



IKV MONTHLY



ISSUE:6 APRIL 2015

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

CAN WE SPEAK ABOUT A NEW ERA IN TURKEY-EU ENERGY RELATIONS?

The first official visit of Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Energy Union, Maroš Šefčovič on 16-17 March 2015 paved the way for strengthening the relations with Turkey in the energy sector and coming a step closer to achieving one of the key priorities under the recently announced Energy Union.

The main item on Šefčovič's agenda was the European Commission's proposal to Turkey to upgrade cooperation by launching a high-level energy dialogue. This idea was announced during the first meeting of the Advisory Council of the Southern Gas Corridor that kicked off in Baku on 12 February. One month later, on 16 March, Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yıldız and Vice-President of the Commission Šefčovič announced the launch of Turkey-EU High Level Energy Dialogue. The role of Turkey as an energy hub between energy sources in the Middle Eastern and Caspian Regions and EU energy markets was emphasized in the draft joint declaration. It was also stated that both Turkey and EU will benefit if Turkey becomes an energy hub.

The declaration was also important to confirm the progress made by Turkey in aligning its legislation with the EU *acquis*. Since the negotiations on the chapter on Energy is blocked because of the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus' veto, launching the High Level Energy Dialogue will allow both parties to strengthen their relations in energy policy and to support Turkey's progress in alignment with the EU *acquis* especially with regular meetings at ministerial level. Moreover this dialogue will not only cover energy security but also other relevant energy sectors such as gas, electricity, nuclear, renewables, energy efficiency and climate action, with a particular view to the preparation of COP21 that will take place in December 2015 in Paris.

In the communication on Energy Union, it has been stated



that "as part of a revitalised European energy and climate diplomacy, the EU will use all its foreign policy instruments to establish strategic energy partnerships with increasingly important producing and transit countries or regions such as Algeria and Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, the Middle East, Africa and other potential suppliers". Considering this statement, one can easily argue that the launching of the High Level Dialogue with Turkey will contribute to the EU's ambition to play a stronger role in global energy markets.

Another important development during the visit of Vice-President of the Commission Šefčovič's was the groundbreaking ceremony of the TANAP pipeline, which sets up the Southern Gas Corridor with South Caucasian Pipeline (SCP) and

Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). As it is well known, the Southern Gas Corridor envisages the delivery of gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz II field to Europe via Turkey, Greece and Italy. As it was pointed out in the first EU official documents in 2008, Southern Gas Corridor is one of the priority energy projects

that will increase EU's energy supply security. The Southern Gas Corridor reveals to be of great importance since it will ensure the diversification of both energy routes and sources. Considering EU's dependency on imported energy, mainly the high level of dependency of Eastern Europe

towards Russia, completing the Southern Gas Corridor acquired a renewed urgency for the EU. Russia uses easily its advantage on energy as a political leverage and there is currently an increasing tension between Russia and the EU regarding the crisis in Eastern Ukraine. At the ceremony, Vice-President of the Commission Šefčovič not only underlined the importance attributed to the TANAP (with its 1850 km route the main part of Southern Gas Corridor) but also the role of Turkey as a reliable energy partner for the EU.

For Turkey, the importance of TANAP for its own as well as the EU's energy security will help to contribute to its goal of becoming an energy hub and to improve its regional clout. Turkey needs to also bolster other areas of energy policy such as renewables, energy efficiency, liberalisation of energy markets or to invest more in energy technologies. Undoubtedly, there are still more areas of opportunity to exploit in Turkey-EU energy relations. However one should not underestimate that opening the chapter on Energy to negotiations remains a higher priority on the agenda.

IKV EVALUATED THE NEW AGENDA ON TURKEY-EU RELATIONS IN SAKARYA

IKV organised on 20 April 2015 a seminar entitled "Sakarya Debates the EU: The New Agenda in Turkey-EU Relations" in cooperation with Sakarya Chamber of Commerce and Industry with the support of Sakarya Commodity Exchange, Akyazi

Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Akyazi Commodity Exchange.

The opening speeches were delivered by Chairman of Sakarya Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mahmut Kösemusul, the President of Sakarya University Muzaffer Elmas and IKV Chairman

Ömer Cihad Vardan.

In his opening speech, IKV Chairman drew attention to the main problems encountered within the current way of functioning of the Customs Union which are a cause of major concern for the Turkish business community. **PAGE 2**



34TH MEETING FOR THE TURKEY-EU JCC WAS HELD IN BRUSSELS

The 34th meeting of the Turkey-EU Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) was held in Brussels on 8-9 April 2015 under the co-chairmanship of TESK President Bendevi Palandöken and Vice-President of the Slovenian Chamber of Trade and Industry Cveto Stantič. Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır and representatives from TOBB, HAK-İŞ, TÜRK-İŞ, KAMUSEN, MEMURSEN, TZOB, TİSK and TESK attended to the meeting. IKV's Member of the Board of Directors İşinsu Kestelli, IKV Deputy Secretary General and Research Director Melih Özsöz and IKV Brussels Representative Haluk Nuray also participated to the meeting.

At the meeting, Minister Bozkır stressed that although only one chapter has been opened in the last four years due to political obstacles with the EU, Turkey continues with determination its reforms. Minister Bozkır highlighted that 167 reform laws had been approved in the TGNA in the last four years. He added that Turkey is currently not only ready to open 28 chapters and to close 14 chapters but also could complete the negotiation process in two years once the political obstacles will be overcome.

The head of the Turkey Unit at the European Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement, Jean-Christophe Filori explained that the technical preparations were completed for the opening to negotiations of Chapter 17 but they still required the approval of all Member States. Filori pointed out to the positive developments in Turkey-EU relations, especially Turkey's commitment to EU membership, the increase in high-level meetings, beginning of cooperation for the revision of the Customs Union, ongoing negotiations for visa liberalization and launch of high level political dialogue on energy policy. However, he expressed his concerns regarding the developments related to judiciary, fundamental rights and insufficient stakeholder consultation mechanism during the legislative process as well as to "disproportionate constraints" applied on social media in Turkey. In the session on the "Developments in the Implementation of the Visa Liberalisation", IKV Deputy Secretary General and Research Director Özsöz gave a presentation on the visa liberalisation dialogue.

IKV EVALUATED THE NEW AGENDA ON TURKEY-EU RELATIONS IN SAKARYA



FROM THE FIRST PAGE

These problems are related to the visa procedure applied to Turkish citizens, the transport quotas applied to Turkish trucks and the free trade agreements (FTAs) signed by the EU with third countries. Chairman Vardan also stressed the importance for Turkey of economic relations between Turkey and the EU and noted the significance for Turkey to take part in the TTIP process. Vardan referred also to Turkey's membership negotiations with the EU and noted his support for a revitalisation of the process by the opening of new chapters.

The panel on "New Agenda on Turkey – EU Relations" was chaired by IKV Member of the Executive Board Responsible for Accounts Mehmet Nuri Görenoğlu. In his brief

presentation, he explained that the prospect of EU membership constitutes a driving force for the development of Turkey since it has contributed in the reinforcement of its industry and encouraged reforms aiming to raise its democratic standards. Nevertheless drawing the attention to the difficulties encountered within Turkey's EU accession process, he stressed the importance of launching the visa liberalisation dialogue and the revision of the Customs Union as well as opening Chapter 17 on Economic and Monetary Policy to negotiations.

In the panel, the General Director for EU Affairs of the Ministry of Economy, Murat Yapıcı shared with the participants the latest developments regarding the update of the Customs

Union. He explained that after the establishment of the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU, the international environment has significantly changed due to the slow progress in Turkey's EU accession negotiations and the shift of the EU's trade policy towards bilateral and regional FTAs following the slow pace of multilateral trade negotiations under the auspices of the WTO. Murat Yapıcı also underlined that Turkey was not represented sufficiently in the decision-making process, especially in the Trade Policy Committee. Murat Yapıcı also stressed the negative impacts of these agreements on Turkey since it is excluded from the negotiation process and continues to face barriers when entering the market of third countries while EU member states gain privileged access. With TTIP, it is forecasted that the negative impacts will be greater for Turkey. It has thus become necessary to revise and expand the framework of the Customs Union that will be more suited to the new global economic and trade environment and to solve the structural problems. With regard to the revision of the Customs Union, Turkey wants to establish a mechanism that will allow the FTAs to be concluded in parallel with the EU, to abolish transport quotas and to ensure its participation in the decision making process. The European side, on the other hand, insists

on widening the scope of the Customs Union to trade, services and public procurement and to reinforce the dispute settlement mechanism.

In his presentation, IKV Brussels Representative Haluk Nuray gave a comprehensive analysis on the reasons that have pushed the EU and the USA to launch TTIP negotiations. In this regard, he underlined the changes that have occurred in the world trade by giving an emphasis on the rise of economic actors in Asia (especially China and South Korea), the shift of global production to Asia, new trade policy of countries focusing on bilateral or regional agreements and the development of the supply value chain model.

In his presentation, IKV Deputy Secretary General and Research Director Melih Özsöz explained the legal, economic and human dimensions of the visa procedures applied to Turkish citizens wishing to travel to EU Member States. In regard to the visa liberalisation dialogue, he explained that according to the first progress report on visa liberalisation roadmap, Turkey has recorded important progress in fulfilling 62 out of 72 criteria required for the abolishment of the visas. Nevertheless Özsöz also stressed that Turkey needs to pursue its reforms especially in areas such as data protection and fundamental freedoms.

THE EP CALLS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF THE "ARMENIAN GENOCIDE" INCITING FIERCE REACTION ON THE TURKISH SIDE

The European Parliament (EP) in a resolution adopted on 15 April, called for the recognition of the "Armenian Genocide" by Turkey, suggesting that this would pave the way for "genuine reconciliation" between Turkey and Armenia. According to the EP resolution, the centenary of the 1915 events is an opportunity that should be used to put into implementation the non-ratified protocols for the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border and establishment of diplomatic relations. The resolution also pays tribute to the statement by Pope Francis on 12 April noting the 1915 events as the "first genocide of the 20th century". It is also expected that the German Bundestag will

debate a similar resolution on 24 April.

The EP resolution instigated stern reaction on the part of several Turkish politicians and decision-makers including the President, Chairman of the TGNA Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister for EU Affairs and President of Directorate of Religious Affairs. President Erdoğan expressed that "Turkey cannot accept Armenian genocide label" while he also criticized the EP by saying that "we do not take seriously those who adopted this resolution by mutilating history and law". Minister for EU Affairs Bozkır said the resolution cannot be explained with legal and

historical reasons, adding that such decisions are "null and void for Turkey and the Turkish nation."

IKV Chairman Vardan also made a declaration on the EP resolution noting that the EP is not a judicial organ and therefore not fit to issue such claims. He also added that such political statements can harm not only Turkey-EU relations but also Turkish-Armenian relations, making it more difficult to start a diplomatic process between the two sides.

UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric also made a statement on the issue and stated that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon evaluates the 1915 events as "tragic events" and an "atrocious

crime" and does not follow Pope Francis's labelling of the incidents as "the first genocide of the 20th century."

It is generally accepted in Turkey that both Turks and Armenians suffered as a consequence of clashes during WWI and the deportation of Armenians from cities and towns in Eastern Anatolia was a measure adopted to end the collaboration between Armenian militia and Russian forces, thereby not having the intent of extermination of Armenians. Today around 60,000 Armenians continue to live in Turkey, while an estimate of 100,000 migrants from Armenia live and work in the country.

IKV IN EUROPOLITICS **EUROPOLITICS**

The Turkish government decides to split its “security package”.

By Markus Bernath,
8 April 2015

Despite Ankara’s wishes, the country’s recently adopted “domestic security package” will likely not be seen as a good public relations move in the EU. “Unfortunately, we expect more criticism from the European Commission and from the European Parliament,” Melih Özsoz, Deputy Secretary-General of the Economic Development Foundation (IKV), Turkey’s long standing pro-European think tank, told Europolitics.

Adopted on 27 March by the ruling Conservative-Islamist AKP party, which holds absolute majority in the Turkish parliament in Ankara, and now becoming law, the “security package” gives considerably more leverage to the already powerful police in the country. From now on, police officers will be entitled to detain persons for up to 24 hours for alleged crimes committed individually without a decision by a judge, or up to 48 hours if

accused of “collective crimes,” which could include a street protest deemed violent by the police. Far-reaching amendments to Turkish law on the powers and duties of the police (Polis Vazife ve Salahiyet Kanunu) also allow for the use of firearms in order to protect public buildings or to respond to violent protesters throwing Molotov cocktails or using slings. Surveillance of phone calls and e-mail traffic without a prosecutor’s order are part of the security package, too, as well as unprecedented powers for Turkey’s 81 provincial governors to initiate police investigations.

[...] Turkey’s parliament has taken some of the worst abuses from the country’s appalling track record on policing and effectively endorsed them in law. Excessive use of violence and the weakened role of prosecutors and defenders are recurrent criticisms in the European Commission’s progress reports on EU membership candidate Turkey.

But the other half of the security package could have earned the Turkish government praise in Brussels: Sections 4 and 5 of the omnibus bill (Articles 68 through 130), contain a number of reforms called for by the Commission as part of the dialogue on visa-free travel. Passport procedures in Turkey would be run by the General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality within the Ministry of Interior and not any longer by the Turkish “Emniyet”, the state security body. The integration of Turkey’s various border control units – coast guard, gendarmerie, police – into a single entity is another reform foreseen by the proposed legal changes.

However, the security package itself has turned out to be so controversial that the government decided to cut short the month-long debates in parliament, often accompanied by fist fights in plenary, and pass Sections 1 to 3, Articles 1 to 67

that grant increased powers to the police and the governors, and send the rest back to the parliamentary commission for further deliberation. The idea was to have the tougher police laws ready before parliament goes into recess on 5 April and new elections are held on 7 June: This latter will coincide with the commemoration of the Gezi Park protests of 2013 by the opponents of the Turkish government, and disappointed Kurdish voters may again stage protests in the streets.

The set of reforms related to visa liberalisation will most certainly be adopted by the Turkish parliament, but only in the autumn or even later. “If three or four key articles in this part of the security package are adopted, it would be a huge step forward in the visa-free process,” Özsoz says.

“This year will mark the tenth anniversary of the start of the EU membership negotiations, but the momentum is lost,” he adds. **(Europolitics)**

THE 76TH TURKEY-EU JPC MEETING WAS HELD IN ANKARA



The meeting, which was the last JPC meeting before the general elections in Turkey and that took place on 19-20 March 2015, was co-chaired by Afif Demirkiran on behalf of the Turkish side and Manolis Kefalogiannis on behalf of the EP.

TGNA Spokesperson Cemil Çiçek and Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır delivered the opening speeches. Minister Bozkır explained the importance of EU membership in regard to common economic interests, trade relations, energy cooperation, fight against radicalism and terrorism.

During the meeting, Turkey-EU JPC Co-Chair Demirkiran stated that opening Chapter 17 on Economic and Monetary Policy in itself would not be enough in generating the much needed impetus in the accession talks and argued that Chapter 23 on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights and Chapter 24 on Justice, Freedom and Security as well as Chapter 15 on Energy should also be opened for negotiations.

In the first session, Undersecretary of the Ministry of EU Affairs Ambassador R. Rauf Engin Soysal, on behalf of the Presidency of the EU Council Latvia’s Ambassador to Ankara Atis Sjanits and Director for Strategy and Turkey at European Commission’s Directorate General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Simon Mordue presented their respective assessments on Turkey-EU relations and the state of play in accession negotiations to the JPC members.

The main issues on the agenda of the other sessions were racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, the fight against all forms of discrimination and media freedom and the fight against terrorism. The final session of the meeting focused on Turkey-EU Customs Union, EU’s free trade agreements including TTIP and Turkey-EU foreign policy cooperation.

EP PRESIDENT MARTIN SCHULZ’S VISIT TO TURKEY



President of the European Parliament (EP) Martin Schulz paid an official visit to Turkey on 8-9 April 2015. During his visit, Schulz met with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister

Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Çavuşoğlu, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır and TGNA Spokesperson Cemil Çiçek. The latest developments in the Middle

East, Syrian refugees, Turkey’s reform process, visa liberalisation, Cyprus talks were among the main topics discussed during these meetings.

Before his visit to Turkey, Schulz reminded that beyond Turkey’s role as a key strategic, political and economic partner of the EU, it is a candidate country which aims to join the EU. Schulz pointed out to the importance of ensuring a continuous dialogue between decision makers, parliamentarians and civil society organisations of Turkey and the EU.

During the meeting held between EP President Schulz and Minister Çavuşoğlu, the latest developments in regard to Turkey-EU relations, Cyprus talks, ongoing TTIP negotiations between the EU and the USA were assessed.

Minister Çavuşoğlu highlighted the significance of opening new chapters to negotiations and the progress in visa liberalisation dialogue which will give an impetus to Turkey’s reforms for EU accession process. Similar message was also given by Minister Bozkır in his meeting with the EP President. The possibility of opening Chapter 17 to negotiations was also discussed in these meetings.

On the second day of his visit, EP President Schulz visited Öncüpınar refugee camps located in the south eastern province of Kilis. EP President Schulz praised Turkey for hosting Syrian refugees and underlined the importance of Turkey’s continuous aids in the region and need for improving infrastructure of the refugee camps.

TURKEY RATIFIED THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON SINOP NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

On 1 April 2015, the Turkish Parliament has ratified the intergovernmental agreement regarding the construction of the nuclear power plant in Sinop. Ratification of the

agreement provides the necessary legal basis for Turkey’s second nuclear power plant. As it is known, Turkey aims to build its first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu with

Russian company Rosatom. The construction of the nuclear power plant in Sinop will be carried out by the consortium consisting of Japan’s Mitsubishi and Itochu, France’s Areva and

GDF Suez, and Turkey’s state-run power producer EÜAŞ. The construction of the plant is expected to start in 2017, once the environmental impact assessment will be approved.

MINISTER OF EU AFFAIRS' VISITS: BELGIUM-ITALY-HUNGARY

Minister Bozır visited Belgium on 20-21 March 2015. During his visit, Minister Bozır met with EU Commissioners Johannes Hahn, Karmenu Vella and Arias Cañete. Turkey-EU relations and accession negotiations were the main topics discussed during the meetings between Minister Bozır and EU Commissioners. During his visit to Belgium, Minister Bozır also gave a speech at 2015 Brussels Forum organized by German Marshall Fund.

Minister Bozır visited Rome on 25-27 March 2015. During his visit, Minister Bozır had meetings with Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Paolo Gentiloni, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Lapo Pistelli and Deputy Secretary to the Prime Minister of Italy for European Affairs Sandro Gozi. Turkey's progress for EU membership, recent developments in Syria, Iraq and Libya as well as measures to prevent illegal migration were the main topic discussed during the meeting.

Minister Bozır attended a meeting organized by Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto in Budapest on 7 April 2015. The agenda of the meeting to which Foreign Ministers of Greece, Serbia and Macedonia also attended was energy security. In his speech following the meeting, Minister Bozır mentioned Turkey's aim to contribute to the EU's energy market while ensuring its own energy security.

IKVM MONTHLY

April 2015 No: 6

On behalf of IKV

Ömer Cihad Vardan

Editor -in- chief

Melih Özsoz

Editorial Directors

Selen Akses, İlge Kivilcim,

Büşra Çatır, Deniz Servantie

Istanbul Office

Esentepe Mahallesi Harman Sokak

TOBB Plaza No:10 Kat:7-8

34394 Levent İstanbul/Türkiye

Tel: +90 212 270 93 00

Faks: +90 212 270 30 22

E-posta: ikv@ikv.org.tr

www.ikv.org.tr

Preparation for Publication



General Director

Gürhan Demirbaş

General Assistant Director

Eser Soygüder Yıldız

Art Director

Hakan Kahveci

Editor

Yağmur Bahar Polat

Graphic Designer

Şahin Bingöl

Printing House:

İstanbul Basım Promosyon

Basın Ekspres Yolu Cemal Ulusoy Cad.

No:38/A 34620, Sefaköy-İstanbul

info@istanbulprinting.com

Tel: (0212) 603 26 20



8TH TURKEY COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY COUNCIL WAS HOSTED BY TOBB

The 8th Turkey Commerce and Industry Council was hosted by TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıkıoğlu on 8 April 2015 in Ankara with the participation of Prime Minister Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, Minister of Science, Industry and Technology Fikri Işık, Minister of Labour and Social Security Faruk Çelik, Minister of

Economy Nihat Zeybekci, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock Mehdi Eker, Minister of Customs and Commerce Nurettin Canikli, Minister of Development Cevdet Yılmaz and Minister of Finance Mehmet Şimşek.

In his speech at the Council meeting, TOBB President Hisarcıkıoğlu explained that with the support of the Chambers and

Exchanges they have conducted a project which helped determine the economic problems of the 81 provinces at micro and macro levels and in this respect presented recommendations to the relevant ministers and public institutions. President Hisarcıkıoğlu also pointed out to the economic risks arisen in the global system and their impacts on the private sector. He thus

emphasized the importance to give moral boost to the Turkish private sector and to support further economic growth in Turkey. In this respect, President Hisarcıkıoğlu stressed once again that the Employment, Industry Investment and Production Incentive Package would constitute a moral boost for the private sector in Turkey by encouraging more investments.

PRESIDENT'S VISITS TO SLOVENIA, SLOVAKIA AND ROMANIA

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Slovenia, Slovakia and Romania between 30 March and 1 April 2015. President Erdoğan was accompanied by a large delegation which included Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozır, Minister of Economy Nihat Zeybekci, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yıldız along with IKV and DEİK Chairman Ömer Cihad Vardan. Turkey's EU negotiations process, regional affairs, NATO partnership and bilateral trade relations were among the main issues discussed during these visits.

During his visit to Slovenia, President Erdoğan met with his Slovenian counterpart Borut Pahor to discuss bilateral and Turkey-EU relations. In a joint press conference, President Erdoğan thanked Slovenia for its support to Turkey's EU negotiations process and

reminded that Turkey maintains strong ties with Slovenia within the framework of NATO. Attending Turkey-Slovenia Business Forum, President Erdoğan stressed the importance of further strengthening, deepening and diversifying economic relations between both countries. Moreover, Chairman Vardan explained that Slovenia is an important and strategic transit country for Turkish export goods to European countries.

Following Slovenia, President Erdoğan visited Slovakia and met with his Slovak counterpart Andrej Kiska to discuss political, military, economic, trade and cultural issues. At the occasion of his visit, President Erdoğan also attended the Turkey-Slovakia Business Forum. During his speech, President Erdoğan emphasized the importance of further strengthening cooperation in economic and trade relations. As for IKV and DEİK Chairman Vardan, he added that it is important to complement close political ties with strong economic relations with Slovakia considering that it is one of



Europe's fastest growing economies.

During his visit to Romania, President Erdoğan met with his Romanian counterpart Klaus Werner Iohannis. He thanked Romania for its support to Turkey's EU negotiations process and further added that it would be important for Romania to continue its support when it will take over the Presidency of the EU Council. President Erdoğan also met with Prime Minister of Romania, Victor Ponta. During this visit, intergovernmental agreements on bilateral cooperation

in water, forestry, meteorology and hydrology were signed. Furthermore, a declaration was signed regarding the establishment of a Joint Economic and Trade Commission between Turkey and Romania. Within the framework of his visit, President Erdoğan also attended the Turkey-Romania Business Forum. Speaking at the Forum, Chairman Vardan explained that bilateral economic relations had gained momentum and that Romania constituted Turkey's biggest trade partner in the Balkans.

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE OF EDİRNE WAS REOPENED

The Great Synagogue of Edirne, also called "Kal Kadoş ha Gadol" was reopened on 26 March 2015. The opening ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister

Bülent Arınç, the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church Bartholomew I, Governor of Edirne Dursun Ali Şahin, Mayor of Edirne Recep Gürkan and members

of the Turkish Jewish Community. During its 5-year-long renovation, the Synagogue was restored by the Prime Ministry General Directorate of Foundations. The Synagogue,

which was built in 1906 under the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II, is the largest synagogue in the Balkan region and the third largest in Europe.