**Baseline Assessment of Beşiktaş Municipality**

The elderly population (65 years of age and over) in Turkey has increased 16% in the last 5 years and exceeded 7 million in 2018. The ratio of the elderly population to the overall population, which was 8% in 2014, climbed to 8.8% in 2018. (The Elderly with Statistics, 2018) According to population projections, it is foreseen that the ratio of the elderly population will keep increasing gradually in the upcoming years. For instance; it is estimated that the elderly population will make up of 10.2% of the overall population in 2023, and this ratio will increase up to 22.6% in 2060. Today the life expectancy after the age of 65 has risen to 18 approximately, and the old age has almost become the period with the highest number of years in people’s lives.

Istanbul has maintained its place among other cities as the most populated one for many years. Although it is said that Istanbul has been losing population in the recent years, it still attracts working-age immigrants from all over the country especially due to economic reasons. While this is still one of the most important agendas debated over, when we look from the aspect of the elderly, it is difficult to say that these elderly people are mobile. In spite of the fact that the elderly population ratio of Istanbul is below the average of Turkey, the ratio of the elderly people increases gradually. One of the important aspects of this process occurred in 2018 and the elderly population of Istanbul exceeded one million. That was the first time the elderly population of a city had ever exceeded one million as of 2018.

Although the density of the elderly population of Istanbul, which is a city comprising 39 districts, changes regionally depending on various dynamics, Beşiktaş is one of the districts accommodating the highest number of elderly people. According to the data provided by the TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute) for the year 2018, the ratio of the 65+ elderly population residing in Beşiktaş was 15.11%. Beşiktaş still maintains the quality of being an important living space for the elderly together with only a few other districts with such density.

After all these developments, it has been deemed necessary to revise the ideas, practices and many other structures adopted on the old age concept. A lot of knowledge previously adopted, deemed as true and reproduced itself after being practiced many times have failed to be acceptable in terms of contemporary developments in the field. Such that, it is possible to see when you look at the studies carried out on the old age that the picture is contrary to what is believed. According to the results of the “Family Structure Study” performed in 2016, the ratio of the elderly people who desire to live with their children when they are too old to take care of themselves is 40.2%. The ratio of those who want to benefit from healthcare services at home is 38.6%, and the ratio of those who want to stay at homes for the aged is 7.7%. The fact that the total capacity of the homes for the aged in Turkey is not sufficient requires families to fulfil their own needs in this field. In addition to that, with the development of the current social policies in Turkey in this direction, the burden on families increasing more and more each day. In this respect, it would be useful to remember this data; while the ratio of extended families was 33.9% in 1978, it decreased to 15.9% in 2008. As the education level of the elderly people increases, their request to benefit from healthcare services at home and also stay at homes for the aged increase as well. Despite the fact that the need to stay at homes for the aged keeps increasing, the facility capacity of Turkey is 24,771 including private homes for the aged. The total capacity of the facilities is able to provide service to only 0.4% of the elderly population. For instance, an elderly person who desire to stay at any state home for the aged in Istanbul today has to wait for 1 to 7 years. There are totally 20 homes for the aged initiated by local governments (three of these are located in Istanbul, belonging to the Bakırköy Municipality, Silivri Municipality and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) and these 20 make up of more than 10% of the total capacity.

To evaluate the situation of the elderly people only within the framework of the shortcomings regarding elderly care is not enough, and it may also lead to misperceptions. For this reason, it is required to evaluate the old age issue with a holistic view on global and national scale. In this context, when we look at the content of the Age Friendly Cities determined by the World Health Organization (WHO), it is possible to see an ideal of a city based on the following 8 points;

1- Community and Health Care

2- Transportation

3- Housing

4- Social Participation

5- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

6- Respect and Social Inclusion

7- Civic Participation and Engagement

8- Communication and Information

In addition to this, the strategies put forward in the “Situation of the Elderly in Turkey and the National Action Plan” released in 2007 also handle the issue not only in terms of ‘care’ but through a more comprehensive approach.

The Beşiktaş Municipality approaches the olds age subject thoroughly and produces participatory policies based on data. The old age study we performed in our district in 2012 provided us assistance at drawing our road map regarding this subject. We established the holistic policies and the services needed by our elderly residents on the basis of this study. We can group the services we have been providing for the elderly in the following way.

**Social Center (Leisure Houses)**

Social Centers, one of the service projects started by the Beşiktaş Municipality for the elderly, offers the residents of Beşiktaş who are 65 and over the opportunity to do mental activities aimed at improving cognitive skills and to socialize and meet new people in a clean and lively medium. We have three Social Centers; Etiler, Ulus and Accessible Social Centers. In Social Centers, residents aged 65 and over can also benefit from the Psychological Consultancy Service, which is a professional assistance that enables them to know themselves better, to be aware of the reasons of the problems they face and to cope with such problems in an effective way. In addition to face-to-face talks, psychosocial group therapies are also provided with a view to help them to overcome their physiological problems. In addition to some outdoor organizations for groups such as concerts, seminars, tours and picnics, the center also provides several indoor activities like hobby gardening, group games, wood painting and so on.

**Social Alarm**

The Social Alarm device works through an electronic system connected to the telephone line. The details delivered by the elderly residents aged 65 and over are recorded into the system at our call center so that once the button is pressed, the number of the device and all the details of that resident are visible at our call center and the person is connected to. There are two main buttons on the Social Alarm device. The red button is used to call an emergency ambulance. When it is pressed the call center is connected and an emergency ambulance is immediately directed to the address. In addition to the emergency health service, police and fire brigade is also directed when this button is pressed. And the blue button is used to directly connect to our call center. And there is an additional button for cancelling a faulty call.

**Well-Being Service**

Our Well-Being Service is aimed at facilitating the lives of our elderly residents -especially those at the age of 75 and over- who are not able to cater for themselves and the handicapped and disadvantaged individuals who live alone. The purpose of the service is to create a healthy, safe and peaceful environment in their houses where they spend most of their time. As part of our Well-Being Service; “Personal Care Services”, “Cleaning and Hygiene Service” and “Practical House Arrangements Service” are provided to our citizens in their houses by the qualified staff of the Beşiktaş Municipality.

a) **Personal Care Services:** It includes personal care services for both women and men provided by male and female assistant coiffeurs at home such as hairdressing, shaving, eye brow and eyelash care, partial hair setting and styling (brushing and basic hairstyling), nose hair-cut, ear hair-cut, partial epilation, nail clipping and nail care.

b) **Cleaning and Hygiene Service:** We provide the disabled/disadvantaged or elderly residents with house cleaning and hygiene services at home once a month upon their request.

c) **Practical House Arrangements Service:** It includes some services such as simple modifications and maintenance of house equipment (services like hanging and taking down the curtains, relocating furniture, immobilizing, mounting and demounting etc.), designing the house in accordance with the personal needs of the group being served (turning unsafe circumstances into safer ones such as slippery floors of the houses where particularly disabled and elderly people live, catering ware which may cause perforating injuries, inadequate lighting which may pose a risk for personal safety at home).

**Catering Service**

The primary goal of the Beşiktaş Municipality’s meal delivery service, Catering Service, is to facilitate the lives of our elderly residents -especially those at the age of 75 and over- who are not able to cater for themselves and the handicapped and disadvantaged individuals who live alone, and to enhance their quality of life. The annual menu planning is carried out by expert dietitians and food engineers. Each meal involves three portions. Every day, except for national holidays, one meal is delivered to the houses of those citizens.

**Health Care Services at Home**

The Beşiktaş Municipality aims to achieve a healthy society by supporting the families and increasing the quality of lives of the residents who are aged over 65, disabled or in need of care due to chronic diseases through the free-of-charge Home Health Care and Social Support Service. As part of this service, healthcare needs including personal care are provided to the residents who need special medical care at home due to old age and physical disabilities in their houses where they live with their families.

This project includes medical care service provided by doctors and nurses, and additionally medical consultation, emergency service and patient transport ambulance if necessary. Nurses can give injection, burn and injury dressing, catheter application, serum, drawing blood for laboratory examinations, voiding urine, taking temperature, attaching and detaching urinary catheter, making care plan, informing patients and their families about the illness and condition of patients, providing trainings about illnesses. They also check and record the fluid patients take and void, give and change the position of the patients, helping patients to raise, walk, sit, take eating position and eat.

**Physiotherapy Service at Home**

This is a healthcare support service offered by our Municipality for the Beşiktaş residents in need of physiotherapy care who are handicapped, bedbound, over 65 and have difficulty in leaving home. This service is provided by specialists in order for our residents to be able to keep healthy.

**Dietitian Service**

According to the contemporary understanding of health, an individual’s being in a state of complete wellness physically, mentally and socially is dependent on taking preventive health measures. And the primary preventive health measure is eliminating nutrition problems. Our service, aimed at addressing individuals of any age group through the sense of a healthy diet, is offered to our elderly residents free-of-charge.

**Social Consultancy Service**

The consultancy service aimed at eliminating the obstacles ahead of the elderly about their access to socio-economic rights includes hospital treatment, home care services, healthcare services at home, old age pension and other services offered to the elderly by other institutions. In addition to guiding information, old citizens are also provided with psycho-social support during the consultancy process with the purpose of helping them to cope with the negativities arising from these treatments and personal care supports which may bring along important changes in their lives and routines.

**Accessible Beşiktaş and Age-Friendly Urban Spaces**

“Fulfilling all the requirements for an accessible Beşiktaş” is one of the goals of our Municipality’s Strategic Plan for the Years 2015-2019. In order to realize this goal, it is aimed to re-design all the substructure and superstructure in an accessible way, as well as to satisfy the accessibility standards of the parks and public spaces.

**Stakeholders & Partners for an Elderly-Friendly City**

Beyond any doubt, the key actor for the fulfillment of this ideal is our elderly residents. We have been creating opportunities with a view to carry out this process altogether at each phase and taking steps towards this purpose. Besides, some non-governmental organizations working on the field of old age are important partners of the process with their experience and ideas. In this context, we have been carrying out various activities with the ‘65+ Elderly Rights Association (65+ Yaşlı Hakları Derneği)’. One of the most important works we have been performing in this field with this association is the “Local Governments Elderly Services Working Group”, of which we are the coordinator (mastermind). As part of this project, the 39 district municipalities in Istanbul take turns to present the practices they performed on old age and various discussions are held about them. Another objective is to strengthen the professionals working in the field of old age, creating a medium where they can learn from each other.