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THE NETHERLANDS TOOK OVER THE EU COUNCIL'S PRESIDENCY

The Netherlands took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU from Luxembourg as of 1 January 2016.

Holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the 12th time, the Netherlands is tasked with setting the agenda and chairing all Council meetings for 6 months except the meetings of the EU Heads of State and Government and of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers. The Dutch Presidency represents the first pillar of the current Trio Presidency consisting of the Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta which will chair the Council until June 2017. The main priorities of the current trio have been specified as growth and competitiveness; employment; Energy Union as well as freedom, security and justice. The current trio also aims at enhancing the EU's role as a global actor and empowering EU citizens as well as ensuring their security.

Priorities of the Dutch Presidency

As one of the founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community, the Netherlands hosted key meetings which laid down the legal foundations and the main pillars of the Union throughout the institutional history of Europe.

The Dutch Presidency will put a special emphasis on the concept of EU citizenship and on enhancing the participation of EU citizens in the

decision-making process and that of the civil society in the EU system.

During these turbulent times in which the Schengen system has been brought into question, the Dutch Presidency has determined its four main priorities as follows: "Migration" and international security; "Innovation for growth and employment"; "Forward-looking energy and climate policy" and "Sound finances and robust Eurozone". In line with these priorities, the Dutch Presidency will encourage structural reforms in Member States and a more coordinated economic policy within the EU. All these priorities will be negotiated and discussed in details during the Dutch Presidency.

Turkey as a Key Actor during the Dutch Presidency

Due to the re-energizing of Turkey-EU relations and the target dates of June 2016 for the implementation of the Readmission Agreement and October 2016 for visa-free Europe for Turkish citizens, the migration crisis and the future of the Schengen Code are expected to be major agenda items of the Dutch Presidency which are of great importance for Turkey. In addition,



stronger cooperation between Turkey and the EU to overcome the migration crisis and the establishment of efficient cooperation for border management remain important priorities for this year as it has been emphasized during the Turkey-EU Summit which was held on 29 November 2015 and the Leaders' Summit in December 2015.

Moreover, the Dutch Presidency is expected to carry out the role of facilitator and mediator between Turkey and the EU institutions. Starting from the first days of 2016,

the Council of the EU would put vital topics on the EU's migration agenda which require close and efficient cooperation with Turkey. One of the most critical topics related to this cooperation is the 3 billion euro aid facility which will be granted by the EU to Turkey which aims at supporting Syrian refugees by improving their living conditions. It is expected that this aid would help stem the influx of migrants seeking to enter the EU.

With regards to the migration agenda, it is worth mentioning that

the Netherlands will be holding the EU Council's Presidency when the European Commission's second evaluation report on progress achieved by Turkey in fulfilling the requirements of its visa liberalisation roadmap will be published on March 2016. Furthermore, the opening of two essential chapters concerning fundamental rights and rule of law (Chapter 23 and 24) in Turkey's EU accession negotiations process is expected to be also on the agenda of the Dutch Presidency.



MESSAGE FROM IKV CHAIRMAN FOR 2016

The last months of 2015 witnessed an intensification of Turkey-EU relations in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis. The number of refugees heading towards the EU reached 710,000 in the first nine months of 2015 and displayed a propensity to increase much further. Turkey being the number one transit country for especially Syrian refugees heading towards the EU, the Union turned towards Turkey as a priority partner in the struggle to contain migratory flows. The EU's

quite reserved approach towards hosting refugees and migrants contributed to a policy of keeping them in countries neighboring the EU. The November 29 Summit between Turkey and the EU became a platform for enhanced cooperation and dialogue between the parties where the EU promised Turkey financial funds of 3 billion euros, visa-free travel to the EU as of October 2016, Turkey-EU summits twice a year, high-level dialogues in various issue-areas such as foreign policy,

energy and economics, and the acceleration of membership negotiations in return for the swift implementation of the Turkey-EU Readmission Agreement, stemming the flow of migrants to the EU and cooperating in the integration of Syrians in Turkey. The refugee issue became the new buzzword in Turkey-EU relations as the refugee action plan started off as a revitalization in Turkey's integration to the EU.

IKV, as a research organization specialized in the area of Turkey-

EU relations, aims to focus on the different aspects of Turkey-EU relations this year, i.e. accession negotiations, cooperation on refugees and migration, visa liberalisation, modernization of the Turkey-EU Customs Union and high-level dialogues between the two parties. It is our intention to contribute to the "re-energizing" of the relations on multiple fronts, through our research, dissemination and communication activities.

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MESSAGE FROM IKV CHAIRMAN FOR 2016

FROM THE FIRST PAGE

IKV's EU Information Center

This year, IKV is also hosting the EU information center in Istanbul. EU information centers are supported by the EU Delegation in Turkey and coordinated by the Union of Chambers and Stock Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) which is also the leading trustee organization of our Foundation. The EU Information Center will organize public events throughout the year with a view to raising awareness on the EU. The events will focus on target groups such as women, young people and business community. The information center activities will align with and complement IKV's mission.

IKV as a Watchdog of Reforms

This year, it is our intention to focus on IKV's role as a watchdog of EU reforms. As an organization dedicated to the pursuit of Turkey's EU integration, we attach high importance to the ongoing reform process in Turkey and believe that reforms are the key to EU membership. IKV will highlight its role as a monitor and watchdog of reforms in Turkey both in the economic and political spheres especially in the following areas: rule of law and independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression and association, freedom of the media, autonomy of regulatory bodies, democratic and participatory constitutional process, requirements of visa liberalisation roadmap, Turkey-EU Readmission Agreement.

IKV's Information Activities

IKV will also engage in the organization of public seminars in different cities and regions of Turkey with a view to raising awareness on the EU process. These seminars will be conducted in cooperation with the TOBB and its member Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The current developments in Turkey-EU relations will be tackled by IKV experts regarding the accession process, refugee action plan, visa liberalisation process, EU programs and funds, and the EU-Turkey Customs Union's modernization process. IKV will also hold a similar campaign together with the Friedrich Neumann Foundation in Turkey which entails the holding of public events on the progress of Turkey-EU relations. IKV will also organize seminars in Brussels in liaison with EU institutions and in EU Member States of the EU within the framework of its project titled "EU Presidencies and Turkey".

We will continue to share our activities and views on the EU and Turkey-EU relations through our online and printed publications, periodic newsletters and monthly journal.

IKV'S VISIT TO ITO, TUSIAD AND ISTIB

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and Members of the Board of Directors visited its founder organization Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and two of its trustee organization TUSIAD and ISTIB on 15 December 2015.



IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and Members of the Board of Directors visited Istanbul Chamber of Commerce

During these meetings, IKV President of Board of Directors Ayhan Zeytinoğlu was accompanied by Vice-Presidents Prof. Halûk Kabaalioğlu and Zeynep Bodur Okyay along with members of Board of Directors Atilla Menevşe, Dr. Zeynel Abidin Erdem, İlhan Koyunseven, İlhan Soylu, Sedat Zincirkıran and Member of the Audit Committee Mustafa İçöz, IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, the then Deputy Secretary-General and Research Director Melih Özsöz and TOBB EU Department Researcher Senem Yavaş.

During the meetings, representatives from IKV, its founder and trustee organization ITO and its trustee organizations TUSIAD and ISTIB evaluated the possible areas of cooperation in the new period. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu stressed the importance given by IKV to the EU accession process and Turkey's alignment with EU norms. In this respect, it is envisaged to give a special importance to enhance relations with chambers and stock exchanges which are members of TOBB and added that within that framework, informative seminars on EU issues would be held in different provinces across Turkey in 2016.

Meeting with ITO

During the meeting held with IKV's founder organization, ITO President İbrahim Çağlar underlined

the important role played by IKV with regard to the activities and research carried out on EU Affairs. ITO President Çağlar, highlighted that IKV and ITO could cooperate in carrying out sectoral analysis in the process of the revision of the Customs Union.

Meeting with TUSIAD

During IKV's visit to its trustee organization, TUSIAD President Cansen Başaran-Symes underlined that they are strong supporters of Turkey's EU accession. Pointing out the importance given by the new government to the EU accession process, TUSIAD President stressed that the business community as a whole also is supporting this process of integration and alignment to the EU market, norms and regulations

Meeting with ISTIB

During IKV's visit to its trustee organization, ISTIB Chairman Ali Kopuz also encouraged the idea of strengthening cooperation between the two institutions. ISTIB Chairman Kopuz referred to the key importance of the EU accession process from the perspective of the business world and revealed information on the recent activities carried out by ISTIB. During the visit, both institutions agreed that joint activities could be realized within the context of the revision of the Customs Union, especially in the agriculture sector.



IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu (left) and ISTIB Chairman Ali Kopuz (right)



TUSIAD President Cansen Başaran-Symes and IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu

WHAT TO EXPECT OF RE-ENERGIZED RELATIONS?

Turkey and the EU have been in a prolonged process of accession with an unspecified target date for membership since 2005. Turkey's accession negotiations in which 15 chapters have been opened and one provisionally closed so far, stagnated due to the implications of the Cyprus conflict, EU's own problems and enlargement fatigue as well as slowdown and reversal in EU-led reforms in Turkey. The EU anchor tied to the credibility of the membership perspective lost its vigour and ability to transform Turkey towards EU values and standards. Turkey continued in its quite peculiar path to the EU as a country which is formally negotiating accession to the EU but at the same time seen as non-European by some in Europe and which itself is pursuing alternate avenues in its external relations.

Turkey and the EU both exist in an international system undergoing rapid transition. Relations between the parties were affected by tremendous volatility, change and unpredictability in the wider region of Eurasia and the Middle East. These quite complex and multi-faceted changes can be boiled down to a number of major developments:

- Russia's new expansionism in its near-abroad and the stand-off with Europe over the Crimea and Ukraine crisis;
- The ongoing proxy war in Syria and the involvement of both global and regional powers bringing about an increasing Russian presence in the Eastern Mediterranean;
- The polarization of the Middle East along sectarian fault lines and the redrawing of borders in a post-American era;
- The stagnation in the world economy and consequent pressures on trade and financial arrangements in an environment of global inequality and insufficient demand;
- The transition from a unipolar world to a multi-polar or indeed non-polar world where hegemonic management of



global problems need to leave its place to a genuinely multilateral and pluralistic system of global governance.

In such an unpredictable and complicated environment, Turkey and EU relations could not be left in the deep freezer for long since mutual gains of both parties were being undermined by lack of progress and diminishing cooperation. Turkey needed to upgrade the relations for multiple reasons, i.e. in order to have increased access to and mobility in the internal market, make use of the EU anchor in internal reforms and for increased international credibility, while the EU also needed to activate its ties with Turkey in order to benefit from an effective partnership in various areas such as energy, foreign and security policy, trade, fight against terrorism and management of irregular migration and to maintain its soft power in its vicinity.

While all these issues and

expectations could be managed within the accession negotiations, the stagnation of the process made it imperative to deal with bilateral issues in parallel platforms. Hence the Positive Agenda that started in 2013 with the aim of igniting the relations and opening up of alternative platforms for bilateral cooperation was followed by the visa liberalisation dialogue and Readmission Agreement and joint decision to upgrade the customs union. High-level dialogues on energy, foreign and security policy, economy etc. were also targeted to be initiated in the course of 2015 and 2016. One critical question emerged out of these developments: Are these processes alternatives to membership negotiations or are they supposed to facilitate eventual accession? The answer is not clear yet and will depend

on whether or not parties will suffice with this formula of a *sui generis* partnership and slowly let the accession process die or will strive to maintain the momentum towards accession. While the first alternative seems to be materialising, the latter may be the case based on some conditions:

- If Turkey engages in a renewed process of reforms and convince the EU of the merits of its membership;
- If the EU delivers the will to integrate Turkey as a member state due to pressing needs emanating from the international environment, such as establishing a joint front against common adversaries;
- If global actors such as the US engages in a new strategy to merge the forces of its allies in the West against challenges emanating from the Middle East and Eurasia.

A DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION VISITED IKV



A delegation of the European Commission, composed by the Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia in the European External Action Service Thomas Mayr-Harting, Director for Strategy and Turkey at the Directorate General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission Simon Mordue, Head of Trade, Economy and Agriculture at the Delegation of the EU to Turkey Balazs Gyargya and International Relations Officer from the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research Andrea Schmidt visited IKV on 22 December 2015.

The delegation was received by IKV Vice-Chairman Prof. Halûk Kabaaloğlu and IKV Vice-Chairwoman Zeynep Bodur Okyay, Member of Board of Directors Yavuz Canevi, IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas and IKV Project Director Çişel İleri. The recent developments in Turkey-EU relations and the 2015 Progress Report on Turkey were discussed during the meeting.

As a response to a question directed by the EU delegation regarding the new generation progress reports, IKV explained that the initiative taken by the European Commission to change the format of the progress reports was considered in general as a positive step. Moreover, IKV also ensured that the presentation of a roadmap in the progress report was also important for Turkey in terms of prioritizing its areas of reforms in order to align its legislation with the EU acquis.

Another important topic discussed during the visit was the Turkey-EU High Level Energy and Economic Dialogue. As it is known, the second meeting of the Turkey-EU High Level Energy Dialogue was held in the end of January and the first meeting of the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue will take place in March. The EU Delegations also ensured that all recommendations coming from IKV regarding the topics to be discussed in these High Level Meetings would be of a valuable contribution.

TERRORIST ATTACKS IN SULTANAHMET SQUARE

Following the vicious terrorist attacks which took place in Suruç in July 2015 and in Ankara in October 2015, Turkey witnessed another suicide attack in historical Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul on 12 January 2016. Eleven tourists (10 Germans and

1 Peruvian) were killed in this suicide attack.

With the increase of terrorist attacks all around the world, as it was highlighted in the G20 Summit held in November in Antalya, there is an urgent need for closer cooperation

among countries to fight against terrorism. As IKV, we condemn the terrorist attack which took place in Sultanahmet and extend our condolences to those who lost their lives and wish a fast recovery to those injured. These attacks which obstruct the

development of democracy and rule of law by targeting peace are considered as inhumane acts. We condemn all acts of terrorism and call all the international community to join hands and form a united front against terrorism.

IKV ORGANIZED A ROUND TABLE MEETING ON DATA PROTECTION IN TURKEY AND THE EU

At the occasion of the meeting hosting representatives of the civil society, academic and the business communities, IKV's publication entitled "Protection of Personal Data in Turkey and the EU" prepared by IKV Junior Researcher Ahmet Ceran was launched.

During his opening speech, the then IKV Deputy Secretary General and Research Director Melih Özsöz highlighted the new momentum witnessed in Turkey-EU relations. He emphasized the importance of the protection of personal data within the scope of accession negotiations as well as within the upgrading process of the Customs Union and the visa liberalisation process. On the other hand, he stressed that the issue of data protection has a great influence not only on international systems, but also on social lives of individuals.

IKV Junior Researcher Ahmet Ceran pointed out that the new IKV publication is focusing on current problems encountered in data protection. The protection of personal data plays an important role not only in the alignment

with related chapters of the EU *acquis* within Turkey's EU accession process but also in the fulfilment of the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap and in the upgrading process of the Customs Union. However, IKV Junior Researcher Ceran highlighted that one of the main problems in this area is the lack of regulation on this issue in Turkey. In this respect, Turkey is the only European Council member which has not ratified European Council Convention No. 108, which is the first regulation at the international level concerning the subject.

During the round table meeting, Chair of Transparency International Turkey Oya Özarslan and the Founding and Managing Partner of ELIG Attorneys-at-Law Gönenc Gürkaynak touched upon fundamental rights and freedoms in Turkey and the relation between the protection of personal data and related rights such as the limits of the right to access to information and freedom of expression.

At the meeting, it was highlighted that transparency of



the campaign funds and financial assets of politicians is vital. In this respect, the examples of Mexico, Croatia and the UK where the citizens have the right to call upon politicians to be more accountable were given. It was also emphasized that limits upon the right of privacy are abstract and that areas such as the right to be forgotten are widely open to abuse. The adoption of a national regulation aligning with the EU *acquis* and the need for

supervisory authority were also highlighted during the meeting.

The issue of data processing was also one of the topics discussed during the meeting. In this regard, the importance of financial gains of efficient data processing and R&D potential were highlighted. It was indicated that some existing regulations empowering public institutions regarding the processing of personal data have the potential to present some risks. It was mentioned that the most essential

need in the area of personal data processing is transparency. In this respect, data owners must be informed and enlightened about the process at all stages.

During the debate session of the meeting, assessments on some key issues such as the compatibility of the draft law comparing EU standards, difficulty of its application in the short term and the possible reactions of the EU institutions regarding the draft law was also brought forward.

IKV PARTICIPATED TO THE PANEL "TURKEY-EU RELATIONS: REFUGEE CRISIS, EU ACCESSION PROCESS AND THE CUSTOMS UNION"

IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, IKV Project Director Çișel İleri and IKV Senior Researcher Selen Akses participated to the panel entitled "Turkey-EU relations: refugee crisis, EU accession process and the Customs Union", which was organized by the Economic, Social and Political Practice and Research Center of Turgut Özal University on 17 December 2015 at Ankara.

The opening speeches of the panel were delivered by the Rector of Turgut Özal University, Prof. Abdulkadir Şengün and the Vice-Rector, Prof. Muhammet Kösecik. The panel, entitled "Turkey-EU relations: refugee crisis, EU accession process and the Customs Union", was chaired by former Member of IKV Board of Directors Prof. Ridvan Karluk.

Following the opening speeches, IKV Secretary-General

Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas revealed information regarding the current status of the Turkey-EU negotiations process and challenges in Turkey-EU relations. She drew attention to the slow pace of the negotiation process by pointing out that so far 15 chapters have been opened and one closed temporarily. Moreover, IKV Secretary-General Nas highlighted the importance of strong political will from the

government and civil society of EU Member States and candidate countries. Lastly, she stated that the signature of the Readmission Agreement and the decision to modernize the Customs Union gave impetus to Turkey-EU relations.

IKV Project Director Çișel İleri assessed the Progress Reports on Turkey published by the European Commission. Pointing out that the 2015 Progress Report on Turkey constitutes the first example of the new-generation of Progress Reports, she stressed that, the progress made over the last year for each chapter is evaluated according to four criteria and Turkey's chapter-specific alignment with the EU *acquis* according to five separate criteria. In her presentation, she pointed out that the areas where Turkey shows signs of backsliding are freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and public procurement. She also highlighted that there were also criticism regarding the independence of the Central Bank, the governance of monetary policy, macroeconomic inequalities,

gender equality and quality in education.

Finally, IKV Senior Researcher Selen Akses gave a presentation on the revision of the Customs Union. She referred to the problems encountered in the current functioning of the Customs Union. In this respect, she stressed that whilst Turkey has to align its trade policy with the EU's preferential trade regime; Turkey is not yet included in the decision-making process and the negotiations conducted between the EU and third countries. This creates an asymmetric situation in disfavour of Turkey. She also informed participants about the need to update the Customs Union and the process which awaits Turkey. Following the decision in May to upgrade the Customs Union, both parties will conduct impact assessments and consultation process with relevant stakeholders. If the negotiations are approved by the relevant authorities, the negotiations are expected to start at the end of 2016.



IKV Brief on the "EU's new aviation strategy" published

IKV launched a board game on the EU

8th Ambassadors Conference

EU-Turkey JCC met with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Trinational Winter University Programme was held in Istanbul

IKV Brief on "EU Professional Card" published

IKV tackled Turkey-EU relations in Denizli

Minister for EU Affairs Bozkır's visit to Italy (28-30 January)

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RY 2016

- 1 The Netherlands took over the EU round presidency
- 2 French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian's visit to Turkey
- 3 Minister for EU Affairs Volkan Bozkır's visit to TRNC
- 4 Terrorist attacks in Sultanahmet Square
- 5 British Foreign Minister Philip Hammond's visit to Turkey
- 6 Minister for EU Affairs Bozkır's visit to Brussels (14-16 January)
- 7 Minister for EU Affairs Bozkır's visit to Strasbourg and Berlin
- 8 Prime Minister Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Germany
- 9 Turkey-EU High Level Political Dialogue
- 10 President Erdoğan received EU Delegation
- 11 Second Meeting of Turkey-EU High Level Energy Dialogue (28-29 January)

IKV TACKLED TURKEY-EU RELATIONS IN DENİZLİ

IKV tackled Turkey-EU relations at the several events organized by Denizli Chamber of Industry (DSO) and Denizli-EU Information Center on 26 January 2016.

IKV gave a conference entitled "A Horizon Tour on Turkey-EU Relations: Myths vs. Facts and Latest Developments" at Pamukkale University in cooperation with Denizli EU Information Centre. Recent developments in Turkey-EU relations, the assessment of the Turkey Progress Report 2015, EU financial funds and the modernization of the Customs Union were the main topics discussed at the conference.

Following the opening speech delivered by DSO Chairman Mustafa Keçeci, the first speaker of the panel, IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas revealed information on the steps and current situation in the Turkey-EU negotiations process and the challenges ahead in Turkey-EU relations. Assessing the current state of play in the negotiations, IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Nas drew attention to the slow pace of the negotiations process. However, she also

explained that the signing of the Readmission Agreement and the decision to modernize the Customs Union gave further impetus to Turkey-EU relations. She also stated that without doubt the refugee crisis would constitute an important item of Turkey-EU relations' agenda in the upcoming period.

In her presentation, she also touched upon how the EU was perceived in the Turkish public opinion and about some common misperceptions. In this respect, she referred to the results of a public opinion survey conducted under IKV activities which aimed at identifying the level of information and awareness among the Turkish public opinion on EU and further analysing the support for Turkey's EU membership. According to the results of the survey, while 4 out of 5 respondents to the survey have stated that they have heard of the EU before, 85% of respondents declared that they have "none" or "a little" knowledge of the EU. The survey also showed that although

61.8% of the Turkish public opinion supports Turkey's EU membership, only 30% of the respondents believe that Turkey will become a member of the EU.

IKV Brussels Representative Haluk Nuray informed participants regarding the changes that are currently occurring in the world trading system. He put special emphasis on Asia which is becoming an important market for consumers and a key centre of production. With the changes in the production structure and trade, IKV Brussels Representative Nuray further referred to the importance gained by the global value chains. In this respect, he underlined that Turkey needs to become part of this global value chains.

In her presentation, IKV Senior Researcher Selen Akses informed the participants about the need to update the Customs Union and the process which awaits Turkey. In this respect, Senior Researcher Akses pointed out to the problems encountered



IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas

within the current functioning of the Customs Union and the need to upgrade it. Furthermore, she also highlighted that although Turkey has to align its trade policy with the EU's preferential trade regime; Turkey is not included in the decision-making process and the negotiations conducted by the EU with third countries. This creates an asymmetric situation in disfavour of Turkey. Following the decision in May to upgrade the Customs Union, both parties will conduct impact assessments and consultation process with relevant stakeholders.

Lastly, IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave information on EU financial

aids such as the IPA funds and EU Programmes (Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, COSME, EaSI, Erasmus+, Customs 2020 and Fiscalis 2020).

Following the conference, IKV Delegation participated in the general session of the DSO Assembly. At this meeting which was chaired by DSO President of Assembly Mehmet Tosunoğlu and DSO Chairman Müjdat Keçeci, the latest developments in Turkey-EU relations, EU financial funds, the modernisation process of Customs Union and TTIP effects on Turkey were discussed. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Nas also informed about IKV's working areas and its activities.

PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN RECEIVED MEMBERS OF THE TURKEY-EU JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received the representatives of the member institutions of the Turkey-EU Joint Consultative Committee, including TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu.

President Erdoğan's meeting with the representatives of member institutions of the Turkey-EU Joint Consultative Committee, which was

closed to the press, took place on 13 January 2016 at the Presidential Complex. TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, TESK Chairman Bendevi Palandöken, General Director of HAK-İş Mahmut Arslan, Director of the Memur-Sen Ali Yalçın, General Director of Turkey Kamu-Sen İsmail Koncuk, Chair of Türk-İş Ergün Atalay, TİSK Chairman of Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations Yağız

Eyüboğlu and Secretary-General of Union of Chambers of Agriculture of Turkey Hikmet Yavuz Yiğit attended the meeting.

Following the meeting, TOBB President Hisarcıklıoğlu explained briefly members of the press that they informed President Erdoğan about their agenda for 2016 and exchanged views on their working programme with the President.

EXPLAINING THE EU WITH A BOARD GAME



IKV prepared a general knowledge board game which introduces the concept of "Europeanness" to all concerned groups especially the youth through a more innovative and entertaining approach. With this board game, IKV explains the EU and its values to Turkish children

above the age of 6 and the young people. The board game entitled "Step by Step towards an Adventure: Evropa" was prepared with the support of the EU Delegation in Turkey within the framework of the EU Information Centres Network project.

TURKEY-EU HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL DIALOGUE MEETING WAS HELD IN ANKARA

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn and Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides visited Ankara on 25 January 2016.

EU delegation met with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır. The meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu and Minister for EU Affairs Bozkır was realised within the framework of the Turkey-EU High Level Political Dialogue. The ongoing refugee crisis, the visa liberalisation dialogue, joint fight against terrorism and the latest developments in the Turkey-EU negotiations process were the main topics discussed during the meeting.

During the Turkey-EU High Level Political Dialogue, the parties discussed in detail the concrete steps to be taken in the upcoming period in order to fulfil commitments agreed upon at the Turkey-EU Summit which was held on 29 November 2015. Both parties welcomed the revitalisation of Turkey's EU accession process and reiterated their common determination in advancing their comprehensive agenda in order to yield further results in that respect.

Furthermore, current pressing



issues of common concern such as the ongoing migration crisis, the visa liberalisation dialogue, the fight against terrorism were discussed. Within this framework, the EU side reiterated its commitment to further expand its overall financial support of 3 billion euros to be granted to Turkey as agreed within the framework of the Joint Action Plan. Furthermore, both parties underlined the necessity to enhance the interception capacity of the Turkish Coast Guard and further highlighted

the importance of maintaining a system of coordinated reporting as regards migration and refugee flows. The EU side commended Turkey's efforts regarding the integration of migrants into Turkish society, notably the adoption of legislation on granting Syrian nationals legal access to the Turkish labour market. Both parties stressed the need to increase cooperation in setting up resettlement programs and schemes within the framework of a spirit of burden-sharing as had been

indicated in the Joint Action Plan.

Both parties stressed the importance of pursuing efforts to start the official negotiations of the revision of the Customs Union by the end of 2016. Regarding the issue of energy, the EU side explained that Turkey stands as a critical partner for the EU's energy security and called upon greater cooperation in that respect. Regarding the fight against terrorism, Turkey and the EU expressed their full condemnation of the terrorist attacks which have struck some Member States of the EU, Turkey and other parts in the world. High Representative Mogherini renewed

the EU's condemnation of all forms of terrorism, reiterated the EU's commitment to fight all terrorist groups. As regards to the Cyprus issue, both sides expressed their satisfaction that settlement talks have been resumed and offered their support to the efforts of UN Secretary General's Special Adviser on Cyprus Espen Barth Eide in order to achieve a comprehensive solution to that pending issue.

Lastly, both parties agreed on a joint work plan aiming at determining the next steps to be taken in the upcoming six months in order to maintain the current impetus in Turkey-EU relations.

TIMMERMANS' VISIT TO TURKEY TO DISCUSS THE REFUGEE CRISIS

First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans visited Ankara on 11 January 2016 in order to discuss the refugee crisis and the implementation process of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan with Turkish officials. During his visit, Timmermans met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır and Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdağ.

During First Vice-President Timmermans' meeting with Minister Bozkır, the EU representative thanked the Turkish Minister for his constructive approach towards the refugee plan. However in order to present a positive report at the EU Council in February, Timmermans stressed that Turkey needs to fulfill the requirements set by the EU in terms of reducing the refugee flows into the EU. First Vice-President Timmermans explained that the initiative taken by Turkey to give resident permits to Syrian



First Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans visited Ankara

refugees settling in Turkey was well-received in the EU. However, he also stated that further efforts are needed especially to support Syrian childrens' education and their access to healthcare services.

First Vice-President Timmermans stressed the importance of further pursuing the negotiation process with Turkey since it represents an important catalyzer for Turkey to reach upon EU norms such as the rule of law, democracy and freedom

of expression. Lastly, he also highlighted that relations with Turkey currently started to focus on positive and common aspects.

In the aftermath of his visit to Turkey, First Vice-President Timmermans also made a speech at the College Meeting in Brussels on 13 January. He stated that both Turkey and the EU agreed on the importance of joint action to reducing irregular flows to Europe.

HEATED DEBATE IN THE EU OVER THE €3 BILLION AID FOR THE REFUGEES IN TURKEY

At the Turkey-EU Summit held on 29 November 2015, the EU had reaffirmed its commitment to provide humanitarian assistance and to expand its financial support to help the refugees in Turkey. As part of a comprehensive cooperation agenda based on shared responsibilities and mutual commitment, the EU agreed to provide financial aid amounting to 3 billion euros over two years under the Joint Action Plan agreed between Turkey and the EU.

During the Ecofin Council held on 15 January 2016, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi expressed his reservations regarding the sources of the financing of this aid. According to the European Commission's initial proposal, it was foreseen that 500 million euros will be

covered by the EU budget while the remaining 2.5 billion euros will be provided by EU Member States. At the Council meeting, Italy has advocated that the financial aid should be fully covered by the EU budget. Following these comments, tensions have risen between Italy and the other Member States as well as the Commission. Strong reaction came especially from the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker who argued that "these 3 billion euros are a question of credibility for the EU". This financial aid is of great importance for Turkey especially in terms of improving the living conditions and integration chances of Syrians seeking refuge in the country.

MINISTER FOR EU AFFAIRS BOZKIR'S OFFICIAL VISITS

In January 2016, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır paid an official visit to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Brussels, Strasbourg and Rome were among the major European cities on Minister's itinerary this month.

Visit to TRNC

Upon his reappointment as Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır paid his first official visit to the TRNC on 6 January 2016. During his visit to TRNC, Minister for EU Affairs Bozkır was received by President of TRNC Mustafa Akıncı, Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic Sibel Siber, Prime Minister Ömer Kalyoncu and Foreign Minister Emine Çolak. During the meetings, Minister Bozkır and his interlocutors exchanged views on the Cyprus issue, bilateral relations between Turkey and the TRNC and Turkey's EU accession process. Minister Bozkır was also awarded an honorary doctorate degree by Girne American University, where he delivered a lecture entitled "Turkey, EU and Cyprus".

Visit to Brussels

Minister Bozkır visited Brussels on 15 January 2016. Within the scope of his visit, Minister Bozkır held separate meetings with members of the Juncker Commission including Vice-President for Energy Union

Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström and Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Günther Oettinger. During these meetings, Minister Bozkır and Commissioners had the opportunity to exchange views on a range of different aspects of the Turkey-EU relations such as the preparations for the opening of Chapter 15 on Energy and the Turkey-EU High Level Energy Dialogue meeting scheduled for 28-29 January on the one hand, the revision of the Customs Union and the potential impacts of TTIP on the other hand. During the meetings, Minister Bozkır underscored the importance of the Commissioners' participation in the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue which is set to be held in March in Turkey.

Visit to Strasbourg

On 20 January 2016, Minister Bozkır visited Strasbourg to hold meetings at the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. At the Council of Europe, Minister Bozkır came together with Secretary-General of the Council



Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır (left) and President of TRNC Mustafa Akıncı (right)

of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland and with President of the Venice Commission Gianni Buquicchio. Among the issues discussed were the political reform process in Turkey, preparations for a new constitution, the issue of irregular migration and terrorism.

At the European Parliament, Minister Bozkır held separate meetings with EP Rapporteur for Turkey Kati Piri, co-chairmen and members of the Friends of Turkey Group as well as with Chair of the Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats Gianni Pittella, Chair of the Group of European People's Party Manfred Weber and Chair of the European

Conservatives and Reformists Group Syed Kamall. At the Parliament, Minister Bozkır and his interlocutors exchanged views on the political reform process, accession negotiations, the visa liberalisation dialogue, the fight against terrorism and cooperation in addressing irregular migration as well as regional developments.

Visit to Rome

At the occasion of his visit to Italy on 28-30 January 2016, Minister Bozkır held meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy Paolo Gentiloni and State Secretary in charge of European Affairs Sandro Gozi. Minister Bozkır exchanged

views with his Italian counterparts regarding bilateral and Turkey-EU relations, latest developments in Turkey's EU accession process as well as cooperation in the ongoing migration crisis and the fight against terrorism. Within the framework of his visit, Minister Bozkır also had the opportunity to meet with Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and EU Policies Committee of the Italian Senate and the House of Representatives of Italy respectively. In that context, Minister Bozkır briefed members of both chambers as regards the current state of Turkey-EU relations, the issue of migration management and the joint fight against terrorism.



THE 8th AMBASSADORS CONFERENCE HELD IN ANKARA AND GAZİANTEP

Turkey's Ambassadors serving at home and abroad attended the 8th Ambassadors Conference which took place in Ankara and Gaziantep on 10-16 January 2016, with the theme entitled "Crisis Management and Humanitarian Solutions". High-level protocol guests and speakers participated in the annual conference to discuss with ambassadors various topics related to Turkish

foreign policy as well as the ongoing humanitarian crises throughout the region.

Within the framework of this Conference, First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans delivered a speech focusing on the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan, the current refugee crisis and Turkey-EU partnership. In his speech, First Vice-President Timmermans assessed Turkey-EU

cooperation in the refugee crisis and stressed the importance of the efforts shown by both parties to manage the crisis and to reduce the number of refugees crossing the EU. At the Conference, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır remarked that the government is currently working on a legislation that will offer work permits for Syrian refugees in Turkey.

TRINATIONAL WINTER UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME WAS HELD IN ISTANBUL

The Trinational Winter University Programme, bringing together students from Turkey, Germany and France was held at Yeditepe University in Istanbul on 11-15 January 2016. This Programme was realised in cooperation with Yeditepe University Faculty of Law, Université Paris Ouest-Nanterre La Défense and University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. Prominent academicians and students from these Universities attended this Programme to discuss a wide range of legal topics such as company law, capital market law, mediation, constitutional law, business law, investment arbitration, international trade arbitration, environmental law, competition law and EU law.

During the Programme, IKV Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Law at Yeditepe University Prof. Halûk Kabaalioğlu gave information on the latest



developments as regards Turkey-EU relations to the participants and stressed that Turkey was pursuing its EU membership objective with full determination. Reminding that the process has been hampered by some EU Member States, he explained that some chapters have been successfully opened to negotiations following the initiatives taken by French President François Hollande. He also pointed out that the ongoing refugee crisis has also brought a new momentum in Turkey-EU relations.

DATA PROTECTION AGENDA OF BRUSSELS AND ANKARA: SAME GOAL/DIFFERENT MOTIVES

Since data protection has become one of the buzzwords of the current age, all actors of global governance including nations, regional integration movements and international bodies place this issue at the top of their agenda. To this end, with similar enthusiasm but with slightly different motives, both Turkey and the EU accelerated their efforts towards ensuring a beneficial data protection legislation.

Ahmet CERAN, IKV Junior Researcher

The European Parliament, the EU Council and the European Commission have agreed upon all principles of the EU Data Protection Reform on 15 December 2015. The reform package is comprised of the General Data Protection Regulation that is expected to be effective within all 28 EU countries and of a Data Protection Directive aiming at ensuring the cooperation among judicial and criminal enforcement bodies at the European level. Data protection reform has been on the Agenda of all three main EU institutions since 2012. The Commission has presented the first Draft Regulation in 2012 then the process emerged along with long-lasting divergences and compromises of the Parliament and the Council.

The EU Data Protection Reform has been considered as one of the main elements of the EU's Digital Single Market and Digital Agenda programmes for a long time. According to a Eurobarometer survey published by the Commission on 24 June 2015, 67% of the Europeans consider that they have partial or no control over the information they provide online. Thus, the General Data Protection Regulation aims at granting EU citizens full control over their personal data within the EU. The data protection reform that has been agreed by the three European institutions is also expected to ensure economic gains for the continent where 315 million citizens use the Internet every day. It is expected that the current Digital Single Market Strategy would additionally save up to 415 billion euros in growth. Under these circumstances, protection of personal data is a key element for a credible, safe and efficient Digital Single Market. Nevertheless 72% of Internet users in Europe still worry that they are being asked too much personal data online.

To that end, the agreed Regulation mainly aims at ensuring

an enhanced level of data protection and privacy with a notion of fundamental rights and freedoms and puts a special emphasis on granting data internet users more control over their personal data with the efficient monitoring mechanism across the EU. In conjunction with the General Data Protection Regulation, the right to know when one's data has been hacked, the right to be forgotten, easier access to its own data, data protection by design and default and stronger enforcement all around the EU would be guaranteed. Also, the establishment of the "one stop shop" mechanism ensuring that EU citizens and businesses would be dealing with one supervisory authority in every EU Member States is on the agenda. According to statistics revealed by the Commission, benefits of a single data protection law replacing the national legislations in 28 EU Member States would be estimated at approximately 2.3 billion euros a year. The regulation is expected to enter into force in all Member States in 2018. Until then, Member States are expected to enhance their technical, legislative as well as their administrative capacities in line with the regulation.

Political Motives for Data Protection Reform in Turkey

In parallel to these developments in the EU, the data protection reform has emerged as a critical item on the law makers' agenda in Turkey. The Cabinet forwarded the Draft Law on Protection of Personal Data to the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 18 January 2016 and the attention of all stakeholders in Turkey once again turned to this issue. The data protection journey in Turkey began in 1981 when Turkish authorities signed the European Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regards to the Automatic Processing of Personal Data even though the Convention has not yet been ratified. Ever since, there has been a lack of



legislative and political will towards establishing an adequate legislative framework regarding the protection of personal data. Turkey is the only Council of Europe member which has not yet ratified the related Convention. Turkey also does not present a comprehensive and general law on this issue. Therefore, the developments which occurred in January 2016 could be considered as a milestone in regards to the data protection journey in Turkey.

The recent steps towards an efficient law on protection of personal data in Turkey are based on a different motive than in the EU. While the EU is seeking to increase the benefits of the digital economy and focusing on the value of data in the digital age as well as in protecting fundamental rights and values, the Turkish side's approach is in keeping with a "Turkey-EU relations-centric" political impetus. For three reasons, data protection issue has a great importance for the future of Turkey-EU relations.

First of all, the criteria indicated within Chapters 23 and 24 in the context of Turkey's EU negotiation process require an efficient legal system aligned with EU standards regarding data protection in Turkey.

Secondly, as reflected in the national and international press, currently Turkey-EU Visa Liberalisation Dialogue is the hottest topic in Turkey-EU relations together with the migration crisis. The Turkish side has been demanding visa-free travel to Europe for all its citizens. To this end, as agreed by both parties in 2013, Turkey has to fulfill 72 criteria according to the Turkey-EU Visa Liberalisation Roadmap. In relation with integrated border management, document safety and cooperation in criminal and judicial matters, data protection reform has been widely discussed along these 72 criteria. As soon as Turkey adopts the Draft Law on Protection of Personal Data, there is a possibility that, many of these criteria would be fulfilled at once. Also this would lead to

enhanced cooperation between Turkish border control authorities, judicial authorities, enforcement authorities and security units and their counterparts in the EU Member States and EU institutions.

Thirdly, data protection reform is also essential for the economic relations between Turkey and the EU. As mentioned within the EU Directive in force and the prospective EU General Data Protection Regulation, third countries hosting the companies expecting data transfer to or from the EU needs to be granted "safe country" status by the competent authorities in the EU. To be able to get safe country status, a third country needs to have a comprehensive data protection regulation in line with European standards. Therefore, in the digital age, as it would be understood, having a law on personal data protection is not solely enough. It is of utmost importance that the data protection reform in Turkey occurs in line with EU standards.