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

EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND COMMISSION PRESIDENTS VISITED TURKEY AFTER POSITIVE STEPS AGREED AT EU SUMMIT

The visit by the two presidents of EU institutions was significant, as it provided for the first in person meeting at the highest level between Turkey and the EU after the steps agreed at the March European Council under the “positive agenda”.

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and President of the European Council Charles Michel visited Turkey upon the invitation of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 6 April 2021 following the critical European Council meeting of 25-26 March. As it can be recalled, at the December 2020 European Council meeting, EU leaders had given the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the Security Policy Josep Borrell the task of preparing a report on Turkey-EU relations. The report had been discussed at the European Council meeting which took place on 25-26 March 2021 and the Council conclusions signalled the beginning of a new process marked by a “positive agenda” between Turkey and the EU. Therefore, the recent visit is considered as a step forward in the EU-Turkey relations. The fact that this visit took place in person is an indication of the importance given to the meeting and to keeping the channels open for high level dialogue. After the meeting, Michel and von der Leyen held a joint press conference whereas the Spokesperson of the Presidency Ambassador İbrahim Kalın gave out a written statement on behalf of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Turkey Expects Concrete Actions

In the statement, it was indicated that the meeting was held in a positive atmosphere. According to the statement, President Erdoğan underscored Turkey's goal of full EU membership and said that Turkey expects concrete action from the EU. In the meeting where it was emphasized that finding sustainable solutions to regional crises will be beneficial for both the EU and Turkey, President Erdoğan stressed the importance of the cooperation between Turkey and the EU regarding the refugees and the fight against terrorism as crucial for stability in the region. In response to criticisms regarding Turkey's withdrawal from the



Istanbul Convention, he said that Turkey will continue its fight against violence directed towards women by strengthening the mechanisms within the current legal framework.

A Mutually Beneficial and Positive Relationship with Turkey

In his statement, European Council President Michel emphasized that “the EU's strategic interest remains a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and a mutually beneficial and positive relationship with Turkey.” Michel continued by saying that the recent positive developments and the bilateral exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey have been welcomed by the EU and the EU is looking forward to the Cyprus talks that will take place in the coming weeks. Michel then pointed out that “the concrete and positive agenda” the EU is ready to put on the table is based on economic cooperation, migration, and people-to-people contacts and mobility and underlined the fact that the relationship will be “progressive, proportional and reversible”. Finally, he stressed the EU's determination to defend the interests of the Member States as well as the interests of the EU and to promote

the EU values.

Enhanced Cooperation Benefits All

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in her speech, stated that the underlying reason for this visit is the interest Turkey has shown to “re-engage with EU in a constructive way”. In order to give a new momentum to Turkey-EU relations, she mentioned four areas in which enhanced cooperation would benefit both parties and listed these as economic relations, high level dialogues, people-to-people contacts and mobility, and refugees and migration. Von der Leyen emphasized that respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights is crucial for the EU and that it should be an “integral part of the EU-Turkey relations” and pointed out that it is crucial for Turkey to respect international human rights and standards as a founding member of the Council of Europe. Referring to the fact that the EU is Turkey's number one trading partner and the uniqueness of the Customs Union between the two parties, von der Leyen said that modernising the Customs Union is one of the top priorities but only after resolving some of ongoing

issues in the implementation of the Customs Union. She also mentioned that work is being carried out to improve the public-private sector cooperation with a focus on green and digital transformation. The European Commission President pointed out to the potential benefits to both Turkey and the EU of Turkey's participation in the EU programmes like Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ in relation to the high level dialogues on issues like climate change, public health and people-to-people contacts. She praised the achievements in relation to migration and refugees so far as a result of the cooperation between Turkey and the EU in line with the 18 March Turkey-EU Statement and said that more can be done if Turkey stands by its commitments especially regarding the prevention of irregular migration and resuming return operations from the Greek islands. Von der Leyen said that the EU will continue to provide funding in this respect and that work is being done to extend this funding to other countries like Jordan and Lebanon. Finally, she said that the EU is aiming for an “honest partnership” with Turkey and that the attitude Turkey will adopt in the near future will determine where the new relationship between the EU and Turkey will lead.

While no reference was made to Turkey's status as a candidate country in their speeches, both EU leaders have mentioned that respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights are core EU values and expressed concern over certain recent developments in Turkey and Turkey's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. They also said that the state of Turkey-EU relations will be reviewed at the June European Council meeting which is a message that the EU will closely follow the developments regarding Turkey and that the “reversible” aspect of the relationship, even sanctions can be triggered in case the developments are not in line with the EU's expectations.

“Positive Agenda” with a Grain of Salt

The outcome of this visit was no surprise as the expectation was that similar messages were going to be conveyed by the EU leaders during their visit to Turkey. Looking at the content of the discussions, parties reiterated what they have already been saying and the remarks made after the meeting confirmed their previous stance regarding Turkey-EU relations. The fact that no mention was made of Turkey's candidacy is considered an indication that Turkey is viewed more as a country in the neighbourhood area of the EU rather than a candidate country aiming for full membership and that Turkey-EU relations are being assessed from a foreign affairs and security policy perspective. In line with this narrow perspective, more emphasis is put on the steps to be taken within the framework of the “positive agenda” put forth after the October and December 2020 European Council meetings. And yet the EU's message is that Turkey has to overcome a condition for every positive step to be activated and that it will be under a constant observation and ongoing review the results of which would impact the nature of the future of the EU-Turkey relations.

The unexpected outcome of the visit by the leaders of EU institutions to Turkey has been the “sofagate” crisis. The protocol crisis, which has been occupying the agenda since the visit, has erupted as a result of the lack of equal seating arrangements for the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and the President of the European Council Charles Michel during the meeting with President Erdoğan. The resulting blame game and a range of interpretations of the events thereof have caused the surfacing of the power struggle between Michel and von der Leyen and their respective EU institutions and was even carried to the European Parliament. Unfortunately, it can be said that the “sofagate” crisis has dampened the constructive spirit of the visit. It seems like in order to understand the actual outcome of this visit, we have to wait until the European Council meeting in June.





TOBB PRESIDENT HİRCAKLIOĞLU ATTENDED EUROCHAMBRES PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL MEETING

The Presidential Council of the European Chamber of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES) chaired by TOBB President M. Rifat Hırcaklıoğlu convened via video conference on 22 April 2021.

During the meeting, which was also attended by European Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Markets Mairead McGuinness, the participants discussed support for SMEs and digitisation in financial markets.

On the same day, EUROCHAMBRES issued a press release calling on the European Commission to appoint an EU SME Envoy. The press release stated that during these times of crisis the appointment was crucial for the business sector.

“THE VISIT BY EU LEADERS IS PROMISING FOR THE FUTURE OF RELATIONS”

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu made a statement concerning the visit by European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to Turkey on 6 April 2021. Stating that relations with the EU have been at a freezing point for a long time, IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu emphasized that the visit indicates an important revival in the relations. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu indicated that the “positive agenda”, first proposed at the EU Summit in October 2020, has begun to materialize and should be implemented as soon as possible without further delay. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu stated the following:

“The visit by the Presidents of the European Council and European Commission is of great importance as the first high level and face to face contact in a long time. It also points to an important stage in the realisation of the positive political agenda which the EU first proposed in October 2020. Relations had been in the deep freeze for some time, and tension dominated particularly the Eastern Mediterranean and the foreign policy agenda. Moderation here, shone a beam of light for the revitalisation of Turkey-EU relations. The positive agenda proposed by the EU does not include a return to the accession negotiations, however it is essential for restoring and putting the relations back on track for future re-operationalisation of the full EU membership strategy which is the ideal strategy for Turkey. The positive



agenda includes cooperation on refugees, the resumption of high level dialogues and the enhancement of people-to-people contacts, as well as economic cooperation and modernisation of the Customs Union.”

Emphasizing that the business community has expectations regarding the modernisation of the Customs Union which is part of the positive agenda proposed by the EU for restoring and reviving relations with Turkey, IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu indicated that they expected the process to be launched immediately:

“Here, the expectation of the business community is for the Customs Union modernisation process to be launched as soon as possible. The framework for the modernisation of the Customs Union has already been established through the

report prepared by the World Bank in 2016. Therefore, it is beneficial to start this process immediately and without further delay. Otherwise, in addition to the Cyprus issue, the upcoming elections in the two leading EU countries; Germany and France in September 2021 and 2022, respectively, may cause a stalemate in the Council. Modernisation of the Customs Union is a win-win situation for both sides. Moreover, the modernisation of the Customs Union will foster dialogue and cooperation on the Green Deal and digitalisation which are the EU's two main priorities and hold considerable significance for Turkey's economy. It is extremely important for both Turkey and the EU to seize this opportunity. As for the other important issue that is visa liberalisation, the fulfilment of the six remaining benchmarks by Turkey will enable relaunching the EU reform process, as a preliminary step. Steps could be taken for revitalising the process by returning to the EU political and economic reforms and implementing the measures envisaged in the recently announced Human Rights Action Plan and Economic Reform Package. In turn, in order to restore its relationship with Turkey, which is of strategic importance for security and stability in Europe, and turn it into a mutually beneficial relationship, the EU should not refrain from taking concrete steps such as giving a negotiating mandate to the Commission for the modernisation of the Customs Union immediately.”

TURKEY– EU JCC MEMBERS DENOUNCED US PRESIDENT BIDEN'S STATEMENT ON 1915 EVENTS

Following US President Joe Biden's statement on 1915 events on 24 April 2021, members of the Turkey wing of the Turkey-EU Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) issued a press release denouncing the description of 1915 events as “genocide” and indicated that the statement was a result of political populism. The press release signed by Hak-İş Trade Union Confederation (HAK-İŞ), Civil Servants Confederation (MEMUR-SEN), Turkey Tradesmen and Craftsmen Confederation (TESK), Turkey Trade Unions Confederation (TÜRK-İŞ), Turkey Employers Unions Confederation (TİSK), Turkey Public Servants Unions Confederation (Turkey KAMU-SEN), Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and Union of Agricultural Chambers of Turkey (TZOB) stated the following:

“We are trade unions and professional organisations representing Turkey's workers, farmers, employers, civil servants, tradesmen, merchants, industrialists and producers.

We unequivocally reject and condemn the statement made by the President of the United States regarding the so-called genocide on April 24, 2021.

We see this statement, which is not based



on any scientific or legal basis, as a result of political populism.

We emphasize that the statements made by the President of the United States and those who have taken similar steps have no legal value and that they do not have the legal and scientific knowledge to make judgments on historical issues.

We hope that it will be recognized that

this statement, which distorts historical facts, will yield no results other than to polarise the peoples and make it difficult to achieve peace and stability in the region.

We remind you that Turkey's proposal for the establishment of a Joint Historical Commission on that period in 2005 was not accepted by the Armenian side.

Historical facts cannot be falsified or

altered according to the conjunctural political purposes or internal political interests of politicians.

Turkey has never shied away from confronting its history and will not be lectured by anyone, including the United States.

This statement will never be accepted in the conscience of our nation and will cause a difficult and deep wound in the alliance relationship between our countries.

The United States should correct this grave mistake, which serves no purpose other than to satisfy certain political circles, stop serving the agenda of these circles that seek to engender hostility from history, and support efforts to ensure that different nations live peacefully in the region.

On this occasion, we pay tribute to individuals of all nationalities and faiths who lost their lives before and during the World War I.

We remind and remember 58 of our citizens, including 31 diplomats and their family members, who were killed in despicable attacks by Armenian terrorist organisations.”

İKVV AGENDA

“WORLD LEADERS SHOULD EXERT MORE EFFORTS FOR COOPERATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE”

İKVV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu stated that promising commitments were announced during the Leaders Summit on Climate, which was hosted by the US and brought together 40 leaders on 22-23 April 2021, on the occasion of Earth Day. Emphasizing that limiting global warming to 1.5 °C by 2100 will significantly reduce climate related risks compared to 2°C, İKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu affirmed that an important step was taken in this direction at the Leaders Climate Summit, but also underscored the need to implement concrete actions as soon as possible. İKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu continued by saying: “It is good news that the US intends to push for climate leadership under the Biden presidency, considering that former President Donald Trump under the climate sceptic approach withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement and promoted a fossil fuel-based economic growth in the US for four years under his ‘America First’ policy. Another welcome development announced during the summit was that the US, the second largest emitter of CO₂, committed to halving its greenhouse gas emission by 2030, compared with 2005 levels. Biden’s pledge is nearly double the 2030 climate goal set by the Obama administration.”

İKVV Chairman Zeytinoğlu also commented on the recently agreed EU Climate Law: “The EP and the European Council have not been able to reach an agreement in the Climate Law negotiations for months. While the European Council wanted the 2030 climate target to be enshrined into the EU Climate Law as a 55% net greenhouse gas emission cut, the EP continued to reject this target



for many rounds of negotiation. This is due to the fact that the 55% net greenhouse gas emission cut could only be achieved through carbon sinks, which would actually result in a 52.6% emission cut. However, the institutions rushing to announce the final version of the Climate Law at this summit hosted by the US, finally reached a compromise on 21 April 2021. Thus, EU institutions agreed on the 55% net greenhouse gas emission reduction target for 2030. However, they also pledged to clarify how much emission reduction and removal will contribute to this target, and to ensure the improvement of carbon sinks by introducing a more ambitious Land Use Change and Forestry regulation by 2021.”

İKVV Chairman Zeytinoğlu finally touched upon global cooperation in achieving global climate goals: “There are some comments that in line with the new climate targets announced by the major economies making up more than half of the global economy such as the US, the EU, Canada, the UK and Japan, the world is now on track to limit global warming to 1.5 °C by 2100. However, it was disappointing to see that countries such as China and India, which have a large share in global emissions, did not set new targets at this summit.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was one of the 40 leaders invited to the summit. During the summit,

President Erdoğan stated that Turkey will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions up to 21% by 2030 within the framework of the nationally determined contribution submitted in 2015 and declared that Turkey is exerting significant efforts to reduce the negative impacts of climate change. However, although Turkey was one of the first countries to sign the Paris Agreement, today it is among the six countries which have not ratified the Paris Agreement, along with Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. This situation is worrying since there is a possibility that Turkey would remain outside the current climate regime. Located in the Mediterranean Basin, Turkey is one of the countries most affected by climate change. Hence, under these conditions, Turkey will not be able to act as an active participant in the Conference of the Parties in the future. Moreover, tackling climate change is an important area where Turkey can cooperate with other countries, especially the EU and the US. It is crucial for Turkey, as an EU candidate country and a Customs Union partner, to comply with the European Green Deal. In addition, both in the March European Council conclusions and the visit by the Presidents of the Commission and the Council to Ankara, tackling climate change was mentioned as one of the proposed high level dialogue topics under the positive agenda. Turkey now needs to implement the Paris Agreement, set more ambitious climate goals, and be a part of global cooperation so that it can better represent itself in climate negotiations and create closer cooperation with the EU on climate change.”

NEW PUBLICATION FROM İKV: EU LITERACY GUIDE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

İKVV published an “EU Literacy Guide” designed primarily for grassroots civil society organisations in Turkey. “EU Literacy Guide for Civil Society Organisations” has been prepared within the framework of the “EU Monitoring Network” project jointly conducted by İKV, TAV (Turkey-Europe Foundation), and YADA (Foundation for Life) within the scope of the “Grant

Programme for Partnerships & Networks for Strengthening of the Cooperation between Public Sector and CSOs” which is implemented by the Directorate for EU Affairs in Turkey.

The guide, developed and drafted by İKV, prioritizes the need for CSOs to discover more about Turkey-EU relations as well as the EU institutions and policies.



TIMELINE APRIL 2021

1	
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3	İKVV Secretary General Nas gave a lecture at DIPAM Academy.
4	
5	European Commission President von der Leyen and European Council President Michel visited Turkey.
6	İKVV Secretary General Nas spoke in the “Gün Ötesi” programme and on Medyascope.
7	İKVV Chairman Zeytinoğlu issued a statement on the visit by European Council and Commission Presidents.
8	İKVV Secretary General Nas attended the webinar hosted by Circle Foundation.
9	İKVV Secretary General Nas was a guest on the “Pasaport” programme broadcast on NTV.
10	Ukrainian President Zelensky visited Turkey for the 9 th meeting of the Turkey-Ukraine High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council.
11	Prime Minister of Libya’s National Unity Government Dbeibeh paid an official visit to Turkey.
12	İKVV Secretary General Nas participated in the webinar organised by Çağ University.
13	Malta’s Foreign and European Affairs Minister Bartolo visited Turkey.
14	İKVV published an EU Literacy Guide for Civil Society Organisations (in Turkish) under the EU Monitoring Network Project.
15	Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu participated in the North Atlantic Council Meeting in Brussels.
16	Greek Foreign Minister Dendias paid a visit to Turkey.
17	Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu visited the TRNC.
18	İKVV Secretary General Nas discussed Turkey-EU relations after Brexit at the Foreign Policy Institute seminar.
19	
20	İKVV Secretary General Nas talked about “EU’s Current Priorities and the Green Deal” at the webinar by Yeditepe University.
21	
22	President Erdoğan participated in the Leaders Summit on Climate.
23	İKVV Chairman Zeytinoğlu issued a statement regarding the Leaders Summit on Climate.
24	Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu visited Romania for Trilateral Foreign Ministers Meeting.
25	İKVV Secretary General Nas discussed the European Green Deal at the workshop hosted by Europolitika.
26	Turkey denounced US President Biden’s statement on the 1915 events.
27	İKVV Chairman Zeytinoğlu issued a statement on the 5+UN informal meeting on the Cyprus issue.
28	
29	
30	İKVV Secretary General Nas delivered a presentation on the Green Deal at the event held by Altınbaş University.

“A SOLUTION IN CYPRUS CAN BE POSSIBLE WITH A NEW VISION BASED ON SOVEREIGN EQUALITY”

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu issued a press statement ahead of the 5+UN informal meeting on Cyprus to be convened in Geneva on 27-29 April 2021. Indicating that Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) will go to Geneva with a new vision, IKV Chairman made the following remarks:

“On 27-29 April, Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders and the representatives of the three guarantor powers; Turkey, Greece and the UK will come together in Geneva under the auspices of UN Secretary General António Guterres. The parties are expected to openly express their views on the future of the island and the settlement of the Cyprus issue in the meeting which will be held in an informal format. During the three-day Geneva meeting, UN Secretary General Guterres will try to determine whether the parties could meet on a common vision for a lasting solution to the Cyprus issue. In this respect, the Geneva meeting does not entail a negotiation round, but it is held in order to determine whether common ground exists for launching a new process.

In Geneva, the TRNC with full support from Turkey, will present its new vision of a two-state solution based on sovereign equality. As known, despite the constructive stance and good faith demonstrated by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side, the pursuit of a solution on the basis of a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation which has been the formula until now, has repeatedly failed to produce results because of the intransigence of the Greek Cypriot side. Despite having rejected the Annan Plan envisaging a federal solution with a majority of 76%, the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) was admitted to the EU based on the claim that it represented the entire island which was in violation of international law and EU



values. On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriot side, who said 'yes' to the plan with 65%, was deprived of the benefits of EU membership due to the attitude of the other side and continues to be subject to embargoes. Initiatives aimed at ending the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot side such as the Direct Trade Regulation could not be implemented due to the Greek Cypriot side's objections. The unilateral EU accession of the Greek Cypriot side has rendered resolving the Cyprus issue even more difficult. Once in the EU, the Greek Cypriot side has not hesitated to use its position within the EU against Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots and abuse the EU's decision making procedures to this end, as it continued to be the party walking away from the negotiation table. As made crystal clear during the Crans Montana talks in July 2017 which broke down due to the maximalist demands and intransigence of the Greek Cypriot side, the Greek Cypriot Administration does not intend to share political power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriot side.

As long as the mentality that sees the Turkish Cypriots as a minority rather than an equal partner persists on the Greek Cypriot side, reaching a partnership on the basis of a federation does not seem possible. The current situation, in which 53-year-long efforts for a solution have failed to produce results, requires new ideas on the Cyprus issue and a new vision based on the existing realities on the island. As argued by Turkey and the TRNC, cooperation between two states living side by side on the basis of equal international status and sovereign equality is the realistic and sustainable solution. At this point, it is understood that initiating a new process in Cyprus will depend on the acceptance of the sovereign equality of the TRNC. In Geneva, the Turkish Cypriot side will explain to the other participants why the two-state solution model based on sovereign equality is the realistic, sustainable and right solution. We hope that rather than insisting on the federal solution that has been repeatedly tried and instrumentalised by the Greek Cypriot side to

maintain the *status quo*, the other stakeholders of the process will be open to new ideas at the meeting in Geneva.”

IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu concluded his remarks by evaluating the EU's position and said the following: “The EU has also requested to participate in the informal meeting in Geneva as an observer. However, it was stated that the EU representatives would not participate in the Geneva meeting after the TRNC voiced valid concerns about the impartiality of the EU due to Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration being EU members. The EU, which has made a huge strategic mistake by admitting the Greek Cypriot side as a member prior to a solution in Cyprus at the expense of its own values, has lost its objectivity in the context of the Cyprus issue. As known, due to the EU's strategic mistake, the opening of a total number of 14 chapters and the provisional closing of all chapters in Turkey's EU accession talks have been blocked by the EU Council and the Greek Cypriot Administration. Moreover, the EU's disregard for the legitimate rights of Turkey and Turkish Cypriots and its unconditional support for Greek and Greek Cypriot claims regarding the disputes over sharing of natural resources and maritime jurisdiction areas in the Eastern Mediterranean under the pretext of 'Union solidarity', have strained Turkey-EU relations. We invite the EU to pursue a balanced position regarding the Cyprus issue. Instead of taking steps to reinforce the injustice caused by the unilateral membership of the Greek Cypriot Administration, the EU can contribute to improving Turkey-EU relations as well as peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean by designing tools to convince the Greek Cypriot side to act in a more constructive way. We call on the EU to deliver on its promises to the Turkish Cypriot people.”

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL SPOKE AT VARIOUS WEBINARS AND PROGRAMMES

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas attended various programmes and webinars throughout April and evaluated latest developments concerning Turkey-EU relations. On 3 April 2021, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas gave a lecture on the pursuit of independence in European security at DIPAM Academy. On 6 April, IKV Secretary General Nas participated in the “Gün Ötesi” programme prepared by TRT Istanbul Radio and broadcast on Radio 1. Assoc. Prof. Nas discussed the importance of the visit by the Presidents of the European Commission and Council to Ankara for Turkey-EU relations in light of the steps agreed at the March European Council meeting under the positive agenda. On the same day, Nas also assessed the visit by von der Leyen and Michel in the special programme presented by Edgar Şar on *Medyascope*.

On 8 April, IKV Secretary General Nas participated in a webinar on “The future of Turkey-EU relations: Can the EU and Turkey find a way forward?” organised by Circle Foundation and moderated by TRT



World presenter Ayça Aydoğdu. Speaking alongside Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı, Director for External Relations at European Commission's General Secretariat Michael Karnitschnig, Sweden's former Ambassador to Turkey, former State Secretary in the Swedish Defence Ministry and member of the European Security Program at SIPRI

Ambassador Michael Sahlin and Middle East Institute scholar and College of Europe visiting professor Prof. Emiliano Alessandri, Assoc. Prof. Nas pointed out that both Turkey and the EU would benefit from improving the relations. A day later, Nas was Mete Çubukçu's guest on the “Pasaport” programme broadcast on NTV where she discussed the recent developments in Turkey-EU relations.

On 12 April, IKV Secretary General Nas delivered a presentation on the modernisation of the Turkey-EU Customs Union at the webinar organised by Çağ University EU Application and Research Center with the theme “Latest Developments in Turkey-EU Relations”. Assoc. Prof. Nas took part in the seminar hosted by the Foreign Policy Institute on 17 April and gave a presentation on “Turkey-EU relations after Brexit”. Participating in the expert seminar organised by Yeditepe University within the Jean Monnet Module on 20 April, Nas delivered a speech titled “EU's Current Priorities and the Green Deal”. IKV Secretary General Nas also discussed the European Green Deal in detail at the workshop organised by *Europolitika* on 24 April. Finally, Nas participated in the online event series hosted by Altınbaş University Energy and Environmental Research and Application Center on 30 April and delivered a presentation on the Green Deal and its implications for Turkey.

COMMON GROUND ELUSIVE AT THE 5+UN INFORMAL TALKS IN GENEVA

As the 5+UN informal talks aimed at finding a common ground between the two sides for a new process in Cyprus proved elusive, the parties agreed to reconvene for a fresh attempt in two to three months' time.

President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Ersin Tatar, Greek Cypriot Leader Nicos Anastasiades and the foreign ministers of the three guarantor states; Turkey, Greece and the UK came together under the auspices of UN Secretary General António Guterres at the informal 5+UN meeting in Geneva on 27-29 April 2021. The purpose of the informal meeting, which brought together the two Cypriot sides and the three guarantor states for the first time since the collapse of the latest round of talks aiming to find a lasting solution to the decades-long Cyprus issue in Crans Montana in July 2017, was exploring whether common ground exists between the two sides for launching a new process.

As it can be recalled, the five party conference in Crans Montana, widely viewed as the last chance for a settlement according to a federal formula broke down at a crucial point due to the intransigence and maximalist demands of the Greek Cypriot side. Since then, initiatives aimed at the resumption of the



Cyprus settlement talks have proved elusive amid rising tension over hydrocarbon exploration rights in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Turkish Cypriot side went to Geneva with a new vision for a two-state solution based on sovereign equality. Indicating that the federal formula, which has been negotiated for over 50 years has failed to yield results, the Turkish Cypriot side advocates cooperation between two states on the basis of sovereign equality and equal international status

as the only realistic and viable solution. Turkish Cypriot side's two-state vision has also been endorsed by Turkey. Meanwhile, insisting on a solution based on a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation, the Greek Cypriot side argued that the talks should continue from the point left off in Crans Montana.

During the Geneva talks, TRNC President Tatar put forward a six-point proposal supporting the Turkish Cypriot side's new vision. As a first step under the proposal, the

UN Secretary General is tasked with taking an initiative for the Security Council to adopt a resolution securing the equal international status and sovereign equality of the two sides. It is argued that such a resolution will form the basis for the establishment of a cooperative relationship between the two states. As a second step, once their equal international status and sovereign equality is ensured, the two states are to start negotiations on their future relationship as well as on property, security, border adjustments and EU matters. The negotiations would be supported by the guarantor states and when deemed appropriate by the EU, as an observer. It is stated that the two states would mutually recognise each other and the guarantor states are to support that. As a last step, it is envisaged that any settlement reached during the negotiations would be submitted for approval in separate simultaneous referenda in the two states.

On the last day of the talks, stating that not enough common

ground was found between the two sides to allow for the launch of formal negotiations, UN Secretary General Guterres announced that the parties would reconvene to make a fresh attempt in two to three months' time. Given the huge gap between the stated positions of the two sides, expectations for a breakthrough during the three-day Geneva talks were low on both sides. Nonetheless, the meeting proved important for the Turkish Cypriot side's new vision to be put on record by the UN Secretary General.

Evaluating the Geneva meeting in a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu, TRNC President Tatar stated that there was no point in starting formal negotiations before TRNC's equal status was confirmed. For his part, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu criticised the Greek Cypriot side for failing to bring new proposals to the table expressed Ankara's determination to support the Turkish Cypriot side's new vision for a two-state solution based on sovereign equality.

TURKEY-US RELATIONS STRAINED OVER US PRESIDENT BIDEN'S STATEMENT ON 1915 EVENTS AND THE F-35 ISSUE

Turkey strongly rejected and condemned the statement made by US President Joe Biden on 24 April 2021 concerning the 1915 events. Biden's labelling of the relocation of Ottoman Armenians resulting in casualties in World War I as a "genocide" has caused strong reaction on the part of Turkey. The Turkish Foreign Ministry in a written statement, criticised Biden for bowing in to pressure from radical Armenian and anti-Turkey circles and indicated that the statement was devoid of any scholarly and legal basis nor was it supported by any evidence. It was reminded that the 1915 events did not meet any of the conditions required for the use of the term "genocide" as defined under international law. Recalling the fact that the controversial nature of the 1915 events was confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights and that the proposal for establishing a Joint History Commission which Turkey had extended to Armenia in 2005 was still on the table, it was stated that the statement made by Biden, who had no authority to judge historical events, had no value. Moreover, it was indicated that the US statement which distorted historical facts would



open deep wounds and undermine mutual trust and friendship between Turkey and the US. The US Ambassador in Ankara was summoned to the Turkish Foreign Ministry to express Ankara's condemnation. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu rejected Biden's statement on social media and said that political opportunism is the greatest betrayal of peace and justice. In addition, on 27 April, the Turkish Grand National Assembly issued a strong condemnation of Biden's remarks.

The Turkish business community reacted strongly to Biden's statement on the 1915 events. TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıkloğlu stressed that the decision of the US administration will not make the slander of the so-called "Armenian genocide" a reality. Condemning the decision, TOBB President Hisarcıkloğlu highlighted that history cannot be changed by political calculations as well as populist decisions and the decision which distorts historical facts, will negatively affect Turkey-US relations. TÜSİAD also issued a condemnation of Biden's statement and emphasized that historical events shall be evaluated by historians and researchers.

Another development concerning Turkey-US relations in April was related to military cooperation. According to reports, the US Department of Defense has notified Turkey of its removal from the F-35 fighter jet programme. The Pentagon has updated the Joint Memorandum of Understanding with eight current participants, which Turkey had signed in 2007 and it was stated that Turkey will not be included in the updated version as a result of its removal from the programme.

MINOR CABINET RESHUFFLE IN TURKEY REGARDING TWO MINISTRIES



According to a decree published in Turkey's Official Gazette on 21 April 2021, the Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Services was split into two as "Ministry of Family and Social Services" and "Ministry of Labour and Social Security". For the two new ministries, new names were appointed while the Trade Minister was also replaced.

Accordingly, Derya Yanık was appointed as the Minister of Family and Social Services while Vedat Bilgin has become the Minister of Labour and Social Security. Derya

Yanık is a lawyer and served as a board member at the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM). Vedat Bilgin served as Chief Advisor to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Deputy Chair of Presidential Social Policies Board. In addition, Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan was replaced with Mehmet Muş, the former Group Deputy Chairperson of the ruling Justice and Development Party. Mehmet Muş is an economist and was serving as a deputy from Istanbul at the Parliament since 2011.

TURKEY'S CENTRAL BANK BANNED CRYPTOCURRENCY PAYMENTS

The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) banned the use of cryptocurrencies and crypto assets in payments for goods and services due to the possible irrevocable damage and significant transaction risks. The ban also prohibits companies handling payments and electronic fund transfers from processing transactions involving cryptocurrency platforms. The relevant decision concerning the ban has been published in the Official Gazette dated 16 April 2021.

In an explanatory statement, the CBRT underscored that the crypto assets are neither subject



to any regulation and supervision mechanisms nor a central regulatory authority, causing irrevocable risks. Moreover, the danger of illegal actions due to the cryptocurrencies' anonymous structures, and their

possible illegal use without the authorisation of their holders were among the reasons stated by the CBRT. The restriction on cryptocurrencies came into effect on 30 April 2021.

"HALLOUMI/HELLIM" GRANTED EU GEOGRAPHICAL PROTECTION

On 12 April 2021, the world famous Cypriot cheese "Halloumi/Hellim" was registered as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in the EU. The iconic white rubbery-textured cheese known as "the white gold of Cyprus" entered the list of products protected by the EU both under its Turkish name "Hellim" and its Greek name "Halloumi". The registration aims to protect the name "Halloumi/Hellim" against imitation and misuse across the EU by limiting its production geographically to the island of Cyprus. It implies that only the cheese produced in Cyprus according to the traditional recipe would be allowed to be marketed in the EU. Moreover, as part of the package adopted by the Commission, the Green Line Regulation governing the movement of people, goods and services across the Green Line will be amended paving the way for the Turkish Cypriots to export the hellim cheese they produce to the EU market. The Commission has pledged to provide additional support to the Turkish Cypriot dairy sector for reaching EU food and animal safety standards. In addition, it has proposed setting up a bi-communal Working Group dedicated to *Halloumi/Hellim* to review the implementation of the package. The measures foreseen in the package are expected to take effect on 1 October 2021.

The Greek Cypriot Administration's unilateral application for registering the common Cypriot delicacy under the name "Halloumi" in 2009, had



caused concern among the Turkish Cypriot community. Thanks to the efforts of the Turkish Cypriot side and objections raised by Greek Cypriot producers on the sheep and goat milk mixture the cheese should contain, the Greek Cypriot Administration had to withdraw the initial application. A second application was submitted in July 2014 for registering the product under the names "Halloumi/Hellim". The Turkish Cypriot side had voiced reservations about the appointment of the body to carry out controls for PDO specifications. A common understanding on the subject was reached between the two sides during a visit by the then European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on 16-17 July 2015. Under the common understanding, an internationally accredited body called "Bureau Veritas" was to be tasked with undertaking the necessary controls regarding PDO specifications and simultaneous to the registration of *Halloumi/Hellim* as a PDO, the Commission was to present a proposal for amending

the Green Line Regulation to allow hellim cheese produced by the Turkish Cypriot community to be exported to the EU.

Although the registration of *Halloumi/Hellim* has been welcomed by EU officials as a confidence building measure, there are some uncertainties concerning the implementation of the package adopted by the European Commission. The TRNC Presidency, in a statement prior to the completion of the registration process, indicated that the final versions of the texts were not shared with the Turkish Cypriot side and that their demands for more clarity on certain aspects were left unanswered. Moreover, the statement pointed to ambiguities concerning how controls would be carried out in practice and how sanitary and food safety inspections to allow for trade through the Green Line would be undertaken. Furthermore, the arbitrary practices and obstacles created by Greek Cypriot officials in trade through the Green Line Regulation are another cause for concern in the TRNC. In addition, the new product specification which would require the *Halloumi/Hellim* to be exported to the EU to contain at least 51% sheep's and goat's milk mixture has been met with concern by dairy producers on both sides. Currently, the cheese produced on both sides of the island is largely made from cow's milk, the Turkish Cypriot producers argue that it would take at least 10 years to comply with the milk mixture specification and thus they have asked for an additional 10-year transition period until 2034.

IMF REVISED UP ITS GLOBAL GROWTH FORECAST

IMF revised its World Economic Outlook and upgraded its global GDP growth forecast on 6 April 2021. IMF expects the world economy to grow by 6% in 2021, up from 5.5% foreseen in its January forecast and projects a stronger recovery in 2022 up from 4.2% to 4.4%.

According to the IMF, advanced economies' GDP growth is expected to be higher, up from 4.3% to 5.1% in 2021, and from 3.1% to 3.6% for the next year. Among the advanced economies, the US and Spain are projected to grow both by 6.4% and are followed by France (5.8%), the UK (5.3%) and Canada (5%).

GDP growth estimations for the emerging markets are 6.7% and 5% for 2021 and 2022, respectively, versus 6.3% and 5% projected in January. Among emerging economies, highest expectations are for India (12.5%), China (8.4%) and Turkey (6%), followed by



Mexico (5%), Russia (3.8%), Brazil (3.7%), South Africa (3.1%), Saudi Arabia (2.9%) and Nigeria (2.5%).

Additional fiscal support in a few large economies, the anticipated vaccine-powered recovery in the second half of 2021, and continued adaptation of economic activity to subdued mobility played an important role in the upward revision by the IMF. However, still high uncertainty surrounds the world economic outlook, related to the path of the pandemic, the effectiveness of policy support to provide a bridge to vaccine-powered normalization, and the evolution of financial conditions.

TWO NEW PRODUCTS FROM TURKEY RECEIVED EU PDO STATUS



Bayramiç White (*Bayramiç Beyazı*) and Taşköprü Garlic (*Taşköprü Sarımsağı*) were granted EU Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status and registered in the list of products protected by the EU after publication in the Official Journal of the EU on 16 April 2021. Produced in the Bayramiç district of Çanakkale province, Bayramiç White is a special kind of white nectarine having a special smell and flavour with a taste between apricot and plum. Similarly, being peculiar to the Taşköprü district of Kastamonu province, Taşköprü Garlic, with an intense smell and more bitterness abounds in mineral matters and vitamins and is known with its benefits for health.

With the latest addition, the number of Turkish products registered in the EU's PDO list and obtained a geographical indication in the EU has reached 7, while 18 more products submitted for a PDO registration await approval from the European Commission. The other agricultural products of Turkey registered as PDO in the EU are; Gaziantep Baklava (*Gaziantep Baklavası*), Aydın Fig (*Aydın İnciri*), Malatya Apricot (*Malatya Kayısı*), Milas Olive Oil (*Milas Zeytinyağı*) and Aydın Chestnut (*Aydın Kestanesi*). Moreover, the application for the registration of Araban Garlic (*Araban Sarımsağı*), which is known with its large teeth and high aroma and produced in Araban district of Gaziantep province, to the EU's PDO list was submitted in early April.

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT ZELENSKY VISITED TURKEY AMID ESCALATING TENSIONS WITH RUSSIA

On 10 April 2021, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky who was paying an official visit to Turkey for the 9th Meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council between Turkey and Ukraine. The official visit took place at a time when the tension between Russia and Ukraine has been rising. In early April, Russia deployed troops along the Ukrainian border, Donbass where government forces and Russian-backed separatists have been fighting occasionally since 2014.

Speaking at the joint press conference held after the one-on-one meeting and the 9th Meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, President Erdoğan stated that as a country prioritising peace in the Black Sea, Turkey did not favour increased tension in the region. President Erdoğan highlighted that the current crisis between Ukraine and Russia should be resolved by diplomatic and peaceful means. In this regard, President Erdoğan also stressed that the escalation should be ended through dialogue on



the basis of the Minsk Agreements dating back to 2014 and expressed Turkey's readiness to provide all the necessary support. Reiterating its policy of non-recognition of Crimea's annexation and defending the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, President Erdoğan underlined his support for the Crimean Platform, Ukraine's initiative that aims to bring the international community together on Crimea.

For his part, Ukrainian President Zelensky specified that the strategic partnership between Ukraine and Turkey celebrated its 10th anniversary this year and that success is a prominent result of a relationship

that has been intensified with reciprocal dialogue and work.

In the Joint Declaration issued following the 9th Meeting of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, the parties highlighted that the friendship built on good neighbourliness and mutual respect and pledged to increase cooperation and coordination in the areas of economy, trade, tourism, security, defense industry, science, education and youth. Affirming the two countries' willingness to increase cooperation in peace and stability, it was stated that the two states adhere themselves to the principles and rules of international law.

AMBITIOUS EMISSION REDUCTION TARGETS ANNOUNCED AT THE LEADERS SUMMIT ON CLIMATE



US President Joe Biden hosted a virtual climate summit on 22 and 23 April 2021 on the occasion of Earth Day. The Leaders Summit on Climate not only brought together heads of state and government, but also representatives from several international organisations, businesses, subnational governments, and indigenous communities from 40 countries. The main objective of the summit was to demonstrate that "the US is back" in the fight against the climate crisis by putting forward economic opportunities for the future, as well as asserting the need for enhanced global cooperation and ambition.

The new and more ambitious climate targets by major economies such as the US, the UK, Canada and

Brazil, and the announcement of the recently agreed EU Climate Law were the highlights of the summit. While the host of the summit, the US, announced a 50% net emission reduction by 2030 compared to 2005 levels, one of the most ambitious climate targets has been declared by the UK. The UK vowed to cut back its emissions by 78% by 2035.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was one of the 40 leaders invited to the summit. During his speech at the summit, President Erdoğan reminded of Turkey's 2030 climate target which pledges to reduce emissions by 21% lower than the business-as-usual scenario and stated that Turkey has been exerting great efforts to reduce the impact of climate change.

FOREIGN MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU ATTENDED THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL MEETING



Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu visited Brussels to attend the NATO Council Meeting on 14 April 2021. Prior to the meeting, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu came together with his counterparts from the Framework Nations of the Resolute Support Mission to evaluate the recent developments in Afghanistan.

During the NATO Council Meeting, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu underlined the need for a comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan and pointed to the Afghan Peace Conference to be held in Istanbul in cooperation with Qatar and the UN. It was announced after the meeting that forces under the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan would start withdrawing by 1 May and that all drawdown is going to be

completed within a few months.

Under a February 2020 deal between the former US administration under Trump and the Taliban, the US forces were foreseen complete their withdrawal by May 2021. The Biden administration is planning to complete the withdrawal from Afghanistan by 11 September 2021, the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Together with his counterparts from other allies, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu met with US State Secretary Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. It was stated that withdrawal did not imply an abandonment of Afghanistan and that the developments in the country would continue to be closely monitored.

FOREIGN MINISTER ÇAVUŞOĞLU HAD EXCHANGES WITH HIS EU COUNTERPARTS



In April, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu held meetings with his Maltese and Greek counterparts in Ankara and visited Bucharest for the Turkey-Poland-Romania Trilateral Foreign Ministers Meeting. On 13 April 2021, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu came together with Malta's Foreign and European Affairs Minister Evarist Bartolo. During the meeting, the two foreign ministers discussed the recent developments in the region including in Libya, Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as Turkey-EU relations and bilateral ties.

On 15 April, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu met with Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias who paid a one-day working visit to Ankara and was also received by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The joint press conference after the meeting, which began on a conciliatory tone with Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu describing their meeting as very positive, turned into a tense exchange as the Greek Foreign Minister Dendias used the occasion to repeat Greece's complaints regarding

outstanding issues between Athens and Ankara. Describing the accusations as unacceptable, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu underscored that outstanding issues could be resolved through constructive dialogue and stated that provocative language should be avoided.

Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu paid a two-day visit to Bucharest on 22 and 23 April to attend the Trilateral Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Poland and Romania. In the context of the visit, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu came together with his Romanian, Polish and Georgian counterparts and was received by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis. During the foreign ministers meeting, the ministers emphasized that the trilateral mechanism had produced many cooperation projects and discussed the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting, NATO Summit, Ukraine, Black Sea, Syria and Afghanistan. Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu also participated in the Turkey-Georgia-Poland-Romania-Ukraine Foreign Ministers Meeting.

THE 2019-2020 EP TURKEY REPORT AND ITS REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF TURKEY-EU RELATIONS

The AFET Committee adopted the 2019-2020 Turkey Report which is the first report prepared by the new Rapporteur Nacho Sánchez Amor and the first Turkey Report to be voted in the new Parliament elected in May 2019.

Selvi EREN

IKV Junior Researcher

The first Turkey Report prepared by Nacho Sánchez Amor, who serves as the Turkey Rapporteur in the 9th term of the EP covering the period 2019-2024, was adopted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) of the Parliament on 21 April 2021. The 2019-2020 Turkey Report, a draft of which was submitted to the Committee on 11 November 2020, was discussed by the AFET Committee in the past few months and 698 proposed amendments have been presented for the 6-page-long document. The next step for the EP Turkey Report, following the completion the Committee phase, will be the EP plenary and the scope of the report will be presented for the approval of EP members elected in May 2019. Similar to the 2018 Turkey Report, recommending a formal suspension of accession negotiations, the current report reiterates this proposal on the grounds that backsliding in accession negotiations increased even further. Stating that "Turkey-EU relations have reached a historical low point", the 2019-2020 Report recommends that the parties review their motivations and find alternatives instead of the current mechanisms which are clearly not functioning in terms of the accession process.

What's in One of the Most Controversial EP Reports?

The non-binding EP reports prepared for each EU candidate country are both an answer and an evaluation showing how developments are interpreted from the perspective of the Parliament, following the annual country reports published by the European Commission. Likewise, the EP report, which expresses how the developments in the candidate country are perceived by member countries and citizens, as the Parliament represents people from 27 Member States, also reflects the political, economic and social aspects of the candidacy process.



The EP reports for Turkey, which are subject to intense discussions in the EP plenary after the preparation phase in the AFET Committee and submission of many amendment proposals, can be read as a reflection of the interest shown by the member countries in the comments on Turkey-EU relations.

After examining the content and subtitles of the 2019-2020 EP Report, a general and detailed assessment of the accession process has been presented under five headings and 34 items in total. With 698 proposed amendments during the discussion phase in the AFET Committee, the scope of the final version of the 2019-2020 Report published on 4 May has expanded to 77 items with additional remarks regarding recent domestic and foreign policy developments in Turkey.

In the general assessment part of the report, which mostly preserved key concepts from the draft, it is emphasized that the bilateral relations have deteriorated to a point that they can no longer be carried out within the framework of the accession negotiations, and therefore a different type of relationship might need to be considered. Nevertheless, the Turkey Rapporteur, who does not make any positive statements in the report concerning the accession negotiations, still expresses the importance of Turkey as a strategic partner for the EU in political, economic and foreign policy terms. Thus, the Union wishes to establish the best possible relationship to avoid risking to lose Turkey as a strategic partner. On the other hand, another item that draws attention to the value of the continuation of a

dialogue and mutual understanding between Turkey and European societies, is the normative power of the accession negotiations over Turkey, which might be interpreted as contradictory to a suggestion stated in previous articles recommending a formal suspension of the accession negotiations if the "current negative trend is not urgently and consistently reversed". Stressing that "the accession process is still the most powerful tool to exercise normative pressure on and constructive dialogue with the Government of Turkey, and that it is also the best framework to sustain the democratic and pro-European aspirations of Turkish society and promote convergence with the EU and its Member States on policies and standards, including fundamental rights and democratic values", although a transactional relationship seems convenient according to the recent developments in bilateral relations, the 2019-2020 Turkey Report argues that it can never replace the normative power for democratisation and pro-European aspirations.

In that context, one might say that these two statements, which appear to be contradictory, actually reflect the confusion experienced by the EU institutions about the best model that will not harm democracy, human rights and the rule of law when dealing with Turkey, and underline the fact that a transactional model for relations would be not only a backsliding for Turkey but also detrimental for the EU's normative power as an anchor for rule of law, democratic principles and fundamental rights and freedoms.

Three Main Areas of Backsliding in the Relations

The 2019-2020 EP Report states that in recent years Turkey-EU relations have been characterised by regression in three main areas: a backsliding in fundamental rights, regressive institutional reforms and an assertive foreign policy with an increasingly anti-EU narrative. Following the submitted amendments, recent developments concerning the tension in the Eastern Mediterranean did have a negative impact on these evaluations. Therefore, Turkey's foreign policy towards Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration was added to the final report as an element that negatively affected the accessions negotiations. Moreover, these main three developments indicated in detail throughout the report are described as a reason for the EU to doubt Turkey's commitment to the EU membership bid. The report is highly critical on fundamental rights and freedoms, democracy, the rule of law, and the separation of powers. It is stated that shortcomings in the aforementioned areas are causing the strategic goal of full EU membership to look unreliable in the eyes of the EU.

If a positive assessment regarding Turkey-EU relations is mentioned in the report, it is related to the modernisation of the Turkey-EU Customs Union and updating the 18 March Turkey-EU Statement. The EP report, which praises Turkey as usual for its tackling of the refugee crisis and its crucial role in hosting nearly 4 million refugees, demands a continuity of cooperation on the migration issue. Concerning the Customs Union, it is once again stressed that its modernisation will have positive effects for both parties since it will pave the way for a renewed dialogue, creating more jobs while boosting cooperation and trade within the framework of the European Green Deal.

However, two fundamental conditions are strictly required to achieve the full potential of the Customs Union with its modernised scope and mechanisms. Accordingly,

the report states that modernisation should be strictly conditional on the developments concerning the Copenhagen criteria on one hand, and its non-discriminatory implementation on the other hand. Linking the modernisation of the Customs Union to the implementation of the Additional Protocol, in other words to the condition that Turkey opens its ports to vessels from the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, the 2019-2020 EP Report extends the scope of the political blockage preventing the opening of 14 chapters and closing of all to further trade integration between Turkey and the EU.

The 2019-2020 Report, which does not present a positive projection with regard to the future of Turkey-EU relations, invites the parties to consider their own motivations, indicating a deeply negative view of the EP vis-à-vis Turkey's accession negotiations. However, arguments about the evolution of bilateral relations into a transactional model would be a fundamental values-oriented deviation for both the EU and Turkey, which can be read as a warning sign for Turkey to take concrete steps in the accession negotiations, as the EU is also not willing to formally suspend Turkey's EU membership bid. Within the scope of its *sui generis* story, Turkey is a candidate country with a Customs Union covering industrial goods, which is the highest level of integration with the EU for any candidate country. Accordingly, it is of great importance for Turkey to return to its reform agenda of alignment with the Copenhagen criteria in order to eliminate the possibility of losing the gains acquired through years-long efforts since Turkey-EU relations cannot go beyond the stage reached due to various reasons. The return of the lost political will in this direction can bring Turkey-EU relations, which have failed to go beyond the sanctions, funding cuts and transactional daily rhetoric in recent years, again within the scope of the accession negotiations and restore an environment of dialogue in which the parties speak the same language.