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EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPORT ON TÜRKİYE 2023: A REVIEW OF THE REPORT ON TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS

The European Commission's 2023 Türkiye Report states that Türkiye remains a key partner and candidate country for the EU, but similar to previous years, criticism of Türkiye continues in the same tone.

Member of the European Commission responsible for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi, published the 2023 Enlargement Policy Communication and Candidate Country Reports on 8 November 2023. The Türkiye Report 2023 on Türkiye's progress towards EU membership contains criticisms of Türkiye in various areas, particularly in the areas of democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights, while acknowledging that Türkiye has made progress, which are mostly limited progress in some areas.

As every year, the report emphasises that Türkiye remains a key partner and candidate country for the EU. Since the Council of the European Council's decision to suspend accession negotiations in 2018, Türkiye has not reversed the trend away from the EU and has made limited progress on accession related reforms.

Political Criteria

The report states that although the Turkish political leadership has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to the objective of EU accession and expressed it at every opportunity, Türkiye has not taken concrete steps in this regard and has not developed any positive momentum on its reform agenda. The report highlights the most critical issues in the realm of political criteria, notably democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights, and the independence of the judiciary. It underscores a more pronounced regression in these areas compared to others. In sum, the 2023 reporting period points to a worrying and sustained backsliding, highlighting the judiciary's non-compliance with European Court of Human Rights judgements, the continued



existence of corruption, the deteriorating human rights situation and unresolved structural deficiencies in the judicial system.

Economic Criteria

The Economic Criteria section of the Türkiye Report, although more moderate in tone than the other sections, emphasises the lack of progress in alignment with EU standards. Despite its advanced level of harmonisation, Türkiye has stalled in recent years and has not taken any significant steps towards full alignment with EU economic principles. The report reiterates familiar criticisms of Türkiye's economic policies, including a tendency towards loose monetary policy, reduced policy credibility and transparency, and continued direct state intervention in price setting. These concerns, coupled with apprehensions regarding the independence of the Central Bank, also cast doubt on Türkiye's dedication to maintaining sound economic management. Despite these criticisms, the

report recognises some positive developments in the Turkish economy, such as economic growth.

Foreign Policy

The criticisms made in the past years on security, defence and foreign policy issues continue in this year's report. In general terms, Türkiye's rate of alignment with the EU's foreign and security policies remains at 10% and the steps taken in foreign policy continue to contradict EU priorities.

The report criticises Türkiye for refraining from complying with its restrictive measures against Russia, refraining from condemning Russian aggression against Ukraine and failing to recognise and condemn Hamas as a terrorist organisation for its attacks on civilians in Israel, pointing out that Türkiye's foreign policy is in conflict with EU values and interests.

Drawing attention to Türkiye's regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, the report states that there were no drilling activities in the Eastern

Mediterranean and the SCGA during the reporting period and recommends that Türkiye-Greece relations, which were quite tense until February 2023 but softened after the 6 February earthquakes, should be maintained in good faith. It also draws attention to the necessity of cooperation between the EU and Türkiye to ensure a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean.

An Overview of the Chapters

The chapters that draw the most attention in the report are Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, Digital Transformation and Media, Agriculture Public Procurement and Agriculture and Rural Development. This attention is due to the report highlighting the backsliding in these chapters. Since 2015, the word "backsliding" has been increasingly used in the reports, meaning that Türkiye has started to lose the progress it has made in the harmonisation process with the EU and the grounds for EU membership.

The Future of Relations

Türkiye is the country with the most negative feedback among the ten country reports published and Türkiye's EU membership process seems to have reached a dead end. Based on the 2023 and previous years' reports, it is estimated that Türkiye will be left out of the new wave of enlargement planned by the EU.

From the EU's perspective, Türkiye's EU membership process has reached a deadlock due to foreign policy incompatibilities (the Cyprus issue, tense relations with Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, Türkiye's approach to regional issues) and increasing contradictions with EU norms and values (regression in democracy, neglect of the rule of law and human rights and values, undermining freedom of expression). From Türkiye's perspective, the EU does not see Türkiye as European and even if Türkiye fulfils the criteria, it will continue to keep Türkiye waiting at the door as it has done for years. Indeed, the EU does not offer Türkiye an objective membership perspective. The Commission should know that "You don't chase an unattainable goal." Could Türkiye be doing the same?

The future course of the relationship between Türkiye and the EU is rather blurred. The future of Turkish citizens and its economy depends more on its own actions than on the EU's decisions. If Türkiye truly desires EU membership, it must first and foremost demonstrate a firm political will to fulfil the criteria for membership. This unwavering determination must translate into concrete actions that uphold democratic principles, promote the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, and protect fundamental rights.



IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU MET WITH EUROPEAN COMMISSION VICE-PRESIDENT SCHINAS



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu met with Vice-President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas on 14 November 2023 as part of the visit of the TOBB delegation led by TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu. During the meeting,

issues regarding the revitalisation of Türkiye-EU relations and cooperation opportunities between business organisations were discussed. Vice-President of the Commission Margaritis Schinas is responsible for issues such as European lifestyle,

migration and asylum pact, European security union, hybrid threats, skills agenda, and European education area. Schinas, who spent a period as an intern at IKV during his student years, is known as an EU official who is close to Türkiye.

IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU PARTICIPATED IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OF ENTERPRISES SUMMIT

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu participated as a delegate in the sixth European Parliament of Enterprises meeting titled "Entrepreneurial Voices, European Choices" on 14 November 2023.

In his speech at the event organised within the scope of the TOBB delegation, President Zeytinoğlu emphasised the importance of updating the Türkiye-EU Customs Union considering today's conditions. Highlighting especially the trade diversion effects of the Free Trade Agreements signed by the EU on Türkiye, Chairperson Zeytinoğlu stressed the need to



start negotiations on updating the Customs Union as soon as possible to solve such problems.

EPE took place in the Plenary Hall of the European Parliament with the participation of over 700 entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs from

different countries across Europe became members of the European Parliament for one day, debating and voting on some of the key issues on the EU agenda. This year's agenda were set as energy, skills for the labour market and international trade.

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave a speech at the panel meeting entitled "Looking Ahead: Türkiye-Germany/EU Relations Amid Global Challenges" held in Berlin on 7 November 2023. In her speech, Assoc. Prof. Nas touched upon various problems of Türkiye-EU relations and stated the twin transformations on the EU's agenda offers opportunities for the improvement



of Türkiye-EU relations.

On 22 November 2023, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave a presentation

titled "The Future of the Republic of Türkiye-EU Foreign Policy and Relations" at the panel titled "Republic of Türkiye in its 100th Anniversary" organised by Yalova University International Conflict Resolution Application and Research Centre. In her presentation, Assoc. Prof. Nas touched upon the past, present and future of the relations of Türkiye-EU.

IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU COMMENTED ABOUT 2023 ENLARGEMENT STRATEGY

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu made a statement about the 2023 Enlargement Strategy and annual reports for candidate countries published by the European Commission. In his statement, Chairperson Zeytinoğlu said:

"Within the scope of the 2023 enlargement strategy, the opening of accession negotiations with Ukraine, Moldova and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the proposal to grant candidate status to Georgia are promising for the revival of the EU enlargement process. However, the lack of any revival in Türkiye's EU accession process and the fact that relations with Türkiye are indexed to thought-provoking.

The EU's approach towards Türkiye appears to be exclusionary and does not offer a perspective for improving relations with Türkiye, except for the migration and refugee issues. While the report draws attention to the problems in Türkiye, it does not mention the obstacles in Türkiye's accession process due to the Cyprus issue, the problems caused by some member states and the shortcomings arising from the EU. In this framework, one of the most important things Türkiye needs to do is to take serious steps especially in the field of law, judiciary, fundamental rights and freedoms, and to revitalise the reform process. The criteria that the EU expects from candidate countries coincide with universal values. In that respect, progress in this



direction will have positive results in terms of Türkiye's democratisation, economic development, raising living standards and strengthening the country.

This year, upon the instruction of the EU Council, the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security will prepare a separate report on the future of Türkiye-EU relations. We expect that there will be positive suggestions in this report. As IKV, our commitment to the goal of full EU membership continues. An alternative that would replace Türkiye's goal of full membership in the EU process is unthinkable. However, in order for the process towards this goal to be revived, conditions must change. As IKV, we had a proposal under the title of "Green and Digital Agenda" to prevent further deterioration in Türkiye-EU relations. This proposal aims to increase cooperation and harmonise Türkiye with the changing acquis, norms and standards in the European Green Deal and digitalisation processes."

IKV İSTANBUL EUIC CREATED EU MEMORIAL FOREST IN ŞİLE FOR A GREEN FUTURE

Within the scope of the European Commission's "Map My Tree" campaign, which aims to plant 170 thousand saplings in 19 provinces of Türkiye, the Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye and IKV İstanbul EU Information Centre established a memorial forest in Şile district of İstanbul on 16 November 2023. At the event, where the first sapling was planted by IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit, 10 thousand saplings were seeded in the ground.

Under the supervision of the General Directorate of Forestry, tree planting activities took place



in Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Edirne, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, İzmir, İstanbul, Kayseri, Kocaeli, Konya, Mersin, Samsun, Sivas, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon and Van between 11-21 November 2023. This event will symbolise the cooperation between the EU and Türkiye for a greener and more sustainable future, as well as contributing to the global fight against climate change.

İKv AGENDA

İKv CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU COMMENTED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONSHIP REPORT

İKv Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu commented about the report on the future of Türkiye-EU relations, prepared by European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivier Várhelyi and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell. İKv Chairperson Zeytinoğlu stated the following regarding the report:

"We were expecting concrete recommendations for the development and revitalisation of relations from the report published today and that is exactly what happened. We have seen that these are focussed on four areas



in particular: "Trade, Foreign Policy, Migration and Mobility". It is clear from the report that the EU sees Türkiye as an important regional actor and an assertive foreign policy player.

The approach here is to increase. For visa liberalisation, it is stated that six criteria are still have not met, and visa facilitation is proposed for certain categories. If this can be implemented quickly, it can be considered as a positive proposal at least in terms of reducing the problems in the visa process. The most comprehensive area of the recommendations is the initiation of the modernisation process of the Customs Union. We still expect a stronger will to emerge in this direction at the EU Leaders' Summit in December, where the report will be discussed, and that the GCASC issue will not be put in front of us as an obstacle."

İKv ORGANISED A CONFERENCE TITLED "EU GREEN DEAL AND ITS EFFECT ON TÜRKİYE'S CLIMATE POLICY" IN ANKARA



A comprehensive conference titled "EU Green Deal and Its Impacts on Türkiye's Climate Policy" was organised by İKv in Ankara on 20 November 2023 with the support of FNF and in cooperation with TEPAV and İPM. İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas stated that in the panel discussion dimension of the European Green Deal process, failure to comply with it will lead to loss of competitiveness and decrease in trade gains, while in the rewarding dimension, compliance will bring new investments and resources. Stating that the EU is trying to move forward through compromise by establishing various alliances both in foreign policy and domestically to achieve the green deal targets, Assoc. Prof. Nas emphasised that Türkiye should accelerate its harmonisation efforts. Providing information about the EU financial resources that candidate countries

can benefit from to reduce the cost of green transformation, Assoc. Prof. Nas underlined that Türkiye's implementation of a more consistent green transformation policy within its own country will also reflect positively on its foreign relations and that it will be able to better underline its discourses such as "The world is bigger than 5".

The opening speeches delivered by Founding Director of TEPAV Prof. Güven Sak and İPM Director Prof. Fuat Keyman. Following the opening speeches, Deputy Director of the Climate Change Department at the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change Assoc. Prof. Abdulkadir Bektaş shared information on how Türkiye will implement the Emission Trading System (ETS). The first session of the meeting was moderated by Director of the TEPAV Centre for Multilateral Trade Studies Ambassador (retired)

Bozkurt Aran and the speakers were Sustainability and Climate Policy Consultant Dr. Akın Ayberk Çilekoğlu, Director of İstanbul Bilgi University the Research Centre for the Environment, Energy and Sustainability Assist Prof. Ahmet Aydemir and İTU Management Engineering Faculty Member Assoc. Prof. Ahmet Atıl Aşıcı.

The second session was moderated by İKv Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit and the speakers were Director of SEFIA Bengisu Özenç, Kadir Has University Faculty Member Assoc. Prof. Emel Akçalı, Faculty Member of TOBB ETÜ Prof. Pinar İpek and Director of the Centre for EU Studies at TEPAV Nilgün Arsan Eralp, Deputy Director General for International Agreements and EU Affairs at the Ministry of Trade Bahar Güçlü, Faculty Member at TOBB ETÜ Prof. Sanem Baykal and İPM Director Prof. Fuat Keyman.

TIMELINE NOVEMBER 2023

President Erdoğan came together with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.	1	
	2	
Foreign Minister Fidan came together with his Hungarian counterpart Peter Szijjarto.	3	
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	5	
	6	
Foreign Minister Fidan came together with his Belarusian counterpart Sergei Aleinik.	7	İKv Secretary General Nas spoke at the event organised in Berlin.
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	9	
Deputy Foreign Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Bozay came together with Finnish Ambassador to Ankara Pirkko Hämäläinen.	10	
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	12	
	13	İKv Chairperson Zeytinoğlu participated in European Parliament of Enterprises Summit and came together with European Commission Vice-President Schinas.
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	15	
	16	İKv İstanbul EUIC created EU Memorial Forest in Şile.
President Erdoğan came together with German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier.	17	
	18	
	19	
	20	İKv organised a conference titled "EU Green Deal and Its Effect on Türkiye's Climate Policy" in Ankara.
	21	
	22	İKv Secretary General Nas talked about Türkiye-EU relations at Yalova University.
	23	
	24	
Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Türkiye to the European Union Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı came together with President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola.	25	
	26	
Foreign Minister Fidan met with his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock.	27	
	28	
Tomato of Ayaş region in Ankara got EU recognition.	29	
	30	
	31	

PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN HAD HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS IN GERMANY



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on 17 November 2023 in Berlin, on a one-day working visit.

According to the statement made by the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, during the meeting between President Erdoğan and his counterpart, the Israel's attacks on Gaza, bilateral relations between Türkiye and Germany and global issues were discussed. President Erdoğan conveyed to his counterpart that Israel's attacks on Palestinian territories must stop and that the world's reaction against human rights violations is crucial.

After his meeting with German President Steinmeier, President Erdoğan proceeded to meet with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. During the joint press conference with Chancellor Scholz, President Erdoğan urged Germany to collaborate in securing a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. President Erdoğan stated that, "If we can achieve a humanitarian ceasefire together as Germany and Türkiye, we will have the opportunity to save the region from this circle of fire." Emphasising that the recent developments have once again highlighted the necessity of a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, President Erdoğan reiterated that Türkiye's objective is to establish an environment where Israelis and

Palestinians coexist peacefully.

Touching on the purchase of Eurofighter warplanes from Europe by Türkiye, President Erdoğan stated that if Germany does not consent to the sale of these warplanes, they can be purchased from any other country and that Türkiye has become one of the leading countries in the field of UCAVs.

Evaluating the European Union membership process, President Erdoğan expressed the necessity for this process to regain momentum. President Erdoğan also expressed hope for Germany's support, being one of the driving forces behind the European Union, particularly on issues such as the updating the Customs Union and achieving visa liberalisation.

NATIONAL DEFENSE MINISTER YAŞAR GÜLER ADDRESSED THE PARLIAMENT



On 16 November 2023, National Defense Minister Yaşar Güler addressed the Parliament in Ankara, delivering crucial statements regarding Turkish-Greek relations, the situation in Gaza and fight against terrorism.

The Minister affirmed Türkiye's stance favoring "peaceful and prosperous" future in its relations with

Greece. Minister Güler emphasised that this pursuit of peaceful solutions does not entail Türkiye relinquish its national interests. Minister Güler identified the recent confidence-building meetings between Türkiye and Greece as a good opportunity to enhance the relations. The delegations met in Ankara on 13 November 2023 after the last meeting held more than

two years ago. The Minister stated that both countries will benefit from an honest and constructive relationship and solution-oriented approach.

Regarding Gaza, Minister Güler emphasised the urgent need for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and violating international law cannot be accepted in any circumstances, and Türkiye will make an effort to supply humanitarian aid to Gaza and to stop the attacks through diplomatic initiatives, he added.

In addressing Türkiye's fight against terrorism, the Minister highlighted that all the operations Türkiye pursues are in line with the Article 51 of the UN Charter, and Türkiye uses its right to self-defense as it respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of its neighbors. Minister Güler also underscored Türkiye's efforts to prevent any harm to civilians, historical and cultural assets, and the environment.

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTORATE HELD A MEETING IN BERLIN



The Presidential Directorate of Communications organised a thought-provoking debate titled "The Dilemma of the International System: Quo Vadis?" in Berlin on 17 November 2023. The event brought together representatives from the German public sector, academia, think tanks, civil society organisations and the German press to discuss strategies and opportunities for international cooperation in addressing global peace and security challenges.

The meeting discussed strategies and opportunities for international co-operation with a shared sense of responsibility in the face of challenges to global peace and security. The destruction and humanitarian tragedy caused by the ineffectiveness of the international system in the face of today's problems and conflicts in different geographies were evaluated, and approaches to the reform of the international system were also discussed. Participants had a lively exchange of ideas on potential reform approaches to strengthen the global system.

Vice President of the Presidency of Communications Assoc. Prof. Çağatay Özdemir emphasised the need for new mechanisms

to overcome the inability of the international community to effectively resolve conflicts. Stating that disinformation and black propaganda activities are frequently carried out in traditional media and social media today and noting that this is another global problem, Assoc. Prof. Özdemir said, "Our main goal is to combat disinformation." Pointing to the inadequacy of the UN Security Council structure in addressing global crises, Assoc. Prof. Özdemir underlined the importance of Türkiye-Germany relations in overcoming these complex challenges.

Reminding that the fight against disinformation is a local and regional problem, Assoc. Prof. Özdemir emphasised the necessity for a global endeavour to establish and sustain international peace and stability. Following the opening speeches, the participants presented their perspectives and suggestions on the dilemmas facing the international system and held a stimulating discussion. The meeting underlined the importance of close relations between Türkiye and Germany in overcoming these challenges and promoting a more just and stable world order.

FOREIGN MINISTER HAKAN FIDAN MET WITH HIS BY BELARUSIAN COUNTERPART SERGEI ALEINIK

Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan met with his Belarusian counterpart Sergei Aleinik in Ankara on 7 November 2023. The primary topics addressed during the meeting encompassed recent global crises. Foreign Minister Fidan's speech on two crucial issues; condemnation of violence in Gaza and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Minister Fidan emphasised that the war in Ukraine should end based on international law and also expressed that if the parties reach an agreement on the Russia-Ukraine war, Türkiye is ready to host these negotiations. In light of this bilateral meeting, Minister Fidan urged the entire international



community to act in ending the oppression in Gaza.

As per the statement released by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Türkiye's relations with Belarus progressing positively. Notably, Türkiye stood as the first country to recognize the independence of Belarus during that period.

TÜRKİYE AIMS TO COMPLETE DEVELOPMENT ROAD PROJECT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Concrete steps have started to be taken in the “Development Road Project”, which will connect the Persian Gulf to Europe through Iraq and Türkiye.

Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Abdulkadir Uraloğlu visited Baghdad on 30 September to discuss the Development Road Project with his Iraqi counterpart Rezzak Muheybes al-Sadawi. Following the meeting, Minister Uraloğlu stated that they anticipate the project’s completion by 2028. The Turkish and Iraqi governments plan to invest 23.8 billion dollars in addition to ongoing investments. Accordingly, the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure will build 615 kilometres of new lines for the 2,88thousandkilometre railway connection and 320 kilometres of new motorway for the 1,912 kilometre road corridor.

In addition to Iraq’s involvement, Gulf partners are also engaged in the project. Speaking at the Türkiye-UAE Business in İstanbul Forum on 31 November 2023, Trade Minister



Ömer Bolat said that Türkiye aims to complete the Development Road Project as soon as possible. Minister Bolat also stated that within the scope of the Project, Türkiye is willing to cooperate with the UAE, Iraq, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

Trade Minister Bolat also made some statements about the Project at the GCC- Türkiye Economic Forum 2023 held on 13 November. Stating that the GCC

countries affect the world economy with their natural resources, geostrategic and logistic potentials, Minister Bolat said that the region’s dynamic economy, openness to international trade and strategic position as a gateway to the Middle East and North Africa create business opportunities and make this region an appealing market for all exporters. Bolat expressed that for all these reasons, the Project will

TÜRKİYE HOSTED EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN NAVAL EXERCISE EVENT



Türkiye hosted the Eastern Mediterranean-2023 Invitation Naval Exercise, organised by the Turkish Navy, with the participation of ships, personnel, and observers from nine countries. The naval exercise commenced in Marmaris district of Muğla with involvement of NATO’s units.

Rear Admiral Hüseyin Tıgılı highlighted the significance of this exercise, recalling the 6 February earthquakes in Türkiye. He stated that the primary focus of this naval exercise was to conduct search and rescue missions and humanitarian aid training. Türkiye’s landing ship, TCG Sancaktar, actively participated

in these scenarios, specifically designed for search and rescue operations and humanitarian aid missions. The exercise held between 19-21 November 2023, encompassed various activities such as dealing with asymmetric threats, photex, surface gunfire, land bombardment, surface and submarine warfare, mine countermeasure operations, amphibious operations, and search and rescue missions. It also included live-fire exercises. Following this phase, a free play segment occurred from 21–23 November 2023, concentrating on humanitarian aid and support scenarios for natural disasters.

TÜRKİYE’S LUNAR MISSION SET FOR 2026 LAUNCH



Türkiye’s leap into the cosmos is reaching thrilling heights as it gears up for a groundbreaking lunar exploration. Within the expansive National Space Program, Türkiye is poised to achieve a significant milestone with the development of its first spacecraft under the Lunar Research Program (AYAP). This initiative marks a ten-year commitment, meticulously planned and orchestrated by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TUBITAK), in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Technology, the Turkish Space Agency (TUA), and various national institutions.

AYAP stands as one of the pioneering endeavours among the

ten programs unveiled, aiming to elevate Türkiye’s position among the select few nations with a presence on the moon. The phased approach of AYAP encompasses significant objectives, from orbit exploration to making direct contact with the lunar surface. The initial phase focuses on deploying a spacecraft to orbit the moon, collect vital data and establish communication with the lunar terrain. Subsequently, the program intends to advance, aiming for a soft landing utilising a rover on the moon’s surface.

The spacecraft’s development involves a meticulously planned timeline encompassing various phases. The completion of system-level design paves the way for a

detailed design phase, focusing on equipment, module and component development. Rigorous assessments and qualification models of crucial equipment are underway, ensuring readiness for the spacecraft’s integration and eventual flight.

This lunar mission is a testament to Türkiye’s commitment to excellence, emphasising mission success above all else. While incorporating collaborative efforts for certain components, the mission and spacecraft predominantly boast indigenous design and implementation. Turkish expertise and infrastructure will spearhead integration, testing, and operations, showcasing the nation’s self-reliance in venturing into deep space.

As Türkiye propels towards this lunar milestone, preparations are underway for subsequent phases, including conceptual studies for reconnaissance vehicles and essential landing technologies. Simultaneously, strategic endeavours in Earth observation, communication satellites, launch systems, and space observation systems demonstrate Türkiye’s multifaceted approach to space exploration, aiming to establish itself as a pivotal player in the cosmic domain.

BULGARIAN NEWS AGENCY HELD CULTURE AND EDUCATION MEETING IN ANKARA



The National Press Club of the Bulgarian News Agency (BTA) in Ankara organised a meeting called “Culture and Education: A bridge between Bulgaria and Türkiye” commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic. This gathering took place before the opera gala show of the Sofia Opera and Ballet.

During the event, Bulgaria’s Ambassador to Ankara, Anguel Tcholakov, emphasised the role of culture in connecting the two countries. He announced that the opera ‘Tosca’ would be performed in celebration of Türkiye’s founding. ‘Tosca’ held special significance as

one of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s favorite operas. Atatürk frequently attended opera performances while serving as a military attaché in Sofia between 1913 and 1915. Kiril Valchev, the BTA General Manager, mentioned that the proceeds from the ‘Tosca’ opera would be donated to regions affected by the 6 February earthquakes. Discussing Türkiye-Bulgaria relations, Valchev quoted Atatürk’s words from 1931, expressing his enduring fondness for Bulgaria: “I will never forget the beautiful moments I experienced in Bulgaria. I will always be a friend of the Bulgarian people. Bulgaria and Türkiye should always remain friends.”

BAŞKENT UNIVERSITY ORGANISED “WOMEN AND GASTRONOMY EVENT”

Women and Gastronomy” event hosted by Başkent University in Ankara on 13 November 2023 featured the participation of chefs from various countries. The event was organised by the Embassy of Spain in Ankara in cooperation with the Cervantes Institute and Başkent University.

Chefs from Spain, Slovenia, and Türkiye came together for the event, conducting culinary workshops alongside students at Başkent University. Sabina Repovz from Slovenia, Maria del Dulce Jimenez, Mimunt Hamido and Maria Jose San Roman from Spain and Aylin Yazıcıoğlu from Türkiye participated in the organisation. Aylin Yazıcıoğlu highlighted the significance of the gathering, attributing it to the



‘Mujeres Gastronomía’ initiative founded by Maria Jose San Roman, which will soon launch its activities in Türkiye. She emphasised the close affinity between Spanish and Turkish cuisines. Chef Yazıcıoğlu also expressed happiness regarding the higher representation of female students compared to male students at Başkent University and conveyed

the aspiration for similar equality in their professional lives.

The event started with the screening of the documentary “Sol Sostenible” (Sustainable Me) by Spanish Chef Maria Jose San Roman. Following the documentary screening, culinary workshops were conducted in the kitchen, involving both chefs and students.

TÜRKİYE INTENDS TO HOST HIGHER NUMBER OF TOURISTS

Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz expressed expectations of exceeding 70 million tourists by 2028 and aiming for an annual tourism revenue 100 billion dollars in the 2030s. He spoke at the 6th TravelExpo Ankara International Tourism and Travel Fair which took place in the Turkish capital city. He shared these objectives during his address at the 6th TravelExpo Ankara International Tourism and Travel Fair.

Türkiye’s picturesque coasts, forests, mountains, and valleys which attract millions of visitors each year. Beyond nature, historical and cultural



heritage of the country catch tourists’ attention. In these circumstances, tourism serves like a factory in Türkiye in which thousands of people work and create added value. It also contributes to the country’s

economy in a great extent. This contribution was spoiled by COVID-19 global pandemic and related travel restrictions implemented worldwide. After the pandemic ended, the numbers of visitors coming to Türkiye and the tourism revenue have started to recover rapidly.

Beyond the recovery, Türkiye aims to break new records in tourism. Up until October 2023, Türkiye hosted 44.6 million visitors in total, which witnessed 13.2% rise compared to 2022. The revenue of this nine-month period is 42 billion dollars, 20.1% more than the last year’s numbers.

22 YEARS OLD SELF-TAUGHT CODER JOINS NASA TEAM

Awoman aged 22 from Yalova in central Anatolia, Elif Eda Güneş joined the NASA team by learning coding all by herself. She grew up in a challenging environment with an illiterate mother and a father who worked as a farmer. Despite these obstacles, she took it upon herself to educate some of the women in her village and thought them how to read and write.

At just 15 years old, Güneş accomplished the remarkable feat of learning how to code without access to a computer or the internet, relying solely on pen and paper. Her initiative led her to reach out to Umut Yıldız, an astrophysicist at NASA, eventually landing her a spot on the Turkish team “Ancha Space,”



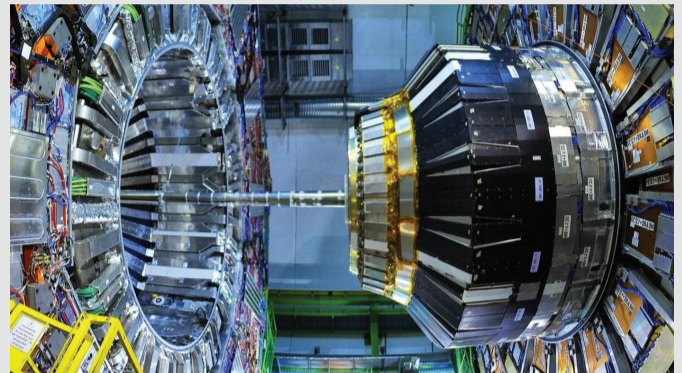
consisting of 17 young individuals working on NASA’s unmanned exploration vehicle.

Güneş acknowledged the transformative power of software in shaping the world and initially embarked on a career in software development. However, she discovered her passion for

networking and transitioned into account and team management. Currently, she’s deeply involved in a long-desired health project.

Facing sponsorship hurdles that prevented her from physically joining NASA, Güneş took the opportunity to start learning software within the team despite the limitations. Throughout her life, financial hardships have been a constant, yet Güneş draws immense motivation from her father’s resilience. Presently, she’s actively seeking job opportunities beyond her freelance work and is on the lookout for investors to support her innovative idea. Once securing investors, she plans to build her team and dive into an intensive phase of work.

CERN’S AI RESEARCH SPEARHEADED BY İSTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY SCIENTISTS



Scientists from İstanbul Technical University (ITU) are conducting extensive artificial intelligence research at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN). Professor Altan Çakır, a member of ITU’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences Department of Physics Engineering and co-chair of the Türkiye AI Platform, shared that ITU scientists have been actively engaged in CERN’s research efforts since 2011, following ITU’s formal entry into the Large Hadron Collider experiment. Çakır emphasised that Turkish scientists are integral to all research endeavours at CERN, focusing primarily on detector hardware, software, and middleware technologies.

As the leader of the ITU-CERN research group, Çakır highlighted extensive interdisciplinary research and measurements using artificial intelligence. These initiatives delve into exploring the universe’s mysteries and fundamental particles by studying particle interaction resulting from proton-proton collisions. This year, with support from the Turkish Energy Nuclear and Mineral Research Institution (TENMAK), a project focused on AI-based research in information technologies and applications commenced at CERN. Çakır specified, “We utilise artificial intelligence to forecast and assess the impact of high radiation on the CMS detector and conduct predictive maintenance studies.”

Discussing the active deployment of AI technologies, Çakır mentioned, “We extensively employ AI technologies in areas that still hold mysteries in the universe’s formation process, including the investigation of the ‘Higgs Boson,’ dark matter, black holes, antimatter, and interaction anomalies within the standard model.” Underlining the significance of interdisciplinary

collaboration, Çakır highlighted ITU’s pivotal role in merging various fundamental science and engineering disciplines to achieve collective success. He stated that “Through our involvement in CERN’s research, we merge cutting-edge technologies in software, hardware, AI, and big data applications, thereby enriching our educational and research pursuits.” and continued “CERN’s research spans accelerator, detector, and information technologies, applicable across diverse fields, from health sciences to smart materials, information technologies, and battery technologies.”

Emphasising the acceleration and broadening of scientific endeavours, Çakır stressed the vital role of actively applying information technologies. He concluded, “Direct involvement in these studies and engagement in AI and big data-driven research are paramount.” Çakır highlighted the significance of CERN for Turkish students, saying, “Through our research groups at CERN, we offer students hands-on experience in algorithms, AI techniques, their utilisation, and development, enabling their involvement in research from undergraduate levels and beyond. We impart our research and application processes developed at CERN to our students.”

He underscored the importance of an active research group within institutions like CERN, where interdisciplinary research thrives and internationally recognised technologies emerge. Çakır concluded by highlighting that the research group comprises students from diverse disciplines such as physics, mathematics, electronic communications, computer science, and aerospace engineering, emphasising the importance of active involvement in applied education-research processes.

PERUVIAN CHEF'S 'EMBASSY RECIPES' PROMOTES SUSTAINABILITY AND WASTE REDUCTION IN GLOBAL GASTRONOMY

Peruvian chef Jean Carlo Milla Lope presented his book "Embassy Recipes" at the Embassy of Spain in Ankara. The book includes various recipes from Spain, Peru, Türkiye and other parts of the world, focusing on sustainability and minimising waste.

Highlighting the challenge people face in finding food, Lope emphasised the urgency of addressing issues such as sustainability and waste reduction in such times. Regarding his book, Lope expressed that he prepared this book to prevent waste and added that he discussed sustainable recipes to prevent waste. Lope gave an example of a recipe in the book made with breadcrumbs, vegetable scraps and eggs.

Milla Lope's book "Embassy Recipes" shows that gastronomy can significantly contribute to sustainability and the fight



against waste. The book serves as a valuable resource for those

seeking to prepare delicious and environmentally friendly meals.

FRENCH ARTIST JISBAR MAKES VIBRANT DEBUT IN İSTANBUL



Jean-Baptiste Launay, known as Jisbar, recently debuted his art in İstanbul at Kalyon Kültür's Taş Konak. Curated by Aslı Bora, the exhibit, "Jisbar in İstanbul," showcases 20 pieces and 40 prints inspired by the city's essence. His fascination with İstanbul's history and culture prompted him to pay tribute through his artwork, reviving iconic pieces like the Mona Lisa in a contemporary pop style.

Jisbar's admiration for İstanbul was evident at the exhibition's opening, where he praised the city's charm and architectural allure, expressing a deep connection with its streets and culture. He mentioned Emre Yusufi, a Turkish artist whose sculptures he found impressive,

particularly those related to Hercules.

The artist's pop art seamlessly blends street art with pop culture traditions, garnering attention for rejuvenating historical figures and iconic artworks. Starting his journey through street graffiti in Paris, Jisbar's art invites viewers to delve beyond imagery, exploring narratives infused with symbols, slogans, and hidden elements.

Each artwork holds untold stories, intended for viewers to decipher through embedded messages, codes, and historical references. The exhibition, free to visit until 14 February, stands as a tribute to İstanbul's spirit and an invitation for audiences to unravel personal connections within Jisbar's art.

CULTURE AND TOURISM MINISTER PLANS REVIVAL OF "WONDERFUL CHILDREN ACT"



Culture and Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy has announced plans to actively implement the widely known "Wonderful Children Act." This act aims to provide talented children in fine arts with the opportunity to pursue studies abroad and receive financial support from the government in the form of scholarships. Originally enacted in 1948, the law facilitated the

educational endeavours of renowned pianist İdil Biret and violinist Suna Kan by sending them abroad for studies. The scholarship program covered all educational and associated expenses for the students and their parents. From 1957 to 1968, a total of 11 children received the opportunity to study at conservatoires in Paris. However, despite remaining in force, the

act has not been actively utilised. During a presentation to the Turkish Parliament's budget commission on 15 November 2023, Minister Ersoy expressed his intention to breathe new life into the act. He announced plans to revise the related legislation and to identify and support highly talented children across the country through the Ministry's art units and institutions.

TÜRKİYE'S SOUTHERN COAST WITNESSES SUCCESSFUL HATCH OF OVER HALF A MILLION ENDANGERED SEA TURTLES



This year, 589,112 endangered sea turtles, including loggerheads and green turtles, have successfully hatched and reached the sea from Türkiye's southern coast. Nearly all sea turtle species face endangerment, and they typically come ashore solely to lay eggs between May and September. Conservation efforts in Türkiye concentrates on 20 beaches recognised for turtle nesting. These endeavours involve maintaining nesting areas since turtles annually return to their birthplaces to lay eggs.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks conducts studies and enforces protective measures under various international conventions. These measures encompass designated nesting zones, awareness campaigns, limitations on beach activities, and the utilisation of wire cages to safeguard nests. Satellite tracking of sea turtles is also utilised to observe their behaviours. Furthermore, rehabilitation centres are in place to care for injured turtles.

MULTI-TIERED EU DEBATES AND TÜRKİYE'S PROBABLE POSITION IN THE LIGHT OF 2023 EU ENLARGEMENT PACKAGE

While the EU is evaluating the next enlargement and the different layers of integration, Türkiye's place is also a subject of debate.

Tunç İbrahim Ceylan
IKV Junior Researcher

It appears that the enlargement is among the plans of the EU after a long period. During the State of the Union speech delivered by the President of European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, the next enlargement process is characterised as "completing our Union" and deemed a "call of history". Likewise, both the EU and the candidate countries should be ready for an enlargement by 2030, President of the European Council Charles Michel expressed in a forum he attended in last August.

In addition to the statements coming from the top officials of the EU, the discussions on how the EU enlarges and how it acts in harmony and without any deadlocks in case of an enlargement have been made by politicians, think tanks and academics. Among others, the Franco-German report, initiated by German Minister Anna Lührmann and French Minister of Europe and prepared by a working group, is one of the latest and comprehensive contributions to these discussions. While analysing the institutional necessities and reforms to ensure the EU remains effective and efficient, the report proposes some suggestions. These include reducing the number of Commissioners, limiting the number of seats in the European Parliament to maximum 751, changing the trio system of the Council of the EU to a quintet system and expanding the policy areas where the decisions are taken with QMV (qualified majority voting).

Multi-tiered EU Discussions

The report also reawakens the multi-tiered EU discussions as well. Basically, multi-tiered or multi-speed EU means that different countries in the EU have different levels of integration. Integration at various levels can be associated with differing levels of political willingness among countries, varying degrees



of preparedness to adopt and implement a specific integration system, and other relevant factors. Multi-tiered EU is in use, actually. For instance, not all of the EU Member State is a part of Schengen Area or use Euro as currency. The Franco-German report envisions this multi-tiered model to be employed in design of the next enlargement and different layers of cooperation within and outside of the EU structure.

It is proposed in the report that there will be four tiers, two of which are within the EU and the other two are out of the EU structure. The fourth and the outermost layer is consisted of the European Political Community (EPC) with a more compact form than it is now, where geopolitical engagement is the base of the cooperation rather than integration. The third tier is defined as "associate membership" which is evolving around the single market. At this point, it is important to stress the existence of a red line between the fourth and the third tiers. The red line here is the "rule of law" principle indicating a conditionality to be a part of third and inner layers of cooperation. The second tier is composed of EU member countries.

The highest level of cooperation is achieved within the first layer where the EU members embrace further options of integration, namely Schengen Area and Eurozone.

The Latest Enlargement Strategy Report

While the discussions were continuing, on 8 November 2023, Communication on EU Enlargement Strategy was published. The report deals with the main course of the EU enlargement agenda, gives some details about the countries and their progress on the way of accession, aligning with the EU policies and the *acquis communautaire* and makes some suggestions to the countries.

The 2023 Report begins by emphasising that accession process is and will be based on merit. It then examines the countries on the enlargement agenda and the next steps can be taken. This report also includes Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine for the first time after Moldova and Ukraine was given candidate status last year and Georgia was given the perspective of candidacy once it takes some steps specified by the European Commission.

Türkiye is defined in the report as a key partner for the European Union and a candidate country; nonetheless, its reform efforts are evaluated as limited in the reporting period while it has been continuing to move away from the Union in several fields, including the Common Security and Foreign Policy, the report claims. Beside these comments, the report emphasizes a number of areas of joint interest to be cooperated with Türkiye such as counter-terrorism, economy, energy and food security, migration and transportation.

Türkiye in the Multi-tiered Integration Design

Türkiye is presently a part of the EPC and it will likely continue to take part in the Community's meetings even if the Community is reformed and structured as a more solid and tighter cooperation forum. As the proposed formation of the EPC does not include and necessitate further integration with the EU other than geopolitical cooperation created by bilateral agreements, it can be argued that the EU will not be willing to alienate Türkiye at that level. Furthermore, given the fact that

Türkiye is a regional power which the EU does and will need to cooperate in a lot of areas from energy security to migration, Türkiye's position in the current and possible novel EPC seems guaranteed. However, when it comes to further integration layers, it is open to discussions.

The current talks and statements on the next enlargement coming from Brussels do not mention Türkiye. The accession negotiations were suspended in 2018, and visa liberalisation and modernisation of the Türkiye-EU Custom's Union processes are far from the expectations. Under these circumstances, Türkiye's possible engagement with the EU through the inner layers of the multi-tiered integration design, as it is proposed in the Franco-German report, seems complicated but not impossible. Türkiye may probably be invited to have a place in the third layer in the predictable run, which is associate membership, possibly together with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

These countries' accession processes are also complicated because of several challenges like Russia-Ukraine war, the situations in Transnistria and South Ossetia and of course, the demanding reform processes these countries have to implement. The second layer, which is the membership to the EU, will probably be added by the Western Balkans in the next enlargement, whose memberships are more likely to be realised in case of carrying out the necessary reforms and fulfil the criteria.

Türkiye, as a candidate country to the EU, refused to accept associate membership options on several occasions in the past, and it will probably do so in the future. Taking in the account that the membership is the most fruitful base for cooperation and further integration, it can be argued that revisiting the necessity of the Türkiye-EU relations for both sides and doing their shares to overcome the current problems blocking the road to full accession are to the benefit of both Türkiye and the EU.