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## **A SEGE-Based Investigation on Women-Friendly Practices of Municipalities**

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**Abstract:** Cities, which have the characteristic of being a social space, have turned into main centers where inequalities arising from gender roles are experienced over time. However, all individuals living in cities should use public space equally, benefit from the tools of democracy, and behave equally in terms of participation and representation. In most civilized countries where women and men have equal conditions in urban life within the framework of acquired legal rights, these are guaranteed by law. However, the rules determined in this legal framework and the application area do not progress in parallel. Especially in municipalities that provide urban services, it has been a frequently discussed topic that has been criticized from various perspectives, such as the neglect of women's services, the limited representation of women, and the fact that women are not taken into account in the design of public spaces. In the face of these criticisms, municipalities have tried to tolerate the negativities by increasing the 'women-friendly' practices. In the framework, the prepared study aims to identify the 'women-friendly' practices of municipalities in Turkey. In the study, the document analysis method, one of the qualitative research techniques, was used. In line with this, the 'women-friendly' practices of the cities in the upper, middle and lower developed levels were investigated through the annual report, based on the SEGE index, which shows the development level of the provinces in Turkey. Yalova as the city at the upper level, Afyonkarahisar as the city at middle level, and Kars as the city at the lower level were chosen as the sample and were the subject of the research. The activity reports of the municipalities responsible for the management of urban-public services in these cities were scanned, analyzed and the findings were presented in tables.

**Keywords:** Urbans, Municipalities, Women, Women friendly, SEGE.

### **Introduction**

Gender is an innate characteristic. This innate condition is a biological phenomenon and is expressed as gender. The behaviors, attitudes and roles of biological sexes are formed as a result of social and cultural processes. In other words, beyond the characteristics of biological sex, it is a phenomenon that changes on the axis of social and cultural structures. Babies born as girls or boys turn into 'women' and 'men' as a result of many things that happen to them in the world. This is the result of a social gender regime and cannot be described as a simple socialization. As a result of this regime in some societies, it is seen that basic problems such as deepening inequalities between women and men in society, the formation of spatial differentiation specific to women or men in the public sphere, and injustices in the participation of women and men in administrative and political mechanisms have emerged. However, as a requirement of human rights, the protection of social order and gender equality is of critical importance. For this reason, human rights are based on the idea of equality and it is underlined that men and women should be equal in social life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (UN, 2022). From this point of view, it has become a basic expectation in developed countries as a fundamental policy objective to create social life according to the needs/preferences of women and men and in a way that promotes gender equality. In this context, local governments, where democracy, participation and egalitarian practices are closely felt, have become critical for achieving the goals set at a higher scale. Municipalities, one of the local government units that provide public services at the local level, are autonomous government units whose decision-making bodies are elected in many countries and are necessary for a democratic social order. Accordingly, municipalities are expected to create mechanisms of equality in every sense.

In this context, this study aims to analyze the 'women-friendly' practices of municipalities in Turkey. In Turkey, municipalities are administrations that are elected by all citizens of the city to meet the localized needs of the citizens of the city in the urban area and undertake the responsibility of providing effective, efficient and effective urban services within the legal term of office. In Turkey, the 1982 Constitution and local government legislation clearly stipulate equality between men and women. This equality is also guaranteed for urban citizens. The functionality of this legally guaranteed situation in practice was investigated by analyzing the annual reports of municipalities responsible for the management of urban-public services. Document analysis method, one of the qualitative research techniques, was used in the research. Accordingly, based on the SEGE index, which shows the development level of provinces in Turkey, the 'women-friendly' practices of Yalova, Afyonkarahisar and Kars, which are located in the upper, middle and lower developed levels respectively, were scanned, analyzed and the findings were presented in tables.

### **Sex, Gender and Gender Equality**

Men and women were not physically and biologically equal. This difference is an innate characteristic and is conceptualized as 'gender'. The concept of gender is a concept used to describe the biological, physiological and genetic dimensions of an individual's being a woman or a man. This innate difference is shaped over time on the axis of social and cultural values and different roles, patterns or attitudes are assigned to 'women' and 'men'. Various preferences such as clothes, colors, toys and the behaviors and attitudes that the child will be asked to be a member of throughout his/her life are constructed by the child's family, close environment and/or the society in which the child is born. As a result of this process, which is not innate like biological sex, different roles, attitudes and behaviors are assigned to 'women' and 'men' by the society. This situation is called gender. The concept of gender was introduced to the feminist literature by sociologist Ann Oakley in 1972 and its use has become widespread over time (Ecevit, 2021). In this direction, the concept of gender can be defined as "The concept of gender can be defined as the basic duties and responsibilities associated with the biological sex that people acquire at birth and given by society" (Tapdik, 2020). Keller (2007) defined gender as "a cultural category that describes the shared beliefs of a particular culture about what is masculine and what is feminine, and refers to this set of beliefs as gender ideology". While the concept of "sex" refers to the biological differences between men and women, the concept of "gender" defines the social relations between men and women, emphasizing the relationship between men and women and how this relationship is socially constructed. Therefore, gender roles are dynamic and their content changes according to time and place (Kadının Statüsü Genel Mudurluğu, 2008). Gender equality is defined as equal rights, participation, visibility, empowerment, empowerment, representation and equal and fair participation in all aspects of social life without being discriminated against because of their gender, which is a characteristic that individuals do not choose and whose emergence is controversial (Ercan, 2022).

Table 1. The difference between biological sex and gender (Sargin, 2013, p. 6)

Biological Gender	Social Gender
It is innate	Learned later
It is related to reproductive functions	It is related to social roles
Universal	It differs from society to society and over time
	Can be changed

Equality is the creation of a social environment in which individuals can fully and freely develop all their talents and the elimination of all social and political obstacles to this environment. Inequality, on the other hand, is a difference that is unnecessary and at the same time unfair because it is preventable and avoidable. For this

reason, differences between men and women arising from their genetic, physiological and biological characteristics are not considered within the framework of inequality. Gender inequality means any discrimination, deprivation or restriction that prevents women from recognizing, exercising and enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural and civil spheres (Demirgoz Bal, 2014).

### Gender Equality in Municipalities and Women Friendly City

Today, cities are social settlements where the majority of people live together. The main actors generally responsible for providing urban services in these settlements are municipalities. Since they are the closest service provider unit to the public, municipalities have an important place in the implementation of policies determined at both macro and micro levels. Cities, where services are provided by municipalities, are spaces that host individuals of both sexes. Cities, which have the characteristics of being a social space, have turned into the main centers where inequality arising from gender roles is experienced. However, all individuals living in cities should equally use public spaces, benefit from the tools of democracy, and be treated equally in terms of participation and representation. In most civilized countries where women and men have equal conditions in urban life within the framework of acquired legal rights, these rights are guaranteed by law. However, the rules set out in this legal framework do not progress in the same way in practice.

Municipalities, a unit of local government, are administrative structures consisting of representatives elected by the people living in a particular district or region. Considering both the world population and the population distribution of settlements, it is seen that the number of women and men is close to each other. Therefore, it is expected that women and men should be represented in close proportions in both local governments and municipalities. Despite constituting half of the urban population, women are not fully and equally represented in local decision-making processes. However, women are natural partners that elected and appointed local administrators should include in planning and management processes (Tekinbas, 2015). The representation rates of women in elected local political bodies in the world are shown in Figure 1.

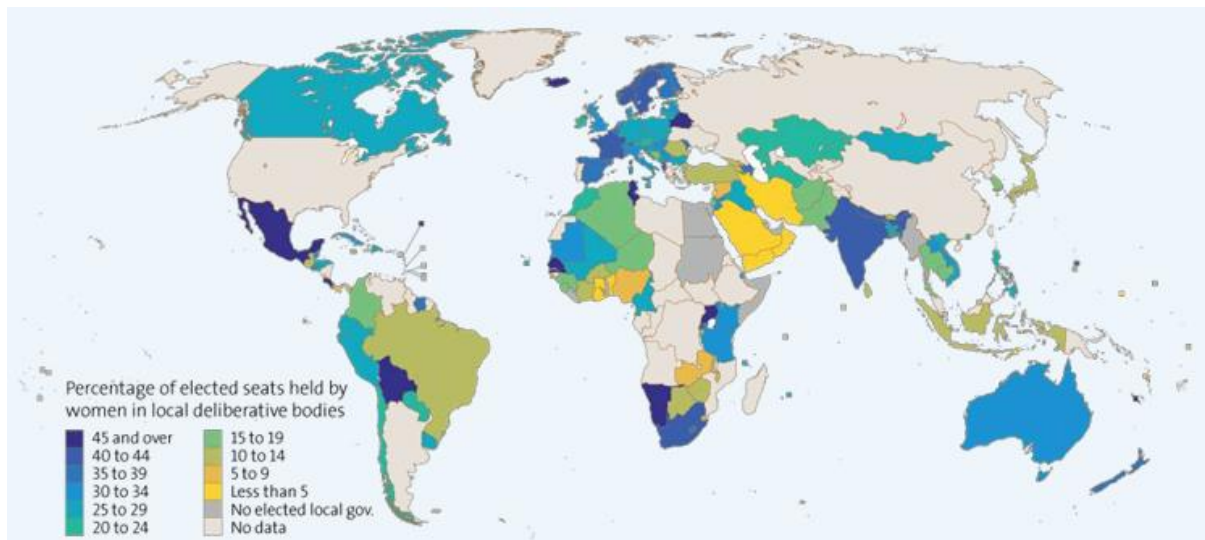


Figure 1. Representation of women in elected local political bodies in the world (Berevoescu & Ballington, 2021, p. 6)

Inequality between women and men is not only experienced in terms of women's representation. Urban planning is traditionally carried out by men and women's needs are often not taken into account. However, local decisions taken in areas such as housing, security, transportation, education and health directly affect women, making their lives easier or more difficult. It is sometimes observed that the design of urban space creates an environment that excludes women from social life. This situation has also attracted the attention of feminist geographers. Sassen (2015) stated that "urban planning is not gender neutral". In this context, one of the main reasons for inequality in urban life is that cities are designed by men for men. In this respect, it is thought that local governments, which hold the power of urban planning in their hands in the organization, management, policy formulation and implementation of urban planning, act on the axis of patriarchal values that ignore, marginalize or subordinate women (Alkan, 2022). Unlit streets, rundown neighborhoods, dead-end streets, areas with limited transportation networks and areas lacking security create the perception in women's minds that

various areas of the city are risky or insecure, leading to the restriction of these areas of the city for women; leading to a sense of fear and anxiety. Women are also one of the groups least able to benefit from cultural, sports and recreational opportunities in cities. In the planning and organization of the city, the creation of spaces where women can come together, the establishment of a nursery or day care center in every neighborhood and similar services are generally not seen as priorities. The distinction between the private and public spheres that emerged as a result of all these has embedded the idea that 'a woman's place is at home' in the social structure. While women are isolated from the public sphere and undertake household chores such as cleaning, cooking, childcare and elderly care, men assume the role of the father who works and looks after the home. The city, divided into public and private spheres, has been an obstacle to women's participation in socio-economic life and politics (Safak, 2021).

In conclusion, it is desirable and expected that urban/local municipalities develop policies sensitive to gender equality. This expectation is fed by both international and national legal texts binding local governments. One of the most important legal limits binding the urban services provided by municipalities was the "rights of the urban dweller" at the meeting of the European Conference of Local and Regional Authorities in Strasbourg in 1992. In this text, which is a twenty-point declaration, it is emphasized that local governments and therefore municipal services should be egalitarian. Apart from this, there are also binding texts for local governments/municipalities such as the 'Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) European Charter on Equality of Women and Men in Local Life', as well as texts such as the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and the 'CEDAW Convention'. Turkey has implemented many international and national legal regulations to ensure that local services are provided equally to urban dwellers. However, the practice of democracy and representation of municipalities, which are the closest service units to the people, in terms of planning and use of the city, and the equal and fair provision of urban public services is a controversial issue for the individuals living in the service area, especially women.

With the recent acceleration of the current debates, municipalities, which are at the center of criticism, are trying to implement women-friendly practices. Women-friendly cities are 'cities that support women's equal participation with men in all areas of urban life by ensuring women's access to health, education and social services, employment opportunities, quality, comprehensive urban services (transportation, housing, security, etc.), mechanisms to secure their rights in case of violence, and their participation in the planning and decision-making processes of local governments' (Esitlik Adalet Kadın Platformu, 2019). The ability of a city to be a women-friendly city is closely related to its ability to accurately identify the problems and needs of women living within its borders and to take the necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against them.

## **A Research on Women Friendly Practices of Municipalities in Yalova, Afyonkarahisar and Kars Provinces**

### **Information on Research Cities**

**Yalova** ranked 12th in the "Socioeconomic Development Index Ranking of Provinces (SEGE)" prepared by the Ministry of Development. Yalova, which is located in a dominant position in the middle of three major metropolises such as Istanbul, Kocaeli and Bursa, is constantly developing and growing with the advantages of its geostrategic location and high accessibility opportunities (Ozkan, et al., 2020). According to 2021, Yalova's population is 291,001. 90.15% of this population lives in the city. The population consists of 145,740 men and 145,261 women. In percentage terms, 50.08% of the population is male and 49.92% is female (TUIK, 2022). The high level of education of the people living in Yalova is one of the first striking features of the city, and the female literacy rate is 95.6%, which is above the average in Turkey (T.C. Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı, 2019). While the male literacy rate is 99.1%, the female literacy rate is 95.6%. 34% of the population is young, 48% is middle-aged and 18% is elderly (TUIK, 2022). While the urban population rate is 73.3%, the rural population rate is 26.7% (T.C. Yalova Valiligi, 2023). Yalova is in a very good position in terms of women's employment across Turkey, and has the distinction of having the second female governor in Turkey's history (TRT Haber, 2023). On the other hand, the city is weak in terms of civil society and women's representation in CSOs is also low. In the 18-member provincial general assembly, no women are represented. Similarly, the majority of the employees of the city council and public institutions in the city are predominantly men. As can be seen, while there is an equal demographic distribution between men and women in the city, women have not been able to participate in the city at the same level in terms of representation, working life and social participation.

**Afyonkarahisar** lags behind the provinces in the region in terms of socioeconomic development. In the "Socioeconomic Development Index Ranking of Provinces (SEGE)" prepared by the Ministry of Development 41 ranking, Afyonkarahisar has the image of a traditional, conservative, introverted, underdeveloped, clean, calm, cheap city (Ozdemir & Karaca, 2009). Looking at the demographic structure of Afyonkarahisar, the total population of the province is 744,179. Of this population, 371,421 are male and 372,758 are female. In other words, 50.01% of the population consists of women (TUIK, 2022). There are 110 central neighborhoods in Afyonkarahisar. Among the mukhtars serving in the central neighborhoods, the mukhtars of only 4 neighborhoods are women. When we look at the municipal council, only 3 of the 31 members of the municipal council are women. Similarly, only 4 of the 50 members of the provincial general assembly are women. Similarly, the majority of the employees of the city council and public institutions in the city are predominantly men. As can be seen, while there is an equal demographic distribution between men and women in the city, women have not been able to participate in the city at the same level in terms of representation, working life and social participation.

Kars is included in the "Socioeconomic Development Index Ranking of Provinces (SEGE)" prepared by the Ministry of Development in terms of socioeconomic development. It ranks 69% and is among the sixth tier developed provinces. The population of Kars in 2022 is approximately 274,829 according to the Turkish Statistical Institute data. When the population structure of Kars is analyzed, it is seen that the proportion of young population is quite high. In Kars, the ratio of males to the population is higher than that of females. The ratio of female population is 49.80%, while the ratio of male population is 51.20% (TUIK, 2022). Kars has 23 central neighborhoods and 73 villages. Among the mukhtars serving in the central neighborhoods, only 2 mukhtars are women. In the municipal council, only 3 of the 25 members of the municipal council are women. There are no women among the 21 members of the provincial general assembly.

**Purpose and Method of the Study**

The study aims to examine the 'women-friendly' practices of municipalities in Turkey based on the concept of 'women-friendly city', which is intensively discussed by different disciplines today. In line with this purpose, the strategic plans and annual reports of the municipalities in the upper, middle and lower developed levels according to the SEGE index, which indicates the development levels of the provinces in Turkey, and their 'women-friendly' practices were investigated. Yalova as a high-level city, Afyonkarahisar as a middle-level city, and Kars as a low-level city were selected as samples and analyzed for the purpose of the study.

Document analysis method, one of the frequently used qualitative research methods, was used in the study. Providing data by analyzing written documents containing information about the facts and events related to the subject examined within the scope of the research is called document analysis (Seyidoglu, 2016). This method provides researchers with the opportunity to conduct an in-depth analysis and draw conclusions based on existing sources. In this study, document analysis method was used to determine the women-friendly practices of municipalities. In light of the relevant method, the strategic plans and annual reports of the municipalities selected as the sample were used for document analysis, as they contain detailed information on the urban and public services of the municipalities. The method scheme of the study is shown in Figure 2.

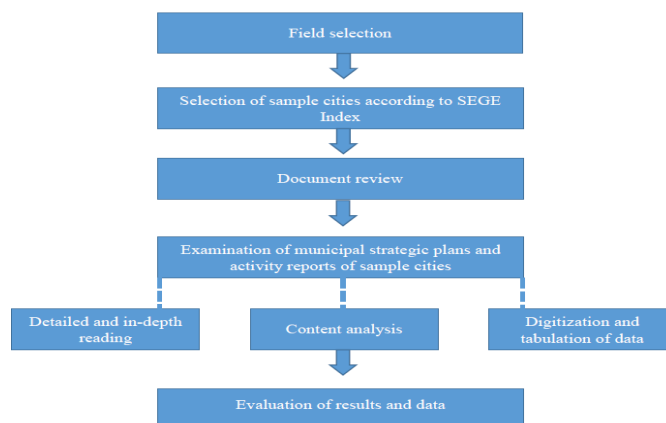


Figure 2. Method schematic

The first step of the study is to scan the strategic plans and activity reports of the relevant municipalities. These reports include issues such as how much importance the municipalities attach to women's services, the

representation rate of women, whether women are taken into account in the design of public spaces, etc. In the document analysis process, the data obtained from the scanned activity reports were analyzed. In this analysis, information on women-friendly practices of municipalities was summarized and tables were created for comparison. As a result of the analysis, findings were obtained on women-friendly practices of municipalities in Yalova, Afyonkarahisar and Kars, which are located in cities with high, medium and low levels of development. These findings evaluate the performance of municipalities in ensuring equal conditions for women in urban life and implementing women-friendly policies.

### Findings of the Study

In the sample of Yalova, Afyonkarahisar and Kars, the number of women-focused activities, goals and targets were calculated by looking at the strategic plans of the cities and their ratio in terms of the total number of goals and targets is presented in Table 2. Again, the two data included in the table are YEAP and GEEPS. In 2006, CEMR developed the "European Charter for Equality between Women and Men in Local Life", which is both a political document and a practical tool for all segments of society to benefit equally from services at local and regional level in Europe. The instrument promotes citizen participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring of municipal services. It emphasizes that different segments of society may have different needs and that the municipality should shape its services accordingly, and considers this on the basis of human rights (TBB, 2021). Among 35 municipalities, only Kars is among the signatories. The LEAP constitutes the framework for local equality policies. Local Equality Action Plans aim to realize equality between women and men at the local level and to embed a gender approach into local governance in order to make equitable policies sustainable. Local Equality Action Plans, also referred to as equality roadmaps of cities, include strategies to increase women's participation in local decision-making processes and decision mechanisms, improve their daily living conditions, and local service models that will ensure the implementation of these strategies (Sabancı Vakfı, 2023).

Table 2. Analysis of policy documents<sup>1</sup> (Strategic plan, KEES ve YEAP) (Afyonkarahisar Municipality, 2023; Yalova Municipality, 2023; Kars Municipality, 2023; İzleme.org, 2023).

Cities	Total Number of Objectives	Total Number of Targets	Number of Objectives for Women	Number of Targets for Women	KEES	YEAP
Afyonkarahisar	4	18	0	0	-	-
Yalova	8	26	0	0	-	-
Kars	8	27	0	0	+	+

The percentage value was calculated by proportioning the number of women-focused, women-themed NGOs among the existing NGOs in the cities. The data obtained are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Ratios of women-focused associations to the total number of women-focused associations in cities<sup>2</sup>

Cities	Number of Women Associations	Total Number of Associations	Ratio of Women Associations (%)
Afyonkarahisar	17	1138	1,49
Yalova	18	452	3,98
Kars	4	196	2,04

Table 4. Rates of women representation in local assemblies in cities

Cities	Municipal Council		Provincial General Assembly		City Council	
Afyonkarahisar %12,55	3 Woman %9,67	28 Man	4 Woman %8	46 Man	3 Woman %20	12 Man
Kars %10,25	3 Woman %12	22 Man	0 Woman	21 Man	3 Woman %18,75	13 Man
Yalova %12,04	5 Woman %16,12	26 Man	0 Woman	18 Man	3 Woman %20	12 Man

<sup>1</sup> The researcher examined the 2019-2023 strategic plans of the municipalities by obtaining them from the website and created a table. SEEAP and REAP data were obtained from <https://www.izleme.org/category/yeep/>

<sup>2</sup> Data on associations were officially obtained by the researcher from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In Afyonkarahisar, the representation of women in the Municipal Assembly is 9.67%, in the Provincial General Assembly 8% and in the City Council 20%. According to these data, the majority of those working in local representation mechanisms in Afyonkarahisar are men. In other words, the representation of women in local government mechanisms is quite limited.

In Kars, the representation of women in the Municipal Assembly is 12%, in the Provincial General Assembly 0% and in the City Council 18,75%. According to these data, the majority of those who take part in local representation mechanisms in Kars are men. In other words, the representation of women in local government mechanisms is quite limited.

In Yalova, the representation of women in the Municipal Assembly is 16,12%, in the Provincial General Assembly 0% and in the City Council 20%. According to these data, the majority of those who take part in local representation mechanisms in Yalova are men. In other words, women's representation in local government mechanisms is quite limited. When we combine all the data, the final Table 5 below shows the situation of women's participation in the public sphere in these cities.

Table 5. Women's visibility in women-friendly cities

Cities	Representation	Policy Documents	NGO	KDK (YEPP, KEES)
Afyonkarahisar	%12,55	0	%1,49	0
Yalova	%12,04	%17,64	%3,98	0
Kars	%10,25	%5,71	%2,4	100

When we look at the situation with quantitative indicators of women in these cities, which have taken steps to become women-friendly and have carried out a series of activities, we can say that the issue of "equality" has not been realized in the political, administrative and civil spheres. This situation suggests that women's equal presence in the public sphere has not yet been realized even in the cities included in the CSW project.

#### *Afyonkarahisar Municipality*

When the 2020-2024 strategic plans of Afyonkarahisar Municipality were examined, it was seen that a total of 4 goals and 18 objectives were included. However, when these goals and objectives were analyzed, no findings on women-friendly practices were found (Table 6). The strategic plan also mentions the necessity of women's participation in the labor force and the inadequacy of women's employment in Afyonkarahisar. Despite this, when the number of municipal personnel is analyzed, it is seen that women are not even employed in the municipality (Table 7). Of the 366 employees employed in the municipality, only 58 are women.

Table 6. Number of objectives and targets of Afyonkarahisar municipality (Afyonkarahisar Municipality, 2023).

City	Total Number of Objectives	Total Number of Targets	Number of Objectives for Women	Number of Targets for Women
Afyonkarahisar	4	18	0	0

Table 7. Distribution of Afyonkarahisar municipality personnel by gender (Afyonkarahisar Municipality, 2023)

Cinsiyet	Civil Servant+Contracted Personnel	Worker	Total
Woman	24	34	58
Man	248	60	302
Total	272	94	366

In Afyonkarahisar, the representation of women in the Municipal Assembly is 9.67%, in the Provincial General Assembly 8% and in the City Council 20%. According to these data, the majority of those working in local representation mechanisms in Afyonkarahisar are men. In other words, the representation of women in local government mechanisms is quite limited.

In Kars, the representation of women in the Municipal Assembly is 12%, in the Provincial General Assembly 0% and in the City Council 18,75%. According to these data, the majority of those who take part in local representation mechanisms in Kars are men. In other words, the representation of women in local government

mechanisms is quite limited. When the data obtained from the Ministry of Interior are analyzed, it is seen that Afyonkarahisar has more public service areas than the other two cities (Table 8). According to the data obtained from the Ministry, it is possible to say that there are 26 kindergartens and 13 children's homes, 6 nursing homes, 5 disabled care centers and 1 women's guesthouse in Afyonkarahisar (Table 8). In the 2020-2021 activity report of Afyonkarahisar Municipality, it has been determined that there is 1 activity under the title of education for women, 2 activities for employment/economic activities and 1 activity in the category of other services. Emphasis on participation, shelter/ violence and equality are also not included in the activity reports. Detailed data is shown in Table 9.

Table 8. Number of public service areas in Afyonkarahisar<sup>3</sup>

City	Nursery	Nursing Home (ASHB)	Nursing Home (Private)	Women's Guesthouse	Disabled Care Rehabilitation Center. (ASHB)	Disabled Care Rehabilitation Center (Private)	Children's Home
Afyonkarahisar	26	6	1	1	1	4	13

Table 9. Women-focused objectives in afyonkarahisar annual reports(Afyonkarahisar Municipality, 2023)

Education	Employment/Economy	Participation	Shelter/Violence	Emphasis on Equality	Other Services
*Women's Cultural Houses aim to provide education for housewives and socialize them at the same time.	*Women offered their handmade products for sale in the "Marifetli Eller Pazarı" organized within the scope of Women's Day activities. *The products produced within the scope of the project, which includes making cloth dolls, are intended to add value to the economy of women and the city.				*The Ladies' Lodge, which started operating in 2014, provides social and cultural services to women.

#### Yalova Municipality

When the 2020-2024 strategic plans of Yalova Municipality were examined, it was seen that a total of 8 goals and 26 objectives were included. However, when these goals and objectives are analyzed, again, as in the city of Yalova, there is no evidence of women-friendly practices (Table 10).

Table 10. Number of objectives and targets of Yalova municipality (Yalova Municipality, 2023)

City	Total Number of Objectives	Total Number of Targets	Number of Objectives for Women	Number of Targets for Women
Yalova	8	27	0	2

The strategic plan underlines the objective of 'Providing social support and assistance to disadvantaged social segments within the framework of social municipalism practices'. However, this target mentions practices for the elderly and children rather than activities for women. When the personnel numbers of Yalova Municipality are analyzed, it is seen that only 302 of the 1151 employees are female (Table 11). It is understood that approximately 77% of the personnel working in Yalova Municipality are men. While the municipality emphasizes social support and assistance, it is seen that it is unable to ensure equality between women and men in employment within its own organization. When the data obtained from the Ministry are examined, it is possible to determine that there are 11 kindergartens and 8 children's homes, 3 nursing homes, 5 disabled care centers and 1 women's guesthouse in Yalova (Table 12). In Yalova Municipality's 2020-2021 activity report, it

<sup>3</sup> The data presented was obtained from the Ministry of Interior within the scope of the project.



was determined that there is 1 activity for the title of education for women, 2 activities for shelter/violence, 1 activity on equality emphasis and 1 activity in the category of other services. Employment/economic and participation are also not included in the activity reports. Detailed data is shown in Table 13.

Table 11. Distribution of Yalova municipality personnel by gender (Yalova Municipality, 2023)

Gender	Total
Woman	302
Man	849
Total	1151

Table 12. Number of public service areas in Yalova <sup>4</sup>

City	Nursery	Nursing Home (ASHB)	Nursing Home (Private)	Women's Guesthouse	Disabled Care Rehabilitation Center. (ASHB)	Disabled Care Rehabilitation Center (Private)	Children's Home
Yalova	11	2	1	1	2	3	8

Table 13. Women-focused objectives in Yalova annual reports

Education	Employment/Economy	Participation	Shelter/Violence	Emphasis on Equality	Other Services
* It is aimed to start sports, skills and vocational courses for women, children, children and people with disabilities and to create production workshops, to provide basic education support in Turkish, Mathematics, English etc. for primary and secondary school level.			*Opening women's solidarity centers (providing psychological, legal and social services to disadvantaged women).  *In the Therapy Room organized at the Bahçelievler Yasmek Center, psychological counseling and therapy process was carried out with mostly women and young clients experiencing domestic violence, communication in the family, relationships, suicide attempts and various psychological problems.	*Yalova Municipality aims to be with our citizens throughout their lives by attaching importance to the perspective of Social Municipality and Social Services, and to ensure that all of them benefit equally from all the opportunities of the city, regardless of their social, economic and cultural differences.	* Family counseling services were provided to strengthen family ties.  *At the end of the project, which was implemented for the first time by the Women and Family Directorate under the slogan "A Breath for Mothers, Happiness for Children", children completed the summer school covering a period of one month.

### Kars Municipality

When the 2020-2024 strategic plans of Kars Municipality were examined, it was seen that there were 8 objectives and 27 targets in total (Table 14). It is understood that 2 of these objectives are for women. These objectives are grouped under the main headings of 'Empowering women economically and socially, mainstreaming social equality perspective in municipal services'. When the number of personnel in the municipality is analyzed, it is seen that only 132 of the 888 employees are women (Table 15). When the data obtained from the Ministry are examined, it is possible to determine that there are 5 kindergartens and 8

<sup>4</sup> The data presented was obtained from the Ministry of Interior within the scope of the project.

children's homes, 1 nursing home, 1 disabled care center and 1 women's guesthouse in Kars province (Table 16). According to these data, there is a lack of public services that address women and are necessary for women's participation in both social and economic life in Kars. In the 2020-2021 activity report of Kars Municipality, it was determined that there is 1 activity under the heading of employment/economy for women, 2 activities for shelter/violence and 1 activity under the category of other services. Emphasis on education, participation and equality is also not included in the activity reports. Detailed data is shown in Table 17.

Table 14. Number of goals and objectives of Kars municipality (Kars Municipality, 2023)

City	Total Number of Objectives	Total Number of Targets	Number of Objectives for Women	Number of Targets for Women
Kars	8	26	0	0

Table 15. Distribution of Kars municipality personnel by gender (Kars Municipality, 2023)

Gender	Civil Servant+Contracted Personnel	Worker	Subcontractor	Şirket Company	Total
Woman	23	14	14	81	132
Man	92	72	152	440	756
Total	115	86	166	521	888

Table 16. Number of public service areas in Kars<sup>5</sup>

City	Nursery	Nursing Home (ASHB)	Nursing Home (Private)	Women's Guesthouse	Disabled Care Rehabilitation Center. (ASHB)	Disabled Care Rehabilitation Center (Private)	Children's Home
Kars	5	1	0	1	1	0	8

Table 17. Women-focused objectives in Kars annual reports (Kars Municipality, 2023)

Education	Employment/Economy	Participation	Shelter/Violence	Emphasis on Equality	Other Services
	*It is aimed to provide vocational training services.		*All parks and gardens, overpasses and bridges in the city center were inspected in terms of women, children and disabled people due to the requirement to make the city safer for women, which is among the activities of the Provincial Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women. *With the Women's Solidarity Center Women's Support Line, women citizens who contacted the line were directed to the relevant directorates and institutions in line with their problems and demands.		*Women's Solidarity Center and Community Solidarity Store were established. *Women and Family Health Services *Home Health Services *1 Women's Life Center was established. *1 day care center (nursery) was established.

<sup>5</sup> The data presented was obtained from the Ministry of Interior within the scope of the project.

## Conclusion

In its shortest definition, gender equality means that women and men have equal rights and opportunities in society. However, equal provision of services and elimination of gender discrimination in urban areas are not always realized successfully. This study examines women-friendly urban practices offered by municipalities from a gender equality perspective. The impact of municipalities' urban services on gender equality and the challenges and discrimination faced by women in urban life are analyzed. The strategic plans, activity reports and practices of municipalities are reviewed, and the inadequacies of women-friendly urban practices are identified.

- In the cities examined in the research area, facilities such as kindergartens, retirement homes and women's guest houses that can eliminate the disadvantages of women's lives are not sufficient according to the population.

- In the Strategic Plan of Afyonkarahisar Municipality, there are a total of 4 Objectives and 18 targets; among these objectives and targets, the titles "activities to ensure gender equality" and "egalitarian women's policies" were not found.

- Yalova Municipality's Strategic Plan has a total of 8 Objectives and 27 targets; among these objectives and targets, there are 2 targets that can be evaluated under the titles of "activities to ensure gender equality" and "egalitarian women's policies".

- Kars Municipality's Strategic Plan has a total of 8 Objectives and 26 targets; among these objectives and targets, there are no targets under the headings of "activities to ensure gender equality" and "egalitarian women's policies".

The study reveals that women's employment is low in the cities studied and women's opportunities to work in municipalities are limited. This situation shows that there is a lack of gender equality. In addition, it was found that there are insufficient facilities such as kindergartens, retirement homes and women's guest houses that can facilitate women's daily lives. This creates obstacles to women's participation in social life and labor force. Especially in the strategic plans of Afyonkarahisar and Kars Municipalities, there are no targets or objectives for gender equality and egalitarian women's policies. This shows that women's rights and gender equality issues are not among the priorities of the municipality. In Yalova Municipality's strategic plan, a limited number of objectives addressed these areas. In addition, despite the inclusion of 'women's economic empowerment' among the goals of the cities analyzed, the number of women working in municipalities is quite low. This is an example of the weak implementation of decisions taken by local governments. The study revealed that the development levels of the municipalities examined in the context of women-friendly city practices do not show much difference on urban services. Municipalities should adopt a more fair, inclusive and egalitarian approach in the urban services they provide. The equal utilization of urban services by all segments of the society (regardless of men/women) will make a significant contribution to making cities more livable areas.

## Scientific Ethics Declaration

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

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