

SYNOPSIS OF IZMIR REGIONAL PLAN AND INTERPRETATIONS ABOUT TOURISM IN IZMIR

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ABSTRACT

This study aims not only to create a summarized background for the effective and efficient use of the potential of Izmir by providing the strategic planning works and institutional and sectoral strategy documents with different purposes realized by all relevant institutions and organizations in Izmir and Aegean Region to steer towards the same priorities and aims, but also focuses on a criticism and comparison viewpoint about tourism sector in Izmir.

Keywords: Regional Plan, Izmir, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Izmir has been one of the most important western gates of Anatolia to Mediterranean World during history. By means of its defined role and geographical facilities, Izmir and its region are inhabited continuously since 4000 B.C. (Kuban, 2001)

Today, Izmir is the third-largest city in Turkey and has made great studies in the agricultural, industrial, and commercial and tourism sectors. It has also become a major educational center. Izmir's 629-kilometer coastline, its priceless archeological and historical works of art, and its thermal springs have contributed to the growing development of its tourism sector (---The pearl of the Aegean, 2005).

Izmir continues being an important trade center in the region and in Turkey as it was in the past, with its unique geopolitical position, its position as Turkey's gateway to Europe, its fertile lands and its proximity to the important consumption areas in Turkey, its ports, its refineries, free zones, organized industrial zones, educated workforce (---Izmir City Marketing Strategic Plan, 2010).

Izmir is a hub of educational and health services and of cultural and arts activities not only for the Aegean region but for the entire country (---The pearl of the Aegean, 2005).

It continues to play the leading role in development of the Aegean region. Izmir is today, as in the past, the shining star of the Aegean region (---The pearl of the Aegean, 2005).

Taner (2002) summarized the period between 1950 and 1970; by means of agricultural mechanization, a migration from rural sides to urban areas began. Izmir has effected this migration like other cities that had economic opportunities in 1950s. As a result of this trend, squatter housing became an important urban problem in Izmir. Planning works concentrate on this topic.

Planning works tried to control aforementioned developments of Izmir Metropolitan Area between 1950 and 1970.

Present day Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013 (IZBP) is the essential policy documentation that presents the progress axes, aims and priorities of the development strategy to be realized by Izmir with an integral approach in economic, social and cultural fields.

In this context; IZBP has been prepared, towards realizing the vision of “Developing and Growing, Innovative Izmir” that was determined with the attendance and shared opinions of all institutions and organizations, non-governmental organizations, universities and private sector, within the framework of the Ninth Development Plan (2009-2013).

In IZBP, a participative strategic approach has been followed that unfolds Izmir's potential resources, opportunities and strengths, prioritizes the problems and covers the aims towards those priorities.

PLANNING APPROACH AND METHOD

Regional plans are deemed the fundamental document to be basis for maintaining the regional development and implementing the planning activities within the region. In our country, the Zoning Law No. 3194 establishes the basis for the regional plans. In the Zoning Law, three main plan stages namely; regional plans, landscape plans and zoning plans are stipulated and the regional plans are shown at the first step of these stages. The regional plan prepared by taking the strategic planning approach as the basis is the coordination, direction and strategy document for realizing the region's development with the following means;

- determining the relationship between the policies, plans and strategies generated at national level and the activities to be carried out at local level,
- strengthening the cooperation and coordination between the institutions and organizations existing at local level,
- fastening regional development, ensuring its sustainability,
- triggering local potential by realizing the efficient and effective use of resources, and forming a basis for the regional programmes and projects.

2010-2013 Izmir Regional Plan Process

Within the framework of the 2010-2013 Izmir Regional Plan (IZBP) preparation works, initially the process design work has been realized. In this stage, the things to be done in the planning period have been set forth and the process has been designed by determining the steps to be followed (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010):

The plan has been produced with strategic planning approach, in the light of the aspects below:

- Realizing consensus and participation at every stage of planning,
- Utilizing quantitative analysis methods,
- Designing as a plan that is to be completed with actions.

The main purpose behind the preparation of IZBP is to evaluate and activate the interior dynamics and development potential of Izmir. Within the framework of this main purpose of the plan, national-scale plans and sectoral strategies have been examined, foreign countries' regional development plans and preparation stages have been studied.

In result of all these studies, a plan preparation process that is participation-based and that encompasses all actors focusing on socioeconomic development within the region has been designed (Figure 1).

Process stages are as given below.

I. Stakeholder Analysis studies

II. Situational Analysis studies

a. “A Socioeconomic Outlook for Izmir Region (TR31)” Report

b. “Izmir Emerging and Strategic Sectors” Report

c. Conclusion Report on Studies Towards Developing Izmir Clustering Strategy

d. Izmir Situational Analysis (June 2009)

III. Vision and Main Purposes studies,

IV. Participative meetings and workshops,

V. Compiling results, determining performance criteria and writing the plan.



Figure 1. Plan Preparation Process

Stakeholder Analysis

A part of situational analysis in strategic planning, Stakeholder Analysis is an important tool for both participation and for the plan to be recognized, adopted and embraced by the local stakeholders.

Within the framework of the stakeholder analysis, an analysis study encompassing approximately 500 institutions and organizations including IZKA Development Council members has been realized. In the light of this analysis, the works based on the plan's participation main principle have been carried out (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Situational Analysis

The purpose of the Situational Analysis studies is to determine the correct development axes, strategies and aims for the region. For that purpose, the first step within IZBP's preparations has been to set forth reports and analyses based on quantitative and qualitative data that display an overview of the Region. In result of the study, problems and potentials of the region have been revealed. Within the context of the Situational Analysis works, the below given studies have been done(--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010):

- I. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis
- II. Izmir Situational Analysis (June 2009)
- III. Sectoral analysis reports, Izmir Emerging and Strategic Sectors Report and Conclusion Report on Studies Towards Developing Izmir Clustering Strategy

Within the frame of Izmir Situational Analysis, the report that set forth the emerging and strategic sectors of Izmir, studies towards developing Izmir's clustering strategy, conclusion report studies and the analysis studies realized on some certain sectors have contributed inputs to IZBP.

The reports published by the Agency during the Situational Analysis step such as “Izmir Region (TR31) Situational Report” and “Izmir Situational Analysis (June 2009)” as well as the findings of SWOT analyses have all revealed problems, potentials and draft strategic development axes. These development axes have defined the focus of all participatory workshops held during preparation of the plan.

Vision and Main Purposes

In parallel to the Situational Analysis studies, works towards determining the vision, main purpose and principles of the plan have been continued. Surveys have been conducted for determining the vision. Alternative comments regarding the vision have been received from workshop participants again with surveys. Lastly, the opinions of the Development Board have been asked via surveys on which among the three alternatives revealed in result of the survey, meeting and workshop studies should be chosen as the development vision of Izmir. Survey results have been presented to the Executive Board and thus the vision of Izmir within 2010- 2013 Izmir Regional Plan context has been defined (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Participative Meetings and Workshops

In light of the initial findings revealed from Situational Analysis studies, after the vision alternatives and IZBP's main principles and purposes were defined, the stage of realizing participative meetings for finalizing plan's development axes and determining strategic priorities and aims has been initiated. Within the framework of the development axes, both thematic and sectoral workshops have been realized, and in result of these studies, the plan's main strategic document has begun to be formed together with the opinions of the local stakeholders. The meetings held within this context may be evaluated under the three stages below(--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010):

- I. Contact Meeting
- II. Development Axes Workshops
- III. Sectoral Workshops

The first among the meetings held for the purpose of informing the local stakeholders in Izmir regarding the IZBP process and the studies conducted was the IZBP Contact Meeting. In the meeting, the stakeholders have been informed about why the Regional Plan is developed and on the results of the preparations and studies conducted. In this meeting, awareness at local level regarding IZBP has been created and preliminary information has been given regarding the workshop studies to be held at later stages. Following the contact meeting, workshop studies on strategic priorities and aims have been conducted. From various institutions and organizations, a total of 127 representatives who are specialists at their field have joined these studies.

The last set of meetings has been realized within the framework of the sectors revealed to be prioritized and approved within the context of IZBP. Participative studies for the key sectors within IZBP have been realized in cooperation with various institutions in Izmir.

Compiling the Analyses and the Results, Writing IZBP

Along with the inputs obtained through the review of the analysis studies, reports and national strategy documents; the axes, priorities and aims of IZBP have been reviewed and four development axes and five key sectors have been determined.

After another opinion exchange at local stakeholders scale, IZBP has been approved by the IZKA Executive Board and then sent to the attention of the Undersecretariat of State Planning Organization (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı Müsteşarlığı - DPT). IZBP, which is a first in our country among regional plans that are of the most important tools of regional development, has then been presented to the opinions and comments of 35 institutions and organizations at national scale, via DPT. IZBP which has been finalized after the evaluation of these opinions and the suggestions, has been approved by DPT on June 16, 2010, thus coming into force as the first regional development plan prepared by regional development agencies in Turkey and approved by DPT (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010):

IZBP's Vision, Fundamental Principles and Purposes

The vision of 2010-2013 Izmir Regional Plan (IZBP) has been determined as “Developing and Growing, Innovative Izmir”. While reaching this vision, the principles that shall be followed as basis are given below(--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010):

- Equality and Social Inclusion
- Sustainable Development
- Participation

Equality and Social Integration

The principle of equality encompasses, beyond a figural equality, the obligation of acting equally to those under same situations, in regards to rights and duties, benefits and commitments, authorities and responsibilities, and opportunities and services. The principle of Equality and Social Inclusion defines the condition of accessibility for the individuals towards fields of social sphere such as education, health, culture, employment, and their effective functioning in such fields within the concept of equal opportunities (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Implementations towards social inclusion encompass policies that shall eliminate discrimination and social exclusion triggered by various social disadvantages (handicapped

people, poverty, etc.). IZBP adopts equality and social inclusion as a general principle in all processes within the context of its priorities and aims.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is an integrated approach that aims for the realization of a programming in harmony from today towards the future with all relevant economic, environmental and social viewpoints by setting up a balance between the needs of human life and sustainability of natural resources. IZBP has handled sustainable development with an integrated approach (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Participation

In IZBP, it is essential to strengthen social dialog and participation, thus to provide public contribution and embracement, as was defined within the Ninth Development Plan. IZBP has been prepared, under the coordination of Izmir Development Agency, with the contributions of public institutions and organizations, private sector and non-governmental organizations in Izmir. Within this context, with the conducted face to face interviews, surveys, workshops, round-table meetings, study visits, search conferences and sector meetings, the views and evaluations of approximately two thousand people have been gathered. As it has been stated in the Ninth Development Plan, providing societal contribution and ownage by strengthening societal dialogue and participation, is also fundamental in IZBP within the context of its priorities and aims. IZBP has been grounded the following three fundamental purposes for the realization of the vision adopted:

- Providing Competitiveness with Innovation, Productivity and Capacity Increase
- Increasing the Quality of Life
- Protection and Effective Use of Natural and Cultural Resources (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF IZMIR REGION

Demographic Structure

Izmir is above the overall median age values of Turkey (28.5) and Aegean Region (32.2) with its value of 32.4. While the elderly population ratio is 6.84% in Turkey and 8.70% in Aegean Region, it is at 8.05% in Izmir. While these data show that Izmir is one of the cities with the most elderly population, social services and care institutions towards this elderly population are not at adequate levels. The number of education institutions for the handicapped people is also insufficient. Regarding population density, Izmir is quite above the values of 2 both the Aegean Region (105 person/km) and Turkey average (93 2 2 person/km) with its density value of 316 person/km and is the third province with the densest population throughout the country. While the birth rate is much lower in Izmir (1.75) compared to both the Aegean Region (2.04) and Turkey average (2.53), the population increase rate is strikingly high. This situation may be explained substantially with immigration phenomenon. Aegean Region and Izmir are at the top of regions and provinces receiving immigrants, and Izmir is an immigrant attraction centre at both regional and national scale. In Turkey, urban population ratio is 75% while the same ratio is 90.89% in Izmir. Izmir, with its population density increasing and urbanizing faster than country overall level, needs strong and effective policies especially in subjects such as planned urbanization, contingency and disaster administration, transportation and environment (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Economic Structure

According to the current prices generated by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) based on the most up-to-date 2001 data; regarding gross domestic product (GDP) per capita values, Izmir is above the Turkey average of 2,146 \$ with its value of 3,215 \$. Izmir ranks at the sixth place in this regard among all 81 provinces. Income distribution inequality in Izmir parallels the inequality throughout the country.

According to TÜİK data, Izmir ranks at the first place among the provinces in the region regarding the GDP generated within Aegean Region. Thus, Izmir generates approximately half (46.9% - 13,383 million TL) of the GDP generated within the Aegean Region by itself, followed by Manisa (13.7%), Muğla (10.2%), Aydın (8.2%), Denizli (7.6%), Kütahya (5%), Afyon (4.3%) and Uşak (1.9%).

Izmir is an immigrant attraction centre both at regional and national scales. In Turkey, urban population ratio is 75% while the same ratio is 90.89% in Izmir. The elderly population ratio in Izmir is higher than that in Turkey.

Izmir constitutes approximately 7% of Turkey GDP, thus being the third province in regards to contributing to Turkey's GDP, rising just below Istanbul and Ankara. According to EUROSTAT data, it resides at the 185 place among a total of 295 regions compared to regions throughout Europe regarding GDP size.

A significant foreign trade centre of the country since very old eras, Izmir still maintains its characteristics of being the secondary most important foreign trade centre of the country for the surrounding provinces and regions. In province based export/import coverage ratio, the province is at second place. However, Izmir's share within Turkey export total is decremental. While this share was 7.70% in 2002, in year 2008 it declined to 5.96%. While Izmir had been in a position giving foreign trade surplus in year 2003 and before, it has begun giving foreign trade deficit since the last five years (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Policies aimed towards increasing the competitive capacity of Izmir based enterprises at international markets should be developed in order to increase the export values of the products produced. The axis of such policies should be competition policy based on technology and quality in production.

Approximately 99% of the industrial sector companies in Izmir are micro-enterprises and small and medium scale enterprises (SME). Institutionalizing of these micro-enterprises and small and medium scale enterprises and increasing of their marketing capacity are important for the region. It may be said that within the city's manufacturing industry, agro-industries and some industry branches based on high technology (high tech industries) are on the rise (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

With its geographic location, infrastructure, natural, cultural and archaeological assets, Izmir bears considerable potential for various tourism types with marine, health, convention, fair, urban, cultural and ecological tourism coming at the lead. Despite this fact, average length of

stay of tourists, occupancy rate of accommodation facilities and labour force efficiency in hotel and restaurant services are not at desired levels. Contribution of hotel and restaurant services to Izmir GDP is around 2.5% while employment ratio in this sector is 7.9% (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

As of year 2008, Izmir is the third province countrywide regarding the number of blue flag beaches with its 21 beaches awarded with the blue flag status. The fact that Izmir's most significant focus of attraction is the seasons and tourism causes the demand to focus on the traditional tourism months within mass tourism context and thus a tourism season of four months is experienced. A serious inadequacy exists regarding the promotion of Izmir's tourism potentialities. It may be said that Izmir is not involved with tourism adequately also regarding investment and planning aspects.

The multi-sector structure of the city causes the economic power to get scattered and lack of specialization. A serious inadequacy exists regarding the promotion of Izmir's tourism potentialities. It may be said that Izmir is not involved with tourism adequately also regarding investment and planning aspects. storing, handling and distribution activities that are effective factors in logistics sector are continuously becoming widespread.

Employment

In sectoral sense, the highest contribution to Izmir province's GDP is provided respectively by, services (54.4%), industry (37.5%) and agriculture (8.1%). According to the data in year 2008, the employment distribution among sectors has been realized as 7.5% in agriculture, 31.5% in industry and 61% in services sector. Total labour force on the other hand has risen up to 1.17 million in Izmir as of year 2008. Compared to country-wide values it can be observed that the employment ratios in non-agriculture sectors are continuously higher in Izmir than that of country overall level. 47.1% of total Aegean Region population working in services and industry sectors are employed in Izmir, and this ratio is 13.7% for those employed in agriculture sector (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Izmir is the industry and services centre of Aegean Region, compared to the TR32 and TR33 Level 2 regions situated in Aegean Region. The unemployment ratio that happened to be 11.8% in 2008 occurs above the country average and increases with the immigrations. And the qualified labour force immigrates to other cities (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Insufficient livelihoods and high unemployment rates are observed at rural areas. Based on labour force efficiency; the national labour efficiency rate is around 25% in Izmir while the same value is approximately at 50% levels in Istanbul. In Izmir, the share of wage earner women labour force within total employment (21.4%) is above the Turkey average (14%) (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Education

Preschool, elementary and secondary education schooling ratios are higher than the Turkey average. Although the number of students per teacher in preschool, elementary and secondary education is lower than the Turkey and Aegean Region averages, in especially some districts the number of students per classroom is considerably higher. There are seven universities in the city.

With the steps taken in recent years, studies have begun for the purpose of developing the university-industry cooperation. In regards to the ratio of population with higher education and above graduation to the total population over age 15; Izmir comes second among Turkey's 81 provinces with 10.77% after Ankara (15.45%) (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Healthcare

Number of people per specialist doctor in Izmir is 59% of the same rate in Aegean Region and 8% of Turkey. And the number of people per nurse in Izmir is 48.5% of the same rate in Aegean Region and 6.8% of Turkey. Although Izmir is above country average in terms of essential health indicators, services provided in subjects such as planned urbanization and public health remain insufficient against the demands, due to the urban population density being higher than Turkey average (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Culture

Although many cultural and artistic activities open to international, national and local participation are held in Izmir, these are not realized in coordination. Moreover, the infrastructure necessary for the mentioned sociocultural activities is currently inadequate. The increase between years 2000 - 2007, in the number of both movie theatres and cinemagoers in Izmir is slightly higher than the increase observed in the same period throughout Turkey and Aegean Region. While in terms of new theatre hall establishment in Izmir is below even the inadequate increase throughout the country, the demand for theatre is on the rise in the city. There are 16 museums within the province. However, in respect to both the thematic variety and the geographic and demographic accessibility, the museums within the province need improvement.

Environment

Because Izmir, employing a considerable importance considering its energy resources, biological diversity, soil fertility, water basins and mineral resources, houses significantly varied urban, agricultural and industrial activities within; environmental sustainability gains importance. The most important environmental issue in the city is basin pollution caused by domestic wastes, agricultural and industrial activities. Marine pollution also persists as a problem for Izmir.

Although the existence of the treatment facility activated in year 2000 to prevent the pollution in Izmir Bay employs a positive effect, the pollution entries carried by the basins' water beds still persist in adversely affecting the improvement process in Izmir Bay. Gediz Basin is environmentally threatened by the pollution coming from Kütahya, Uşak and Manisa along with the industrial pollution coming from Izmir's Kemalpaşa district, settlements without wastewater treatment facilities with Menemen at the top of the list and also by the insensible agricultural applications again in Menemen. Küçük Menderes Basin is also polluted in result of domestic wastewaters. In Bakırçay Basin pollution problem is experienced again caused by domestic wastewaters and agricultural activities. Wastewater treatment facilities and investments for garbage landfill areas should be realized in basin terrains (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

One of the environment-related problems is that the rate of the utilization of environmental management systems is low in Izmir. While in a fine condition regarding urban solid waste collecting works, Izmir has capacity inadequacies regarding disposal tasks. 88% of the total

hazardous waste amount produced in Aegean Region results from industrial activities in Izmir.

It constitutes a problem that the waste amount is high while the industrial waste storehouses and appropriate hazardous waste disposal facilities are few, resulting in illegal dumping. Although forested area ratio is high, Izmir is significantly below Turkey average regarding productive forest area. Moreover, Izmir houses sensitive ecosystems of international importance.

Transportation Infrastructure

Due to being the third largest city within Turkey and the largest city within Aegean Region, Izmir has a dense passenger and cargo (load) traffic. It is a passage point connecting the settlement regions at the north and the agriculture, industry and tourism areas at the south.

Izmir Harbour is the largest port of Aegean Region with its annual ship acceptance capacity of 2,757. The exporting port at the first place in Turkey among government-managed ports dealing with container handling is in Izmir. Izmir Harbour is not only an importing portal to Central Anatolia Region and Aegean Region but also an important trade and commerce port between European, Middle Eastern and Asian countries due to its railway and highway connections (--Izmir Regional Plan 2010-2013, 2010).

Although having an important potential among the world's port cities, Izmir currently does not utilize this potential adequately considering its development and infrastructural works. In order to strengthen the aspect of Izmir being a trade centre, port capacity should be expanded and approach roads should be developed. With its strategic location on the Mediterranean-Black Sea line and its potential expansion area, North Aegean (Kuzey Ege - Çandarlı) Port will be one of the important main transshipment ports of East Mediterranean, in case it is activated.

The airport capacity being increased, international ferry routes, ports servicing tourism and trade, and transportation variety are positive features for Izmir regarding transportation. On the other hand, the inadequacy of railways investments, rarity of direct flights from and to Izmir, maritime lines not being used sufficiently for passenger transportation, the dependency of both intracity and intercity transportation of loads and passengers on highways, Izmir Port not being sufficient in both capacity and infrastructure to meet the increasing demand, road traffic and parking problem are the weak points of transportation in Izmir.

Tourism

In Izmir demographic profile of tourists and breakdown by country: Domestic and foreign tourists aged 25-55 and member of middle/ high income group form the main target group. While foreign tourists are usually European couples or families, domestic tourists include people or families from İstanbul or Ankara with high income. Based on the 2009 data by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, when we look at the breakdown of tourists who have visited Turkey and Izmir by the countries, the rate of tourists visiting Izmir is only 5% of the number of tourists coming to Turkey. It is seen that mostly European tourists come to Izmir and 80 % of those who come are generally from 5 countries (Germany, UK, France, England and the Netherlands) Izmir attracts tourists from Italy, Belgium, France and the Netherlands in a higher ration than Turkey's average for those countries. However, Izmir cannot attract sufficient number of tourists from Germany, Russia, and the Middle East countries where

Turkey benefits a lot. Considering its historical and cultural proximity, we can add Greece to this list (-- Izmir City Marketing Strategic Plan, 2010).

Table I Number of Tourists Coming to Turkey and Izmir-2009

| Number of Tourists Coming to Turkey and Izmir - 2009 | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Countries | Number of tourists coming to Turkey | Number of tourists coming to Turkey | Ratio of Izmir against Turkey |
| Germany | 4.488.350 | 268.814 | 5,99% |
| Italy | 634.886 | 142.457 | 22,44% |
| France | 932.809 | 94.389 | 10,12% |
| UK | 2.426.749 | 79.509 | 3,28% |
| Netherlands | 1.127.150 | 71.001 | 6,30% |
| Belgium | 592.078 | 65.516 | 11,07% |
| USA | 667.159 | 38.654 | 5,79% |
| Greece | 616.489 | 29.969 | 4,86% |
| Switzerland | 283.06 | 13.462 | 4,76% |
| Russia | 2.694.733 | 10.19 | 0,38% |
| Middle East | 1.609.965 | 1.188 | 0,07% |
| Sum of First Ten Countries | 16.073.428 | 815.149 | 5,07% |

Source: Izmir City Marketing Strategic Plan, 2010.

CONCLUSION

The aims of the regional plan are important for Izmir because new investment and employment opportunities would contribute to the city's economic strength and considerably increase the country's gross national income. Izmir would not only attract a substantial workforce from neighboring provinces, but would also be in a position to strengthen Turkey's economy.

Izmir has advantages for tourism: Izmir is situated in a place that makes it both the most western point of the East and the most eastern point of the West. This characteristic makes it a unique intercultural bridge between different countries. Izmir is only 3 hours flight distance away from 48 countries on 3 continents. Izmir is the perfect host city given its 8,500-year old history, extraordinary natural beauty, 300 days of summer, temperate climate, perfect beaches, and friendly and hospitable citizens. It is home to two of mankind's most important historical legacies, Ephesus and Pergamon, which are a mere 100 km apart from each other. Similarly close are many tourist destinations including Çeşme, Alaçatı , Seferihisar, Urla, and Kuşadası (--Expo-Izmir 2020 Presentation).

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