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# CLEAN HANDS, DIRTY FOOTPRINTS

THE NEW KEY TO THE AGE OF ELECTRICITY: SMART, FLEXIBLE AND RESILIENT GRIDS

EXPLORING THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS AT COP31

FASHION ROOTED IN NATURE



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FROM ANKA

# A WEEK ON THE GROUND

A week into COP31, Antalya has become a meeting point for people who rarely find themselves in the same room. Government officials, business representatives, scientists, activists and indigenous communities have arrived with different priorities and expectations, but with a shared concern: climate change is a global challenge that no country or community can address alone.

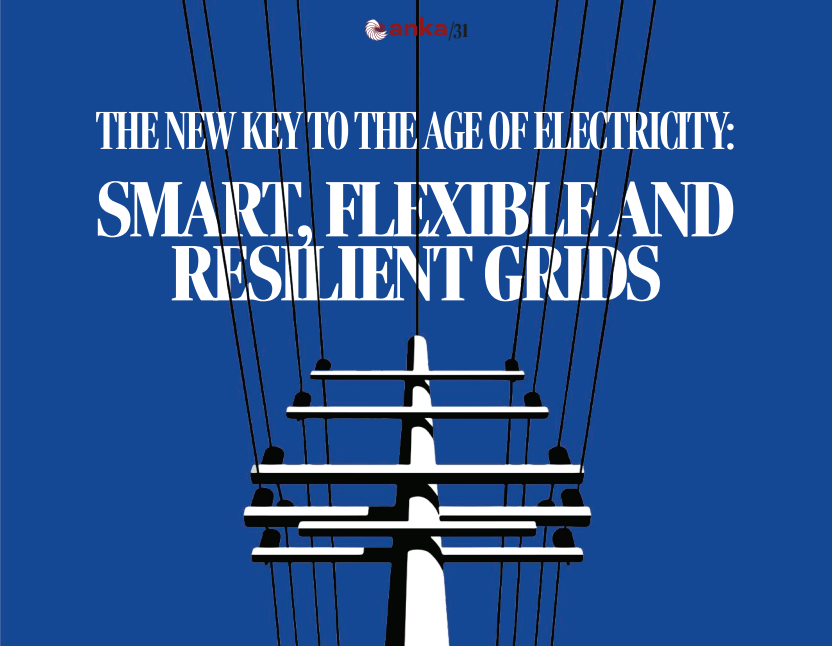
For ANKA News Agency, the first week has been an opportunity to bring these different voices and perspectives to our readers. Our reporting team has followed discussions inside the conference venue, interviewed participants and covered events ranging from energy transition and climate finance to civil society demands and local climate initiatives. Meanwhile, our colleagues reporting from elsewhere in Antalya covered an event organized by the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Türkiye (DİSK), alongside trade union representatives from Africa and Canada. As COP31 enters its second week, another team will continue our coverage on the ground. Many thanks go to all our colleagues, both in Antalya and behind the scenes, whose hard work has made this coverage possible.

This week's edition of ANKA31 reflects some of those conversations. Our cover story, "Clean Hands, Dirty Footprints," examines the emissions hidden within corporate supply chains and asks what companies can actually demonstrate about their progress toward climate targets. Another story, "Fashion Rooted in Nature," grew out of encounters with delegates wearing traditional clothing. What began as a visual curiosity became a conversation about identity, cultural heritage and the relationship between clothing and sustainability.

One conversation has stayed with me in particular. A participant from Kenya questioned the environmental cost of bringing thousands of people together for a climate conference. Why, she wondered, couldn't at least some of these meetings have taken place over Zoom? It was a fair question, and one worth considering at a conference dedicated to addressing climate change. Yet the past week has also reminded me why meeting face to face matters. Despite their different backgrounds, interests and priorities, the people gathered in Antalya were, in a sense, all on the same side when it came to the challenge of climate change. Meeting them in person made that shared responsibility feel more tangible, even if they disagreed on how to address it.

If dialogue is to become global action, the value of gathering in Antalya will ultimately depend on what changes after everyone goes home. As negotiations enter their second week, ANKA will continue to follow the discussions, decisions and voices shaping COP31, bringing more of these stories to our readers in next week's edition.

# THE NEW KEY TO THE AGE OF ELECTRICITY: SMART, FLEXIBLE AND RESILIENT GRIDS



Electricity has become a fundamental necessity that touches every aspect of life, and its importance in our daily lives continues to grow. From heating and lighting in our homes to electrical appliances and mobile devices; from production processes in factories to life-support systems in hospitals, electric vehicle charging stations, public lighting in cities and data centers, the uninterrupted flow of daily life depends on electricity.

Electrification, now at the center of today's energy landscape, is defining an entirely new world and a new economic order. The age of electricity is beginning. Beyond changing the way we use energy, electrification is emerging as a force that influences macroeconomic indicators, development policies and

improvements in prosperity. This compels us to rethink the infrastructure upon which this new order will be built, challenge established assumptions and redefine existing designs. At the heart of this transformation are grids, particularly distribution grids.

## DEMAND IS ACCELARETING, GRID IS STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP

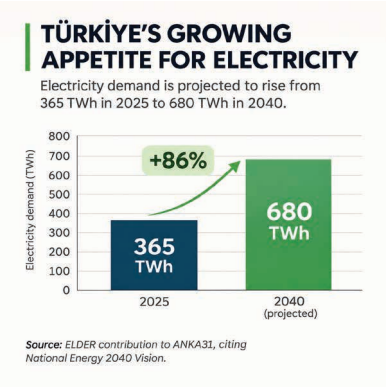
The International Energy Agency's electrification report, published last month, shows that increasing electricity's share of final energy consumption from approximately 23 percent today to 35 percent by 2035 is possible using cost-effective technologies. However, the same report also states that achieving this will require grids to be expanded and modernized approximately 40 percent faster than in the previous decade. Global electricity demand is expected to grow by an annual average of more than 3.5 percent through 2030, adding the equivalent of approximately two European Unions to global electricity demand. Meanwhile, projects totaling

more than 2,500 gigawatts are waiting in grid connection queues, and annual grid investment needs to increase by 50 percent by 2030.

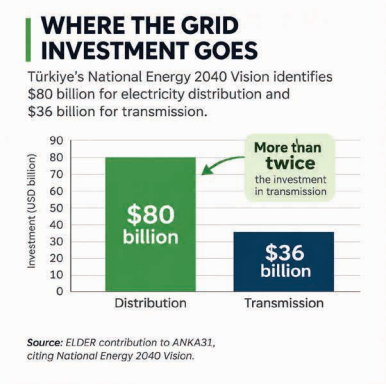
## TÜRKIYE'S SCALE AND CHALLENGE AHEAD

In Türkiye, 21 electricity distribution companies serve approximately 52 million users across all 81 provinces through a network exceeding 1.6 million kilometers and more than 573,000 transformers. In the coming period, this service will change both quantitatively and qualitatively, while the responsibilities of distribution companies will increase. The charging needs of rapidly growing numbers of electric vehicles; the management of distributed generation facilities, which are also increasing rapidly in number and capacity; air-conditioning loads; demand for an uninterrupted electricity supply; and the potential for every consumer to become a producer all demonstrate that the system can no longer be operated using traditional approaches. Data flows must now be managed alongside energy flows.

The "Distribution 2.0" vision we have adopted at ELDER responds precisely to this need. Our aim is to move beyond conventional infrastructure operations that simply deliver electricity from point A to point B and instead establish a distribution system operation model capable of monitoring generation, consumption and flexibility options in real time, making data-driven decisions and managing bidirectional flows. "Prosumers," who generate their own electricity and manage their consumption, are also at the center of this ecosystem. Digital capabilities alone cannot be sufficient without strong physical infrastructure. The National Energy 2040 Vision projects that Türkiye's electricity demand will increase from 365 terawatt-hours in 2025 to 680 terawatt-hours in 2040, with the electrification rate reaching 36 percent. The vision identifies $36 billion in transmission investment and $80 billion in distribution investment to support this transformation.




The fact that the amount allocated to distribution is more than twice that allocated to transmission clearly demonstrates that the energy transition cannot be assessed solely through investments in power generation facilities.



In the nearer term, an investment ceiling of $18.5 billion has been set for the sector for the 2026-2030 implementation period. It is vital that these resources be allocated in a balanced manner not only to new lines and transformers, but also to the rehabilitation of existing assets, digitalization, cybersecurity and physical resilience against risks arising from the climate crisis.




## COP31: FROM COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION

The COP31 Presidency's global electrification target of "35 percent by 2035" aims to increase electricity's share of final energy consumption from its current level in the 20-percent range to 35 percent. As noted above, flexible and modern grids will be the key to achieving this target on the ground.

The International Energy Agency's electrification report shows that, under a high-electrification pathway, energy-importing countries could reduce their annual import bills by approximately $400 billion by 2035. This means electrification is not only a climate policy but also an economic and energy security policy. The 36 percent electrification rate set for 2040 in Türkiye's National Energy 2040 Vision points in the same direction as this global target.

Our most concrete expectation from COP31 is for grid investments to receive the attention they deserve on the climate finance agenda. Electricity distribution is a long-term, capital-intensive activity, and financing must therefore be long-term, affordable and suited to the nature of the sector.

Türkiye also has experience to share in this area. We reduced the electricity loss and theft rate from 18.5 percent in 2013 to 8.8 percent in 2025. We have experience that can be transferred to countries facing similar conditions.

The true success of electrification should not be measured by how quickly electricity meters turn, but by how efficiently, accessibly, affordably, flexibly and sustainably we can manage growing demand within the architecture of the electricity system.

As the electricity distribution sector, we remain committed to addressing the needs of the future today and continuing to serve as a fundamental pillar of Türkiye's journey toward net zero.

# CLEAN HANDS, DIRTY FOOTPRINTS



A truck purchased today may remain on the road for another decade. Some loads require specialized vehicles, while the infrastructure and technology needed to move them without fossil fuels remain limited. These were among the practical difficulties raised during a discussion on corporate emissions at the COP31 climate conference in Antalya on Nov. 10.

Participants described a familiar dilemma: Companies are increasingly expected to account for emissions throughout their supply chains, even when the technologies, infrastructure and commercial relationships needed to reduce those emissions lie beyond their immediate control.

The discussion took place at the International Emissions Trading Association's BusinessHub in the COP31 Blue Zone. The session took an unexpected turn when two scheduled speakers from Amazon and MSCI were delayed in Antalya traffic. Rory Heskin, general manager for the Asia-Pacific region at climate technology company Patch, invited participants to discuss the questions themselves.

The conversation quickly moved from carbon accounting standards to the realities of transportation, manufacturing and procurement. Participants spoke about suppliers facing repeated requests for emissions data and investments whose environmental benefits might take years to become measurable.

Behind these examples was a larger question: How much of a company's climate footprint can it genuinely measure, reduce and claim responsibility for?

## THE EMISSIONS BEYOND A COMPANY'S WALLS

Corporate greenhouse gas emissions are generally divided into three categories under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, one of the principal international frameworks for emissions accounting.

Scope 1 covers emissions from sources a company owns or controls, such as fuel burned in its vehicles or factories. Scope 2 covers indirect emissions associated with purchased electricity, heating, cooling and steam.

Scope 3 is considerably broader. It includes other indirect emissions throughout a company's value chain, from producing the materials it purchases to transporting its products and, in some cases, the emissions generated when customers use those products.

The GHG Protocol divides Scope 3 into 15 categories, covering activities such as purchased goods and services, business travel, waste, transportation, investments and the use of sold products.

For example, fuel burned by a logistics company's trucks counts as Scope 1 for that company but may appear as Scope 3 for the manufacturer purchasing its transportation services.

A technology company, meanwhile, may run its offices on renewable electricity while relying on emissions-intensive semiconductor manufacturing and global supply chains. Its own operations may appear relatively clean, even as much of its carbon footprint lies elsewhere.

## WHEN THE NUMBERS DEPEND ON THE METHOD

The further emissions extend into a supply chain, the harder they become to trace. Without reliable supplier data, companies often turn to industry averages and other estimates, which can produce strikingly different results.

A recent study of Toyota's supply chain illustrates the problem. Researchers examined a network of nearly 10,000 suppliers, but fewer than half disclosed their own emissions, leaving significant gaps in the data.

Depending on the accounting method, estimated emissions from the same supply network ranged from 12.4 million to 36 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, nearly a threefold difference.

Toyota's actual emissions had not changed. Only the method used to calculate them had.

## A SUPPLY CHAIN IS ALSO A NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS

A company can set its own climate targets, but it cannot simply order its suppliers to meet them. Each supplier has its own costs, equipment and business priorities. Cutting emissions across a supply chain therefore depends on cooperation between companies, not just decisions made at corporate headquarters.

Even measuring those emissions requires cooperation. A 2023 study highlighted how industry averages can overlook differences between individual suppliers. At COP31, participants described how suppliers receive emissions data requests from multiple customers, often with different reporting requirements. For smaller businesses, responding to them can be a challenge in itself.

Reducing emissions is harder still. Companies may need to help suppliers invest in cleaner equipment and production methods, changes that take time and money.

Dr. Susanne Etti, who leads climate initiatives at Australian travel company Intrepid Travel, illustrated the problem through transportation. Heavy vehicles still depend heavily on diesel, while suitable electric alternatives remain limited. A truck purchased today may remain in service for another decade, making rapid fleet replacement difficult.

Better fuel efficiency and smarter operations can reduce emissions in the meantime. But replacing vehicles, developing infrastructure and changing how businesses operate cannot happen overnight. A company's climate target may have a deadline; its supply chain does not necessarily move at the same pace.

## PAYING FOR CLIMATE ACTION IS NOT THE SAME AS REDUCING EMISSIONS

The distinction between financing climate action and claiming emissions reductions was another theme of the IETA meeting. Heskin introduced market-based instruments, including certificates and book-and-claim systems, alongside direct investments in supply-chain decarbonization.

Carbon credits are one way companies can finance climate projects. A single credit typically represents one metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent reduced or removed from the atmosphere. Companies can purchase credits generated by projects such as forest restoration or methane capture, often to compensate for emissions they have not yet eliminated.

But buying a carbon credit does not mean a company's own emissions have fallen. A manufacturer, for example, might purchase credits while continuing to produce the same amount of pollution through its suppliers.

The IETA discussion also touched on book-and-claim systems. These allow companies to purchase certificates associated with lower-carbon products or services, such as cleaner transportation, even when they do not physically receive them.

The GHG Protocol requires companies to report their value-chain emissions separately from offsets and project-based reductions. Both financing climate projects and cutting emissions can contribute to climate action, but they are not interchangeable. The question is not simply how much a company spends on climate action, but what it can legitimately claim to have achieved.

On the other hand a 2024 study published in Nature Communications examined research covering more than 2,300 carbon credit projects. It estimated that less than 16% of the credits issued to the projects studied represented real emissions reductions. The findings raise a troubling possibility: Companies may be paying to offset pollution that has never actually been offset.

## WHAT TÜRKIYE'S CORPORATE DISCLOSURES REVEAL

According to the CDP Türkiye 2025 Climate and Nature Report, 98% of the 132 com-

panies assessed reported Scope 3 emissions, while 88% reported third-party verification. All disclosed Scope 1 emissions, and 99% reported location-based Scope 2 emissions.

The report also recorded a 16% decline in reported Scope 3 emissions, from 788 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2024 to 666 million tons in 2025. Scope 3 nevertheless remained the largest source of reported emissions. The decline is encouraging, although changes in reporting methods or business activity may also have influenced the figures.

For Turkish businesses supplying international manufacturers and retailers, the implications go beyond reporting. As global companies work to reduce their Scope 3 emissions, they increasingly depend on their suppliers for reliable data and cleaner production. A Turkish textile manufacturer, for example, may be asked not only to disclose the emissions generated in its factories but also to demonstrate how it plans to reduce them.

The challenge is turning those figures into meaningful changes across supply chains.

## FROM ACCOUNTING TO ACCOUNTABILITY

The discussion at COP31 began with a question about what companies should fund, measure and claim. It revealed a growing gap between corporate climate promises and the difficult work of delivering them.

Companies can publish detailed emissions reports, set ambitious targets and finance climate projects. But none of these measures alone guarantees that their supply chains are becoming cleaner.

The real test is what happens beyond the reports: Are suppliers adopting cleaner production methods? Are transportation emissions falling? Are companies changing how they source materials and manufacture products?

For companies making climate promises at COP31, the numbers are only the starting point. What matters is what actually changes behind them.

# THE COST OF ATTENDING COP31




As tens of thousands of delegates, journalists, activists and business representatives gather for COP31, hotels are filling up, restaurants are welcoming international visitors and prices are rising across parts of the city's hospitality sector.

The economic impact of hosting COP31 extends far beyond hotel rooms and restaurant bills. From infrastructure and transportation to employment, business opportunities and public spending, an event of this scale touches many parts of the local economy. But for those experiencing the summit firsthand, some of its most immediate effects are visible in the cost of accommodation, food and everyday services.

According to hospitality data platform Lighthouse, advertised hotel room rates during COP31 are 92% higher than Antalya's 2026 average. Five-star hotels have seen an increase of 108%, while average nightly rates reached $268 during the first week of the conference and $239 in the second.

For Antalya's tourism industry, the summit has brought an unusual November boom. Hakan Saatçioğlu, president of the Professional Hotel Managers Association (POYD), told ANKA News Agency that hotel occupancy in central Antalya, particularly Kaleiçi, had approached 100%. He said accommodation prices had increased by 80-90% compared with November last year, with smaller increases of around 50-60% in the city center.

But the economics of COP31 are also apparent inside the conference venue.

At food outlets in the Blue Zone, ANKA reporters found bottled water selling for 100 Turkish lira ($2), tea for 75lira ($1.50) and a portion of döner kebab for 995 lira ($19.90). A bowl of lentil soup costs 305 lira (6.10), while a döner wrap is priced at 765 lira ($15.30). For participants spending long days at the venue, even basic meals can become a considerable daily expense.

# AN ALTERNATIVE CLIMATE AGENDA

Despite heavy rain, representatives of civil society organizations, trade unions and grassroots movements gathered in Antalya on Nov. 14 for a march marking the opening of the People's Climate Summit and the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice.

Organized by Antalya Labour and Democracy Forces, the march launched a five-day alternative summit held alongside COP31. Nearly 100 organizations endorsed a joint statement criticizing the official climate negotiations and calling for greater public participation in climate decision-making.

The statement accused governments of failing to deliver binding commitments and criticized COP31 hosts Türkiye and Australia over their continued reliance on fossil fuels. It also drew attention to the environmental destruction caused by wars, inequalities in access to clean water and healthy food, and the disproportionate impact of climate change on poorer communities.

"Although we all live under the same atmosphere, we do not share the same economic and social conditions," the statement said. The summit brings together communities affected by mining, environmental degradation and climate change, alongside trade unions and grassroots organizations, to discuss alternative approaches to the climate crisis.

Speaking to ANKA News Agency at the COP31 venue in Antalya, DEM Party lawmaker İbrahim Akın questioned whether international climate negotiations had produced effective solutions. Akın said the consequences of climate change were distributed unequally, with poorer communities facing greater difficulties accessing healthcare, clean water and nutritious food.

Labour organizations have also brought these concerns into the COP31 debate. Speaking to ANKA News Agency at a separate event in Antalya, DİSK President Arzu Çerkezoğlu outlined the confederation's proposals for a just transition, including employment protection, income security, stronger trade union rights and worker participation in climate policy-

making. DİSK also pledged to make just transition provisions a standard part of collective bargaining agreements.

With COP31 entering its second week, attention will turn to whether the demands raised at the People's Climate Summit find an echo inside the Blue Zone, where official negotiations continue. ANKA31 will be following both sides of the conversation as the conference moves toward its final days.

SCAN FOR MORE

Explore ANKA's COP31 coverage, reports and interviews.

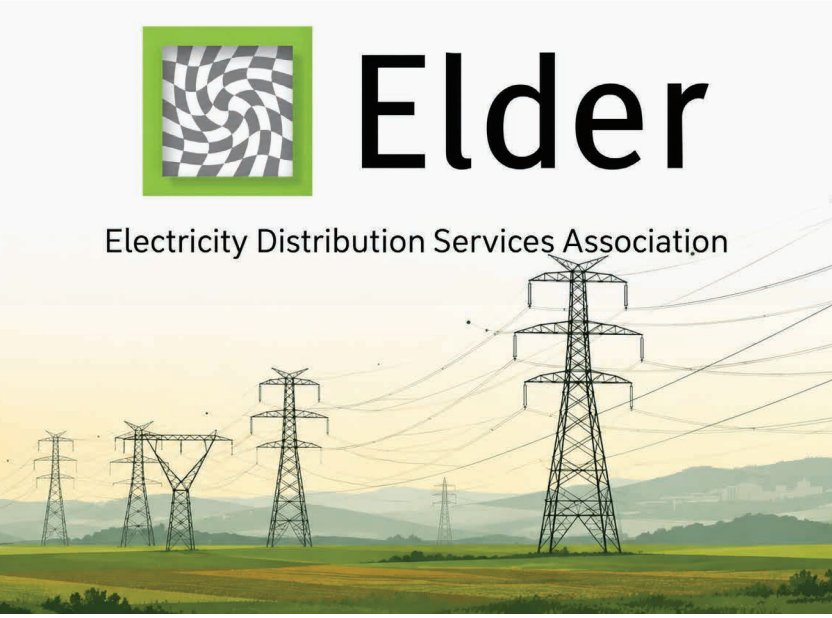













# R&D, INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TÜRKIYE'S ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION SECTOR

From wildfire risk mapping to AI-powered grid management, Türkiye's electricity distribution companies are developing technologies to address the challenges of the energy transition. At COP31, the sector is sharing these innovations with international stakeholders.

## 48 CLIMATE-FOCUSED PROJECTS, FOUR THEMES

At its COP31 Blue Zone stand, Elder is showcasing 48 climate-focused R&D projects developed by Türkiye's electricity distribution companies. Addressing practical challenges in the field, the projects are grouped into four themes.

**Climate-resilient grids:** Systems that use satellite imagery, meteorological data and machine learning to map wildfire risks around power lines; microgrids powered by renewable energy and storage that can operate independently of the main grid during disasters.

**Grids ready for renewable energy and electrification:** Applications that autonomously manage voltage fluctuations caused by rooftop solar installations and charging stations. A scenar-

io involving the transition to a low-voltage direct current grid showed a reduction in active power losses from 15 percent to 7 percent in simulations.

**Artificial intelligence, digital twins and carbon visibility:** Applications that calculate transformer hot-spot temperatures to monitor remaining service life and enable investments to be scheduled at the right time; projects that map emissions resulting from technical losses to help prioritize investments in loss reduction.

**Efficient operations and circularity:** Applications that enable maintenance without interrupting electricity supply and prevent renewable energy generation from stopping during planned outages; a field device that detects street lighting faults at the base of poles with 99 percent accuracy and achieves a recovery rate of more than 65 percent for scrap components.

## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND A COMMON CARBON ACCOUNTING METHODOLOGY

Some of these projects are being developed through international partnerships. Türkiye's electricity distribution companies participate in projects under Horizon Europe and other European Union programs. These range from initiatives integrating solar power plants, battery storage and charging stations into the grid through local flexibility markets to projects establishing centers of excellence for energy communities in Türkiye, Greece and Portugal.

Under Elder's EU-funded project, "Clean, Affordable and Secure Electricity for All in Light of the European Green Deal," a common approach to calculating corporate carbon footprints has been developed for electricity distribution companies. This approach lays the groundwork for preparing the sector for carbon pricing and access to green finance.

On the demand side, appliance-level measurements are being conducted in 33 selected households across four distribution regions. Preliminary findings suggest that the use of certain household appliances could be shifted to hours when solar energy is abundant.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The Enerjim Sensin Accelerator Program, implemented in cooperation between the Energy Market Regulatory Authority (EPDK) and Elder, connects startups developing energy technologies with the sector's real-world needs.

Since 2019, the program has received 981 applications and supported 280 startups. These startups have created more than 1,400 jobs, while 40 have expanded into international markets. Their combined revenues have reached $155 million, and they have attracted $25 million in investment.

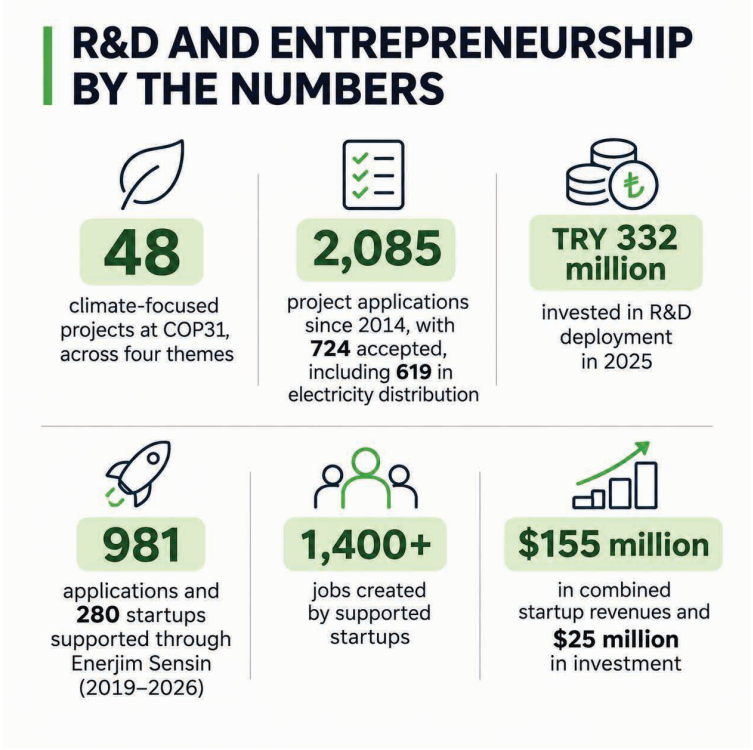
Under EPDK's support mechanism, which has been in place since 2014, a total of 2,085 project applications have been submitted, of which 724 have been accepted. Of the accepted projects, 619 are in electricity distribution.

Regulations published in September brought prototype development, pilot applications, field demonstrations and localization activities within the scope of support under certain conditions. During the 2026-2030 period, a 5 percent increase in the weighted average cost of capital rate is applied as a regulatory incentive for distribution companies using domestically developed software.

Elder Chairman Barış Erdeniz summarizes the sector's approach as follows:

"Our goal is clear: The experience of our 21 distribution companies should not remain 21 separate bodies of knowledge, but become a collective strength for our sector. We regard the development of domestic and reliable technologies as a strategic priority for the future of our sector."

Elder says it is open to collaborating with international start-ups, technology developers and research institutions to address the sector's operational challenges.






# EXPLORING THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS AT COP31

*By Asli L. Atli*

Beyond the negotiating rooms at COP31 in Antalya, another conversation is unfolding, one that explores how art, cultural heritage and local knowledge can shape the way societies understand and respond to the climate crisis. The conference is hosting a wide-ranging cultural program featuring exhibitions, artistic installations, international collaborations and heritage projects across the city.

## ART AS A LANGUAGE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

At the Antalya Expo Center's Green Zone, the COPArt: Still Possible program brings together more than 1,000 artworks and over 50 outdoor installations by artists from Türkiye and around the world.

The Turkish selection includes Six Masters, Six Traces, an exhibition featuring works by Fahrelnissa Zeid, Burhan Doğançay, Ömer Uluç, Devrim Erbil, Mehmet Güleryüz and Haluk Akakçe.

The international program features artists including Eva Jospin, Todd Gray, Erica Daborn, Xavier Cortada, Zaria Forman, Oksana Chepelyk and NILS-UDO, whose works engage with themes of ecological transformation and environmental justice.

Together, the exhibitions introduce artistic perspectives into a conference primarily associated with scientific assessments and political negotiations. The program creates space for visual and cultural interpretations of environmental challenges.

## CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Five Türkiye-U.K. partnerships supported by the British Council are exploring the relationship between culture and environmental sustainability through projects ranging from sustainable filmmaking to biodiversity mapping.

Among them are initiatives examining the ecological knowledge of Laz and Hemşin communities in Türkiye's eastern Black Sea region and documenting biodiversity in Ankara's Esat neighborhood.

These projects draw attention to forms of environmental knowledge that are not always prominent in international climate discussions, including local experience, community practices and relationships with surrounding ecosystems.

The role of culture in climate policy is also being explored through the Culture Global Stocktake for Climate Action (CGST) initiative. Launched following discussions at the third Culture x Climate Forum in Istanbul on Nov. 3, the initiative examines how cultural perspectives can be incorporated into climate action. Its initial findings are expected to be shared during COP31.

## PROTECTING HERITAGE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Cultural heritage forms another part of the conference's agenda. From Nov. 11 to 16, the Cultural Heritage in Climate Action program, organized by ICOMOS Türkiye, the ICOMOS International Working Group on Climate Action and Antalya Bilim University, brings participants to some of the region's archaeological sites.

Field activities at the ancient cities of Lyrbe, Side and Termessos connect discussions about climate action with the preservation of historical places.

The program places cultural heritage within a broader conversation about environmental change, highlighting the importance of considering historical landscapes and archaeological sites alongside contemporary climate challenges.

## BEYOND THE CONFERENCE VENUE

Antalya's cultural program also extends into galleries, hotels and public spaces across the city. At Akra Antalya, photographer Edward Burtynsky's Shifting Topography exhibition runs through Nov. 20. In Belek, Akdeniz, a joint exhibition by Nikolina Šimunović and Mert Üngör at Lonca Studio, continues until Nov. 21.

Meanwhile, Muratpaşa Municipality is organizing COP TOWN events in Kaleiçi, bringing elements of the conference's cultural program into Antalya's historic center. Music is also part of the agenda. On Nov. 18 at 6:30 p.m., the Doğuş Children's Symphony Orchestra is scheduled to perform a special COP31 concert in Antalya.

Conducted by General Music Director Prof. Rengim Gökmen, the orchestra will bring together 80 young musicians from 10 cities across Türkiye. Violinist Cihat Aşkın and soprano Görkem Ezgi Yıldırım will join as soloists for a program featuring works by Turkish composers Ferit Tüzün, Ulvi Cemal Erkin and Cihat Aşkın.

While the negotiations at COP31 focus on the political and economic decisions needed to address climate change, the cultural program offers another perspective on the same challenge. Through art, community knowledge, historical heritage and music, it broadens the conversation beyond the negotiating table.




# FASHION ROOTED IN NATURE

At a climate summit, clothing might seem like a small detail. Yet among the thousands of delegates gathering in Antalya for COP31, traditional garments have brought another dimension to the conversations about nature, identity and the future.

From the intricate headwear of Kazakhstan to the colorful garments of Nigeria, the conference corridors have become an unexpected showcase of cultural heritage. Behind the embroidery, fabrics and patterns are stories that extend far beyond fashion.

And at a time when the global clothing industry is grappling with its environmental footprint, these traditions invite a question: What if fashion were less about keeping up with the latest trends and more about preserving what we already value?

## MORE THAN FABRIC

At COP31, Leah, a participant from Indonesia's Banda Aceh region, wore traditional clothing associated with a dance celebrating women's strength.

"The dance and our clothing show how strong women are in Indonesia, especially in Aceh," she explained, describing the fast, intricate hand movements that require strength and memorization.

A participant from Kazakhstan introduced her kamzol, a traditional short jacket, and saukile, a headdress she said was worn by unmarried girls. Its decorative element, known as ükü, also carried meaning associated with marital status.

For a Sámi participant from Finland, traditional clothing known as gakti reflected an even closer relationship between culture and the natural world.

"The colors symbolize our nature and our flag," the participant explained. "There are also patterns representing families and regions."

The designs, the participant added, can reveal where some-

one comes from and even whether they are married.

Elsewhere, Nigerian participants introduced the fila, buba and shokoto of Yoruba traditional dress, while Suria Sun, an Indigenous participant from Brazil, described the spiritual protection represented by the bird figure on her traditional headdress.

Each garment offered a different way of expressing identity, connecting its wearer to a community, a history or a landscape.



Unlike the traditional garments on display at COP31, much of today's fashion is designed around constant change. New collections arrive, trends fade and perfectly wearable clothes can lose their appeal long before they wear out. It is a striking contrast: While the fashion industry encourages consumers to look for the next new thing, traditional clothing often draws its meaning from what has been preserved, remembered and passed down through generations.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the world generates approximately 92 million metric tons of textile waste every year. Between 2000 and 2015, global clothing production doubled, while the length of time garments were used declined by 36%.

The European Environment Agency estimates that producing textiles consumed in the European Union generated 121 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2020. Around 80% of textiles' climate impact occurs during production.

These figures point to a fundamental challenge: making fashion more sustainable requires not only cleaner production but also longer-lasting clothing and different consumption habits.

Some traditional garments are treasured as family heirlooms, while others are reserved for special occasions. Beyond the fabrics and patterns, they carry craftsmanship and knowledge passed down through generations.

This does not automatically make traditional clothing environmentally sustainable. Materials, production methods and resource use still matter. But the personal and cultural significance of these garments offers another way of thinking about what we wear and why we keep it.

At COP31, where discussions frequently revolve around emissions targets, financing and technological solutions, these colorful expressions of heritage offer a quieter reminder: Clothes do not have to change every season to remain meaningful.

# PLASTIC:

## THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY'S TROJAN HORSE

Artistic expression is also finding a place in climate activism at COP31. Greenpeace drew attention to the fossil fuel industry's role in plastic production with a giant Trojan horse installation, using the ancient symbol to illustrate its message that plastic is the industry's "Trojan horse."




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