

DEM FOUNDATION



THIRD WAVE COFFEE AND THIRD WAY OF THINKING: “ THEY SPEAK SIGN LANGUAGE ”

The Issue

Why is your story important? Why is the social problem you focus or the change you want to make is important?

It shocks many that use of Turkish Sign Language in education was banned in 1953 based on the fallacy that signing impedes deafs' potential ability to speak. It was only 2005 when Turkish Sign Language was recognized as an official language in Turkey.

Due to ingrained perceptions, society defines the deaf - a community of 3 million - as the ones who are “not able to hear.” A major shift in discourse is needed for the social inclusion of the deaf in Turkey. We propose to change the discourse of ‘not being able to hear’ to “being able to speak Sign Language”?

The Background

What is the reason of existence of your institution / venture that is supporting the topic at hand? What were the circumstances that brought about your idea / venture?

Dem was founded in 2014 with the purpose of executing empathy-based social responsibility projects and social enterprises, which can be integrated to and harmonized with the daily routine.

Because we believe that empathy is the source of 21st century revolution.

We determine a theme of empathy annually and shape our work accordingly. Theme for 2015 - 2016 is: “**Empathy with the Deaf.**”

Within the frame of defined theme, our objective is to initiate perception transformation for the the deaf in Turkey by having the public recognizing Sign Language and the culture that language itself intrinsically creates. And, we intend to achieve that transformation with **alternative and joyous methods**, in order to deprive the traditionally ingrained feeling that dominates public's perception: **pity**.

What kind of work is being done in Turkey in this field? Among these, what do you see as lacking or wrong?

Turkish Sign Language has been recognized as an official language in 2005. Municipalities offer Turkish Sign Language courses and recently, as an initiative of

the Minister of Family and Social Affairs, a research project on Turkish Sign Language was launched. First official dictionary has already been published and a second is expected to be published at the end of 2015.

However, positive measures taken fall short when it comes to their social inclusion and the constitution of dialogue between deaf and non-deaf for real impact.

Goals

What kind of perception or attitude shift are you expecting at these group(s)? (could be direct or indirect)

With our unique and meaningful funded projects*, we work to realize the **Project Coffee Pot, which envisions the** opening of three places combining Turkish Sign Language with coffee culture, which will act as multi-functional deaf platforms. Those spots do not only serve third wave of coffee; but will also be hubs for third way of thinking.

Coffee Pot will be run by the members of the deaf culture and its supporters, being the home for everyday interactions and transactions between the deaf and non-deaf. By making them a part of the daily routine through coffee culture, we intend to start the constitution of dialogue, which is a crucial component of building empathy.

What is (are) your longer term goal(s)?

Our objective in the long run is to spread this alternative way of social thinking in the society and to support individuals discovering their empathic brains.

Public Coverage

How this issue has played out in the public? How do you evaluate public and media approach to the issue / problem?

The awareness about the deaf and Turkish Sign Language are considerably higher in the last few years. However, impact is not measurable.

Samsung's recent viral advertisement is a great example. Please watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVuJAumTXdc>

Two events organized by Dem Dernek in the last month took place on the news hour of Kanal D and CNN Turk, which are two of the most popular Turkish TV channels. Also, some of the important local agencies were interested and wanted to publish the story.

Additional Info

Are there any facts or data that you think would be useful for the creative team to know? Specific Hooks, concepts to play with (i.e. suggestions for creative materials or creations)

* For example, **Sign Your Love** is an alternative crowdfunding project designed to fund **Project Coffee Pot**. It is adoptable to concept, space and time that establishes first acquaintanceship with Sign Language with the theme of love. Participants learn how to sign their love (via sign language), then get filmed while signing. After editing, participants receive their video in return for an agreed donation. To have a better idea please watch: <https://vimeo.com/119749343>