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

## “THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”: A GREEN AND DIGITAL AGENDA FOR TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS

Assessing Türkiye-EU relations amid recent crises and changes requires embracing a green and digital agenda to align with the EU’s twin transformations.

Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas  
IKV Secretary General

“The Times They Are a-Changin’” was a famous song written by Bob Dylan and released in 1964. The song’s universal message of the inevitability of change is even more relevant today in our fast changing, perplexing, and uncertain world. Sailing from one crisis to another, it is possible to lose a sense of direction and purpose. Survival, rather than planning and strategising for the future, becomes the focus. Each crisis is also an important opportunity to alter and adapt oneself to the changing conditions. Without a strong foundation, however, change may become disruptive and difficult to adjust to.

As change in the international system becomes much more apparent with increasing global competition, the rise of non-western powers, particularly China and India, as well as the belligerence of Russia, and the climate crisis and environmental challenges coupled with the digital revolution are transforming the way we live, work and interact with each other. States and organisations are also finding themselves in this complex environment which necessitates them to rethink and redesign their institutions and policies.

Both the EU and Türkiye have gone through several changes and crises over the last decade or so. While the EU’s struggle to redefine itself, reform its institutional system, rectify internal imbalances, and improve its global actor qualities continues, Türkiye has also been struggling with the reform of its political regime, cultural polarisation, regional security challenges, and economic crisis. The EU, its Member States, and Türkiye are caught in the midst of many challenges, including the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and the corresponding crises in European security, energy policy, supply change disruptions and food security. The



search for strategic autonomy has become a buzzword for the EU not only in its defence policy but also energy, industrial, and trade policies as well. As the phase of hyper-globalisation began to regress, global interdependencies still matter. Questions of supply security have been added to and taken precedence over considerations of cost-effectiveness and quality. Friend shoring, nearshoring or reshoring have altered and shaped trade and investment decisions.

Such profound changes also require a recalibration and adjustment in Türkiye-EU relations in line with current developments, the needs of both sides, and a consideration of what is possible and what is desirable. When reflecting on possible avenues for the future of the relations, careful attention should be given to the historical roots of the relations as well. What is needed is to find ways to trigger improvements in the relations without jeopardising the previous achievements and targets.

### A Green and Digital Agenda for Türkiye-EU Relations: Identity, Context, Content, Purpose and Aim

The identity aspect, the context and content of the relations, as well as their purpose and aim, should be taken into consideration in order to relieve Türkiye-EU relations from the current stalemate and provide for

an adjustment in line with current challenges.

Identity: Any relationship is based on and determined by the identifications of the parties concerned. Türkiye has been interchangeably defined as a “would-be European”, a “friendly other”, and even as a “competitor” by prominent figures in the EU. It is a candidate country to join the EU and started accession negotiations in 2005. Despite this status, Türkiye has also experienced many upheavals and disputes with the EU and individual Member States, and the negotiations have been at a standstill with scant hope regarding their restart in the foreseeable future. The basis of a revitalisation should definitely be based on a friendly/ European perspective in which Türkiye’s Europeanness is accepted as a given owing to its long-standing role in European politics, security and state system, candidate status, and will to become a future member. Although it may seem quite difficult to achieve that aim under the present conditions, it should not be totally disregarded and terminated just on the basis of current realities which can also change in line with global, regional and domestic changes. Such an identity perspective also presupposes a will to engage, find mutually beneficial solutions to disputes, coordinate and cooperate

in foreign and security issues, and contribute to building joint resilience.

Context and Content: The proposal to revitalise and recalibrate the relations rests on the changing context of the global system as well as the parameters of European security and economy. The EU is intent on responding to the challenges of global competition and transformation by way of the twin priorities of the European Green Deal and the digital agenda. These priorities manifest themselves in a renewed effort to regulate the European economy in terms of sustainable and green norms and methods and the digitalisation of production, distribution, and related models. As a norm entrepreneur and regulator, the EU also acts as a leader in the international economy by way of its initiatives such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), cybersecurity and artificial intelligence legislation. The context thus becomes a radically changing legal, technological, and regulatory environment which requires the Türkiye-EU relationship to adapt. The content of this renewed relationship should also be based on the ground-breaking targets inherent in the green and digital agendas. As the EU has reflected these priorities in its external relations with several actors, such as the Green Alliance with Japan and Norway, a digital alliance with Latin America and the Caribbean, and digital partnership with Singapore, it could also be an opportunity for a breath of fresh air for Türkiye-EU relations. The Green and Digital Agenda (GDA) proposed should be based on an institutional framework which will include levels of engagement and dialogue at the intergovernmental and parliamentary levels as well as business and civil society platforms, thus going beyond the mere formal to impact the different echelons of society. The proposals which may be developed as a result of the institutionalised dialogue should provide the basis of new initiatives by the European Commission in Türkiye-EU relations. The Green and Digital Agenda should

include subheadings in different policy areas such as trade, industry, energy, climate, defence, security, R&D, ICT, and related sectors. Hence it would display the potential to trigger developments in the overall perspective of Türkiye-EU relations.

Purpose and Aim: The revitalisation of the relations based on the Green and Digital Agenda aims not to replace the accession perspective or the association relationship altogether. Rather, its goal is to act as a means to further the engagement between the parties regarding the challenges of the current period and lay the groundwork for a future where the conditions for a revitalisation of the eventual goal of integration as a member may become a reality. It rests on the observation that the Positive Agenda which was proposed to revitalise the relations in 2020 could not provide the expected momentum. The modernisation process of the Customs Union could not be initiated, the visa liberalisation process could not be completed, and the high-level dialogues initiated on issues such as climate and public health produced only limited results. The proposal is based on the acknowledgement that the relations are rooted in a 60 years old deep, significant and valuable association and goal to become a member. Such a deep-rooted relationship is today neglected and underestimated by some circles although its continuation is still relevant, indispensable, and beneficial for both Türkiye and the EU. It is necessary to recognize some deep problems and disputes that block the progress of Türkiye’s accession to the EU, such as the Cyprus dispute and problems in Türkiye’s democracy and human rights record. Based on evaluations of what is possible and what is desirable in the relations, we propose a green and digital agenda that will facilitate further engagement and dialogue between Türkiye and the EU to increase the desire for cooperation in responding as well as adapting to the twin transitions.



## TOBB PRESIDENT HİSARCIKLIOĞLU ATTENDED EUROCHAMBRES GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 20 June 2023, M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu, President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), attended the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting of the European Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES) in Geneva.

At the General Assembly, where the priorities of the European business world for the EU Institutions in the 2024-2029 period were discussed, the text containing the proposals was adopted. Within the scope of Hisarcıklioğlu's request, Türkiye-EU relations, updating the Customs Union and visa issues were included in the text.



## TOBB PRESIDENT HİSARCIKLIOĞLU ELECTED TO THE BOARD OF 'MERCHANTS OF PEACE'

President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu is elected as a member of the Board of Directors of the ICC and will serve in the 2023-2026 period. During the General Assembly held in Geneva, Hisarcıklioğlu entered the management of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), saying "I will carry out this duty on behalf of the Turkish business world for 3 years. I will carry the demands and problems of the Turkish business world to the ICC agenda."

ICC is the world's largest business organization covering more than 45 million companies in 170 countries. The ICC Türkiye National Committee, which operates under the umbrella of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), has been representing



the ICC in Türkiye since 1934. The Turkish National Committee continues its activities in the Turkish business world to increase its competitiveness and to increase Türkiye's share from the global economy. In his speech after being elected, TOBB President Hisarcıklioğlu said "It is an honour for us to represent our country and our business world at the ICC."

## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU VISITED TÜRKİYE'S AMBASSADOR TO STOCKHOLM



During an IKV visit to Sweden just prior to it handing the Presidency of the European Council over to Spain on 1 July 2023, IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu, accompanied by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit

and IKV Research Director Çisel İleri, met with Türkiye's Ambassador to Stockholm, Yönet Can Tezel at a business dinner on 21 June 2023. After a brief introduction of IKV activities, views were exchanged on Türkiye-Sweden and Türkiye-EU relations.

## IKV İSTANBUL EUIC ORGANIZED EU GREEN WEEK EVENT

IKV İstanbul EU Information Center organized the "EU Green Week" event on 19 June 2023 at Kolektif House-Ataşehir. After the opening speech of IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas made a presentation titled "European Green Consensus, Its Importance and Effects".

Assoc. Prof. Nas began her presentation by talking about the EU's leading role in climate change. Expressing that the European Green Consensus is an economic growth strategy, she said that Europe is in an effort to become a climate neutral continent. Talking about the EU's 2030 targets, the roadmap for energy use, the concept of clean energy and strategies such as from farm to fork, Assoc. Prof. Nas also made detailed statements on the Green Deal and Türkiye-EU Relations. Emphasizing the importance of



the effect of the Green Deal on updating the Customs Union in Türkiye-EU relations, Assoc. Prof. Nas also touched upon the pressures created by the EU trade policies and the Border Carbon Regulation Mechanism on Türkiye.

Within the scope of the event, basic project cycle training was

given to the participants. After the training, the participants created their projects on climate and environment. After the participants presented their projects, the basic project cycle training continued with the logical framework matrix. At the close of the event, a ceramic workshop was held.

## IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS



IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker in the webinar titled "Türkiye-EU Relations in the New International Order" organized by Prof. Dr. Özgür Ünal Eriş, Head of Jean Monnet Chair at İstanbul 29 Mayıs University, on 5 June 2023. In her speech, Assoc. Prof. Nas discussed the national and international factors that affect Türkiye-EU relations and talked about alternative scenarios for the future of the relations.

On 8 June 2023, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas attended the A-NEST academic network meeting created by the initiative of the EU Delegation to Türkiye and coordinated by İstanbul Bilgi University. At the opening of the meeting, Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut, Head

of the EU Delegation to Türkiye, made a speech. Then, the university that will undertake the coordination of A-NEST for two years was determined. Assoc. Prof. Pelin Sönmez took over the coordination of A-NEST on behalf of Kocaeli University from Prof. Dr. Ayhan Kaya. A-NEST aims to bring together academics working on EU issues at universities in Türkiye and create a network.

On the same day, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker at the panel titled "Assessments Regarding Elections in Türkiye Amid Geopolitical Challenges: Restarting Türkiye-EU Relations" organized by İstanbul Policy Center. In the panel, Assoc. Prof. Nas touched on how Türkiye-EU relations can be revived and emphasized the importance of updating the customs union and adapting Türkiye to the green and digital agenda of the EU.

On 10 June 2023, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas commented on the EU's new migration and asylum pact, the Union's fight against irregular migration, the consensus reached in the EU Council and the funds allegedly given by the UK to Türkiye for the protection of external borders in Halk TV's program.

IKV AGENDA

## IKV HELD A MEETING ON TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS IN STOCKHOLM

On 21 June 2023, IKV held a meeting on Türkiye-EU relations in Stockholm in cooperation with the Swedish Institute of International Relations (UI). The event is organised within the scope of the IKV's project of engaging with the EU country holding the EU Presidency to bring Türkiye-EU relations to their agenda and has been carried out since 2010.



The meeting started with the opening speeches of the Swedish Institute of International Relations Director Jakob Hallgren and IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu. In the first panel, under the moderation of Rouzbeh Parsi, the Director of the Swedish Institute of International Relations Middle East and North Africa Program, the developments in Türkiye following the elections were evaluated by İstanbul Economics Research General Manager Can Selçuki, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Swedish Institute of International Relations Middle East and North Africa Program Analyst Aras Lindh, and Lund University Middle East Studies Center Researcher Dr. Pınar Dinç.

The Swedish Institute of International Relations EU Program Manager Nicholas Aylott, was the moderator for the second panel in which Türkiye-EU relations were

discussed by Sabancı University Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences International Relations Faculty Member Assoc. Prof. Meltem Müftüler-Baç, TOBB-ETU Faculty of Law Faculty Member Assoc. Prof. Sanem Baykal, İstanbul Aydın University Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dean Assoc. Prof. Tarık Oğuzlu and Swedish International Peace Research Institute Researcher Ambassador Michael Sahlin.

## IKV İSTANBUL EUIC ATTENDED A STUDY VISIT IN BRUSSELS

IKV İstanbul EU Information Centre Coordinator Nagehan Nur Uysal, one of the coordinators of the EU Information Centres Network working in 19 different cities, attended a study visit in Brussels between 7-10 June 2023. During the program, EU institutions were visited and information was exchanged on Türkiye-EU relations with authorized persons.



Within the scope of the program, Bernard Brunet, Head of the Türkiye Desk of the European Commission General Directorate for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, was visited on 8 June 2023. Sharing his views on Türkiye's EU membership process, Brunet was asked questions about updating the Customs Union. The second stop of the visits was Sigrid Brettel, Deputy Head of Communications and Inter-Agency Relations of the European Commission. During the visit, ideas for future projects were exchanged. After the EP visit, the 8 June program

ended with a visit to Faruk Kaymakçı, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Türkiye to the European Union. Ambassador Kaymakçı shared important information about the process of Türkiye-EU relations from past to present.

The European Union Foreign Relations Service was visited on 9 June 2023. Anouar El Anouni, Head of the Foreign Relations Service East StratCom Task Force, made a presentation on the EU's foreign policy and touched upon the work of the EU Foreign Service. The program ended with a visit to the IKV Brussels Representative Office. At the IKV Brussels Representation, views were exchanged on the current situation regarding Türkiye's EU membership

and the importance of EU Information Centres in explaining the EU to Türkiye. In addition, the activities that should be carried out in the country and abroad for the future were mentioned.

EU Information Centres aim to reduce misconceptions and provide information to the public about the EU by providing information about EU institutions and the basic values of the EU. Incorporating Türkiye's first EU Library and EU Documentation Centre, IKV carries out the İstanbul EU Information Centre activities of the EU Information Centres Network Support Project. Within this framework, IKV İstanbul EU Information Centre organizes regional and thematic events, social debates and cultural activities.

## EU INFORMATION CENTRE COORDINATORS VISITED IKV BRUSSELS REPRESENTATIVE



EU Information Centre Coordinators from 19 provinces of Türkiye visited the IKV Brussels Representative Office on 9 June 2023. IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit and IKV Brussels Representative Haluk Nuray

also attended the meeting organized as part of the visit and hosted by IKV. At the meeting, information was exchanged between the IKV Brussels Representation and EU Information Centre coordinators on Türkiye-EU relations.

## TIMELINE JUNE 2023

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5	TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu met with Ambassador Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut and IKV Secretary General Nas attended Jean Monnet webinar.
6	Former Chief of National Intelligence Agency Hakan Fidan became new Foreign Minister.
7	President Erdoğan exchanged views with President of the European Council Charles Michel.
8	Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan exchanged views with his Ukrainian counterpart Minister Dmytro Kuleba.
9	IKV Secretary General Nas talked at the IPC panel and attended A-NEST meeting.
10	EU Information Centre coordinators visited IKV Brussels Representative and IKV İstanbul EUIC attended a study visit in Brussels.
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14	Deputy Minister Ambassador Burak Akçapar hosted Regional Consulation Meeting.
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17	Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan attended the state funeral of Silvio Berlusconi.
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19	President Erdoğan exchanged views with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.
20	IKV İstanbul EU Information Centre organized EU Green Week Event.
21	TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu attended EUROCHAMBERS General Assembly.
22	IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu visited Türkiye's Ambassador to Stockholm Yönet Can Tezel and IKV held a meeting on Türkiye-EU relations in Stockholm.
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25	Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan joined Ukraine Recovery Conference in London.
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## TÜRKİYE'S NEW CABINET HELD ITS FIRST MEETING

President Erdoğan unveils new cabinet and sets ambitious goals for Türkiye's future.



**H**aving won the second round of elections on 28 May 2023, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced his new Cabinet following his inauguration. The Cabinet comprises of: Cevdet Yılmaz as Vice President; Yılmaz Tunç as Minister of Justice; Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş as Minister of Family and Social Services; Vedat Işıkhan as Minister of Labor and Social Security; Mehmet Özhasseki as Minister of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change; Hakan Fidan as Minister of Foreign Affairs; Alparslan Bayraktar as Minister of Energy and Natural Resources; Osman Aşkın Bak as Minister of Youth and Sports; Mehmet Şimşek as Minister of Treasury and Finance; Ali Yerlikaya as Minister of Interior; Mehmet Nuri Ersoy as Minister of Culture and Tourism; Yusuf Tekin as Minister of National Education; Yaşar Güler as Minister of National Defense; Fahrettin

Koca as Minister of Health; Mehmet Fatih Kacır as Minister of Industry and Technology; İbrahim Yumaklı as Minister Agriculture and Forestry; Ömer Bolat as Minister of Trade and Abdulkadir Uraloğlu as Minister of Transport and Infrastructure.

Ahead of the first meeting of the new Cabinet on 6 June in Ankara, President Erdoğan and his new Cabinet paid a visit to Anıtkabir, the resting place of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. President Erdoğan's message in the memorial book of Anıtkabir emphasised his goal of "building the Century of Türkiye" in 2023, the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic. The priorities of the new Cabinet are announced to be relief and rebuilding efforts in the quake-hit southern region, economic measures, the fight against terrorism, and border security.

## TÜRKİYE CELEBRATED WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY ON 5 JUNE 2023



**T**ürkiye started the zero-waste project in 2017 with the goals of combating the climate crisis and protecting the environment. This project received international praise by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during a conference in New York in 2022. In December 2022, the UN General Assembly unanimously accepted the project and declared 30 March as the International Day of Zero Waste. Especially in recent years, Türkiye has been expanding the scope and importance of its work on climate change and the environment.

On 5 June 2023, World Environment Day was celebrated in Türkiye to promote

awareness and action for the protection of the environment. First Lady Emine Erdoğan made a statement on her Twitter account regarding the protection of the environment and the importance of zero waste. The First Lady stated that "Water, soil, air and all living things have only one thing to say to humanity: Do not consume nature, do not destroy it, let it live!"

President Erdoğan invited citizens to be more conscious about protecting the environment and nature. In addition, President Erdoğan, in a statement on Twitter, remarked that Türkiye will continue to strive for the protection of nature.

## NEW FOREIGN MINISTER HAKAN FİDAN TAKES OVER FROM ÇAVUŞOĞLU



**D**uring the announcement of the new Cabinet after the second round of the Presidential election on 28 May, Hakan Fidan was appointed 46<sup>th</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs. Having served most recently as the Head of National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) since 2010, the new Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan held other critical positions in the state administration in foreign policy and security domains. During his career, he served as the President of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Deputy Undersecretary responsible for foreign policy and security issues at the Prime Ministry, Board Member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Special Representative of the Prime

Minister, Deputy Undersecretary of the National Intelligence Organization and Special Representative of the President.

Handing over the role he held for over eight years in a ceremony on 5 June 2023, former Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu said he followed entrepreneurial and humanitarian foreign policy and protected Türkiye's interests all over the world during his role as foreign minister. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan expressed his commitment to continuing to advance the national foreign policy vision based on the sovereignty of the nation's will and said he will do his best for the peace, security and welfare of the Turkish state and nation. He was congratulated by foreign ministers worldwide on his appointment.

## TURKISH GAMING SECTOR ATTRACTS THE BIGGEST INVESTMENTS IN EUROPE

**T**ürkiye's gaming industry has experienced a remarkable influx of investment during the first half of this year, securing an impressive 333 million dollars. This figure not only positions Türkiye as the recipient of the highest amount of gaming investments in Europe but also reflects a substantial 60% increase compared to the same period last year. These statistics have been compiled from data provided by the Digital Transformation Office of the Presidency of Türkiye.

Notable gaming investments were also observed in several other European countries. The United Kingdom followed with investments amounting to 158 million dollars. Norway came next with 60 million dollars, Finland with 53 million dollars, and Sweden with 24 million dollars.

The Turkish gaming industry has made significant strides in recent years, transforming from a sector that received a mere 600,000 dollars worth of investment in 2017 to one that has experienced exponential growth. Investments surged to 1.8 million dollars in 2018, further increased to 8.4 million dollars in 2019, reached 14.4 million dollars in 2020, and skyrocketed to an astounding 264 million dollars in 2021.

Furthermore, in 2022 İstanbul emerged as the second city with the highest number of gaming industry deals in Europe and ranked fifth globally. This recognition highlights İstanbul's thriving gaming ecosystem and its



attractiveness to investors.

The engagement rate of Türkiye's population in gaming is remarkable, with an impressive 92.3% of internet users in the country playing video games. This figure surpasses the global average of 81.9% and underscores the nation's strong affinity for gaming.

In terms of market dominance, mobile gaming takes the lead, constituting the largest segment with an estimated volume of 1.2 billion dollars in 2023. Overall, Türkiye's gaming industry has flourished, attracting significant investments and demonstrating remarkable growth potential. With its dynamic gaming ecosystem and high engagement rate, the country is poised to further establish itself as a major player in the global gaming market.

## HOSPITAL FOR RARE DISEASES TO BE SET UP IN İSTANBUL

As one of two ministers who retained their positions in the new cabinet announced after the second round of Presidential elections on 28 May 2023, Minister of Health Fahrettin Koca unveiled his plans for his new term following the new Cabinet meeting.

Minister Koca announced a plan for establishing a new hospital for rare diseases in İstanbul and a production facility for cell and gene therapy drugs on the same campus. He said that this development will enable a comprehensive approach to treatment of rare diseases by allowing for the same medicines to be produced and administered for treatment on-site.

The main focus of the hospital will be the treatment of rare diseases and application of medical procedures such as cell and gene



therapy, where necessary. Minister of Health Koca made a special reference to the spinal muscular

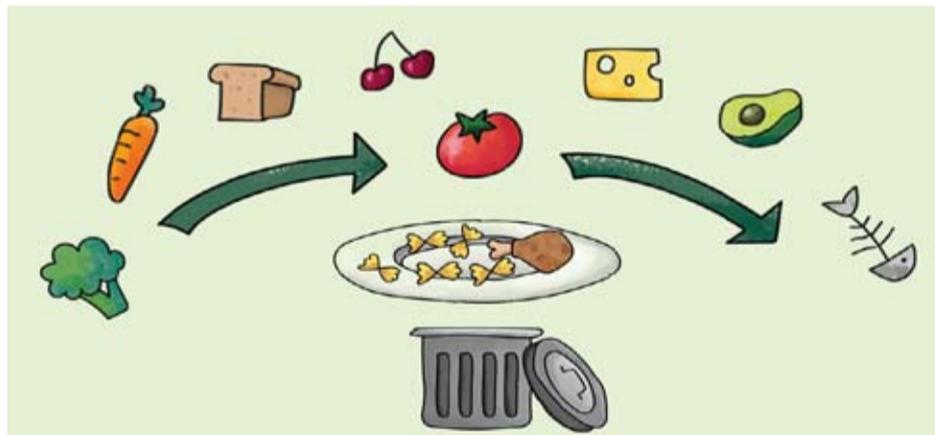
atrophy (SMA) disease and its treatment. As a very sensitive genetic condition that causes the

weakening of muscles and leads to walking limitations, he said that SMA is under the competence of

the SMA Scientific Committee. The Committee will decide the patients likely to benefit from a new SMA drug found to be potentially effective when tested on certain groups.

Minister of Health Fahrettin Koca also mentioned the regulation for the establishment of particular "Healthy Living Centers" for citizens aged 80 and above and plans for extending the scope of remote services for the elderly so as to enable all services, such as appointments and prescriptions, to be delivered effectively and home visits to be introduced for patients, if necessary. A pilot project of "Family Dentist Practice," being carried out in three provinces at the moment and planned to be gradually implemented across the country was also among new plans announced by Minister Koca.

## HOTELS IN TÜRKİYE TAKING ACTION TO PREVENT FOOD WASTE



The "Prevention of Food Waste Platform" initiative which began to be implemented in Türkiye for the first time in 2019 aims to make hotels more sustainable and environmentally friendly through raising awareness and training programs on preventing food waste. The system created by the initiative is backed by several institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Turkish Hoteliers Federation. The estimated number of registered hotels implementing the requirements of the system at the end of this year is around 250. The number is likely to increase to 1000 next year, according to the coordinator of the initiative, Ali Akgün.

The hotels voluntarily apply to the system, then

events and trainings are organized to teach hotel staff how to actively fight against food waste, which tends to be excessive unless the necessary measures are considered and carried out. Once the trainings are completed successfully, the facility receives an "orange flag," indicating its competency to pursue a responsible and sustainable food policy. The system envisions important changes in a number of processes regarding food served in hotels. From menu design to presentation of food, the whole process is regulated in order to minimize food waste. Once the implementation begins, monitoring activities are conducted systematically and hotels with orange flags are investigated by representatives of the initiative on a regular basis to avert any practices

which challenge the aims to have sustainable and recycling-based facilities.

By way of this system, the hotels and accommodation industry can experience a decrease in general expenses. While the facilities in the industry turn into more and more efficient organizations, it also creates benefits for the whole economy in the country thanks to dropping food waste and extra value added to the facilities. In addition to hotels carrying an orange flag, there are also educational activities targeting the guests in order to make them also a part of the system and raise awareness of food waste and sustainability in society. In case cooperation continues with international hotel chains, the system is expected to expand abroad in the coming year.

## TOURISTS FLOW TO TÜRKİYE AS CRUISE SHIPS SHINE



The number of tourists coming to Türkiye seems to be recovering completely from the stagnancy brought by COVID-19. During the first five months of the year in 2019, there were 3.3 million tourists visiting Antalya while the same period of 2023 witnessed 3.4 million foreign tourists arriving the same destination. As Germans held the first place in terms of tourists by nationality table, they were followed by Russian and British tourists.

The soar in numbers is not only limited to tourists visiting Türkiye in total, but also cruise ships visiting Turkish ports and the visitors which these ships carry. It is stated that prices in hotels and transportation have risen more than cruise tours; therefore, it is more than likely that more tourists will come to visit Türkiye by cruise ships according to experts. The data provided by the Ministry

of Transportation and Infrastructure, in 2022, more than 1 million tourists visited Türkiye through 993 cruise ships, which is a number 12 times higher than the number that of 2021.

As foreigners are becoming more aware of the benefits of cruise tours, Turkish tourists have also begun to prefer cruise ships for their holidays due to both economic purposes and their desire to have a more comprehensive vacation. Excluding İstanbul and Bodrum, the most visited ports in Türkiye are Çeşme, İzmir, Antalya, Marmaris and Fethiye. For vacations abroad, Greek islands are on the top in the context of cruise tours. Experts also state that in order not to have a problem regarding Schengen visa, Turks who plan to visit Greek islands by way of the cruise tours should get their visas a reasonable time preceding the date of the tour.

## HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

## PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN EXCHANGED VIEWS WITH CHARLES MICHEL



President of the European Council Charles Michel called President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 7 June 2023 to congratulate him on his re-election. Stressing that Türkiye has a great strategic value for Europe, President Erdoğan stated it is necessary to enhance interactions at all levels with a tangible and positive agenda for Türkiye's full EU membership. President Erdoğan highlighted the need for collaboration in areas such as modernising the Customs Union, achieving visa liberalisation, managing migration, and combating terrorism. President Erdoğan also asserted that equitable treatment of Türkiye

and backing for its full membership aspiration will pave the way for new opportunities in relations with the EU.

In reference to the phone call with President Erdoğan, the President of the European Council Charles Michel said he reaffirmed "the EU's desire for a strategic and mutually beneficial relationship with Türkiye", underlining open dialogue on economic relations, transport, and security cooperation. Michel also emphasized the importance of the rule of law and appreciated Türkiye's role in the Black Sea grain initiative, which ensures the transportation of Ukrainian grain to international markets.

## FOREIGN MINISTER FİDAN ATTENDED ITALY'S FORMER PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI'S FUNERAL



New Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan attended the state funeral of Italy's longest-serving former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Having suffered from leukaemia, Silvio Berlusconi developed a lung infection in his last days and died on 12 June, at the age of 86. Foreign Minister Fidan, accompanied by the spokesperson of Türkiye's Justice and Development Party (AKP) Ömer Çelik, attended the funeral which took place in the Duomo

Cathedral in Milan on 14 June to pay their respects and conveyed their condolences. Italy's current Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, former PMs Paolo Gentiloni, Mario Monti and Mario Draghi as well as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban were among those international political leaders who were present at the ceremony.

Newly appointed Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan also visited Turkish Consulate General in Milan after the funeral.

## ANKARA HOSTED CRUCIAL MEETING ADDRESSING SWEDEN'S NATO MEMBERSHIP BID

Recently, Türkiye's NATO agenda has been quite busy. In particular, the question of Sweden's NATO membership and Türkiye's negative stance towards this membership has turned the focus of NATO to Türkiye. In addition, Türkiye and other members also held talks on the general agenda within NATO. A number of important interactions between Türkiye and NATO is worth mentioning as it will shed some light on the state of relations.

On 15 June 2023, recently appointed Minister of National Defence Yaşar Güler went to Brussels to attend the defence ministers meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC). Minister Güler met with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and his Lithuanian and French counterparts in Brussels. Imminent defence and security issues were among the topics Güler and Stoltenberg discussed. During the meeting with Lithuanian Defence Minister Arvydas Anusauskas and French Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu, Minister of Defence Güler discussed bilateral and local defence and security issues, as well as NATO cooperation.

Turkish Minister of National Defence Yaşar Güler also met with his Greek counterpart Alkiviadis Stefanis, at the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting held at NATO Headquarters. In the statement made on the Twitter account of the Turkish Ministry of National Defence, reference was made to the "constructive and sincere atmosphere" that prevailed during the meeting and that Ministers Güler and Stefanis agreed on "the development of a cooperation agenda based on good neighbourly relations and friendship between Türkiye and Greece."

The fourth meeting of the Permanent Joint Mechanism of Türkiye-Finland-Sweden was held in Ankara. At the meeting in Beştepe, the Turkish delegation was chaired by the Chief Advisor of the President, Ambassador Akif Çağatay Kılıç. Deputy Foreign Minister Burak Akçapar was also present in the Turkish delegation. NATO



Secretary General Cabinet Chief Stian Jenssen as the head of the NATO delegation, Ambassador Jan Knutsson, State Secretary of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the head of the Swedish delegation, and Jukka Salovaara, Permanent State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, as the head of the Finnish delegation, attended the meeting. The meeting lasted about three hours. In the statement made after the meeting, "at the meeting, steps taken by Sweden in the context of the commitments included in the tripartite memorandum were discussed. In this framework, the level of progress made in realizing the commitments recorded in the tripartite memorandum has been discussed. Participants emphasized the importance of the Permanent Joint Mechanism and agreed to continue working on the next concrete steps."

One final meeting on the subject of NATO happened when President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Dolmabahçe Office. In his statement following the hour-long meeting NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg emphasized the importance of Türkiye for NATO. During the meeting, the Swedish membership to NATO was high on the agenda. Secretary General Stoltenberg said that freedom of assembly and expression is important, but demonstrations by certain groups are aimed at undermining Sweden's NATO membership and cooperation against terrorism between Türkiye and Sweden.

## FOREIGN MINISTER HAKAN FİDAN AND HIS UKRAINIAN COUNTERPART DMYTRO KULEBA DISCUSSED RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan had a telephone conversation with his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba on 8 June 2023. According to the statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba congratulated Foreign Minister Fidan on his new duty. During the meeting, the current situation of Ukraine, the effects of the war on Ukraine and Türkiye-Ukraine relations were also on the agenda. Destruction of the dam on the Dnieper River and the subsequent flooding of the port city of Kakhovka in the Kherson region was among the topics discussed. The dimensions of the human tragedy caused by the disaster and Türkiye's humanitarian



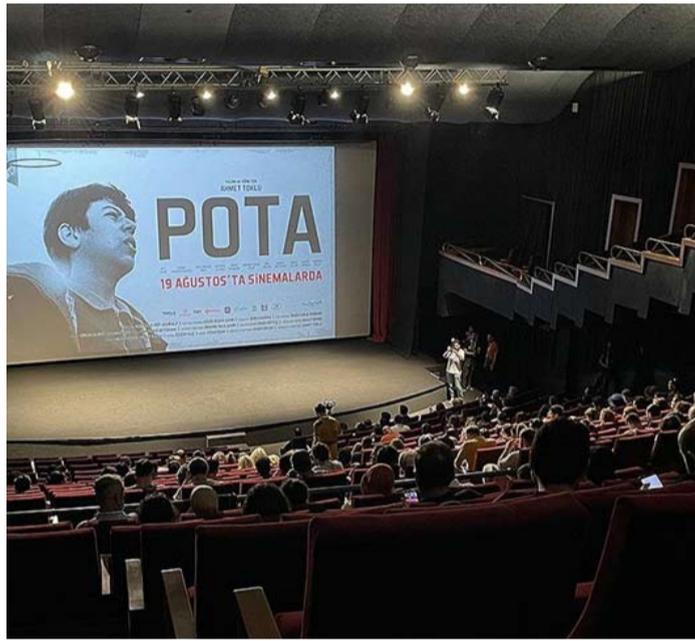
aid efforts were mentioned. At the end of the meeting, Kuleba invited Foreign Minister Fidan to visit Ukraine.

## TURKISH FILM 'POTA' WINS AN INTERNATIONAL AWARD

The TRT co-produced film, titled "Pota," has been bestowed with an accolade at the esteemed "Crystal Seal" International Film Festival held in Ulan Ude, the capital of the Republic of Buryatia, an autonomous region of Russia. This cinematic endeavour, which was conceived and directed by Ahmet Toklu with substantial backing from the Moscow Yunus Emre Institute, was prominently featured among the diverse assortment of children-oriented films showcased at the festival.

Having previously debuted at the distinguished 51<sup>st</sup> Giffoni Film Festival, "Pota" has since amassed numerous accolades across both national and international film festivals. The narrative of this cinematic creation revolves around the arduous journey undertaken by socioeconomically disadvantaged children who, driven by their indomitable spirit, erect a basketball hoop within their local community, confronting a multitude of challenges along the way.

Mehmet Ülker, the Coordinator of the Moscow Yunus Emre Institute, underlined



the profound significance associated with acquainting cinophiles with Turkish films through internationally renowned events like the aforementioned festival. Furthermore, he unveiled ambitious plans to screen a

curated collection of 100 Turkish films across diverse cities and cinema venues throughout Russia, serving as a notable component of the grandiose commemorative festivities scheduled to honour the centenary milestone of Türkiye.

## TURKISH CHEF EBRU BAYBARA DEMİR RECEIVES THE GASTRONOMY NOBEL

Chef Ebru Baybara Demir has been awarded the 2023 Basque Culinary World Prize, also known as the Gastronomy Nobel. She is the first Turkish female chef to receive this prestigious award. Among 1000 nominated chefs from various countries, 700 were evaluated for the prize. Demir was recognized for her use of gastronomy as a means of integrating and empowering women in Türkiye, and challenging prejudices. She gained prominence through her notable culinary projects, particularly in Mardin, where she established a kitchen that provided meals for tens of thousands of people affected by earthquakes in Kahramanmaraş. Joan Roca, the President of the Prize Jury, described Demir as an exceptional example of humanity, commitment, and strength.

Demir expressed her immense happiness and gratitude for receiving the Gastronomy Nobel, seeing it as a culmination of over 20 years of work dedicated to her country. While acknowledging her debt to her nation, she emphasised the need to continue giving back and promoting Anatolian cuisine's cultural significance globally. Ebru Baybara Demir's achievement marks a milestone as the first Turkish female chef to bring this esteemed award to Türkiye.



## 51<sup>ST</sup> İSTANBUL MUSIC FESTIVAL TOOK PLACE



More than 60 artists from Türkiye and abroad, including the star soloists and distinguished orchestras of the classical music world performed in 25 concerts at 18 different venues during the 51<sup>st</sup> Istanbul Music Festival, which took place from 1-17 June. The festival hosted the Turkish and world premieres of 12 pieces.

The festival's agenda was influenced by the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the republic and features

traditional Turkish music, early republic-era Istanbul tango pieces, and works inspired by notable women from the history of Anatolia.

The 51<sup>st</sup> Istanbul Music Festival Honorary Award was presented to composer Hasan Uçarsu for his contributions to Turkish contemporary music. This year's Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to world-renowned violin virtuoso Anne-Sophie Mutter.

## VIOLIN VIRTUOSO SUNA KAN DIED AT THE AGE OF 86



Suna Kan, one of the best violin virtuosos in Türkiye, served as a soloist and principal violinist in the Presidential Symphony Orchestra for many years. The famous virtuoso gave concerts in many countries such as the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Russia, China, Japan, Canada, USA, and throughout South America during her life. Suna Kan made

many valuable contributions to contemporary violin literature with her wide repertoire, which led to her winning many awards in international competitions.

Kan, who took violin lessons from important names throughout her life, has held the title of State Artist since 1971. Kan, who died on 11 June 2023 at the age of 86, will always be remembered for her contribution to Turkish art and her outstanding talent.

# THE RISE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: FROM ADA LOVELACE TO OPENAI'S CHATGPT AND BEYOND

A simple but important question asked years ago is the spark to one of the most popular topics in our world today.

**Bared Çil**  
IKV Junior Researcher

Artificial Intelligence has been integrated into human life for over two decades. However, the concept itself dates back to the 1840s, when Lady Augusta Ada King posed the famous question, "Can machines think?". This inquiry later inspired Alan Turing's renowned Turing Test, propelling humanity to create and challenge machines to emulate human thought processes and make decisions. Nevertheless, achieving a level of AI that closely resembles human thinking proved to be a formidable task, requiring significant technological advancements. In the past, the term AI was often used loosely to describe anything that had not yet been translated into algorithms, as AI and algorithms were challenging to explain. Once an idea was translated into code, it became regarded merely as an algorithm. An example of this can be observed in the case of word processor applications. Whereas the application correcting grammatical errors was once deemed a significant AI contribution, it is now recognized as a routine algorithmic function.

In recent times, the popularity of AI, particularly after the rapid growth of OpenAI's Artificial Intelligence ChatGPT, has surged significantly, leading to its increased usage among people. Prior to the widespread adoption of ChatGPT, earlier versions were prevalent, and even prior to OpenAI's emergence, basic AI models were present in the early 2000s, such as Microsoft's Encarta. Encarta initially originated as a digital encyclopaedia predating Wikipedia. During the period when MSN Messenger served as a prominent communication application, Microsoft developed an AI model and integrated it into the encyclopaedia. Leveraging the extensive database of an encyclopaedia, it possessed substantial knowledge and was capable of providing answers to a wide range of queries within the database's scope. Subsequently, AI advancements continued to be made, with incremental improvements, and the gaming industry's contributions



to AI played a significant role in its development and evolution.

With the widespread utilisation of AI, particularly the Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) model, the primary developer behind this model, OpenAI, has attracted significant attention. Its applications span diverse domains, ranging from education to art. However, AI's proficiency in providing accurate information remains limited, and it is prone to making mistakes. Although the latest version can access information from the internet, there is still the potential for disinformation. Cybersecurity remains a significant concern in the realm of artificial intelligence, as individuals often reveal personal information or unconsciously share sensitive company data while seeking assistance from AI systems. Although developers claim that they do not collect user data, certainty regarding this matter is lacking. Inadequately coded AI systems have the potential to inadvertently share such information, underscoring the need for proper coding practices to mitigate these risks. Nations are attempting to establish boundaries and implement regulations. Even prominent entities in Silicon Valley advocate for a temporary pause in "Machine Learning" and development by AI developers, aiming to define limits and mitigate the dissemination of misinformation caused by AI.

#### EU's Approach to AI

The EU has been actively engaged in addressing these concerns by formulating an AI Act. In early June, Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, visited

Europe with the objective of establishing an office in the region. This move aims to foster close collaboration with the EU in the process of defining boundaries for AI. Altman also held discussions with the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, focusing on the future of AI. With appropriate boundaries, AI has the potential to contribute significantly to the advancement of society, providing knowledge beyond human capabilities. AI's problem-solving capabilities position it as a valuable asset in critical domains such as renewable energy, healthcare, cybersecurity, climate neutrality, and even governance.

Presently, students increasingly utilise AI for their academic endeavours, enabling them to streamline their schoolwork. Musicians use AI to create customised music by simply specifying the desired sound and beat through text input. Software developers can employ AI to generate code based on high-level instructions, expediting the development process. In the medical field, doctors rely on AI to aid in diagnostic procedures. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that AI is not perfect, particularly in recent iterations. Errors can arise, giving rise to potential problems. Over an extended period, AI has been extensively utilised to monitor individuals' movements and bolster surveillance capabilities, which raises significant concerns. Addressing these concerns, an AI Act is being formulated to safeguard the rights of civilians. Additionally, the issue of personal data, which AI collects or that individuals share, necessitates prompt resolution to avert potential repercussions.

Nevertheless, once these challenges are effectively addressed, AI has the potential to be a tremendous asset in advancing humanity's well-being.

#### Türkiye's Approach to AI

Türkiye is actively participating in the AI trend and is diligently working towards both the development and implementation of AI across various platforms. This endeavour aligns with Türkiye's 2021-2025 National Artificial Intelligence Strategy prepared by the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Digital Transformation Office in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and Technology. The objectives outlined in this strategy encompass a multitude of goals. These include increasing the GDP by 5% through the advancement of the AI field, generating employment opportunities for 50,000 individuals in the AI sector, hiring 1,000 AI professionals in central and local government institutions, and prioritizing the commercialization of AI applications developed within the local ecosystem through public procurement. Furthermore, Türkiye aims to actively contribute to research efforts and standardisation processes regarding cross-border data sharing, emphasising the utilisation of internationally reliable and responsible AI practices. This commitment signifies Türkiye's dedication to promoting global collaboration and ensuring the development and deployment of AI technologies in a manner that is ethical, secure, and aligned with international standards. Ultimately, the objective is for Türkiye to rank among the top 20

countries in international AI indices.

In addition to the flourishing software development sector, Türkiye is witnessing the emergence of Turkish companies and freelance developers actively contributing to the advancement of AI and shaping its future. In the Middle East and Africa, Türkiye holds a prominent position in the realm of artificial intelligence. Numerous companies operating in diverse domains within AI, including image processing, machine learning, foresight, data analytics, and autonomous driving, are making significant strides. These enterprises attract substantial investments, bolstering Türkiye's standing in the global AI race.

#### An important question...

The initial seeds of this development were sown by a seemingly straightforward yet profoundly significant question more than a century ago, igniting the path towards the birth and ascent of AI. We are presently witnessing the remarkable growth of AI, propelled by its rapid learning capabilities. Such advancements portend an exhilarating future that lies ahead, brimming with immense possibilities.

While challenges remain, such as ensuring accuracy and addressing concerns about privacy and misinformation, efforts are underway globally to establish boundaries and regulations. With its rapid advancement and ever-expanding capabilities, artificial intelligence has the potential to revolutionise various domains, from education to healthcare, and from governance to renewable energy. Furthermore, Türkiye's commitment to strengthening international cooperations in AI reflects its recognition of the transformative potential of AI technologies both globally and in the EU and the need for collective action to address associated challenges. Through its active participation in regulatory studies and standardisation processes, Türkiye aims to play a pivotal role in shaping the global AI landscape, fostering trust among nations, and promoting responsible and reliable AI practices worldwide.