



FORM BEST PRACTICES CONTEST 2026

Municipality **Demre Municipality**

Country **Türkiye**

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Name project

International Santa Claus Peace and Culture Festival

Category Certification Criteria: mark the category of your project

- ☐ Energy and environmental policies (politiche energetiche e ambientali);
- ☐ Infrastructure policies (politiche infrastrutturali);
- ☐ Quality of urban life policies (politiche per la qualità urbana);
- ☒ **Agricultural, touristic and artisan policies (politiche agricole, turistiche, artigianali);**
- ☐ Policies for hospitality, awareness and training (politiche per l'ospitalità, la consapevolezza e la formazione);
- ☐ Social cohesion (coesione sociale).

Summary project

The International Santa Claus Peace and Culture Festival is a comprehensive cultural and social project developed by Demre Municipality in order to promote peace, intercultural dialogue, cultural coexistence and sustainable cultural tourism through the universal heritage of Saint Nicholas (Santa Claus), one of the most important historical and spiritual identities of Demre.

Saint Nicholas, who lived in Demre and became known worldwide as the symbol of kindness, solidarity, generosity and peace, represents universal human values that continue to connect different cultures, beliefs and societies across the world. The festival was designed by transforming these globally recognized values into a contemporary cultural meeting platform based on dialogue, coexistence and social harmony.

First initiated in 2024 and transformed into an international organization in 2025, the festival has been developed as a sustainable and continuously improving cultural model in line with the principles of the Cittaslow movement, particularly the 2026 theme focused on peace-building, dialogue between cultures and reducing social conflict through local actions and community participation.

The festival program includes international parade walks, concerts, dance performances, stage shows, cultural workshops, children's activities and public gatherings organized at Santa Claus Square. Through these activities, local communities, international guests, sister cities and visitors from different countries come together within a peaceful and inclusive social environment.

The festival hosted participants from North Macedonia, Serbia, Kazakhstan, Poland, Cyprus, Egypt, Sweden, Switzerland and Russia, creating a multicultural atmosphere that strengthens intercultural communication and cultural understanding through shared experiences.

Within the festival area, local gastronomic products, artisan products and cultural heritage elements of Demre are promoted through exhibition and sales stands, supporting local producers, small businesses and sustainable local tourism while strengthening awareness of local identity



and cultural diversity.

The project has become one of the most important cultural organizations of the district and significantly contributes to the international visibility, cultural vitality and social cohesion of Demre while reinforcing the principles of peace, solidarity, dialogue and sustainable local development promoted by the Cittaslow philosophy.

Goal project

The primary goal of the project is to create a sustainable cultural peace platform inspired by the universal values associated with Saint Nicholas (Santa Claus), who symbolizes kindness, sharing, solidarity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence throughout the world.

The festival aims to strengthen dialogue between people and cultures by bringing together local communities, international participants, artists, children, families, visitors and sister cities within a shared cultural environment based on peace and mutual understanding.

In line with the 2026 Cittaslow theme focused on “peace projects” and reducing social conflict through local initiatives, the festival seeks to promote coexistence, social harmony and intercultural communication through inclusive public cultural activities and community participation.

Another important objective of the project is to protect and promote the historical and cultural heritage of Demre while supporting sustainable cultural tourism, strengthening local identity and contributing to local economic development through the promotion of local gastronomy, artisan products and cultural values.

The project also aims to establish a continuously developing and sustainable cultural model consistent with the Cittaslow philosophy of long-term improvement, participation and community-centered local development.

Result project

Since its establishment in 2024 and international expansion in 2025, the International Santa Claus Peace and Culture Festival has become one of the most significant cultural and social organizations of Demre.

Through international parade walks, concerts, dance performances, stage programs, workshops and children’s activities, the festival created a vibrant and inclusive social atmosphere throughout the district while strengthening community participation and intercultural interaction.

The participation of international guests and delegations from different countries contributed significantly to the development of cultural dialogue and strengthened the themes of peace, tolerance and coexistence through shared public experiences and cultural exchange.

By reflecting the historical identity of Saint Nicholas together with his globally recognized values of kindness, solidarity and peace, the festival transformed Demre’s local cultural heritage



into an internationally visible cultural diplomacy and peace-building platform.

The festival also generated positive social and economic impacts for local producers, artisans, tourism businesses and local tradespeople through increased visitor activity, cultural promotion opportunities and public participation.

Within the festival program, a special plaque ceremony was organized in honor of stakeholders who contributed to Demre's recognition as "Best Tourism Village 2025" and to the district's Cittaslow candidacy process, reinforcing institutional solidarity, local cooperation and community awareness.

The project has significantly contributed to the promotion of Demre as a peaceful, culturally diverse, sustainable and internationally connected destination while strengthening local identity, cultural heritage awareness and social cohesion in line with the principles of the Cittaslow movement.

Finance (costs and benefits)

The International Santa Claus Peace and Culture Festival is organized and coordinated by Demre Municipality with the support of public institutions, local stakeholders, cultural organizations, volunteers, partner municipalities and international participants.

The project creates significant social, cultural and economic benefits by increasing sustainable cultural tourism activity, supporting local businesses, strengthening cultural interaction and promoting Demre's historical and cultural heritage at both national and international levels.

During the festival period, local producers, artisans, gastronomy businesses and local tradespeople benefit from increased visitor activity and public participation through exhibition and sales stands established within the festival area.

The project also contributes to the long-term cultural and economic sustainability of the district by strengthening international visibility, encouraging cultural exchange and supporting community-based tourism development in line with Cittaslow principles.

As a continuously developing cultural model, the festival is planned to expand its international cooperation network, public participation capacity and cultural programming every year through sustainable organizational practices.

Staff (staff involved and use of time)



The project is implemented through the coordination of Demre Municipality together with municipal departments, cultural coordinators, technical teams, volunteers, local stakeholders, partner institutions and international participants.

The organizational process includes cultural programming, international coordination, public communication, technical infrastructure management, stage organization, logistics, visitor services, public safety coordination and social activity planning carried out throughout the preparation and implementation stages of the festival.

Municipal staff work in cooperation with local organizations, cultural representatives and community stakeholders in order to ensure inclusive public participation and the sustainable development of the festival each year.

The festival is organized through a participatory management approach consistent with the Cittaslow philosophy of community-centered development, cooperation and continuous improvement.

Additional information (if necessarily)

The International Santa Claus Peace and Culture Festival was developed as a long-term peace and cultural dialogue project inspired by Saint Nicholas, who lived in Demre and became a universal symbol of kindness, solidarity, generosity and peaceful coexistence throughout the world.

The project reflects the universal values associated with Saint Nicholas through cultural activities, public participation and intercultural interaction while transforming Demre's historical heritage into a contemporary platform for peace, dialogue and cultural sharing.

In line with the 2026 Cittaslow theme focused on peace-building and dialogue between cultures, the festival contributes to reducing social and cultural barriers by encouraging coexistence, mutual understanding and community participation through inclusive public events.

Within the festival program, local gastronomic products, artisan products and cultural heritage values are promoted through exhibitions, workshops and cultural activities, supporting local identity, sustainable tourism and local economic development.

The participation of sister cities and international delegations further strengthens international cultural cooperation and contributes to the development of Demre as a peaceful, culturally rich and internationally connected Cittaslow destination.

Link website (if available)

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E1bI1F5fJy3-SyNjEgPDyVW_6_US2EGM?usp=sharing

Once filled in this form please send it to: info@cittaslow.net
- Participation Deadline, 19 May 2026 -