

**Rural Development and Digital Entrepreneurship for Youth - KA 220 Strategic Partnership Project**

**"VEFALI YURT KEPSUT LOCAL ACTION GROUP ASSOCIATION"**

Under the guidance of the Agricultural and Rural Development Support Institution, Balıkesir Provincial Coordination, our activities have started within the framework of the 'Local Rural Development Strategy Preparation and Implementation' measure under the LEADER approach. The Local Action Group is a public-private partnership established at the local level with the aim of enabling local communities to participate in the rural development process in their regions and preparing the groundwork for sustainable development in rural areas in the long term. In this context, the 'VEFALI YURT KEPSUT LOCAL ACTION GROUP ASSOCIATION' was established in our district on July 13, 2021, in collaboration with representatives from the public sector, private sector, and civil society. Our association, VEKYEGDER, was officially founded on July 13, 2021, with Registry Number 10-030-050. The Board of Directors of the association consists of 5 members, and the Audit Board consists of 3 members.

As the 'VEFALI YURT KEPSUT LOCAL ACTION GROUP ASSOCIATION,' our objectives include:

- Conducting local development work in Kepsut district based on needs and expectations.

- Preparing (YKS) and implementing a LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY through a bottom-up approach that ensures the participation of the local population in decision-making processes.

- Promoting and enhancing public-private partnerships in the local area based on the local development strategy.

- Identifying, implementing, and improving innovative practices, methods, and projects that will contribute to rural development and the overall development of the district.

- Adopting a holistic approach that addresses economic, social, cultural, environmental, and related sectors together.

PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY Vefalı Yurt: Kepsut Local Action Group Association

Under the name of 'Vefalı Yurt Kepsut Local Action Group Association,' we applied to the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of Relations with Civil Society for the 'Public-Private Collaboration for Local Development Strategy Project.' The project was approved, and activities began on January 3, 2022. The project aims to establish focus groups that will volunteer and collaborate to coordinate activities in the district, reach out to our citizens, generate innovative ideas for improving our district's deficiencies, and make it a more livable place. The established focus groups include Women, Youth, Tradesmen, Farmers, Disabled Citizens, Opinion Leaders, and Policy Makers. Meetings were held with these focus groups during the project, and regular meetings continued at specified intervals. Particularly, more frequent meetings were held with the Youth, and consensus was reached to work together in future activities. Based on these meetings, key topics for the development of our district were identified. Reports were created for each focus group, and the 'Kepsut Local Development Strategy Book' was prepared based on these reports. The aim is for the reports and the Kepsut Local Development Strategy Book to inspire the projects that our association will carry out.

KEPSUT MUNICIPALITY:

HISTORY OF KEPSUT MUNICIPALITY:

The exact date of our district's establishment is not known, but it is understood from the remnants of the fortress from the Seljuk period that it developed during those times. The people called it "Kes-bit" because the land was fertile, and crops grew quickly. Until 1953, the official correspondence referred to our district as "Kepsüt," but it began to be pronounced as "KEPSUT" after the law regarding its district status was passed with the name "KEPSUT."

Municipal services and the municipal organization in Kepsut began in 1888. Municipal services were provided from the Municipal Service Building, which was located in today's Republic Square and later replaced by a cinema building.

As Kepsut Municipality, our activities for the social, artistic, and cultural development of the community, especially for children, youth, women, and the disabled, are as follows:

- Organizing trips for high school students in Kepsut and women in both the city center and rural neighborhoods.

- Organizing the Şehit Ömer Halisdemir Minikler Serbest Güreş (Young Wrestlers) Tournament.

- Commemoration programs for the martyrs of July 15.

- Ramadan festivities organized by our municipality at Ali Osman Sali Park, including entertainment shows, traditional shadow plays, poetry performances, and more.

- Organization of the Kepsut Agriculture Fair.

- Culture and Arts Festival and Emtia Panayırı (Commodity Fair) organization.

- Yağlı Güreş (Oil Wrestling) organization at Tarzan Mehmet Er Square.

PROJECTS PARTICIPATED BY KEPSUT MUNICIPALITY:

- Receiving the Golden Ant Award: Kepsut Municipalitiy's joint project with Kepsut Local Action Group Association, titled 'Public-Private Collaboration for Kepsut Local Development Strategy,' was awarded in the field of Governance and Participation at the Marmara Municipalities Union's GOLDEN ANT Awards ceremony. This project was conducted with the support of the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of Relations with Civil Society.

- "50 Peynirli Şehrim" (My City with 50 Cheeses) Project: Kepsut Municipality, in partnership with S.S. Kepsut Vefalı Eller Women's Initiative Production and Business Cooperative, participated in the "50 Peynirli Şehrim" project, which was successfully submitted to the South Marmara Development Agency (GMKA) within the framework of the Social Development Support Program (SOGEP) coordinated by the Ministry of Industry and Technology's Development Agencies General Directorate.

- "TURKEY MUNICIPALITIES UNION/KEPSUT MUNICIPALITY SIGNAGE DESIGN": The aim of this project is to design announcement and advertising materials in a way that enhances urban aesthetics, avoids visual pollution, and ensures the proper use of the Turkish language on signs. In this context, shop signs are being organized.

- "T.C. MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM COPYRIGHTS GENERAL DIRECTORATE/KEPSUT CULTURE ROUTE WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH": This project aims to contribute to the cultural and artistic development of children and young people in our district by providing opportunities for them to participate actively in social, cultural, artistic, and sporting activities in their free time, in line with their interests, desires, and talents. The project also raises awareness about children's rights and privacy through fun activities involving children and families.

- "FROM TRADITION TO FUTURE CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUMMER FESTIVAL": This project, realized with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Copyrights General Directorate, aimed to contribute to the cultural and artistic development of children and young people in our district. Various activities, including traditional shadow plays, Nasreddin Hodja performances, puppet shows, juggling, balloon folding, and cultural street events, were organized during the festival.