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SWEDEN'S EU PRESIDENCY ARRIVES AT A CRUCIAL MOMENT AS EUROPE FACES SEVERAL CHALLENGES

Sweden has assumed key institutional and legislative responsibility for the European Council at a time of war and economic turmoil with the recently formed government supported by far-right parties.

Sweden took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU from the Czech Republic on 1 January 2023. This is the third time Sweden is assuming the Rotating Presidency of the Council after January-June 2001 and July-December 2009. The Swedish EU Presidency, which will last until 30 June 2023, will also conclude the 18-month programme of the 11th Trio Presidency consisting of France, the Czech Republic, and Sweden.

The Main Priorities Set Out by the Swedish EU Presidency

The priorities and work programme Sweden put forward reflect its traditional positions in the EU and respond to the current economic and geopolitical challenges it faces. The priorities identified by Swedish EU Presidency are as follows:

- Security-Unity
- Resilience- Competitiveness
- Prosperity- Green & Energy Transitions
- Democratic Values and the Rule of Law - Our Foundation

Sweden's priorities and programme highlight issues related to the security of the EU and its citizens, joint support for Ukraine, energy security, the climate transition, the need to strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of the European Single Market.

There are already some concerns about Sweden's EU Presidency, which has recently formed a government led by the centre-right Moderate Union Party and has also been working to join NATO. In light of these four priorities, the Presidency plans to organise around 2,000 official meetings in Brussels and Luxembourg and around 150 official/informal meetings in Sweden.



Since joining the EU in 1995, Sweden has left its mark in many policy areas. Sweden is likely to leave its mark again on both the legislative initiatives started by the Czech EU Presidency and on its own programme. It is also expected that Sweden will seek a broad consensus amongst EU countries and call for pragmatism for real solutions. In particular, Sweden is expected to prioritise the negotiation of the files under the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, negotiation of the Fit for 55 Package, EU leadership on the reform of the WTO, wider trade relations with the US, more ambitious free trade agreements with third countries and the implementation of the Single Market Emergency Instrument.

Sweden will hold the rotating EU Presidency for six months under the motto "greener, safer and freer". Despite the recent change of government and the difficulties in achieving unity amongst EU

Member States, Sweden aims to carry out an effective Presidency. Moreover, during its six-month Presidency, Sweden has to fulfil the EU's priorities, with challenges such as the war in Ukraine, tackling inflation in Europe and securing energy supplies.

The Future of Türkiye-EU Relations: Sweden's NATO Membership and Türkiye

The war in Ukraine, which materialised the Swedish phrase "Ryssen kommer" ("the Russians are coming"), led to a paradigm shift in Swedish foreign policy. Sweden, which had remained militarily neutral and non-aligned for the last 200 years, applied for NATO membership together with Finland in May 2022. However, Türkiye announced that it would veto Sweden and Finland's membership applications to NATO because both countries "supported terrorist organisations" and imposed an arms/military

equipment embargo. Following intensive dialogues on the issue, Türkiye, Sweden and Finland signed a Trilateral Memorandum at the NATO Madrid Summit on 28 June 2022. Sweden assured that it would take Türkiye's sensitivities into consideration within the scope of the memorandum and has taken some actions in this direction since such as the recent constitutional amendment on the fight against terrorism. However, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson stated recently that not all of Türkiye's demands can be met.

Sweden pointed out in its presidency work programme that a mutually beneficial relationship with Türkiye should be developed, including increased cooperation to co-create stable and secure conditions in the Eastern Mediterranean. This means that Sweden's EU presidency and the EU's general agenda do not include a view on Türkiye's accession

to the EU or the resumption of negotiations. It is a big question mark how Sweden and Türkiye will maintain bilateral relations during the Swedish Presidency and how these relations will be affected.

Considering that there are also parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled in Türkiye this year, if bilateral relations, which will proceed on a multifactorial basis, do not reach a conclusion, NATO, which supports the participation of Sweden and Finland, will need to look for a new solution.

Türkiye's recent increased contact with the new Swedish government and its emphasis on co-operation indicate that there may be positive repercussions for EU-Türkiye relations. Especially in the field of energy, which is amongst Sweden's priorities, Sweden aims to organise a high-level dialogue meeting between Türkiye and the EU on "green transformation" (instead of "energy"; "green transformation" wording is preferred, since the meeting of High-Level Energy Dialogue and the Energy chapter have been blocked by Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus).

Türkiye's expectations from Sweden and Swedish EU Presidency include a special enlargement summit consisting of ten candidate countries and enlargement countries at the European Political Community Summit in Moldova in June 2023. However, this does not seem to be sufficient. While differences of opinion on enlargement persist within the EU, Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus are likely to remain the biggest obstacles to strategic cooperation and dialogue between Türkiye and the EU.



IKV CHAIRMAN ZEYTİNOĞLU: "TÜRKİYE NEEDS TO BUILD ITS DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY BY STARTING A LARGE-SCALE DIGITAL POLICY PROGRAMME"

IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu drew attention to the fact that Türkiye needs to formulate strategic policy objectives and build its digital sovereignty in the digital domain, which has become a new arena of geopolitical competition. Chairman Zeytinoğlu also stated that the EU has taken important and comprehensive steps in this field, especially in the last 12 years. Zeytinoğlu underlined that Türkiye, both as an EU candidate country and as a Customs Union partner, should follow closely the digital agenda pioneered by the EU because it would be an effective guideline for Türkiye to create a success-focused digital transformation strategy.

IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu made the following remarks:

"Governments and companies around the world are taking action to establish short, medium, and long-term policies and goals on digital transformation, which they regard as the new epoch-making discovery of our century, in order to successfully achieve digitalisation and digital transformation, and to shape their digital future. Türkiye also needs to swiftly launch an inclusive digital policy programme to benefit from the opportunities and advantages of digitalisation and digital transformation in terms of



social welfare, sustainable economic growth and the environment, and to establish its sovereignty in the digital space where actors are diversifying day by day. It would be in Türkiye's interest to follow the developments in the EU and harmonise its own legislation accordingly, both because of its EU candidacy process and intensive trade relations with the EU. In particular, analysing the digital strategies and policies that the EU has been continuously shaping in the last 12 years will be an essential guideline for Türkiye to create a success-focused digital transformation strategy."

Chairman Zeytinoğlu stated that the EU has been shaping its digital future with the following

initiatives: The Digital Agenda within the scope of the Europe 2020 Strategy published in 2010, the Digital Economy and Society Index launched in 2016, the Digital Europe Programme and the General Data Protection Regulation formulated in 2018, the Digital Europe Strategy published in 2020, the Digital Compass Strategy for 2030 proposed in 2021, the Cyber Resilience Act and the Artificial Intelligence Liability Directive proposed in 2022, and the "Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles" for a "people-centred digital transformation".

Emphasising that while the EU is taking extremely crucial steps, it is also shaping the global agenda at

a time when the constitution and rules of the digital world are being established and the technological infrastructure is being strengthened, Zeytinoğlu highlighted the importance of Türkiye taking part in this process and continued his words as follows:

"Considering all these trends in the EU, we recognise that the EU has adopted a wide range of strategies and policies that encompass almost every field. We also know that the EU is expanding its areas of cooperation with like-minded partners in digital transformation, namely under the umbrella of the Trade and Technology Council established with the US. Moreover, 2023 has been declared the 'European Year of Skills'. This means that we will witness steps being taken to ensure that everyone gains digital skills in all areas, which will in turn, increase the competitiveness of the EU. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Türkiye showed to the world that it is one of the exemplary and leading countries in the digital transformation of public services with the e-government service.

The 'National Technology Move and Digital Türkiye', which was published in 2019, and the 'National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2021-2025' have created a roadmap

for Türkiye's digital transformation. Nevertheless, when compared to the EU, it is understood that Türkiye has some shortcomings in terms of both policy scope and financing of digital transformation. Given that the digital sphere and technology are growing and expanding with each passing day, we conclude that the need for Türkiye to adopt more inclusive digital strategies and policy recommendations is becoming urgent.

Following the strategies, policy programmes and legislative initiatives of the EU as a guidance will be fruitful for Türkiye to implement initiatives to establish its technological and digital sovereignty, to become a country that produces and exports advanced technology and to compete with digital leaders in the global arena.

And finally, in 2022, we witnessed the revival of high-level dialogue platforms between Türkiye and the EU. It is a clear fact that Türkiye and the EU's increased cooperation and high-level dialogue on digital transformation and green economy, as a chain of extremely strong positive agendas that complement each other, will be mutually beneficial. Therefore, we would like to witness strong, broadened and deepened Türkiye-EU relations in the digital field".

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS



In December 2022, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas discussed Türkiye-EU relations and crucial foreign policy issues in various events and programmes.

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave a seminar entitled "EU's New Term Priorities: The European Green Deal" at Abant İzzet Baysal University on 6 December 2022. In the seminar, Assoc. Prof. Nas stated that the EU is focusing on the twin transformation agenda, which is seen as essential for the competitiveness and reputation of the EU. Drawing attention to the importance of the European Green Deal amongst the new period priorities of the EU, Assoc. Prof. Nas stated that this brings a revision and renewal in all policies within the scope of the EU's green growth strategy.

On 11 December 2022, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave a presentation evaluating the latest developments in Türkiye-EU relations within the scope of the programme entitled "Diplomacy School: Preparation for Foreign Relations and Security Bureaucracy" organised by the Foreign Policy Institute (FPI) and Başkent University Strategic Studies Implementation and Research Center (SAM). In the online presentation, Assoc. Prof. Nas approached the current developments in Türkiye-EU relations from a historical perspective. Emphasising the causes and consequences of the problems Türkiye-EU relations have been going through recently, Assoc. Prof. Nas also touched upon the changing dynamics in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak and the Ukraine war.

On 27 December 2022, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave a presentation on "The EU's Role in Global Risk Governance: COVID-19 Pandemic and Health" within the scope of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University's Jean Monnet Module. At the online presentation held as part of the Jean Monnet Module coordinated by Prof. İsmail Erkam Sula, Assoc. Prof. Nas talked about the EU's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken. Assoc. Prof. Nas emphasised that, contrary to popular belief, the health crisis did not cause a regression in EU integration but resulted in the EU expanding its competence in the area of health and paved the way for the emergence of a Health Union.

THE CLOSING MEETING OF THE "OVERCOMING GLOBAL PROBLEMS WITH LOCAL COOPERATION" PROJECT WAS HELD



The closing meeting of the project entitled "Overcoming Global Problems With Local Cooperation: The Case of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality" was held on 5 December 2022. In the meeting hosted by IPC, the third and final report of the project and the project findings were discussed. Following the opening speech of Prof. Fuat Keyman, Director of IPC, the panel discussion took place with the participation of IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas as the speaker. In the panel, the

role of cooperation between local authorities in solving problems such as the climate crisis was discussed with a special focus on vulnerable groups such as refugees. The panel was moderated by Prof. Senem Aydın Düzgüt from IPC and the other speakers were Asmin Kavas Bilgiç, Consultant at TEPAV and Ayşe Köse Badur from IPC. IKV Junior Researchers Mehmet Can Sezgin and Nagehan Nur Uysal, who are part of the project team and co-authors of the reports, also attended the meeting.

CULTURE AND ART AGENDA

GERMAN OFFICIAL SUGGESTED RETURN OF THE PERGAMON ALTAR TO TÜRKİYE

Berlin's official in charge of anti-discrimination efforts, Saraya Gomis, has recently suggested return of the Pergamon Altar, which is currently displayed at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, to Türkiye. Pergamon Altar, a monumental and religious construction built in the 2nd century B.C. by the Attalus dynasty, was smuggled to Prussia from the Ottoman Empire by German engineer Carl Humann in the 1870s. Türkiye has been carrying out intensive diplomatic efforts since the 1990s for the return of the altar.



"TÜRKİYE'S SYNAGOGUES" PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION OPENED IN TEL AVIV

Famous photographer İzzet Keribar's exhibition met with art lovers in the Saraya Turkish Cultural Center, hosted by Tel Aviv Embassy of Türkiye. The exhibition gave its visitors a visual tour of the places in many cities of Türkiye, documenting moments of worship, marriage, and official visits.

Stressing the fact that there are many synagogues in Türkiye despite the declining Jew population, photographer İzzet Keribar pointed out that Israeli citizens of Turkish origin especially showed interest in the exhibition. The exhibition was very important for both Turkish and Jewish citizens living in Israel to get to know their religious heritage.



THE LOCALS OF KIRKLARELİ CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN-LIKE FESTIVAL KOLEDA



On 8 January 2022, the Koleda festival, a cultural event that dates back thousands of years and has origins in the Balkans, was

celebrated by people who live in the Babaeski district of Kırklareli, a city located in the north-western part of Türkiye.

Similar to Halloween, every year participants wear scary costumes and make-up during the celebrations for the Koleda festival, to scare off "evil spirits". Traditionally, scary sound effects are played in the streets in which locals get together and eat pumpkin with syrup and walnuts as part of the event. People who do not eat pumpkins are daunted by the "boogeymen" who knock on their windows.

Locals pointed out that this year's Koleda was held with the largest crowd since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

TIMELINE DECEMBER 2022

Minister Çavuşoğlu attended the 29 th Meeting of OSCE Ministerial Council.	1	
Minister Çavuşoğlu participated in the 8 th edition of the Mediterranean Dialogues Conference.	2	
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	4	The closing meeting of the "Overcoming Global Problems With Local Cooperation" project was held.
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Minister Çavuşoğlu met with Romanian Foreign Minister Aureescu.	6	İKv Secretary General Nas discussed the European Green Deal at Abant İzzet Baysal University.
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National Defence Minister Akar met with his Finnish counterpart Kaikkonen.	8	
	9	
President Erdoğan came together with his Bulgarian counterpart Radev.	10	İKv Secretary General Nas discussed Türkiye-EU relations at the Diplomacy School: Preparation for Foreign Relations and Security Bureaucracy.
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Minister Çavuşoğlu met with Maltese and Belgian counterparts, Borg and Lahbib.	15	
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EP Türkiye Rapporteur Amor visited Türkiye.	19	
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	22	İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu made a detailed evaluation on the digital future of Türkiye.
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	27	İKv Secretary General Nas gave a presentation on health policies in the EU within the scope of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University's Jean Monnet Module.
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BULGARIAN PRESIDENT RADEV PAID A WORKING VISIT TO TÜRKİYE

The Bulgarian President Rumen Radev visited Türkiye on 9 December 2022. President Erdoğan and his Bulgarian counterpart Radev held a tête-à-tête meeting followed by inter-delegation meetings in İstanbul. During the meetings, the two leaders focused on various dimensions of bilateral relations between Türkiye and Bulgaria as well as steps to enhance bilateral cooperation and discussed current regional and global developments.

Speaking at the joint press conference, President Erdoğan expressed their shared belief that at a time when the Balkans and the global system faced immense challenges, the solidarity between Bulgaria and Türkiye as two NATO allies should be stronger than ever.

Concerning bilateral economic and trade relations, President Erdoğan signalled that they would intensify their efforts to achieve 10 billion dollars in bilateral trade. In addition, President Erdoğan stated that they discussed the need for further cooperation in managing irregular migration. President Erdoğan also underscored the role Bulgarian Turks assume as a strong bridge between the two countries and referred to the importance he attributes to the protection of cultural heritage. For his part, Bulgarian President Radev stressed the importance of working together in the face of current challenges and referring to the need for diversification of energy resources, emphasised that the two countries have joint responsibility.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU MET WITH ROMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AURESCU

On 6 December 2022, Foreign Minister and Chief Negotiator Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu met with his Romanian counterpart Bogdan Lucian Aurescu in Ankara. During the meeting, bilateral relations between Türkiye and Romania were on top of the agenda.

Highlighting the importance of the relations

between two countries based on "mutual trust" and "spirit of alliance", the ministers discussed cooperation in the defence industry and military expenditures of NATO allies as well as the security of the Black Sea. Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that the text prepared on the establishment of the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council would

be signed during Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Ciuca's visit to Türkiye. The ministers also stated that a high-level meeting would be held in the near future on the Türkiye-Romania-Poland tripartite mechanism. Both sides signalled that they would move forward to strengthen the cooperation between Türkiye and Romania.



EP TÜRKİYE RAPPORTEUR AMOR VISITED TÜRKİYE

EP Türkiye Rapporteur Nacho Sánchez Amor visited Türkiye on 19 December 2022. As part of his contacts in Türkiye, EP Rapporteur met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı in Ankara. Türkiye-EU relations, the humanitarian foreign policy of Türkiye, its expectations from the EP Türkiye Report, and the importance of inter-parliamentary dialogue

were amongst the topics discussed at the meeting. Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı stated that "Nacho Sánchez Amor and I agree on the importance of Türkiye's EU membership process for Türkiye-EU and the world. Balanced EP reports and fair treatment of Türkiye as an EU candidate will only accelerate EU reforms and advance Türkiye-EU relations in all fields".

HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

FOREIGN MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU MET WITH HIS BELGIAN AND MALTESE COUNTERPARTS IN ANKARA



Foreign Minister and Chief Negotiator Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu held separate meetings with Malta's Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg and Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade and Federal Cultural Institutions Hadja Lahbib in Ankara on 15 December 2022.

The bilateral relations between Malta and Türkiye as well as Türkiye-EU relations, developments in Ukraine, Libya, the Eastern Mediterranean and Syria were the main items on the agenda of the meeting between Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu and his Maltese counterpart Borg. Speaking at the joint press conference after the

meeting, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu provided information regarding Ankara's counter-terrorism efforts and expressed its readiness to collaborate with Malta on the issue within the UN Security Council. Çavuşoğlu signalled that Türkiye and Malta would maintain close consultation and cooperation regarding Libya. Meanwhile, Maltese Foreign Minister Borg praised Malta's ties with Türkiye and underscored Türkiye's role as a key partner for the EU and a crucial actor in the region.

On the same day, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu also held a meeting with Belgian Foreign Minister Lahbib. Bilateral relations, Türkiye-EU relations and regional issues including the situation in

Ukraine and Syria topped the topics discussed during the meeting. At the joint press conference, in response to his Belgian counterpart's critical remarks regarding a possible counter-terrorism operation by Türkiye in Syria, Minister Çavuşoğlu underlined that the fight against terrorism must be pursued without "ifs or buts". Çavuşoğlu also conveyed Ankara's expectation that Belgium would take action against the PKK terrorist group and its affiliates which maintain an active presence in Belgium. Moreover, pointing out the rising racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia in Belgium and in Europe, he stressed the necessity to take concrete measures to counter these trends.

FOREIGN MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU PARTICIPATED IN THE 8TH EDITION OF THE ROME MED



Foreign Minister and Chief Negotiator Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu participated in the 8th Mediterranean Dialogues Conference (Rome Med) on 2 December 2022. The conference, organised by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI),

focused on the problems in energy and food security stemming from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Minister Çavuşoğlu delivered a speech on Türkiye's foreign policy on regional and international issues and stressed the need for dialogue and diplomacy to overcome the trust

deficit in the "MED Dialogue" session.

During his visit to Italy, Çavuşoğlu also met with his Italian counterpart Antonio Tajani. The ministers discussed the bilateral relations on economic cooperation and defence industry as well as developments in Ukraine and Libya on the margins of the Forum.



NATIONAL DEFENCE MINISTER AKAR MET WITH HIS FINNISH COUNTERPART

Finnish Defence Minister Antti Kaikkonen visited Türkiye on 8 December 2022 and came together with National Defence Minister Hulusi Akar in a productive and constructive meeting.

During the first official visit in 17 years from Finland at this level, the main topics on the agenda were the Tripartite Memorandum signed by Türkiye, Finland, and Sweden, bilateral relations regarding the fight against terrorism, and the removal

of restrictions on export licenses. Defence Minister Akar highlighted that fight against terrorism is one of Türkiye's priorities and that Türkiye demands concrete steps be taken to fulfil the commitments made by Finland. Recognising the security concerns of Türkiye as well as its rights and responsibilities as a NATO member, Finland's Defence Minister Kaikkonen stated that Finland's membership would be a win-win situation for Sweden, Finland, Türkiye and NATO.



MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU ATTENDED THE 29TH MEETING OF OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Foreign Minister and Chief Negotiator Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu visited Poland on 1-2 December 2022 to participate in the 29th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, the central decision-making and governing body of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

During the meeting, Minister Çavuşoğlu stressed the importance of diplomacy to end the war in Ukraine. He also had bilateral talks with Archbishop Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See and the Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin of Tajikistan on the sidelines of the Ministerial Meeting.

TÜRKİYE AND THE EU SIGNED THE FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Türkiye and the EU ratified the 2021-2027 Financial Framework Partnership Agreement, which put forwards rules for the implementation of actions funded by the EU.

Türkiye and the EU completed the signature and ratification process of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA). Covering the seven-year period 2021-2027 and setting out common rules for the implementation of actions funded by the EU in Türkiye, FFPA was concluded as part of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III).

The EU aims to support IPA III beneficiaries in adopting and implementing the political, institutional, legislative, administrative, social and economic

reforms they need to harmonise with Union values and progressively adapt to Union rules, standards, policies and practices with a view to Union membership, thus contributing to their stability, security and prosperity.

Thanks to the entry into force of the FFPA, the 2021 and 2022 Annual Action programmes for Türkiye under the IPA III could begin to be implemented.

The EU has also adopted the 2022 Annual Action programme for Türkiye under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.



UNGA ADOPTED TÜRKİYE'S "ZERO-WASTE" RESOLUTION



On 14 December 2022, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) unanimously adopted a resolution on a zero-waste initiative presented by Türkiye. Within the scope of this landmark resolution that aims to combat climate change and accelerate sustainable development strategies, a three-year advisory board is planned to be established based on their knowledge, experience, and expertise to promote local and national zero-waste initiatives.

The resolution also called on the UN to hold a one-day high-level meeting in collaboration with the UNEP and

UN-Habitat, during the 77th session of the General Assembly that is expected to be convened in New York, in 2023. The UNGA also declared 30 March as the International Day of Zero Waste in the resolution.

Türkiye further advanced on the waste management practices in December 2022. The champion of the "zero-waste" concept, first lady Emine Erdoğan inaugurated Türkiye's first "Zero Waste Training and Simulation Center" in Ankara with the cooperation of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change.

THE EUROPEAN UNION COORDINATION BOARD (EUCB) MEETING WAS HELD

The third meeting of the European Union Coordination Board (EUCB) was held on 21 December 2022 at the Directorate for EU Affairs. The EUCB, which was established by Presidential Circular No. 2019/22, is responsible for the coordination of Türkiye's EU acquis alignment process with the participation of the relevant Deputy Ministers and senior representatives from the institutions.

During the meeting chaired by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı, the implementation of the 2021-2023 National Action Plan for EU Accession (NAP), next steps to take in the harmonisation with the EU acquis, raising Türkiye's standards in all areas and speedily opening new chapters were discussed.



WTO FOUND THE US TARIFFS ON STEEL AND ALUMINIUM ON TÜRKİYE VIOLATE GLOBAL TRADE RULES



On 9 December 2022, a WTO dispute panel ruled in favour of Türkiye on account that the additional customs duties the US imposed on certain steel and aluminium products violated

WTO rules and global trade rules since they were not imposed "in time of war or other emergency in international relations."

The US imposed 25% and 10% import tariffs on certain steel

and aluminium products under former Trump administration in 2018. Türkiye had filed suit against the US at the WTO to object to additional customs duties.

TÜRKİYE TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERREG NEXT MED 2021-2027 PROGRAMME FOR THE FIRST TIME



The Programme Document of Cross-Border Cooperation Programme in the Mediterranean Basin (INTERREG NEXT MED) 2021-2027 was approved by the European Commission on 12 December 2022.

The INTERREG NEXT MED aims to offer wide-ranging cooperation by supporting multi-level management for a smarter, sustainable, and equitable future for the Mediterranean Basin.

Türkiye will benefit from this programme for the first time and enjoy an investment opportunity of 253.3 million euros in 21 provinces in the next seven years. Information on the application conditions will be made in the first quarter of 2023.

EUROPE'S LARGEST NATURAL GAS STORAGE FACILITY WAS INAUGURATED IN SİLİVRİ

On 16 December 2022, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the ceremony that marked the completion of the operations that aimed to expand the capacity of the Silivri Underground Natural Gas Storage Facility. The capacity expansion increased the facility's capacity to 4.6 billion cubic meters of gas from 3.2 billion cubic meters, thus making it the largest storage site in Europe. The site's daily production capacity of 28 million cubic meters has been increased to 75 million cubic meters.

The Silivri Underground Natural Gas Storage Facility is also known as the first facility in Türkiye to receive a carbon footprint certificate thanks to the wind turbine with an installed power of 4.2 megawatts that meets the facility's all electricity needs.

It is expected that the facility would meet 25% of Türkiye's daily gas needs during intense winter days. Work related to increasing the capacity at Türkiye's second



storage unit, Tüz Gölü (Lake Tuz) is also stated to be underway.

The project is stated by President Erdoğan to be part of Türkiye's efforts to emerge as a global energy hub.

EU ADOPTED A 220 MILLION WORTH PACKAGE TO IMPROVE BORDER CONTROLS IN EASTERN TÜRKİYE



On 12 December 2022, the European Commission adopted a 220-million-euro package to improve border controls on Türkiye's eastern border. This brings the total EU assistance for 2022 to 1.235 billion euros to continue supporting refugees in Türkiye in meeting basic needs, assisting the most vulnerable populations, and providing socio-economic and border management assistance.

The Commission noted that the aid packages approved in 2022 are composed of four programs, including cash assistance to support refugees,

projects to implement Türkiye's Employment Strategy and Sustainable Socioeconomic Program for Refugees, the Emergency Supplemental Social Safety Net (ESSN), which focuses on providing cash to elderly and disabled refugees, and border control measures.

Türkiye has been hosting the largest refugee community in the world, around 4 million refugees since 2015. This includes 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees and 330,000 registered refugees from other countries. Türkiye continues to make commendable efforts to receive, support and host refugees and migrants.

RELATIONS WITH THE EU AT THE CENTENNIAL OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC: INTERSECTING, OVERLAPPING OR CONFLICTING AGENDAS?

Being closely connected to Europe in several aspects, Türkiye could grow closer to or drift further apart from the EU, depending on the direction it goes with its reforms.

Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas
IKV Secretary General

2023 marks the centennial of the Republic of Türkiye. The Republic was established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on 29 October 1923, being a national, secular and modern state founded upon the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. The motto of this Republic was "Peace at home, peace in the World" a maxim representing the priority of Atatürk and his cadres to concentrate on mending the deep wounds of years-long battles and the impoverishment of the country and the socioeconomic development of the people. Atatürk also set the goal of "catching up with contemporary civilisation" with the aim of shortening the gap between Türkiye and the more developed European countries in terms of progress in science and technology, education, arts, and high culture. Thus, as the new Republic was being built, it aimed to adapt to western culture and technology by way of comprehensive reforms in administration, education, justice, and related areas. These were in a way a continuation of the westernisation trend that had earlier started in the Ottoman Empire as a means to reverse its gradual decline. The transition to the Latin alphabet, adoption of European units of measurement and attire, and transition to the Gregorian calendar were important indicators of the intended change in the direction of westernisation which was concomitant with Europeanisation at the time. However, these acts of adaptation were not senseless acts of imitation, but they were indicators of a fundamental decision about the direction of the country and the aim of being more like the dominant civilisation in order not to be hegemonized by it and to



be recognised as equals with the frontrunners of humanity.

At the centennial of the Republic, Türkiye is situated at another critical historical juncture, finding itself in the middle of conflicting currents, i.e. between freedom and autocracy, democracy and dictatorship, secularism and theocracy, and progress and decline. Thus, making the right decisions for the future of the country is more important than ever. Critical decisions have to be made in reforming the country towards an effective, democratic, participatory, rule-based and accountable system of government, independent and functioning system of justice, achieving gender equality, upgrading the education system towards a contemporary, science-based and talent-oriented direction, modernising the industrial base in line with the green and digital revolutions, adapting organic farming techniques and all in all

laying the basis for a sustainable, prosperous, open and free society. Hence, a hundred years after the founding of the Republic of Türkiye, we stand at yet another historical juncture whereby the decisions we make today will determine the next hundred years of the country.

At the centennial of the Republic, we find that Türkiye's stature in Europe is full of problems and paradoxes, and yet also contains the seeds of opportunities. Türkiye is one of the first countries that became a member of the Council of Europe immediately upon its establishment in 1949. It is a staunch member of NATO and other organisations in Europe such as the OSCE. However, it is observed to be in breach of its commitments under the Council of Europe due to failure to implement several judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and problems in its track record with regards to the common values and norms of the Council of Europe system. Its

relations with the EU, which is unique in its aim and degree of regional integration, have gone through several rough patches, especially since 2016.

Despite these problems in its relations with European institutions and also difficulties with a number of European countries, Türkiye is closely connected to Europe both geographically, politically, socially and economically. Nearly 6 million persons of Turkish origin live in Western, Northern and Central Europe in addition to the Turkish minority living in Balkan countries such as Bulgaria and Greece. This is quite a strong bond with other parts of Europe linking peoples culturally and socially. Türkiye, in its role as a member of the European state system, also exerts a critical influence on the politics and security of the Euro-Atlantic area. Economically, Türkiye's extensive trade and investment links with the EU and other European

countries such as the UK create an important interdependence between the parties, thereby linking the Turkish economy to the European Single Market. Last but not least, migration management and refugee cooperation has emerged as another area of the intersecting agendas between Türkiye and the EU, especially since the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015-16.

At the centennial of the Republic, Türkiye is well-positioned to expand and revitalise its relations with the EU despite the problems that were elaborated previously. Its dynamic population, developed industrial base, efficient entrepreneurial culture, strong military capability and the western-outlook of its people as indicated in various public opinion surveys, create a strong basis to launch the next phase of relations with the EU. However, reforms in the direction of a sustainable democracy, independent and functioning judicial system, climate-neutral future and an effective and rational system of governance are essential components of this new phase of revitalised relations with the EU. Here the current agenda of the EU is very much in line with the needed direction of the Turkish Republic. Thus, the aim of catching up with contemporary civilisation is still relevant today and is concomitant with the reforms that are needed to steer Türkiye in the direction of democracy, progress and freedom. The digital and green priorities of the EU lay the basis of intersecting and overlapping agendas with Türkiye and are well-positioned to bring about a common future of cooperation and further integration. Unless the right decisions are made in this critical juncture of Türkiye's history in the direction of democracy, justice and freedom, Türkiye and the EU may find themselves moving further away from each other due to conflicting agendas.