The “OUR COMPASS IS DIGITAL PARTICIPATION!” Project

Nilüfer turned its 15-year-old neighbourhood committee model into Türkiye's first digital local election, making civic participation more accessible, inclusive, and representative than ever before.

Description

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO LOCAL PARTICIPATION

In many municipalities, participation mechanisms remain limited by physical constraints and unequal access, leaving large parts of the community unheard. Nilüfer's "Our Compass is Digital Participation!" project tackled this directly by digitally transforming its existing Neighbourhood Committees model. Candidacy applications and elections were conducted entirely through the "Nilüfer Her Yerde (Nilüfer Everywhere)" mobile app, supported by extensive field outreach across all 64 neighbourhoods. Quota systems were introduced to strengthen the representation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, ensuring the process was inclusive by design.

TÜRKIYE'S FIRST DIGITAL NEIGHBOURHOOD ELECTION

The project marks a genuine first: the first fully digital local election at neighbourhood scale in Türkiye. The result was 1,006 candidates, 7,713 voters, and 770 elected neighbourhood committee members, including 327 women, 78 young people, and 28 persons with disabilities. Rather than simply moving existing processes online, the project fundamentally reimagined how neighbourhood-level democracy works, combining digital tools with on-the-ground outreach in markets, parks, cultural centres, and public spaces to reach citizens where they are.

FROM CONSULTATION TO DIRECT REPRESENTATION

Through this project, neighbourhood committees evolved from a participation tool into a mechanism of direct digital representation. By removing physical barriers and embedding inclusiveness into the process, Nilüfer established an innovative local governance model that goes beyond consultation. Citizens can now engage in democratic decision-making with a single click, fostering a lasting culture of digital democracy and offering a replicable model for municipalities across Türkiye and beyond.