

BEYOND ISTANBUL ACROSS

# THE SEA OF MARMARA TO THE BLACK SEA AND EUROPE

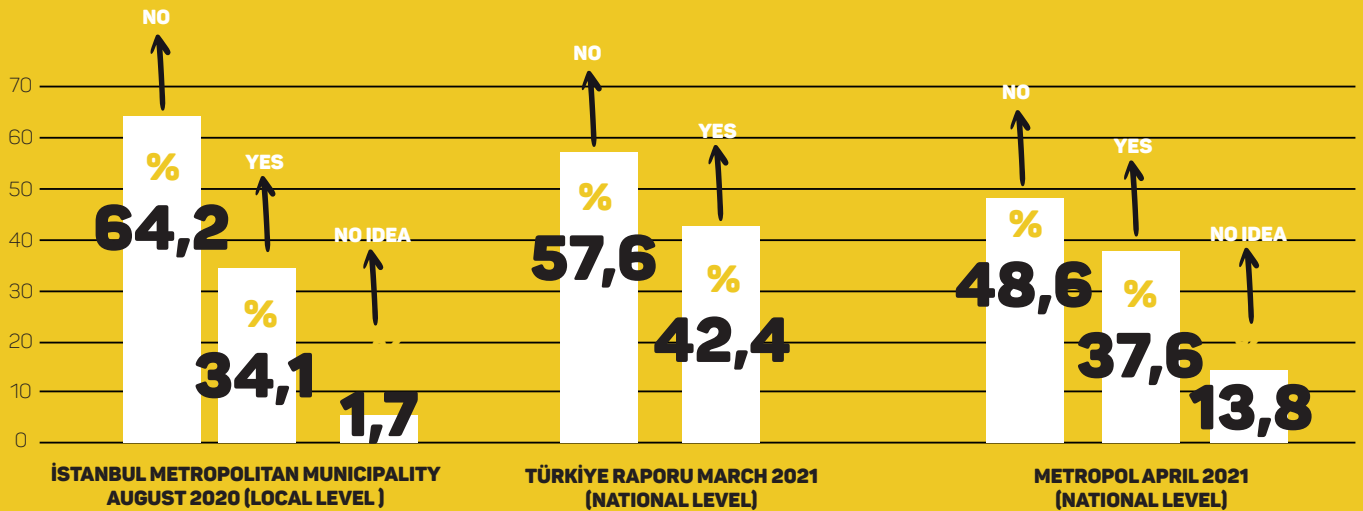
The Black Sea basin is one of the richest habitats in terms of biodiversity extending into the European geography, home to countless animal and plant species and wildlife. The sea is the source of vivacity nurturing this marine biodiversity, already over-exhausted and critically threatened, and, is key for the integrity of the livelihoods and welfare of the resident communities of the wider Black Sea basin. The sea also harbors regionally distinctive meteorological conditions that are critically integral for the alarming state of our global climate with detrimental and multiple repercussions.. What happens to/in the Black Sea extends across and beyond the Black Sea basin.

That is why, what happens in Istanbul, the megapolis on the shores of the Black Sea, does not stay in Istanbul. The grim prospects for the dying Sea of Marmara are of serious concern for the citizens of the Black Sea basin and of Europe as well. Our concern and responsibility for our commons, for climate and for generations to come necessitate that we must do our best to protect our seas, our common wellbeing.

The President of Turkey announced the **“crazy project” Canal Istanbul**, as an element of glitter in his election campaign back in 2011. In the decade since then, the deterioration in rights and freedoms, rule of law and associated prospects for democratization in Turkey has been accompanied by a parallel, pervasive ecological destruction. Projects extracting natural and public resources, with no viable public benefit, enflamed by socio-economically and financially devastating policies have culminated with a wide and deep socio-economic crisis that has eclipsed lives and livelihoods of a population of almost 85 million. The insistence to impose this highly controversial, “crazy project” has been resurrected lately, without any public consultation or debate, and even though polls demonstrate a rising public majority against it.



## THE PUBLIC OPINION ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF CANAL ISTANBUL





The socio-ecologically and economically catastrophic construction project, is planned as a waterway cutting through the Thracian peninsula in Turkey, with a length of approximately 45 km (28 mi), a depth of 20.75 m (68.1 ft.) and a width of 275 m (902 ft.) at the narrowest part, connecting the Sea of Marmara Sea and the Black Sea. The impacts of the channel are multi-dimensional and also transnational. According to the plans which have been meticulously kept in the dark while speculative land sales soared in the interim, the canal will create an island in the Thracian peninsula, severing the territorial links of the main bulk of Istanbul from its western Thracian hinterland.



The Multidisciplinary Scientific Assessment Report on Kanal İstanbul, commissioned by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, which is a comprehensive evaluation of all the dimensions of the impact of the canal, covering marine transportation, international maritime law, the Montreux Convention, earthquake and tsunami risks, canal hydrodynamics, water contamination, biodiversity and the environment, natural and cultural heritage, integrated coastal and marine structures, physical geography, weather and climate change, infrastructure and treatment facilities and new settlements, makes it very clear that the Black Sea as well as the Marmara Sea will bear the brunt of this cataclysmic intervention in physical geography.



If Kanal İstanbul goes ahead despite the mounting evidence gathered together by scientists, academics and NGOs that demonstrate the scale of irreparable destruction that this project will bring, the hydrologic balance will be reversed between the cold and fresh waters of the Black Sea and the warm and salty waters flowing from the Mediterranean Sea across Marmara Sea into the Black Sea. As the Black Sea is approximately 30 centimetres higher than the Marmara Sea, the one-way tap of the Channel will force the Black Sea to constantly supply fresh water to Marmara Sea without being able to be fed by the reverse streams that exist in the Bosphorus supplying the Black Sea with warm and salty waters. This will be the beginning of an irreversible environmental disaster, as the Black Sea will be emptied twice as fast with two taps while the flow rates and capacities of the rivers that feed the Black Sea stay the same. That concerns its principal feeders the Danube, the Dnieper, the Dniester, but also rivers of all riparian states. While the Black Sea slowly dries up, the warmth and the salinity of Marmara Sea and the Mediterranean will change, with devastating consequences for marine and urban life, and, of course, the entire Black Sea Region will suffer, with its great biodiverse habitats of sandy beaches and dunes, wetlands, grasslands and forests. This amounts to no less than an ecological catastrophe of vast scale, at a time when we must, as citizens and governments, summon all our resources to act on and stop climate destruction and the collapse of the integrity of our planet.

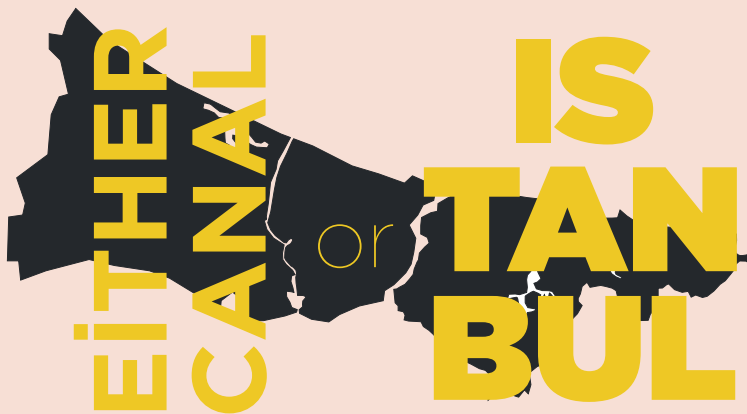


It is clear that the project is not consistent with climate change mitigation policies. Devastation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, increasing built-up land cover in natural areas, and an increase in the urban heat island effect are those negative effects that will ameliorate carbon emissions and biodiversity loss.

The Multidisciplinary Scientific Assessment Report on Canal Istanbul concluded in stark terms that it is 'Either Canal or Istanbul' (Ya Kanal Ya İstanbul).

We, the organisers of this event, mindful that the prospective damage extends far beyond Istanbul, and that these devastating implications of Canal Istanbul will create adverse effects on the well being of humans in this region, say that it is 'Either Canal or our Commons'.

This event, therefore, is an invitation to all concerned citizens of Europe to think about what our Commons are, how the Black Sea is one such Common and how to care for our commons, in this case the Black Sea. With this event, our aim is to bring home to the citizens of Europe and the Black Sea Region, the notion of caring for common values, which, in this case is the Black Sea. The well being of the Black Sea, clearly, has to be introduced as a factor into considerations of public benefit. There is no benefit that would legitimize bearing the cost of such a multi-layered, irreversible, irreparable hazard.





# Either **CANAL** or **OUR COMMONS**

We invite all citizens and civil society organizations concerned with issues of biodiversity, climate change and citizen participation across the Black Sea and across Europe to engage in Europe-wide action to raise awareness regarding the grave implications of Canal İstanbul project, and the vital necessity of protecting the wellbeing of Black Sea as a common, living asset and the citizens' role in developing caring frameworks and policies to protect our commons. It is our hope that, through citizens' actions and civil society engagement, the national governments and the decision-makers, will reconsider and shift their disposition towards a climate mitigation and biodiversity protection course, in view of public benefit and for the lives and livelihoods of current and future generations

## **CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY OF TURKEY**

**PLEASE VISIT FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
CANAL ISTANBUL:**

***kanal.istanbul/en/***



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