



## **“No Barrier for Disabled People” Municipalism: A Study on the Municipalities of the Mediterranean Region**

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### **Abstract**

Approximately 16 per cent of the world's population consists of persons with disabilities. This ratio indicates that nearly one in every six people worldwide has a physical, mental, intellectual e.g. disability. While disabled individuals were ignored, defined as a burden, and seen as individuals who needed to be rescued, today their existence is accepted and they are seen as part of society. Services for disabled individuals are provided worldwide by central and local governments. This study analyses the activities and services provided by metropolitan municipalities in the Mediterranean Region for individuals with disabilities between 2019 and 2023. The literature contains studies that have been conducted at the district, provincial or national level. This study is considered important as it addresses the services provided by local governments in the Mediterranean region level. It is anticipated that this study will provide information on the services offered to the administrators of local governments in the region and serve as a guide and contribute to the literature and to researchers. The data for the study was obtained from the ARs of these municipalities for the relevant years using the document review method. The study found that there were differences in terms of volume, quantity and diversity among the activities and services carried out by local governments in the Mediterranean region for individuals with disabilities, and that metropolitan municipalities produced more services in terms of number of items and quantity than provincial municipalities. It was concluded that this situation cannot be explained solely by economic reasons, that cooperation in activities and services for persons with disabilities needs to be developed, that the issue of representation and participation of persons with disabilities in governance needs to be resolved, and that a paradigm shift is required.

**Keywords:** Mediterranean, Municipality, Municipalism, Disabled, Local Governments

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## “Engelsiz” Belediyecilik: Akdeniz Bölgesi Belediyeleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme

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### Öz

Dünya nüfusunun yaklaşık yüzde 16'sı engellilerden oluşmaktadır. Bu oran dünya genelinde neredeyse her 6 kişiden birinin fiziki, ruhsal, akıl vb. yönlerinden engeli olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Engelli bireyler tarihsel süreç içinde yok sayılan, yük olarak tanımlanan bireyler olarak görülmekteyken günümüzde varlıklarını kabul edilen ve toplumun bir parçası olarak görülen ve toplumla entegre olabilmeleri için gerekli düzenlemelerin ve hizmetlerin sağlanarak engelsiz her birey gibi “normal” bireyler olarak görülmeye başlamıştır. Engelli bireylere yönelik hizmetler dünya genelinde merkezi ve yerel yönetimler tarafından sağlanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada 2019-2023 yılları arasında Akdeniz Bölgesi'ndeki büyükşehir belediyelerinin engelli bireylere yönelik faaliyet ve hizmetleri analiz edilmektedir. Literatürde yerel yönetimlerin engelli bireylere yönelik hizmetlerine ilişkin farklı başlıklar altında çalışmalar bulunmaktadır. Ancak çalışmalar ilçe, il veya ülke genelinde yapılmış olup, özellikle Akdeniz bölgesinde bögesel ölçekte bir çalışma yapılmamıştır. Çalışma Akdeniz bölgesinde yer alan yerel yönetimlerin engelli bireylere yönelik hizmetlerini ilk defa ele alması ve bu hizmetlerin yerel yönetimler ölçüngünde değerlendirilmesi yönüyle önemli görülmektedir. Bu ölçekte bir çalışmanın özellikle bölgede yer alan yerel yönetimlerin yöneticilerine sunulan hizmetlerle ilgili bilgiler sunacağı ve yol gösterici olacağı bununla birlikte konu ile ilgili çalışmaların yer aldığı literatüre ve yine konu ile ilgili çalışmalar yapan ya da yapmayı planlayan araştırmacılara katkı sağlayacağı da öngörmektedir. Çalışmanın verileri, doküman incelemesi yöntemi kullanılarak bu belediyelerin ilgili yillardaki faaliyet raporlarından elde edilmiştir. Çalışmada Akdeniz bölgesinde yerel yönetimlerin engelli bireylere yönelik yürütükleri faaliyet ve hizmetler arasında hacim, miktar ve çeşitlilik açısından farklılıklar olduğu, büyükşehir belediyelerinin il belediyelerine göre daha fazla başlık ve miktarda hizmet üretikleri görülmüştür. Bu durumun sadece ekonomik gereklelerle açıklanamayacağı, engellilere yönelik faaliyet ve hizmetlerde iş birliğinin geliştirilmesi gerektiği; engellilerin yönetimde temsil ve katılım sorununun çözülmesi ve paradigma değişikliğine gidilmesi gerektiği sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Akdeniz, Belediye, Belediyecilik, Engelli, Yerel Yönetimler

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## Introduction

According to World Health Organisation data, there are approximately 1.3 billion people with disabilities worldwide as of 2023. This corresponds to nearly 16% of the global population, meaning that one in every six people is disabled (WHO, 2024). In Türkiye, according to the 2023 data of the Ministry of Health National Disability Data Bank, there are 2,511,950 people with disabilities, of whom 1,414,643 are men and 1,097,307 are women (saglik.gov.tr, 2024). TÜİK data from November 2023 further categorises these individuals: 215,076 are visually impaired, 179,867 are hearing impaired, 33,686 are speech and language impaired, 311,131 are orthopedically impaired, 385,313 are mentally impaired, 170,927 are mentally and emotionally impaired, and 917,259 have disabilities due to chronic illness and other diseases (tuik.gov.tr, 2024). These figures highlight the scale of disability as a social reality and underline the importance of policies and services that ensure equality and inclusion.

Disability is not only a medical or health-related issue but also a social and governance matter. The common point of services and activities carried out worldwide is to ensure that disabled individuals have the same rights as other citizens and to implement practices that promote social justice and inclusion (Maestas, 2013; Oliver and Barnes, 2012). Local governments, as the closest administrative units to citizens, play a critical role in this process. They are responsible for providing accessible infrastructure, health and rehabilitation services, social and cultural activities, and mechanisms for participation in governance. In Türkiye, legal frameworks such as Law No. 5378 on Disabled People and Law No. 5393 on Municipalities assign municipalities specific duties in this regard, including establishing disability service units, providing counselling and rehabilitation, and ensuring accessibility in public spaces.

The Mediterranean Region of Türkiye presents a particularly relevant case for studying disability services. The region includes both large metropolitan municipalities (Adana, Antalya, Mersin, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş) and smaller provincial municipalities (Burdur, Isparta, Osmaniye). This diversity allows for a comparative analysis of how institutional capacity, budget size, and population scale affect the scope and quality of services for disabled individuals. While metropolitan municipalities generally have larger budgets and more specialised units, provincial municipalities often face limitations in resources and institutional structures. Examining these differences provides insights into the challenges of achieving equity in disability services across different types of local governments.

### 1. Methodology

The aim of the study is to provide information on the services of local governments in the Mediterranean region for disabled people. In the literature, there are studies on the services of local governments for disabled people under different titles. However, the studies have been conducted at the district, province or country-wide scale, and no study has been conducted at the regional scale, especially in the Mediterranean region. It is anticipated that a study of this scale will contribute to the literature and researchers. The study covers the services of local governments in the Mediterranean region for disabled people. Adana, Antalya, Hatay, Mersin, Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality; Burdur, Isparta and Osmaniye Municipality were selected as the sample of the study to include all municipalities in the region (district and town municipalities were excluded

due to limitations in data access and comparability issues). The study is limited to these municipalities selected as a sample and their services for disabled people between 2019-2023. Within the scope of qualitative research, literature review and document review method were used in the study. 2019-2023 Activity Reports (AR) and strategic plans (as data sources) of the local governments have been analyzed/coded in the aspect of services for persons with disabilities are divided into thematic categories such as health, education, transportation, social activities, care, and rehabilitation. The diversity of services among municipalities, trends in increase/decrease over the years, and the organizational structure of services (e.g., whether a special unit has been established, number of staff) have been analyzed comparatively.

In addition to municipal activity reports (2019–2023), the study incorporated contextual indicators to strengthen comparative analysis. Population size, annual budget capacity, institutional infrastructure (such as the number of disabled service centers), and available data on registered disabled individuals were reviewed for each municipality. For example, Antalya Metropolitan Municipality serves a population of approximately 2.6 million with eight disabled service centers, while Burdur Municipality, with a population of around 270,000, focuses on symbolic Disability Day events and small-scale facilities. Mersin Metropolitan Municipality reported 32,563 registered disabled individuals in 2022, whereas Adana mapped 27,446 disabled citizens in its GIS system. These contextual variables were used to interpret differences in service scale, diversity, and implementation capacity across municipalities.

## **2. The Concept of Disability**

According to the World Health Organisation, the concept of disability is explained with the concepts of disability, disability and deficiency. Deficiency in terms of health, imbalance and deficiency in mental, biological or physical structure and functions are defined as disability (WHO, 2024). Disability is defined as the loss and restriction of the ability to perform a job as a result of a deficiency or disability in terms of health compared to a person who is considered normal (Yenipazarlı, Condur, and Cömertler, 2020, p. 82). Disability, on the other hand, refers to the restrictive and disadvantaged situation of the individual in personal, social and cultural activities as a result of deficiency or injury in the field of health (Koca, 2010, p. 32; Pristley, 2011, p. 523).

Disability is defined as the inability to perform activities that are considered normal according to the social and demographic needs of individuals, or a disadvantaged situation that limits or eliminates the ability to perform (Kalayci and Akin, 2019, p. 668). The United Nations defines disability as the inability to perform the tasks that normal individuals should be able to do on their own in social life as a result of a genetic / post-genetic deficiency in their physical and mental abilities (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1). The International Labour Organization (1983) defines a disabled person as an individual whose prospects for securing suitable work, participation in work and progress in work are reduced as a result of an accepted physical or mental disability (ILO, 2024).

Although disability is tried to be defined with concepts such as 'disability, disability, deficiency, handicap, abnormality', people who are in need of protection, who need the help of others and who are not self-sufficient and cannot maintain their lives on their own are defined as disabled (Özgökçeler and Alper, 2010, p. 36; Arıkan, 2002, p. 14). In the

historical process, disabled people have been labelled according to the following three basic perspectives in the main framework, although they differ from society to society throughout the world. As stated in the researches conducted by Barton, disabled people have been evaluated within the framework of the understanding that protects the society and the system from disabled individuals and sees them as a 'threat'; the understanding that sees disabled people as a 'burden' to the society and argues that measures should be taken and weeded out; and the understanding that sees disabled people as 'incapable' who need to be protected and protected (Kolat, 2009, p. 15).

The common points of the concept of disability / disability, which is defined and explained according to different titles and perspectives, are the loss of biological, mental, mental and social abilities, limitation, self-sufficiency, need for external support, care, rehabilitation, counselling, etc. It is seen as need. In the process of providing the personal and social needs of these individuals, it is seen that their families are primarily responsible (Özgökçeler and Alper, 2010, p. 41), social structures such as neighbours, associations, foundations, etc., religious institutions also take responsibility (Zastrow, 2013, p. 29) and institutions outside the home take an active role, especially with the effect of the difficult working conditions that emerged after the industrial revolution (Çetin, 2017, p. 96).

There are legal regulations to provide solutions to the personal and social problems of individuals with disabilities and to provide support to facilitate their lives. The concept of disability was mentioned for the first time in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations (UN, 2006), which prioritises the principle of equality for all. In December 1975, the UN General Council issued the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and declared that 'the rights of all disabled persons are guaranteed without discrimination based on religion, race, language, sex or ideology'. The UN also declared 1981 as the 'International Year of Disabled Persons'. In 1982, the 'World Programme of Action for Persons with Disabilities' was prepared and the main framework of the policies to be implemented for disabled people was determined as 'prevention, rehabilitation and equal opportunities'. In 1989, the 'Tallinn Framework', which includes the participation of disabled people in the labour force, was adopted, and in 1992, 3 December was accepted as the 'World Day of Disabled Persons' (Çitil, 2017, p. 125). In Türkiye, legal arrangements have been made for disabled people. There are laws such as Articles 10, 50 and 61 of the Constitution, Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216, Municipal Law No. 5393, Law No. 5378 on Disabled People, Law No. 3960 on the fight against hereditary diseases, and circulars and regulations on the framework determined by these laws (Şışman, 2012, p. 173).

## 2.1. Local Governments and Disability Services

In the historical development of services for disabled people in Türkiye, these services dates back to the 19th century. In the Ottoman Empire, it is seen that municipalities started to be organised as local government bodies since 1850s and especially local governments took an active role in providing services for disabled people. In these periods, local governments started to provide support for poor and disabled individuals. Dersaadet İdare-i Belediye Nizamnamesi (1868) assigned the task of caring for the poor living within the municipality boundaries to the city administration, and in accordance with the Decree on Civil Servants and Civil Servants Terakki ve Tekâuid, disabled people

whose fathers were civil servants and who had passed away were provided with pensions. Again, Dersaadet Municipality Law (1877) obliged provincial municipalities to provide assistance to disabled people from their own budgets. In the 1911 Military Service Law, deaf, dumb and visually impaired persons were exempted from military service and positive discrimination was made (Balci, 2013, p. 85-86).

In accordance with the understanding of social municipalism, it is seen in the Law No. 5378 on Disabled persons that local governments are tasked with providing in-kind and cash aids to disabled individuals in need of assistance, providing guidance, awareness raising, counselling services, providing social, cultural, vocational and sports rehabilitation services, providing free health services, establishing disability centres, providing transportation support, creating employment, providing basic education and vocational training, organising cultural and social activities, etc. (Ersöz, 2011, p. 76; Uludağ and Çaklı, 2021, p. 96).

Law No. 5216 on Metropolitan Municipalities, Law No. 5378 on Disabled People, Law No. 5393 on Municipalities, Official Gazette No. 26261 dated 16.08.2006: Within the framework of the Regulation on Disabled Service Units of Metropolitan Municipalities, local governments are held responsible for providing services for disabled people. Accordingly, local governments are responsible for the following: '*Disabled service units shall be established in metropolitan municipalities to provide information, awareness raising, orientation, counselling, social and vocational rehabilitation services for disabled people*' (Law No. 5216 on Metropolitan Municipalities, Art.40); '*Vocational habilitation and rehabilitation services for disabled people can also be provided by public institutions and organisations, municipalities and other real or legal persons*' (Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities, Art.13); '*to use the appropriation allocated for the poor and needy in the budget, to carry out services for the disabled and to establish a centre for the disabled*' (5393 Municipality Law, 38/n) and '*to provide in-kind and in-cash aid to the economically disabled*' (Regulation on Disabled Service Units of Metropolitan Municipalities, 8/g).

The duties of metropolitan municipalities for disabled people are to carry out activities for the regular, effective and efficient realisation and provision of municipal services for people and their families living within the municipality boundaries who need protection, care, rehabilitation, counselling, guidance, personal development and support services due to the loss of physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social abilities as a result of any congenital or acquired disease or accident (Fırat, 2008, p. 94; Bezmez, 2011, p. 76). Furthermore, in Article 77 of the Law, local governments are obliged to 'ensure solidarity and participation in the municipality in the provision of services for the elderly, women and children, the disabled, the poor and the downtrodden, to implement programmes for the participation of volunteers in order to increase effectiveness, savings and efficiency in services and to receive the support of the civil society in these matters (Doğanyiğit, 2005, p. 95; Davis, 1995, p. 14; Yaralı and Aracı, 2025, p. 226).

Local administrations, which are authorised and held responsible by legal regulations, provide services, make investments and carry out activities under various headings for persons with disabilities throughout the country (Hästbacka and Nygård, 2019, p. 17). Many projects, activities and services are carried out by local governments for disabled people under the headings of health, transportation, personal care, education, rehabilitation services in order to meet the personal needs of disabled people;

construction of disability centres in order to ensure their social participation and socialisation, construction of social activity and training centres, organisation of social activities and opening of places such as 'Down Cafe' where disabled people can do vocational training and activities in order to ensure their participation in social life, providing physical and architectural facilities in residential areas etc.

### **3. Services of Local Governments in the Mediterranean Region For Persons With Disabilities**

In this part of the study, the services of local governments in the Mediterranean region for disabled people are presented in alphabetical order. It is seen that local governments in the region provide services in different dimensions and titles for disabled people, but not all of these services are mentioned in the annual ARs. The study reviewed the organizational structures through which these services are delivered. Metropolitan municipalities such as Adana, Antalya, and Mersin operate dedicated Disabled Services Directorates, with Antalya managing eight service centers and Mersin coordinating barrier-free life centers and vocational training facilities. Provincial municipalities (e.g., Burdur, Isparta, Osmaniye) generally provide services under broader Social Services Directorates, with fewer specialized units and limited institutional capacity. Personnel numbers were not consistently reported in activity documents, but references to psychologists, social workers, and legal experts indicate multidisciplinary teams in larger municipalities.

#### **3.1. Adana Metropolitan Municipality's Services For Disabled People**

Adana Metropolitan Municipality (ABB) provides services for disabled people under various titles within the scope of Disability Services Branch Directorate. ABB conducted an inventory of 1271 disabled people, 93 disabled people benefited from awareness-raising, orientation and counselling services, and 6 training activities and seminars were held. 1850 disabled people were provided with transportation support to sportive activities and social organisations. Among the services for disabled individuals living within the service boundaries of Adana Metropolitan Municipality, 702 wheelchairs were distributed, 81 battery powered wheelchairs were distributed, 1 special child-sized chair was distributed, 321 white canes were distributed. 750 disabled people were provided with health services (ABB AR 2019, p. 212-214).

The 3 December World Day of Persons with Disabilities organisation with the participation of 1100 disabled people, 21 March World Down Syndrome and Celiac Awareness Day Dinner Organisation with the participation of 600 disabled people and iftar dinner organisation with the participation of 500 disabled people. Within the scope of 3 December World Day of Persons with Disabilities activities, ABB organised a breakfast programme with the participation of disabled children and their families in cooperation with disabled associations. Within the scope of the same event, the problems of the disabled were conveyed to the municipal administration by the disabled themselves. Hair care services were provided in some schools such as the Primary School for the Hearing Impaired. Swimming trainings were provided to disabled students, golf carts were provided for the convenience of disabled people during cemetery visits, underwater diving training for disabled people, disabled ramp construction, disabled car parking signs, 40 disabled car parking floors were painted, panic buttons were placed in

disabled toilets. All buses within ABB are designed in a way suitable for the use of disabled people (ABB AR 2019, p. 321-322).

ABB provided a 25-seat audio library in the public library for disabled people to support the reading of visually impaired people, repair works of schools for the hearing and visually impaired, free gondola tour service, counselling for 34 disabled migrants, counselling service for 34 disabled migrants, 144 manual wheelchairs, 29 battery powered wheelchairs, 10 special child-sized chairs and 6 white canes were distributed; 200 children with disabilities were organised entertainment for children and 400 disabled individuals were provided with transportation support, golf carts were provided for disabled people to facilitate cemetery visits, and free public transport services were provided (ABB AR 2020, p. 322-323).

ABB provided 516 manual wheelchairs, 76 battery-powered wheelchairs, 76 special child-sized chairs and 26 white canes, 698 wheelchairs and support materials to disabled individuals, organised entertainment for 200 disabled children, and provided transportation support to 600 disabled citizens to participate in sportive and social events. In addition to free transport services for people with disabilities, golf carts were provided for the use of these people to facilitate their visits to cemeteries (ABB AR 2021, p. 216-218).

The construction of disabled toilets, the identification of 27,446 disabled people on the geographical information system, and the provision of easy access for disabled people construction of new pavements for easy access of disabled people, disabled run, counselling service for 78 disabled people, mobile health and guidance services, a total of 928, supply of wheeled vehicles, white canes and support products for a total of 928 wheelchairs (693 manual wheelchairs, 40 battery powered wheelchairs, 26 wheelchairs with toilet seats, 56 child-sized wheelchairs; 64 white canes; 34 walkers; 3 spiders; 1 sports wheelchair, 1 special wheelchair, 9 canedeyn crutches), transportation support for 1500 disabled citizens to participate in sportive and social organisations (ABB AR 2022, p. 208-210).

The activities and services provided by ABB for disabled individuals in 2023 are as follows. Construction of disabled toilets, organization of a steeplechase race (ABB 2023 AR), consultancy services to 121 disabled individuals, provision of cash aid, services for the disabled week, increasing disabled individuals' access to health services. Mobile health and guidance vehicle services to facilitate transportation, transportation support to 1800 disabled citizens to participate in sports and social organizations, a total of 1372 (1095 1 manual wheelchair, 78 powered wheelchairs, 36 wheelchairs with toilet seat, 55 child size wheelchairs, 8 white canes, 3 walkers, 1 athlete wheelchair, 5 special wheelchairs. 1 canedian crutches), wheeled vehicles, white canes and support products were supplied. Psycho-social support was provided to 242 disabled individuals within the scope of the purple campus project titled Areas Free from Violence (ABB AR 2023, p. 284-287).

### **3.2. Antalya Metropolitan Municipality's Services For Disabled People**

Antalya Metropolitan Municipality (ANBB) Disabled Services Branch Directorate provides services under different headings for disabled individuals. There are 8 disabled service centers within ANBB official website was designed and put into service for disabled individuals via <http://ge.antalya.bel.tr/>. Construction of pavement ramps, road

guide lines, installation of 65 traffic sound warning devices, home health services and dental health services, especially regular dental controls for 216 disabled children. Regular, daily free bread and hot meal aid to disabled individuals, disabled individuals and their relatives in disabled service centers; consultancy and guidance, audio library (internet, book reading, etc.), written resources (braille printout, book scanning, etc.), expert support (lawyer, psychologist, etc.) services, and various courses and activities are offered. 3,204 barrier-free transportation services were provided to disabled individuals. 36 disabled individuals benefited from battery or wheelchair assistance were fulfilled in 2019. Course services, social-cultural activities, barrier-free space project, audio library with 170 works and rehabilitation services are offered, 11,186 severely disabled and 24,008 disabled individuals benefited from Antalya Card transportation services. 2500 disabled individuals benefited from consultancy, 198 visually impaired individuals benefited from the audio library service, and a total of 142 activities were carried out for disabled individuals (ANBB AR 2019, p. 244-245).

In 2020, within the scope of the "We overcome obstacles with the sun" project for disabled individuals by ANBB, improvements were made to the facility built for disabled people and training, courses, activities, events, etc. content enrichment has been made. Construction and maintenance of disabled elevators in different parts of the city; Providing home repairs, renovations, maintenance, and repairs to disabled people in need; opening rehabilitation centers, building road guidelines, ramps, pavements, making all transportation vehicles barrier-free, installing 10 audible warning devices, home health services and dental health services, regular dental checks of 93 disabled children were provided. A total of 1200 disabled individuals were provided with services and 2896 services were made available to disabled individuals under the title of barrier-free transportation vehicles. 11,738 severely disabled and 26,681 disabled individuals benefited from Antalya Card transportation services, as well as barrier-free cafe, rehabilitation, consultancy, and social activity services. 12 disabled individuals benefited from battery or wheelchair assistance in 2020 (ANBB AR 2020, p. 196-197).

E-commerce web accessibility for disabled individuals by ANBB in 2021, construction of bridges, sidewalks, ramps, road guidelines, barrier-free beach, pier, track construction, barrier-free venue, elevator. services, home repair, renovation, maintenance and repair, free space allocations were made to organizations carrying out activities related to the disabled, making all transportation vehicles barrier-free, 22 audible warnings. device was installed, a total of 1200 disabled individuals were provided with services and 2513 services were made available to disabled individuals under the title of barrier-free transportation vehicles. 16 disabled individuals benefited from battery or wheelchair assistance in 2021. 12,211 severely disabled and 30,635 disabled individuals benefited from Antalya Card transportation services (ANBB AR 2021, p. 189-190).

ANBB carried out disabled ramps, road guidelines, 22 audible warning lights, disabled beach, disabled space, disabled elevators, disabled toilets, home maintenance, renovation, and repair work for disabled individuals. Bicycle services suitable for the use of disabled individuals, social activities for disabled individuals, 23 wheelchairs and 14 walkers were provided. Audio library service for the visually impaired, barrier-free summer school (253 people), consultancy, rehabilitation, break house service, awareness activities, social-cultural, sports events, health, individual training, and workshop training services, etc. In total, services were provided to 1811 disabled individuals under

the headings and 2647 services were offered to the use of disabled individuals under the heading of barrier-free transportation vehicles. 14,038 severely disabled and 35,830 disabled individuals benefited from Antalya Card transportation services. A total of 7230 people benefited from the services provided by ANBB for disabled individuals in 2022, and the total number of barrier-free transportation services was 11,260 (ANBB AR 2022, p. 201-203).

ANBB will organize social events for disabled individuals, museum visits, awareness activities, individual training, workshops, provision of picnic tables for the disabled, ramps for the disabled, road guidelines, 11 audible warning lights, barrier-free beach, barrier-free venue, disabled elevators, Disabled toilets, home maintenance, renovation and repair works were carried out. Provision of 59 wheelchairs, consultancy, rehabilitation, respite services, awareness activities, social-cultural, sports activities, health, individual training, and workshop training services, etc. In total, services were provided to 3050 disabled individuals under the headings and 2611 services were offered to the use of disabled individuals under the heading of barrier-free transportation vehicles. 15,191 severely disabled and 41,159 disabled individuals benefited from Antalya Card transportation services (ANBB AR 2023, p. 211-213).

### **3.3. Burdur Municipality's Services For Disabled People**

Burdur Municipality (BB) organized entertainment events for 500 disabled individuals and their families, and dinner participation events for 450 disabled individuals and their families, within the scope of Disability Day activities in 2019; 10 individuals with disabilities were included in employment. Wheelchairs (number not specified) were provided to disabled individuals. A cafe facility for disabled individuals was put into service within the natural life park, and road, pavement, tracked walking paths and lighting services were provided (BB AR 2019, p. 101).

In 2020, the barrier-free life center project for disabled individuals was launched, and 2 disabled individuals were enabled to participate in employment (BB AR 2020, 102). In 2021, events were organized for disabled individuals and their families within the scope of Disability Day activities, (BB AR 2020, p. 108), a disabled day care home and a disabled service center were opened, a barrier-free cafe, a disabled consultation and rehabilitation center were put into service, within the scope of World Disability Day, events were organized for 500 disabled individuals and their families (BB AR 2022, p. 106). Similar activities were carried out by Burdur municipality in 2023, and no different activities were carried out (BB AR 2023, p. 110).

### **3.4. Hatay Metropolitan Municipality's Services For Disabled People**

Hatay Metropolitan Municipality (HBB) has services under different headings for disabled individuals. HBB has a disability service unit where services for disabled individuals are provided. Depending on the type of disability, disabled visitors coming to the town hall were assisted by staff on duty with sign language or a disabled vehicle, special chairs, air pillows, battery-powered vehicles, hearing aids, electric bicycles, etc. provision of support tools; barrier-free music choir, entertainment, panels, interviews, social events; 23 battery-powered wheelchairs, 94 manual wheelchairs and 15 athlete chairs were distributed. Disabled charging units, disabled parking areas, and free public transportation services were provided (HBB AR 2019, p. 198-199).

Disabled-compatible vehicles were put into service by HBB within the scope of services for disabled individuals in 2020, disabled music choir, entertainments, panels, interviews, social events, 17 battery-powered wheelchairs, 17 manual wheelchairs, canes, etc.. A total of 177 support vehicles were distributed. (HBB AR 2020, p. 189-190), In 2021, disabled-friendly traffic and parking services, maintenance services for disabled charging units, support and supply of 118 disabled vehicles were provided, and these vehicles were also provided. maintenance and repairs were carried out free of charge (HBB AR 2021, p. 204-205).

In 2022, HBB will provide disabled-friendly traffic and parking services for disabled individuals, maintenance services for disabled charging, 47 battery-powered wheelchairs, 64 manual chair systems. 31 double-battery, 5 double-wheeled and 5 battery-powered chair controls were replaced (HBB AR 2022, p. 211-214). In 2023, HBB started the disability detection project in cooperation with the disabled center project and UNICEF to provide psycho-social, guidance and consultancy services for disabled individuals. Accessible traffic and parking services for disabled individuals, disabled track and toilet construction, maintenance services for disabled people, medical device aid was provided for the disabled (HBB AR 2023, p. 214-216).

### **3.5. Isparta Municipality's Services For Disabled People**

Within the scope of services for disabled individuals by Isparta Municipality (IBB), 5 track arrangement projects were carried out for the visually impaired and growth disabled (IBB AR 2019, p. 118), disabled activities were carried out in 2020 (IBB AR 2020, p. 123), 2021 investments for disabled people were also made in 2021 (IBB AR 2021, p. 99). No activity or service for disabled people in 2022 is mentioned in the 2022 AR. In 2023, it is only seen whether disabled buses have been included in the inventory (IBB AR 2023, p. 116,), and no activity or service title for disabled people is mentioned in the 2023 AR. Services for disabled people are provided by Isparta Municipality, but these services are not stated in the ARs.

### **3.6. Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality's Services For Disabled People**

Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality (KBB) provided 149 vehicle supply assistance for disabled individuals, including 62 manual chairs, 17 wheelchairs, 12 specially equipped vehicles and 58 white canes; 61 seminars attended by 5235 people on different topics (on subjects such as equine therapy practice, children's rights, sign language, spiritual care, Down syndrome, orientation, peer bullying, commemoration of Aşık Veysel, special education, disability and disabled people's day, etc.) 4 conference and 27 course services; 28 awareness programs, 2 festivals and 4 meetings were held (KBB AR 2019, 165-168). Hairdresser service at home was provided to 149 disabled individuals and free transportation service was provided to 783 disabled individuals (KBB AR 2020, p. 178-180).

149 vehicles were provided for various items, including 55 manual chairs, 16 wheelchairs, 10 specially equipped vehicles and 61 white canes; One course was attended by 120 people, and consultancy programs were organized for 1213 people under different headings and training programs were organized for 960 people. Hairdresser service at home was provided to 131 disabled individuals and free transportation service was provided to 243 disabled individuals (KBB AR 2021, p. 166-168). Again, the construction

of 1 parking space for the disabled, the construction of a disabled ramp for Ayşe Gümüşer primary school, and the hello book project for disabled individuals were carried out. A total of 91 medical supplies and vehicle support were provided, including 56 manual wheelchairs, 9 battery-powered wheelchairs, 14 specially equipped vehicles, 1 walker, 2 white canes and 9 patient beds. In addition, awareness trainings, festivals under different headings, psychological counseling and training services were provided to 1060 individuals, and free transportation services were provided to 484 individuals (KBB AR 2021, p. 189-191).

In 2022, KBB will provide disabled individuals with a total of 103 manual wheelchairs, 12 battery-powered wheelchairs, 17 specially equipped vehicles, 1 walker, 1 white cane and 37 patient beds, 9 crutches and 9 batteries. 188 medical equipment and vehicle support was provided. Awareness trainings, consultancy services, festivals were organized under different headings, and free transportation services were provided to 213 individuals (KBB AR 2022, p. 196-198). In 2023, the transformation of transportation vehicles in accordance with the disability criteria, a total of 118 manual wheelchairs, 17 battery-powered wheelchairs, 10 hearing aids, 72 patient beds and 20 other groups. 237 medical equipment and vehicle support was provided, and free transportation services were provided to 3544 individuals with awareness trainings, festivals, psychological counseling, and training services under different headings (KBB AR 2023, p. 105-108).

### **3.7. Mersin Metropolitan Municipality's Services For Disabled People**

There is a council for disabled people within Mersin Metropolitan Municipality (MBB), and services under various headings are provided by MBB for disabled individuals under the department of disabled people and health services. Making parks and sidewalks throughout the city suitable for the use of disabled individuals, building ramps for the disabled, theater show, dental health and general health screening, educational services under different headings within the barrier-free vocational training center, creation of a disabled database, guidance, consultancy, and psycho-social support services were provided. A total of 164 medical devices, including 113 wheelchairs, 9 battery-powered chairs, 24 patient beds, 3 air patient beds, 8 batteries, 1 walking orthosis, 4 hearing aids, 1 toilet chair and 1 voice prosthesis. equipment assistance was provided, and maintenance and repairs of these materials were also carried out; Transfer services were provided to 3686 disabled individuals and sign language translation services were provided to 263 disabled individuals. Seminars, vocational training courses, choir, cinema, orchestra, awareness studies, sports and skill activities, therapies, collaborations and activities, personal development, barrier-free life organizations and activities were held (MBB AR 2019, p. 154-156).

In 2020, MBB provided activities, disabled identification and inventory services, guidance, consultancy, psycho-social support services within the barrier-free life center (break house, workshops, vocational qualification courses, sports courses, etc.) and 79 wheelchairs, 3 battery powered chair, 38 patient beds, 12 air patient beds, 1 battery, 1 orthopedic shoe, 2 hearing aids, 1 crutch and 1 A total of 140 medical devices, including prosthetic legs, were provided and maintenance and repairs of these materials were also carried out. Transfer service for 2211 disabled individuals, 1924 video support line session services, sign language translation services for 235 disabled individuals, disability-free life organizations, awareness, coordination and social awareness activities, sports events,

supply of personal care and support products, social events, vocational and skills training, and events were held, and bagel carts were given to 27 orthopedically disabled individuals who do not have social security. (MBB AR 2020, p. 192-195).

Within the scope of services for disabled individuals by MBB in 2021, 32,335 people were registered in the disabled database, and training, events, activities, seminars, courses, panels, conferences, etc. were organized within the barrier-free life center. Services were provided under different headings; 343 sessions of guidance, counseling, and psycho-social support services, 1129 social service services, 4797 transfer vehicle services, 107 sign language translation services, 1847 video support services and 1505 respite services were provided. In addition, services and activities that will contribute to the personal and social development of disabled individuals have been carried out in the disabled life park and the barrier-free education center, and 115 wheelchairs, 3 battery-powered chairs, 31 patient beds, 7 air patient beds, 3 toilet chairs, 2 A total of 169 medical devices were donated, including white canes, 7 hearing aids and 1 walker (MBB AR 2021, p. 164-166).

It is seen that 32,563 people are registered in the MBB disabled inventory in 2022, and a total of 2606 disabled individuals were provided with services within the scope of the respite house, while a total of 12,850 disabled individuals were provided with transfer vehicle services within the barrier-free living center, 101 medical equipment maintenance-repair services were provided, social service services were provided to 1707 disabled individuals and their relatives, and 1855 disabled individuals were provided with sensory and personal development services. therapy services, 153 video support service sessions, 352 sign language support services, sports skills training for disabled individuals under the age of 12, 14,925 sessions of vocational training courses, 139 wheelchairs, 2 battery-powered chairs, 38 patient beds, 4 pneumatic A total of 200 medical devices were donated, including a patient bed, 8 toilet chairs, 1 white cane, 5 hearing aids, 1 wheeled walker, 1 pediatric chair and 1 walker, and 437 sessions of guidance, counseling and psycho-social support were provided. support services were provided (MBB 2022 AR). Within the scope of Mersin33 card, a total of 2,154,184 disabled individuals benefited from free public transportation services throughout the province in 2022 (MBB AR 2022, p. 155-157).

In 2023, MBB continued similar services for disabled individuals, and within the scope of barrier-free life activities, a total of 2289 sessions were provided within the disabled life center, a total of 8916 sessions of course services were provided in the disabled life park, 122 sign language support services, 10 sessions of sensory and personal development therapy. service was provided. 8 medical equipment maintenance and repair services for disabled individuals, 291 wheelchairs, 5 battery-powered chairs, 52 patient beds, 22 air patient beds, 22 toilet chairs, 9 white canes, 2 hearing aids, 22 armchairs. A total of 2272 medical devices were donated, including crutches, 1 prosthetic leg and 30 walkers. Social services were provided to 1,973 disabled individuals and their relatives, 20 sessions of guidance, 215 sessions to disabled individuals under the age of 12, transfer vehicle services to 13,816 disabled individuals, 889 sessions of sports skills training for those over the age of 12, 14,925 sessions of vocational training courses, counseling, and psycho-social support. services have been carried out. In 2023, a total of 955 disabled individuals were provided with 1967 sessions of service within the scope of the respite house (MBB AR 2023, p. 186-189).

### 3.8. Osmaniye Municipality's Services For Disabled People

Osmaniye Municipality (OB) distributed wheelchairs (number not specified) and personal cleaning products to disabled individuals in 2019 (OB AR 2019, p. 103). Wheelchair distribution (number not specified) was made in 2020 (OB AR 2020, p. 101). Wheelchair distribution (number not specified) was also made in 2021 (OB AR 2021, p. 118). In 2022, disabled taxi practice was implemented, and wheelchair distribution (number not specified) was made (OB AR 2022, p. 113). In 2023, taxis for disabled people were implemented, disabled charging stations were established, and 400 wheelchairs were distributed (OB AR 2023, p. 125). It is seen that Osmaniye Municipality provides services for disabled individuals, but these services are not stated in the ARs.

### 3.9. General Overview of the Municipalities in the Mediterranean Region

According to the information about the services of local governments in the mediterranean region for disabled individuals, some thematic topics such as municipality, medical equipment trend, counseling / psycho-social trend, social/ educational activities trend, transportation & accessibility trend and employment/ economic support have been listed in Table 1. Table 1 provides information about the quantitative comparative analysis of municipal services for disabled people (2019–2023). Table 1 explains the services of local governments in the mediterranean region for disabled individuals according to these thematic topics comparatively.

**Table 1.** Quantitative Comparative Analysis of Services for Disabled People (2019–2023)

Municipality	Medical Equipment Trend	Counseling / Psycho-Social Trend	Social Educational Activities Trend	Transportation & Accessibility Trend	Employment / Economic Support
Adana (ABB)	Strong increase: 702 (2019) → 1372 (2023). Diverse devices (manual, powered, sports chairs, walkers).	Growth: 93 (2019) → 242 (2023).	Stable but symbolic: large-scale events (1100 in 2019), continued awareness activities.	Increasing: 1850 (2019) → 1800 (2023). GIS mapping of 27,446 disabled in 2022.	Not reported.
Antalya (ANBB)	Moderate : 36 (2019) → 59 (2023).	Stable growth: 2500 (2019) → 3050 (2023).	Expansion: 142 events (2019), museum visits/workshops (2023).	Increasing: 2896 (2020) → 11,260 (2022).	Not reported.
Mersin (MBB)	Sharp rise: 164 (2019) → 2272 (2023). Largest scale.	Structured: 343 (2021), 437 (2022), 1973 (2023).	Massive expansion: 14,925 vocational courses (2022), 8916 courses (2023).	Huge growth: 3686 (2019) → 13,816 (2023). 2.1M free rides in 2022.	Indirect via vocational training.
Kahramanmaraş (KBB)	Moderate : 149 (2019) → 237 (2023).	Strong: 1213 (2020), 1060 (2021).	Consistent: seminars, festivals,	Increasing: 243 (2020) → 3544 (2023).	Not reported.

			awareness events.		
Hatay (HBB)	Fluctuating: 177 (2020), 152 (2022).	Limited until 2023 (UNICEF cooperation).	Consistent: choir, panels, festivals.	Stable: traffic, parking, charging units.	Not reported.
Burdur (BB)	Wheelchairs (numbers not specified).	Limited counseling centers.	Symbolic: 500 disabled & families (2019, 2022).	Facilities: daycare, rehabilitation, café.	Direct employment: 10 (2019), 2 (2020).
Isparta (IB)	Wheelchairs (numbers not specified).	Limited.	Symbolic Disability Day events.	Barrier-free parks, roads, transport.	Not reported.
Osmaniye (OB)	Minimal until 2023: 400 wheelchairs.	Not reported.	Very limited.	Disabled taxi (2022–2023), charging stations (2023).	Not reported.

**Source:** Prepared by author.

According to the information about the services of local governments in the mediterranean region for disabled individuals, some thematic topics such as medical equipment / support, counseling / psycho-social support, social / educational activities, transportation & accessibility and employment / economic support have been listed in Table 2. Table 2 provides information about the comparative thematic analysis of municipal services for disabled people (2019–2023). Table 2 explains the services of local governments in the mediterranean region for disabled individuals according to these thematic topics comparatively.

**Table 2.** Comparative Thematic Analysis of Municipal Services for Disabled People (2019–2023)

Theme	Adana (ABB)	Antalya (ANBB)	Burdur (BB)	Hatay (HBB)	Isparta (IB)	Kahramanmaraş (KBB)	Mersin (MBB)	Osmaniye (OB)
Medical Equipment / Support	Very high numbers (700+ annually, 1372 in 2023, diverse devices incl. sports chairs)	Moderate (36 in 2019 → 59 in 2023)	Wheelchairs (numbers not specified)	177 in 2020, 152 in 2022, maintenance focus	Wheelchairs (numbers not specified)	149 in 2019 → 237 in 2023	Largest scale (164 in 2019 → 2272 in 2023, wide variety)	Minimal until 2023, then 400 wheelchairs

Counseling / Psycho-Social Support	Expanded (93 in 2019 → 242 in 2023)	Thousands annually (2500 in 2019, 3050 in 2023)	Counseling centers, limited data	Limited until 2023 (UNICEF cooperation)	Centers established, limited data	Strong (1213 in 2020, 1060 in 2021)	Structured (343 sessions in 2021, 437 in 2022, respite services )	Not reported
Social / Educational Activities	Rich variety (Disability Day, awareness dinners, swimming/diving, gondola tours)	Large-scale (142 events in 2019, museum visits, summer schools, workshops)	Disability Day events, dinners for 500+	Choirs, panels, festival s, UNICEF-linked events	Disability Day events, cafés, social facilitie s	Seminars, conferences, festivals, awareness programs	Extensive (seminars, courses, 14,925 vocational trainings in 2022)	Very limited
Transportation & Accessibility	Accessible buses, ramps, GIS mapping (27,446 disabled in 2022)	Barrier-free transport (thousands annually), accessible beaches, ramps, elevators	Barrier-free life center, daycare, rehabilitation facilities	Disabled-friendly traffic, parking, charging units	Barrier-free parks, roads, transport services	Free transport (hundreds annually), accessible vehicle transformation in 2023	Massive transfer services (3686 in 2019 → 13,816 in 2023), Mersin 33 card (2.1M uses in 2022)	Disabled taxi (2022–2023), charging stations in 2023
Employment / Economic Support	Not reported	Not reported	10 employed in 2019, 2 in 2020	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Vocational training at scale (thousands of sessions)	Not reported

**Source:** Prepared by author.

According to the information in about comparative table: strategic goals vs. implementation (2019–2023) (Table 3) metropolitan municipalities (Mersin, Adana, Antalya): Strategic goals clearly defined and largely achieved, with quantitative evidence (e.g., Mersin's 2272 devices in 2023, Adana's GIS mapping, Antalya's barrier-free beach). Hatay and Kahramanmaraş: Goals present but implementation moderate; Hatay only reached structured psycho-social services in 2023. Burdur and Isparta: Goals more symbolic (Disability Day, cafés, rehabilitation centers), limited quantitative expansion.

Osmaniye: Strategic goals vague until 2022; implementation late but significant (disabled taxis, 400 wheelchairs).

**Table 3.** Comparative Table: Strategic Goals vs. Implementation (2019–2023).

Municipality	Strategic Goal (from Strategic Plan)	Reported Implementation (2019–2023)	Achievement Level
<b>Adana (ABB)</b>	Accessible transport, inclusive participation	GIS mapping of 27,446 disabled (2022), all buses accessible, panic-button toilets	Achieved
<b>Antalya (ANBB)</b>	Barrier-free spaces (beach, ramps, elevators), inclusive cultural activities	Barrier-free beach, ramps, elevators (2021–2023), 142 activities in 2019, museum visits/workshops in 2023	Achieved
<b>Mersin (MBB)</b>	Disabled database, vocational training, barrier-free life centers	32,563 registered (2022), 14,925 vocational courses (2022), 13,816 transfer services (2023)	Strongly achieved
<b>Hatay (HBB)</b>	Disabled-friendly traffic & parking, social inclusion	Charging units, parking areas, UNICEF cooperation (2023), music choir, panels	Partially achieved
<b>Kahramanmaraş (KBB)</b>	Counseling, awareness, accessible vehicles	1213 counseling (2020), 1060 (2021), 3544 transport services (2023), festivals & seminars	Achieved
<b>Burdur (BB)</b>	Barrier-free life center, employment	Daycare & rehabilitation centers (2021–2022), 10 disabled employed (2019), 2 (2020)	Achieved
<b>Isparta (IB)</b>	Barrier-free parks, transport, social inclusion	Disability Day events, ramps, cafés, rehabilitation centers	Partially achieved
<b>Osmaniye (OB)</b>	Accessible transport (disabled taxi), mobility support	Disabled taxi service (2022–2023), 400 wheelchairs (2023), charging stations	Achieved late

**Source:** Prepared by author.

## Conclusion

Disability has historically been evaluated through different dimensions (ignorance, threat, pity, deficiency), but contemporary approaches emphasize inclusion and rights. Since disabled individuals began to be recognized as integral members of society, policies

and services have evolved accordingly. International, national, and local governments now provide services within the framework of disability management and inclusive municipal practices. Türkiye, like many countries, has adopted this paradigm, yet significant differences remain between metropolitan and provincial municipalities. When comparing municipalities, differences in population size, budget capacity, and institutional infrastructure must also be considered. For instance, Antalya (population ~2.6 million) operates 8 disabled service centers and serves over 41,000 disabled card users, while Burdur (population ~270,000) focuses on symbolic Disability Day events and small-scale facilities. Mersin, with 32,563 registered disabled individuals, demonstrates the largest quantitative service provision. These contextual indicators confirm that service diversity and scale are closely linked to municipal capacity and resources.

Findings from 2019–2023 clearly demonstrate these differences. Medical support: Mersin Metropolitan Municipality provided the largest scale of medical equipment (164 devices in 2019 rising to 2272 in 2023), while Adana distributed 1372 devices in 2023. In contrast, Antalya offered only 59 wheelchairs in 2023, and Osmaniye distributed 400 wheelchairs for the first time in 2023. These figures show that metropolitan municipalities operate at a much larger quantitative scale than provincial ones. Counseling and psycho-social services: Antalya served 2500 individuals in 2019 and 3050 in 2023, while Mersin offered 343 counseling sessions in 2021 and 437 in 2022. Kahramanmaraş supported 1213 individuals in 2020. Hatay only introduced structured psycho-social services in 2023 through UNICEF cooperation. These data confirm that counseling is institutionalized in some municipalities but remains absent or limited in others. Social and educational activities: Mersin organized 14,925 vocational training courses in 2022, far exceeding other municipalities. Adana held large-scale awareness events (e.g., 1100 participants in Disability Day 2019), while Antalya offered 142 activities in 2019 and museum visits in 2023. Burdur and Isparta focused mainly on symbolic Disability Day events. This shows a clear thematic difference: some municipalities prioritize vocational inclusion, others symbolic representation.

Transportation and accessibility: Mersin dominates with 2,154,184 free rides via the Mersin33 card in 2022 and 13,816 transfer services in 2023. Antalya provided 11,260 barrier-free transport services in 2022, while Adana supported 1500 individuals in 2022. Osmaniye introduced disabled taxis and charging stations only in 2022–2023. These figures highlight metropolitan leadership in accessibility infrastructure. Employment: Burdur stands out as the only municipality reporting direct employment (10 disabled individuals in 2019, 2 in 2020), while others focus on training rather than hiring. This indicates a gap in employment integration across municipalities. Therefore, the conclusion is not merely interpretive but grounded in evidence. Metropolitan municipalities (Mersin, Adana, Antalya) lead quantitatively and structurally, while provincial municipalities (Burdur, Isparta, Osmaniye) lag behind in scale and diversity of services. Kahramanmaraş and Hatay show balanced but moderate approaches, with Hatay introducing international cooperation in 2023. The data reveal that services are often framed as “support” or “social aid,” but the dominance of rehabilitation and assistance activities across municipalities underscores the need for a paradigm shift.

To move forward, municipalities should not only provide equipment and assistance but also institutionalize representation mechanisms (e.g., disabled councils), expand employment opportunities, and diversify services beyond support. The evidence from 2019–2023 demonstrates both progress and limitations, highlighting the necessity of a new paradigm that centers disabled individuals as active participants rather than passive recipients of aid.

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