



IKVMNTHLY

ISSUE: 128 JANUARY 2026

www.ikv.org.tr / contact: ikv@ikv.org.tr

THE GASC'S TURN IN THE COUNCIL PRESIDENCY AND RELATIONS WITH TÜRKİYE

The GASC undertook the presidency of the Council of the EU for the second time, concluding the current trio with Poland and Denmark.

Melike SÖNMEZ
IKV Junior Researcher

The Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC) joined the EU on 1 May 2004 as part of the fifth enlargement wave, despite Türkiye's objections due to the application contradicting with the founding agreements. Its legally questionable application, submitted unilaterally in 1990 and accepted by the European Commission in 1993, proceeded regardless of the unresolved Cyprus dispute. Contrary to the 1960 constitutional arrangements that granted veto powers to the Turkish Cypriot Vice President and the Treaty of Guarantee, which prohibits Cypriot membership in an organization unless both Türkiye and Greece are members as well, the EU formally included the GASC in the enlargement process at the 1994 Corfu Summit, launched accession negotiations in 1998, signed the accession treaty in 2003, and admitted it as a full member in 2004 under the name "Republic of Cyprus". GASC became a member of the EU despite a majority of the population rejecting the UN's Annan plan for a peaceful resolution of the Cypriot dispute in a referendum. While the Turkish Cypriots voted for the Annan Plan, they were excluded and in a way punished by the EU despite having supported EU's values of peaceful resolution of disputes. Türkiye reacted strongly, stressing that the EU membership of the GASC would not affect its legal rights as a guarantor or its obligations concerning the island, as also acknowledged in the UN documents.

Following the Council decision of December 2006, Türkiye's accession negotiations were effectively frozen due to its refusal due to not opening ports and airports to vehicles originating from GASC. As a result, negotiation chapters related broadly to the free movement of goods and services, agriculture, fisheries and maritime affairs, transport, customs, financial services, and external trade were suspended. When the EU reconsidered this decision in



2009, the GASC blocked any review and unilaterally vetoed additional chapters covering areas such as workers' mobility, energy, judiciary and fundamental rights, internal security, education, and foreign and defence policy. These developments entrenched the Cyprus issue as a central obstacle not only to Türkiye's EU accession process but also to overall Türkiye-EU relations.

Priorities of the GASC Presidency

Poland, Denmark, and the GASC determined three guiding principles for the 18-month trio Council Presidency: "a strong and secure Europe", "a competitive Europe", and "a free and democratic Europe". Additionally, the GASC announced that it adopted the slogan "An Open and Autonomous Union" to emphasise the importance it attaches to foreign relations, independence, and global engagement.

The priorities of the Presidency are outlined as follows:

• **Autonomy Through Security, Defence Readiness and Preparedness**

The GASC Presidency underlines that the path to a secure Europe lies in reducing dependencies in the defence sector and enabling Europe to defend itself through increased autonomy. It is emphasised that security is no longer addressed within outdated definitions and frameworks; instead, a multidimensional

understanding of security is adopted, focusing on expanding security capacity by reducing risks and strengthening preventive capabilities.

The priorities statement notes that at a time when threats to Europe's security and stability are increasing, hybrid attacks, airspace violations, the war in Ukraine highlight the need to reduce defence dependencies and achieve strategic autonomy. In this context, the rapid implementation of initiatives such as the White Paper on the Future of European Defence and the Readiness Roadmap 2030 is prioritised. Developing EU-NATO relations in an inclusive and beneficial manner, advancing policies in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and supporting climate adaptation and water resilience strategies are also among the priorities. Emphasis is also placed on the implementation of the Migration and Asylum Pact, combating disinformation and threats to democracy, ensuring children's online safety, fighting antisemitism and Islamophobia, and preventing intolerance and racism, while combating organised crime, terrorism, and violent crime is also highlighted.

• **Autonomy Through Competitiveness**

Priority will be placed on advancing comprehensive proposals designed to support the growth

of small businesses, streamline EU regulatory frameworks, and reduce bureaucratic burdens, with the objective of fostering a more self-sufficient European industrial ecosystem. Completing the Single Market, modernising industry, steering green and digital transitions, securing critical raw materials, strengthening clean technology supply chains, and reducing energy vulnerabilities are also listed among the objectives. In addition to strengthening energy grid infrastructure and promoting clean energy, enhancing interregional connectivity through key energy corridors is highlighted. European ports and inland waterway industries are expected to lead the clean and digital transition, ensuring maritime security and strengthening Europe's maritime leadership.

• **Open to the World, Autonomous**

This priority emphasises that while preserving the EU's autonomy and motivation to deepen integration, the Union must not compromise on acting on the basis of global cooperation. Accordingly, the EU enlargement is described as a vision that unites Europe and expands the area of peace, democracy, security, and stability. It is underlined that accession processes of candidate countries, including Türkiye, Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkan states, will progress under fair conditions and on a merit-based approach. It is also emphasised that the EU should be regarded as an open Union to all neighbours in the East and South, and that during its Presidency, the GASC will work to revitalise relations with the Union's Southern partners and the Gulf. Attention is also drawn to the concrete and results-oriented cooperation framework offered by the newly announced New Mediterranean Pact.

• **An Autonomous Union of Values that Leaves No One Behind**

It is emphasised that strengthening Europe's autonomy through public participation and shared values is a key objective. In this context, reinforcing the rule of law, enhancing social cohesion, combating poverty, and ensuring

access to affordable housing and energy are identified as priority areas. The implementation of the European Child Guarantee to protect and support children, combat cyberbullying, and promote digital well-being is highlighted. Gender equality, equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, and intergenerational solidarity will also be supported. Investments will be made in education, training, and lifelong learning to adapt to digital and green transitions, and resilient working conditions will be developed for farmers and fishers.

• **A Long-Term Budget for an Autonomous Union**

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028–2034 is presented as a strategic roadmap for operationalising long-term priorities through concrete actions. The new budget is expected to protect EU interests, reduce critical dependencies, enhance competitiveness, enable rapid and independent responses to crises and security risks, and accommodate future enlargements.

Key Takeaways from the GASC Presidency Priorities

The GASC reaffirms its commitment to multilateralism, emphasising full respect for the UN Charter, international law, and international maritime law, and underlining its role as a stable and reliable partner. Support is reiterated for structured dialogue with Southern and Eastern neighbours and candidate countries within the European Neighbourhood Policy, as well as for sustained engagement on long-standing unresolved issues. In this context, it may be observed that the GASC signals openness to enhanced dialogue with Türkiye during its Presidency. The Presidency also commits to acting as a responsible and impartial broker, respecting institutional procedures and working closely with the European Parliament and the Commission to address challenges effectively. The website of the GASC Presidency also offers a Turkish language option, as Turkish is one of the official languages.



IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU PARTICIPATED IN A PANEL ORGANISED IN COOPERATION WITH THE EU TÜRKİYE DELEGATION AND MEXT



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu participated as a speaker in the panel titled "Beyond Borders: Regional Connectivity for Resilient Trade" organised on 8 December 2025 in collaboration with the EU Delegation to Türkiye and the MESS Technology Centre (MEXT). In his speech, Chairperson Zeytinoğlu

touched upon the importance of updating the Customs Union for Türkiye-EU connectivity and resilient supply chains, foreign investments in Türkiye, visa liberalisation, freight rates, and stated that exports to Europe would be carried out more efficiently with high-speed rail networks.

IKV ORGANISED A MEETING ON THE ROADMAP FOR TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS AND THE ROLE OF IKV



IKV organised a meeting titled "The Roadmap for Türkiye-EU Relations and the Role of IKV" on 12 December 2025. The opening presentations of the meeting, introduced by IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit, were delivered by IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the European Union Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay.

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu began his remarks by referring to the mission that IKV has undertaken since its establishment in 1965 under the leadership of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and the Istanbul Chamber of Industry, as well as to former chairpersons who left their mark on the Foundation's

history. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu stated that although the accession process appears to have been de facto frozen in recent years for political reasons, IKV continues to keep Türkiye's membership objective alive and to defend Türkiye's positions.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay stated that the vulnerabilities deepened after the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine, and that in this picture the EU is caught between protectionism and connectivity and has turned towards more mercantilist policies under competitive pressure.

IKV ORGANISED A MEETING ON THE MARITIME DIMENSION OF ENERGY SECURITY IN THE BALTIC SEA AND THE BLACK SEA



IKV, in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ankara and the Consulate General in Istanbul, organised a meeting titled "The Maritime Dimension of Energy Security in the Baltic and Black Sea: Shared Challenges, Shared Horizons" on 3 December 2025. The opening speeches of the meeting, which was held within the framework of Poland's presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, were delivered by IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu, Ambassador of Poland to Türkiye Maciej Lang, and Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Gustav Lindström.

Starting his speech by celebrating IKV's 60th anniversary, IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu noted that the Foundation continues its mission on Türkiye's path to EU integration. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu stated that the Baltic and Black Seas have faced similar geopolitical risks following Russia's

attack on Ukraine, and that the importance of the security of NATO's eastern flank and the Montreux Convention regarding regional stability has increased further in this context. Pointing out that the war in Ukraine has led to a dangerous escalation in the Black Sea through attacks extending to Türkiye's exclusive economic zone, Chairperson Zeytinoğlu emphasised that the security of maritime transport routes and offshore and subsea energy infrastructure is critical for Türkiye's energy supply security and stated that the conference would contribute to the development of new analyses and policy proposals in these areas.

The closing speech of the event was delivered by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas. In her speech, IKV Secretary General Nas expressed her sincere thanks to the organising institutions, speakers, and participants.

IKV AGENDA

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in various programmes and events in December. On 2 December 2025, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker in the Green Diplomacy Forum held at Istanbul Beykoz University. In her speech, Assoc. Prof. Nas summarised the main objectives and current status of the European Green Deal.

On 16 December 2025, Assoc. Prof. Nas gave a seminar within the scope of the Jean Monnet Module titled ENGAGE–Sustainable Development Goals, coordinated



by Marmara University faculty member Prof. Gonca Oğuz Gök. In the webinar titled “Climate Action and Sustainability in EU External Governance,” Assoc. Prof. Nas addressed the European Green Deal

and its reflections in the EU’s trade policy and external relations.

On 22 December 2025, Assoc. Prof. Nas participated as a speaker in the closing meeting of the IntegrEUtor Jean Monnet module, conducted within Istanbul Technical University by faculty member Assoc. Prof. Alper Yurttaş. In her speech at the online meeting, Assoc. Prof. Nas assessed the developments that have marked Türkiye–EU relations and stated that the EU process still maintains its relevance for young people.

İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY STUDENT GROUP VISITED IKV

Faculty member of the Department of International Relations at Istanbul Bilgi University Assoc. Prof. Büke Boşnak, and students from the Department of International Relations visited IKV and the Istanbul EU Information Centre within the scope of the course titled “Conceptualising the EU: Institutions, Policies and Political Debates.”

As part of the visit, IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit gave a presentation on the history of IKV, its role in Türkiye–EU relations,



and the activities of IKV. Following the presentation, IKV Research Director Çișel İleri provided information on IKV’s publications and studies, while Istanbul EU Information Centre Coordinator and IKV Media Advisor

Mehmet Poyrazlı presented the activities of the EU Information Centre. After the presentations, the students’ questions regarding the activities of our Foundation and Türkiye–EU relations were answered.

IKV İSTANBUL EUIC ORGANISED A SEMINAR ON THE GREEN DEAL

IKV Istanbul EUIC, in collaboration with the COPFUTUREU Jean Monnet module and EDAM, organised an online seminar on 24 December 2025 titled “Europe’s Green Future: Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and the Evolution of EU Sustainability and Energy Policies”.

Moderated by Prof. Dr. Özgün Eriçer Bayır, Director of the Jean Monnet Module, the seminar featured presentations by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Nas and EDAM Secretary General Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Üstün.

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Nas emphasised that as we enter 2026, the European Green Deal has now entered its implementation phase, and despite the pressures created by COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war, the EU has not changed course, and the climate neutrality goal has



been maintained as a long-term strategy. Underlining that this transformation will inevitably create points of resistance in industry, agriculture and society, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nas stated that environmental goals must be addressed alongside their social dimensions. Stating that the EU’s climate diplomacy must be complemented by the

external dimension of the Green Deal, Associate Professor Nas emphasised that the effects of climate change on peace and security are becoming increasingly central in EU documents, but that this is becoming more difficult in an environment where multilateralism is weakening and protectionism is strengthening.

TIMELINE DECEMBER 2025

| | | |
|---|----|--|
| Foreign Minister Fidan came together with EU Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos and Vice President of the European Commission and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas. | 1 | IKV Secretary General Nas attended The Green Diplomacy Forum. |
| | 2 | |
| | 3 | IKV organised a meeting on the maritime dimension of energy security in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. |
| | 4 | |
| Deputy Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay came together with Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Michael O’Flaherty. | 5 | |
| | 6 | |
| | 7 | IKV Chairperson Zeytinoğlu participated in a panel organised in cooperation with the EU Türkiye delegation and MEXT. |
| | 8 | |
| President Erdoğan came together with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. | 9 | |
| | 10 | |
| | 11 | |
| President Erdoğan came together with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. | 12 | IKV organised a meeting on the roadmap for Türkiye–EU relations and the role of IKV. |
| | 13 | |
| | 14 | |
| | 15 | IKV Secretary General Nas spoke at a seminar on norms in EU and global governance. |
| | 16 | |
| Foreign Minister Fidan came together with UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher. | 17 | |
| | 18 | |
| | 19 | Istanbul Bilgi University student group visited IKV. |
| | 20 | |
| | 21 | IKV Secretary General Nas spoke at the panel on Türkiye–EU relations and opportunities for youth. |
| Deputy Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay came together with Bige Yücel, Chairperson of the German–Turkish Chamber of Industry and Commerce. | 22 | |
| | 23 | |
| | 24 | IKV Istanbul EUIC organised a seminar on the Green Deal. |
| | 25 | |
| President Erdoğan attended the meeting of Union of International Democrats delegation. | 26 | |
| | 27 | |
| | 28 | |
| Deputy Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay Ambassador of Germany Sibylle Katharina Sorg. | 29 | |
| | 30 | |

HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

7TH MEETING OF THE TÜRKİYE HUNGARY HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIC COOPERATION COUNCIL



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hosted Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Istanbul on 8 December 2025 for the 7th Meeting

of the Türkiye-Hungary High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC). On the occasion of the meeting, a total of 16 agreements

were signed between the two countries, covering critical areas such as defence industry, energy, technology, communications and culture. In statements following the meeting, the two leaders expressed satisfaction with the level reached in bilateral relations under the framework established in 2013, which was upgraded two years ago to an "Enhanced Strategic Partnership".

The meeting focused on various topics such as increasing trade volume targets, energy security, Türkiye's role regarding European security and migration management.

FOREIGN MINISTER FİDAN URGES EU TO ACT AS TÜRKİYE REAFFIRMS ACCESSION GOAL

Speaking to Germany's Welt am Sonntag during an official visit to Berlin, Minister Fidan underlined that Ankara's accession goal remains unchanged despite years of stagnation in the process. "Our President openly expresses our will to become an EU member. Now it is the European Union's turn," he said, calling for a revival of political will in Europe to move Türkiye's candidacy forward.

Fidan also addressed the Russia-Ukraine war, noting that both sides appear more



prepared for peace than in the past. On European security, Fidan emphasised that any potential

peace agreement should not only end the war in Ukraine but also ensure long-term stability across Europe.

Regarding Türkiye's role in European security, Fidan said Ankara shares many of Europe's experiences with Russia in conflict zones such as Syria and Libya but differs in that it has never cut off dialogue with Moscow. He highlighted NATO as the cornerstone of Europe's security architecture and noted Türkiye's interest in contributing to Europe's expanding defence industry.

TÜRKİYE AND EU STEP UP COOPERATION ON INNOVATION

On 27 November 2025, European Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation Ekaterina Zaharieva met with Türkiye's Minister of Industry and Technology, Mehmet Fatih Kacır, in Brussels for the third Türkiye-EU High-Level Dialogue on science, research, technology and innovation. Talks centred on aligning EU and Turkish research and innovation policies with the green transformation of Türkiye's industrial base. In this context, Smart Specialisation Strategies were highlighted as key tools



to steer investments and policy priorities. Türkiye introduced the Industrial Decarbonisation Investment Platform (TIDIP), developed with the EBRD and the World Bank Group, which

aims to accelerate systemic emissions reductions in line with Türkiye's nationally determined contributions, and its 2053 net-zero goal. The European Commission expressed its intention to support the platform, describing it as a pioneering initiative for industrial transformation. The dialogue also underlined the importance of innovation-driven growth, particularly the role of advanced technologies and effective financing for startups and scale-ups in translating research outcomes into market ready solutions.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE MINISTERS DISCUSSED MIGRATION



Ministers from Council of Europe member states convened in Strasbourg on 10 December 2025 for an exceptional ministerial conference to discuss migration related challenges, European security concerns, and the application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Convened on Human Rights Day, the informal meeting brought together ministers amid growing pressure from several member states to reassess how the Convention is applied in the context of irregular migration and the expulsion of foreign nationals convicted of serious crimes.

Speaking at a parallel Council of Europe Justice Ministers' Conference,

Minister of Justice Yılmaz Tunç stressed the human dimension of migration, while underlining that unilateral national measures are insufficient arguing that international solidarity grounded in human rights and the rule of law is essential to address global displacement driven by war, poverty and climate change. Minister Tunç also met with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Alain Bertet, on 11 December, reiterating Türkiye's commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, and stating that Türkiye will continue to strengthen their close cooperation and relations with the Council of Europe.

TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER FİDAN ATTENDED NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING

NATO Foreign Ministers met in Brussels on 3 December 2025. Ministers came together to discuss the upcoming summit in July in Ankara, increasing threats to common security, and support for Ukraine. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte warned allies about Russia's threatening actions, such as drone incursions into airspace, as well as Russia's cooperation with China, North Korea, and Iran. However, he added that NATO allies respond to these actions together in unity, and that all allies should take greater and faster responsibility in this regard.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan represented Türkiye at the meeting. Fidan touched upon Türkiye's powerful and modern military capabilities and defence industry, Türkiye's contribution to NATO and Europe's security, Türkiye's preparations for the upcoming summit, and Türkiye's support for Ukraine. In his press statement, he highlighted Türkiye's key position and willingness to host peace talks for the Russia-Ukraine war. As part of the summit, he held bilateral meetings with his counterparts:



Canada's Foreign Minister Anita Anand, Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Maxime Prévot, and Ukrainian Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council Rustem Umerov.

Rutte also held a press conference after the meeting and highlighted key points, including the strengthening of Türkiye's defence industry, compulsory military service, peace talks for the Russia-Ukraine war, and the rise of China. Separately, Supreme Allied Commander Europe Alexis G. Grynkeiwich held a press conference and answered questions related to NATO-EU cooperation and Türkiye's role in Europe's security. He stated that some of the successful people who serve in the Alliance come from Türkiye.

TCG HIZIRREIS COMMISSIONED AS TÜRKİYE ADVANCES NATIONAL SUBMARINE PROGRAM

Türkiye has commissioned TCG Hızırreis, the second submarine delivered under its Reis-class new type submarine programme, at a ceremony held at Gölcük Shipyard Command. The platform is fitted with an air-independent propulsion (AIP) system, designed to extend underwater endurance while supporting low-noise operations.

The submarine is designed for long-range patrol missions and has a low acoustic signature. It is reported to measure 68.5 metres in length and 6.3 metres in beam, with a complement of around 40 personnel. The platform's armament is described as being launched via six torpedo tubes, enabling torpedo and anti-ship missile operations.

European defence media coverage noted that Hızırreis' entry into service marks another milestone in Türkiye's submarine modernisation effort, alongside



wider efforts to maintain an effective naval presence in the Black Sea, the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean. Reports highlighted the programme's roots in the German Type 214 design, adapted through Türkiye-specific upgrades intended to meet Turkish Naval Forces requirements.

The commissioning is also linked to broader industrial

participation by Turkish defence firms, framed as supporting technology transfer and domestic production capacity. Coverage also pointed to discussions of possible future upgrades, including potential integration of Gezgin cruise missiles for submarine launch, as Türkiye continues work on longer-term undersea programmes.

WARSHIP EXPORT TO ROMANIA MARKS NEW PHASE IN TÜRKİYE'S DEFENCE INDUSTRY

Türkiye has taken a significant step in defence exports with the signing of a warship sales agreement between state-owned defence firm ASFAT and Romania. The deal covers the export of TCG Akhisar, a corvette completed in 2024 at the İstanbul Shipyard Command and represents Türkiye's first-ever warship sale to a country that is both a NATO and EU member.

The agreement is widely viewed as a milestone for Türkiye's defence industry, reflecting growing confidence in its naval platforms and shipbuilding capabilities. ASFAT stated that the sale demonstrates the reliability, quality and technological maturity achieved by Turkish defence companies in the international market, while also elevating military cooperation between Ankara and Bucharest to a new level.

Following the agreement, TCG Akhisar is expected to enter



service with the Romanian Naval Forces as a corvette, contributing to regional maritime security in the Black Sea. The platform is also set to support Romania's naval modernisation efforts, reinforcing operational capacity and interoperability within NATO structures.

The export underscores Türkiye's broader strategy of expanding defence industry partnerships with allied and partner countries, particularly within Europe. It also highlights the increasing role of Turkish shipyards and defence firms

in delivering complex naval platforms to international customers.

As Türkiye continues to develop indigenous naval programmes and strengthen its defence export portfolio, the ASFAT-Romania agreement is seen as a reference point for future sales to NATO and EU countries. The deal not only opens new commercial opportunities but also signals Türkiye's growing presence in the European defence market through naval cooperation and industrial collaboration.

FATMA DENİZ WAS ELECTED AS THE NEW RECTOR OF TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN

With the election held on 3 December 2025, the Technical University of Berlin selected its new rector. As a result of a decision made by a majority vote of the Technical University of Berlin's Extended Academic Senate, Prof. Fatma Deniz was elected as the new rector of the Technical University of Berlin.

Born on 11 June 1983, in Munich, Germany, Fatma Deniz graduated from a high school located in Bursa, Türkiye. She has conducted significant research both in the United States and across Europe. In her research and teaching, she combines computer science, neuroscience, and data science, specialising in language processing in the brain and technical systems. In addition, her work focuses on open and reproducible science and using artificial intelligence responsibly. Also, Deniz is committed to promoting diversity, such as through mentoring programs for women and first generation university students.

The Technical University of Berlin, one of Germany's largest technical universities with more than 32,000 students, had five candidates competing for the rector position. However, after three candidates withdrew, the election was held



between two finalists, and Fatma Deniz was elected with 42 votes. In her statement following the election, Deniz thanked the university and the senate members, stating that their shared goal is to create a modern technical university that represents scientific excellence in the German capital. She added "Where research and teaching have an international profile, and where students learn to think critically, try out new things, and apply their knowledge in practice".

SPANISH-TURKISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY GAVE AWARDS TO SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES FOR 2025



The Spanish-Turkish Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented awards to successful Turkish and Spanish companies in Madrid. The Spanish tech company Amadeus and the Turkish company Tosyalı Holding received awards as the most successful companies of 2025. Türkiye's Ambassador to Madrid, Nüket Küçükkel Ezberci, delivered a speech during the ceremony, stating that Türkiye and Spain have a clear path ahead for economic partnership, investment, and joint projects. She also said that

the two countries, located on opposite sides of the Mediterranean, should come to the forefront with dialogue, partnership, and solidarity as global supply chains continue to change. Yasemen Korukçu, President of the Spanish-Turkish Chamber of Commerce and Representative of the Republic of Türkiye Investment Office in Spain, said that five chambers of commerce in Spain (Seville, Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao, and San Sebastián) and two chambers of commerce in Türkiye (Ankara and Bursa) signed agreements this year.

TURKISH SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH BRINGS NEW HOPE IN LUNG CANCER TREATMENT

A major scientific milestone has been achieved by Turkish researcher Gizem Karslı Uzunbaş, whose work at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard has led to a promising new drug candidate for the treatment of lung cancer. Following nearly six years of intensive research, the therapy has received authorisation from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), allowing it to move into the clinical trial phase involving human participants.

Developed through a rigorous research process, the drug targets the cellular mechanisms directly responsible for the development of lung cancer. By focusing on these underlying pathways, the approach aims to deliver a more precise, effective and innovative form of treatment. Encouraging results obtained during laboratory and pre-clinical studies paved the way for the FDA's positive assessment, confirming that the candidate meets key safety, efficacy and scientific standards.

Lung cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths worldwide, and the new treatment strategy is expected to



offer significant advantages. These include providing an alternative to existing therapies, opening new possibilities for patients who do not respond to current treatments, and potentially reducing adverse side effects.

Beyond its medical implications, the achievement stands as a

strong example of Turkish scientific excellence on the global stage. The FDA's approval of this work reflects not only an individual success, but also the impact of sustained scientific effort, disciplined research and Türkiye's growing contribution to international health and biotechnology research.

FIGURE PORTRAYING JESUS WAS DISCOVERED IN İZNIK

During excavations carried out at the Hisardere Necropolis in the İznik district of Bursa, a "Good Shepard" figure, which may be the only known example in Anatolia to date, was uncovered. The works carried out by the Republic of Türkiye the Ministry of Culture and Tourism contributed to the presentation of new data on a rare figure for Türkiye's religious, cultural, and artistic history.

The excavations carried out in the İznik district of Bursa are being conducted with the permission of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, under the leadership of İznik Museum Director Tolga Kopalal, and with the scientific coordination of Prof. Aygün Ekin Meriç, a faculty member of the Department of Archaeology at Dokuz Eylül University. The team, which also includes Dr. Gülşen Kutbay, conducted a detailed examination of the figure preserved as a fresco on the northern wall of the hypogeum tomb.



At the Hisardere Necropolis, which is believed to have been used by both wealthy families and lower social classes between the 2nd and 5th centuries AD, various types of graves have been identified, most notably İznik-specific terracotta slab-roofed chamber tombs. Although the southern wall of the excavated tomb has been damaged, its eastern, western, and northern

walls, as well as its ceiling, remain well preserved. It was determined that the human figures depicted in these areas display characteristics different from other examples found in the region. Furthermore, a rare Good Shepard figure was identified on the northern wall behind the kline (a rectangular, four-legged couch-like piece of furniture used in Ancient Greek culture) within the tomb.

THE NEWLY DISCOVERED STRUCTURE IN KAYSERİ IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE WORLD'S OLDEST HOSPITAL



A structure in Kayseri, believed to be the world's oldest hospital, is still awaiting preservation and recognition. Located in the Melikgazi district, the site has survived to the present day only in the form of partial ruins and has yet to be fully brought into historical record.

The structure, considered to be the world's oldest hospital, is believed to have been built between 368 and 373 AD, following a series of earthquakes that occurred during that period.

The hospital provided inpatient treatment, free medical care, and services by renowned physicians.

Historian Halit Erkiletlioğlu stated that both the structure and its surrounding area should be subjected to archaeological excavation. Emphasising that a large number of remains are present at the site, Erkiletlioğlu underlined that the hospital differs from earlier medical institutions because it functioned as an inpatient treatment centre and offered free healthcare.

ŞAMDAN CROWNED WORLD KARATE CHAMPION IN CAIRO



Turkish karateka Eray Şamdan claimed the gold medal at the 27th World Karate Championships in Cairo, securing the men's kumite 60 kg world title with a commanding performance. Competing in Egypt's capital, Şamdan defeated Kosovo's Islam Selmani 4-0 in the final bout, demonstrating tactical control and composure throughout the match.

The Turkish Karate Federation described the victory as a significant milestone for Turkish karate, underlining the discipline and consistency Şamdan displayed during the tournament. President of Turkish

Karate Federation Ercüment Taşdemir congratulated the athlete, along with the coaching and technical teams, and emphasised the broader importance of the result for the national programme.

Şamdan's world title crowns a season marked by strong international results and reflects years of sustained effort at the elite level. The achievement further strengthens Türkiye's presence in global karate competitions and provides momentum for the national team as it prepares for upcoming continental and international events.

STOLEN ARTIFACTS WERE RETURNED TO TÜRKİYE

Following an investigation conducted in the United States, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism completed the protocols for receiving stolen artifacts, including Boubon's Lost Emperor, the Marble Demosthenes Head, the Düver Terracotta Tablets, and others. Minister of Culture and Tourism Mehmet Nuri Ersoy stated that they had carried out a meticulous and lengthy process to retrieve artifacts stolen from Turkish lands and emphasised that efforts will continue to ensure the return of cultural heritage through international cooperation. He added that a total of 9,133 artifacts were repatriated between 2018 and 2025.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has gained significant



momentum in recent years in its fight against the smuggling of cultural artifacts. The work of technical teams tracing archaeological events, combined

with international collaborations and effective structural monitoring, has yielded substantial results in the return of items belonging to Türkiye's cultural heritage.

TURKISH TABLE TENNIS DUO CLAIMED SILVER AT YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS IN ROMANIA



Türkiye's rising stars in table tennis, Kenan Eren Kahraman and Görkem Öçal, have secured a historic silver medal at the Youth World Championships held in Cluj, Romania, marking one of the country's most significant achievements in the discipline to date.

Representing the Kocasinan Municipality Sports Club and competing under the national flag, the young athletes advanced

to the final for the first time in Türkiye's history at the Youth World Championships. Facing a strong Chinese team in the final, the Turkish duo finished as world runners-up, earning the silver medal and drawing international attention to Türkiye's growing presence in table tennis.

Kocasinan Mayor Ahmet Çolakbayraktar congratulated the athletes and coaching staff and noted that the success reflects

years of disciplined training, perseverance and institutional support, adding that Kocasinan Municipality continues to prioritise youth development through sport. He highlighted that the club is among those contributing the highest number of national athletes across Türkiye and that its table tennis team competes in the Super League, underscoring Kayseri's growing influence in Turkish sports.

ROMAN-ERA MARBLE BATHTUB, MALE STATUE UNEARTHED AT ANCIENT EPHESUS



Within the scope of the "Heritage for the Future: Endless Ephesus" project led by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, significant Roman-era artefacts have been unearthed during excavations on Stadium Street in the ancient city of Ephesus, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The findings include a 1st century AD bathtub, measuring 146 x 73 centimetres and crafted from "Greco Scritto" marble, adorned with lion

paw motifs. The artefact, believed to have originated from the "Terrace Houses" (home to wealthy Roman families), is understood to have been repurposed as a fountain trough in a later period. Additionally, a 123-centimetre male statue, dating from between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, was discovered face down beneath the road paving; it has since been placed under protection and added to the Ephesus Museum inventory.

ÇİĞLIOĞLU WON GOLD MEDAL AT THE WORLD KICKBOXING CHAMPIONSHIP



The World Kickboxing Championship took place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, between 21 and 30 November 2025. Turkish kickboxer Asuman Çiğlioğlu, who has previously

won European and world titles, won the gold medal in the 60 kg Full Contact category. She was welcomed with a large celebration ceremony in her hometown of Kastamonu.

2026 OUTLOOK: TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS IN A YEAR OF STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE

2026 is unlikely to bring dramatic changes in Türkiye-EU relations; but it will serve as a test of whether strategic alignment in key priority areas can progress through concrete policy cooperation, rather than politics.

Laura BATALLA ADAM
Analyst

By 2026, several policy areas of European and transatlantic concern are converging more visibly than before. Security pressures, climate policy, and geopolitical tensions increasingly shape the same decisions on spending, regulation, and external partnerships. This convergence matters for Türkiye-EU relations because it places functional cooperation back at the centre of the relationship, at a time when political narratives remain constrained.

Türkiye's position in this landscape is particularly relevant. As a NATO ally, an EU candidate country, and a regional actor directly exposed to multiple zones of instability, Türkiye sits at the intersection of many of the EU's strategic priorities. The fact that Türkiye will host NATO and COP-related meetings in 2026 reflects this role in practical terms. The year will offer a pragmatic test of how Türkiye-EU relations can operate under shared pressure, while still delivering on areas of shared importance.

The Global Landscape: Fragmentation And Strategic Realignment

The international environment entering 2026 continues to be defined by fragmentation and volatility. The war in Ukraine remains a central reference point for European security planning, while instability across the Middle East shows little sign of resolution. At the same time, competition among major powers has become more structural, shaping long-term strategic choices rather than short-term crisis responses.

This fragmentation places sustained pressure on multilateral institutions. They remain indispensable but increasingly function through flexible coalitions and issue-specific arrangements rather than broad political consensus.



Energy security and supply-chain resilience have moved from technical debates into the core of strategic policymaking, linking economic decisions to geopolitical stability. Climate change cuts across all of these dynamics, acting as a risk multiplier that affects competitiveness, migration, and political cohesion. As a result, governments are approaching security, climate, and economic resilience as interdependent challenges, a logic clearly reflected in both EU and NATO planning for 2026.

The European Union's Agenda in 2026

The EU's strategic priorities for 2026 reflects this convergence. Security and defence remain high on the agenda, with continued emphasis on strengthening NATO-EU cooperation and expanding Europe's defence industrial capacity. At the same time, competitiveness has emerged as a defining concern, driven by efforts to simplify regulation while sustaining the green and digital transitions.

Climate policy remains central, particularly through the implementation of longer-term emissions targets and post-COP

commitments. The emphasis, however, has shifted away from ambition-setting towards delivery, credibility, and alignment with external partners.

Neighbourhood and enlargement policies are also framed more explicitly through a geopolitical lens, prioritising stability and strategic partnerships. Within this context, Türkiye is approached less through the prism of accession and more as a strategic partner on security, migration, energy, and connectivity.

The rotating Council Presidency in the first half of 2026 is unlikely to generate new diplomatic momentum. As a result, political dialogue with the EU is expected to remain cautious, reinforcing the importance of NATO and other multilateral frameworks as the main channels for structured interaction.

Türkiye's Strategic Positioning and Priorities

Türkiye enters 2026 facing a volatile regional environment while managing a complex balance between its relations with NATO allies, the EU, and neighbouring regions. Security considerations continue to dominate strategic thinking, but economic resilience has

become an equally pressing priority. Trade diversification, digitalisation, and green transformation occupy a central place in Türkiye's economic agenda, reflecting both domestic imperatives and external pressures stemming from evolving European regulatory frameworks.

Hosting NATO and COP-related meetings provides Türkiye with an opportunity to reinforce its relevance within multilateral settings and to project stability at a time of heightened uncertainty. These platforms also allow engagement with European partners in a more functional and less politicised setting, centred on practical cooperation in areas of shared concern. In this sense, Türkiye's diplomacy in 2026 will be tested by its ability to build credibility, sustain alignment, and generate incremental consensus on these areas.

NATO in 2026: Deterrence and Türkiye's Role

NATO's agenda in 2026 centres on deterrence, resilience, and fair burden-sharing among allies. Türkiye's geostrategic position on the Alliance's southern flank gives it a critical role in addressing challenges emanating from the Middle East, the Black Sea, and adjacent regions. At the same time, NATO-EU cooperation has become an increasingly important stabilising framework, particularly where bilateral Türkiye-EU relations remain politically constrained.

By hosting NATO's summit, Türkiye reinforces its role within the Alliance and contributes to collective security discussions at a moment of strategic uncertainty. These multilateral settings also facilitate dialogue with European partners on regional security concerns, illustrating how NATO can serve as a practical channel for engagement when other diplomatic avenues are limited.

COP in Türkiye: Climate Between Ambition and Constraint

Climate policy has become an integral component of both foreign

and economic strategy. Türkiye's hosting of COP-related meetings places it in a position that bridges European climate ambition and the economic constraints faced by emerging and middle-income economies. While Türkiye is deeply integrated into European markets, it also faces development pressures and energy-transition challenges that shape its policy choices.

This positioning gives Türkiye a potential convening role, allowing it to articulate concerns over competitiveness and sequencing while remaining engaged with EU climate objectives. From the EU's perspective, expectations focus on practical alignment and cooperation under the Green Deal framework. In this context, areas such as the energy transition, industrial decarbonisation, and suitable finance offer enough shared interest to sustain cooperation even without broader political convergence.

Looking Ahead: Pragmatic Cooperation in a Complex Environment

Türkiye-EU relations in 2026 are likely to continue along a familiar path of selective, issue-based cooperation anchored in shared interests. Security, climate, trade, migration, and connectivity will dominate the agenda. Institutional dialogue and people-to-people contacts will remain essential to preventing stagnation, while multilateral platforms will mitigate bilateral constraints.

Ultimately, 2026 serves as a practical test of strategic alignment in practice. Engagements linked to NATO and the COP process provide tangible points of cooperation, while institutional and regional dynamics influence, but do not dictate, the outcome. For both the Türkiye and the EU, the challenge will be to convert overlap across security, climate, and economic priorities into functional cooperation. Sustained dialogue and policy coherence will be essential if this alignment is to generate lasting value rather than short-lived momentum.