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TÜRKİYE-HUNGARY RELATIONS WERE ELEVATED TO THE LEVEL OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Orbán announced that the relations between the two countries have been raised to the level of enhanced strategic partnership.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid an official visit to Hungary on 18 December 2023 to attend the 6th Meeting of the Türkiye-Hungary High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council at the invitation of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary. It was very symbolic that this visit coincided with the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship signed by the two countries on 18 December 1923.

Following the Türkiye-Hungary High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Meeting chaired by President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Orbán, a 17-article cooperation agreement was signed between the two countries. In addition to the Joint Political Declaration on the Elevated Level of Enhanced Strategic Partnership between Türkiye and Hungary inked by Erdoğan and Orbán, "Memorandum of Understanding for Increased Cooperation in Social Services", "Memorandum of Understanding on Collaboration related to Graduate Policies and Scholarship programs", "Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Defense Industry", "Memorandum of Understanding on Visual and Audiovisual Policy Cooperation", "Memorandum of Understanding on Nuclear Energy Cooperation", "Cooperation Agreement between the ministries of foreign affairs, a pact on collaboration in civil emergency situations, and declaration of intent for a joint cooperation mechanism between the two countries' interior ministries were among the documents signed between the two sides.

According to the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "friendly relations between Türkiye and Hungary, which are strengthened by historical and cultural ties, have gained



momentum in every field with the increasing mutual high-level visits and consultations". It is observed that bilateral political and trade relations have progressed rapidly especially since the 2010s. In this process, Türkiye has developed close cooperation with Hungary within the framework of international and regional organisations, in particular NATO, the EU, the Council of Europe and the Organisation of Turkic States, while Hungary has given significant support to Türkiye's EU accession process.

The establishment of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) between Türkiye and Hungary in 2013 paved the way for high-level contacts, including visits of foreign ministers, prime

ministers and presidents, and relations were raised to the level of "strategic partnership" with the HLSCC. An Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation was signed between the two countries in 2015. In 2018, Hungary also joined the Organisation of Turkic States, of which Türkiye is a founding member, as an observer. In the light of all these developments, the elevation of Turkish-Hungarian relations to the level of enhanced strategic partnership during the 18 December visit is actually a reflection of the progress that has been going on for more than a decade. Looking at the trade dimension of the relations, it is seen that the bilateral trade volume, which was 1 billion 822 million dollars in 2010, doubled

approximately in 2022 and reached 3 billion 155 million dollars. It should be underlined that in the 18 March meeting, the two sides set a target to increase the bilateral trade volume to 6 billion euros.

In a period in which Türkiye's relations with the EU and many Member States are deteriorating, there are various reasons behind Hungary's aim to further develop its relations with Türkiye. First of all, Hungary wants to improve its political and trade relations with the Central Asian countries within the scope of its "Eastern opening" policy. Being a bridge between Asia and Europe, Türkiye plays a key role for Hungary. Moreover, the fact that Türkiye transports Russian, Azerbaijani and Central Asian natural

gas resources to Europe through energy transmission lines further increases Hungary's importance in terms of energy security. As a matter of fact, 50% of Hungary's natural gas passes through the Turkish Stream pipeline, which runs under the Black Sea between Russia and Türkiye. In addition, the natural gas it receives from Azerbaijan is also transported through Türkiye. As part of the natural gas agreement signed between MVM, the Hungarian state-owned natural gas company, and BOTAŞ during the 18 December meeting, Türkiye is expected to export natural gas to Hungary from next year. The two countries will also cooperate on the use of Türkiye's liquefied natural gas infrastructure and natural gas storage facilities.



IKV ORGANISED A MEETING TITLED “CURRENT DISCUSSIONS ON TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS” IN KOCAELİ

IKV organised a meeting titled “Current Discussions on Türkiye-EU Relations” on 20 December 2023 in cooperation with Kocaeli University. The opening speeches of the meeting were delivered by Kocaeli University POW-EU-R Jean Monnet Module Coordinator Assoc. Prof. Pelin Sönmez, Kocaeli University SBF Dean Prof. Recep Tarı, IKV Chairperson and President of KSO Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and Rectorate of Kocaeli University Prof. Nuh Zafer Cantürk.

The opening speeches emphasised the activities of Kocaeli University and the importance they attach to EU projects. In his speech, IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu, briefly introduced the organisation by explaining the activities of IKV and mentioned the problems in the current Türkiye-EU relations and pointed out that despite all these problems, the support for EU membership in our country is 66%.

While the first session of the meeting titled “Migration and Populism” was moderated by Prof. İtir Aladağ Görentaş from Kocaeli University, Prof. Murat Erdoğan from Ankara University evaluated the impact of migration on Türkiye-EU relations and Syrian refugees, and Prof. Selcen Öner from Bahçeşehir University evaluated the rise of the far right in Europe and the effects of populism.

In the second session titled “Visa Liberalisation” moderated by Kocaeli University Faculty of Political Sciences Faculty Member Prof. Pelin Sönmez, Faculty Member at TOBB University of Economics and Technology Prof. Sanem Baykal discussed free movement and visa issues in Türkiye-EU relations, while IKV Secretary General and Yıldız Technical University Faculty Member Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas discussed the visa liberalisation process in Türkiye-EU relations.



IKV ORGANISED THE SECOND EU SIMULATION EVENT



IKV organised the second EU simulation event on 20-21 December 2023. In the simulation of the European Parliament, many participants from different universities and institutions discussed the EU's enlargement policy. The opening speech of the event was given by IKV Research Director Çiğdem İleri. In her speech, Research Director İleri talked about the missions and activities of IKV since its establishment.

In the closing speech of the event, IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit emphasised that IKV will continue to work to

raise the awareness of the society about the EU, especially among young people. After the public opinion survey presentation, IKV Deputy Secretary General Kilit answered questions from the participants on the EU accession process of Türkiye.

After the closing speech of the event, the certificate and award ceremony took place. IKV Deputy Secretary General Kilit presented the awards to the participants who stood out with their performance during the two-day event and were selected as the best delegate and honorary delegate.

IKV ORGANISED A MEETING ON TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS IN BRUSSELS



IKV organised a meeting titled “Current Developments and Prospects in Türkiye-EU Relations” in Brussels in partnership with GMF on 11 December 2023. The opening speech of the meeting was delivered by IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and the speakers were IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, GMF Brussels

Office Director Ian Lesser, Leiden University Lecturer Dr. Seda Gürkan and CER Senior Research Fellow Luigi Scazzieri. During the meeting, Türkiye-EU relations were discussed in depth and the results of the “Research on EU Support and Perception of Europe in Public Opinion 2023”, which was recently announced by IKV, were shared.

İKv AGENDA

İKv SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in various events this month. On 5 December 2023, Assoc. Prof. Nas participated as a speaker at the meeting titled "The Role and Importance of the Private Sector in Combating Violence against Women" hosted by Kocaeli EU Information Centre and TOBB Kocaeli Women Entrepreneurs Board. Assoc. Prof. Nas pointed out that the fight against violence against women should be multi-faceted and that deterrence mechanisms against all forms of violence should be strengthened. The panellists also highlighted the experience of women working in the private sector and discussed possible solutions.

On 18 December 2023, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker at the "1st International



Migration Seminar" hosted by Istanbul Beykent University Strategic Research Centre and made a presentation

at the seminar where international migration and sub-themes of migration were discussed.

İKv İSTANBUL EUIC ORGANISED A "COFFEE TALK" EVENT



İKv İstanbul EU Information Centre organised a "Coffee Talk" event on 5 December 2023 at the İKv library focusing on the theme of Türkiye-EU relations from the past to the present.

Delivering the opening speech of the event, İKv Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit informed

the participants about İKv and EU Information Centres and gave the floor to İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas. In her speech, Assoc. Prof. Nas touched upon the historical background of Türkiye-EU relations, current challenges, and potential areas of cooperation. The event ended with an exchange of

views where participants shared their ideas and questions.

During the event, the participants had the opportunity to visit Türkiye's first EU library, examined the books on the EU and Türkiye-EU relations and received information on the latest İKv publications.

TIMELINE DECEMBER 2023

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4	Deputy Foreign Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Bozay came together with Ambassador of Ireland to Türkiye John McCullagh.
5	İKv İstanbul EUIC organised a "Coffee Talk" event and İKv Secretary General Nas participated in a seminar.
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7	President Erdoğan had high-level meetings at Athens.
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9	Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Burak Akçapar met with Secretary General of the EU External Action Service Stefano Sannino and Deputy Secretaries General Enrique Mora and Charles Fries in Brussels.
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11	İKv organised a meeting on Türkiye-EU relations in Brussels.
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15	Foreign Minister Fidan attended the online Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
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18	President Erdoğan paid an official visit to Hungary.
19	İKv Secretary General Nas participated in the "1 st International Migration Seminar".
20	Foreign Minister Fidan came together with Co-Chair of the Türkiye-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee Sergey Lagodinsky.
21	İKv organised a meeting titled "Current Discussions on Türkiye-EU Relations" in Kocaeli.
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25	İKv organised the second EU Simulation event.
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HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN CONDUCTED AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO HUNGARY



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid an official visit to Hungary on 18 December 2023 to participate in the 6th Meeting of the Türkiye-Hungary High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council. The invitation was extended by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary. The Council Meeting, chaired jointly by President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Orbán, resulted in the signing of a 17-article cooperation agreement between the two nations.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán, President Erdoğan said Türkiye and Hungary elevated the relations which were at the level of strategic partnership, to the level of enhanced strategic partnership and added that it is sign of both countries' vision for future. President Erdoğan indicated that during their bilateral talks, they discussed current issues including Türkiye-EU relations, developments in Ukraine and Gaza. Stating that in the first 11 months of 2022, bilateral trade volume exceeded last year and approached 4 billion dollars, President Erdoğan expressed that Türkiye encourages

mutual investments and is determined to increase bilateral trade to 6 billion dollars. President Erdoğan also underlined that he was pleased that Hungary, which will take over the Presidency of the EU Council in the second half of 2024, strongly re-emphasised its support for Türkiye's full membership of the EU and added: "I wish Hungary success in its presidency. We agree with our Hungarian friends that war and violence in Palestine and Ukraine is not a solution."

In his speech, Prime Minister Orbán stated that Türkiye contributed to Hungary's security, especially in the fields of migration and energy, and that Hungary would not be safe without Türkiye. Prime Minister Orbán emphasised that Türkiye is the only country that has so far been able to achieve results in the Ukraine-Russia war in terms of peace building and agreement. Stating that Hungary wants to help Türkiye in EU relations, Prime Minister Orbán said that Hungary will support Türkiye during the EU presidency, especially in the issues of updating the customs union and visa liberalisation.

TÜRKİYE AND ALBANIA CELEBRATE A HUNDRED YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC TIES



The diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Albania have spanned over a century. The two countries officially established diplomatic ties on 15 December 1923, with the signing of the Treaty of Eternal Friendship and Cooperation. Over the course of century marked by cooperation, partnership, and different agreements, Türkiye-Albania relations reached a pinnacle with the signing of the Strategic Partnership Agreement in 2021 by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

It is often cited that the foundation of the strong relations between Türkiye and Albania

in political and other domains is rooted in the traditional friendship between the two nations and their centuries-long coexistence. Diplomatic relations were initiated through the signing of the Treaty of Eternal Friendship and Cooperation on 15 December 1923, and the agreement came into effect on 15 June 1925.

According to information shared by the Albanian Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, Rauf Fico became the country's first ambassador to Türkiye and presented his credentials on 13 April 1926. That same year, Tahir Lütü Bey was appointed to the inaugural Turkish embassy in Tirana. However, following World War II, Albania's new communist government disregarded the foreign relations and agreements established by prior administrations. Consequently, relations between Albania and Türkiye experienced an interruption during the communist regime, but they were restored in 1959. During this period, various agreements were signed between the two countries across different fields.

PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN HAD HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS AT ATHENS



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had high-level meetings at Athens on 7 December 2023. The visit, marked by diplomacy and a concerted effort to navigate historically complex ties, centred on comprehensive discussions addressing both bilateral and regional concerns. President Erdoğan, alongside Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, co-chaired the 5th meeting of the Türkiye-Greece High-Level Cooperation Council, emphasising the need to assess and fortify various dimensions of their relationship. An array of topics was broached, ranging from bilateral relations to broader regional and international developments.

Aiming to solidify the foundations of their engagement, both nations expressed intentions to fortify the contractual basis of their ties. Several agreements and memoranda of understanding were anticipated to be inked, signalling a firm commitment to enhancing their

collaborative framework. Despite the historical complexities and intermittent tensions between Türkiye and Greece, both leaders highlighted the imperative of nurturing improved relations. Alongside with Kyriakos Mitsotakis, President Erdoğan also had a meeting with Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou, underscoring mutual efforts to amplify economic partnerships.

President Sakellariopoulou emphasised the importance of joint efforts to consolidate cooperation and promote adherence to international law for the greater welfare of the region. Amidst the backdrop of historical differences and ongoing challenges, the visit marked a concerted step toward reconciliation and constructive dialogue between the two neighbouring nations. The meetings held substantial promise for steering Türkiye-Greece relations into a more cooperative and progressive trajectory, fostering optimism for sustained collaboration in the future.

TÜRKİYE AND EU CALL FOR CLOSER TIES AND JOINT SOLUTIONS



The 80th Türkiye-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee has urged for intensified dialogue, including high-level meetings in Brussels, between Türkiye and the EU institutions. The push for closer cooperation comes amid discussions on a variety of issues, from regional issues to Türkiye's long-standing bid for EU membership. Both sides, represented by co-chairs İsmail Emrah Karayel and Sergey Lagodinsky, stressed the importance of bolstering dialogue across all levels. They expressed satisfaction with the regular joint committee meetings and the participation of key figures like Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Bozay and EU representatives.

The committee delved into various aspects of the Türkiye-EU relationship, exchanging viewpoints on regional developments and global challenges. Highlighting the crucial role of closer ties for

Türkiye's future EU membership, the co-chairs emphasised the need for joint solutions in areas like: Rule of law and democracy, economic cooperation, security and defence, countering Russian aggression in Ukraine and energy and food security.

Beyond their bilateral relationship, the committee also addressed the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel. They called for a two-state solution as the path to lasting peace, urging an immediate halt to violence and civilian casualties.

This renewed emphasis on dialogue and collaborative efforts signifies a potential shift in the Türkiye-EU dynamic. Whether it paves the way for enhanced cooperation and eventual membership remains to be seen, but the commitment to open communication and tackling shared challenges offers a glimmer of hope for a stronger future relationship.

THREE TURKISH PRODUCTS GOT EU RECOGNITION

European Commission announced that the EU approved the Kahramanmaraş Tarhana, Gulf of Edremit Green Olive and Ezine Cheese from Türkiye as Protected Geographical Indication.



December was an important and exciting month for Turkish products as three of them got EU recognition. The news are published by both Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Türkiye to the EU Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı and TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıkıoğlu on X (formerly Twitter). On 4 December, Kahramanmaraş Tarhana, which is a dried food based on a fermented mixture of grain and yogurt that mostly served as a soup got registered as 16th Turkish product to be recognised by EU. The Maraş Tarhana is famous by grain

being boiled for long hours and later added with yogurt and being spiced especially with oregano. Also on the same day, in the gulf of Edremit on the Aegean coast of Türkiye, the Gulf of Edremit Green Olive (*Edremit Körfezi Yeşil Çizik Zeytini*) got EU recognition as 17th Turkish product. This olive grows on a warm Aegean weather with a soft breeze.

After those two products, on 7 December, Ezine Cheese also got EU recognition as it became the first Turkish cheese to get recognition with being the 18th Turkish product

on the list. The Ezine cheese is made from sheep's milk and it contains more fat regarding to other cheese therefore it has a thick texture. TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıkıoğlu congratulated Kahramanmaraş Commodity Exchange President Mustafa Narlı, Edremit Chamber of Commerce President Ahmet Çetin and the board of management teams of those organisations. The work on 45 geographical indications and 5 traditional product names is ongoing in the European Union registration process continues.

CLIMATE CHANGE CENTRE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN TO BE ESTABLISHED IN TÜRKİYE

The Climate Change Centre, operating under the UN umbrella in İstanbul, aims to contribute to executing national and regional projects for regional adaptation. The concept of establishing such a centre in Türkiye was initially proposed during a meeting attended by First Lady Emine Erdoğan in Antalya in 2021. Following negotiations and diplomatic efforts at COP23 (Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention), led by Deputy Minister of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change Fatma Varank, unanimous agreement was reached to establish this Climate Change Centre.

The establishment process of the centre is anticipated to be completed within two years. The research and initiatives conducted under the UN's auspices will serve globally, with Türkiye assuming



coordination and support for these endeavours. This centre will address the entire Barcelona Convention, and the projects emerging from its establishment are expected to set an example for research and climate-related activities worldwide.

Primarily focusing on mitigating climate change effects in the

Mediterranean region and fostering regional adaptation, the Climate Change Centre will engage in activities related to marine litter, biodiversity, and marine spatial planning. These efforts are anticipated to pave the way for proactive measures and solutions in these critical areas.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE THRIVES IN TÜRKİYE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is flourishing in Türkiye, according to Minister of Industry and Technology Mehmet Fatih Kacır. Speaking at the 'Managing AI in Media' program organised by Anadolu Agency in Ankara, he highlighted that over 2,300 AI companies are actively engaged in their endeavors within technoparks across the country. Additionally, the Ministry has provided support to more than 3,700 AI sector projects, allocating a total of 230 thousand dollars to these initiatives.

The Minister stressed that an Artificial Intelligence Institute under the Scientific and Technological Research Institution of Türkiye (TUBITAK) has been founded with the aim of strengthening the AI studies in Türkiye and creating an increase in cooperation between parties and stakeholders working in the field.

The Minister of Industry and Technology Mehmet Fatih Kacır continued his speech by noting



that media sector is also one of the sectors being transformed and reshaped by use of artificial intelligence in analyzing user preferences and initiating personalised content. Beside this fact, however, he pointed out the disinformation which artificial intelligence can be a part of through creation of fake contents.

TURKISH SCIENTIST REVOLUTIONISED MEDICINE AND ARCHITECTURE WITH "ANTHROBOTS"

Gizem Gümüşkaya, a Turkish scientist who recently completed her PhD studies at Tufts Biology Department and Harvard University Wyss Institute, spearheaded a study developed miniature biological robots named "anthrobots" using adult human cells. These entirely cellular living structures are engineered to self-assemble from individual cells into multicellular mobile machines. Each anthrobot can originate from a single human cell within a span of two weeks and holds potential for performing various beneficial tasks, such as repairing damaged neurons.

The objective is to introduce these synthetic biobots into human body to tackle medical challenges, including pursuing pathogens or clearing arterial plaque. Additionally, anthrobots could revolutionise environmentally friendly construction methods. The study has garnered positive feedback from the scientific community, particularly in the medical



field, representing a significant advancement for both biology and architecture. Subsequent research aims to conduct further experiments and obtain approval from the US Food and Drug Administration for trials involving more complex human disease models and damaged tissues.

İSTANBUL AIRPORT GOT ITS LEVEL 4 CARBON NET ZERO CERTIFICATE



Istanbul Airport has recently received the Airport Carbon Accreditation certificate, awarded by the Airports Council International Europe following evaluations. This certification recognizes airports that meet specific criteria among five levels, signifying the degree of alignment with global climate targets.

Achieving Level 4 accreditation, Istanbul Airport has demonstrated significant efforts

toward attaining its 2050 Net Zero Carbon objectives. The airport emphasizes that its operations align with climate targets. Notably, İstanbul Airport progressed from Level 1 in 2019 to Level 4.

Furthermore, the airport plans to inaugurate its solar energy power plant later this year, intending to meet all its electricity needs through this sustainable source. Selahattin Bilgen, the acting CEO of İstanbul Airport,

highlighted that the airport will pioneer generating its entire electricity consumption from clean energy sources.

Olivier Jankovec, Director of Airports Council International Europe, lauded İstanbul Airport as the first facility to achieve this milestone and commended the entire İstanbul Airport team for their dedication in striving towards the 2050 net-zero carbon emissions target.

TURKISH CONSTRUCTION GIANTS GEAR UP FOR AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT ROAD PROJECT

Turkish contractors are positioning themselves for a major attempt with the Development Road Project, a colossal infrastructure undertaking set to link the Persian Gulf with Europe through Iraq and Türkiye. This vital network of roads and railways promises to revolutionize logistics and slash transportation costs, offering lucrative opportunities for Turkish construction firms. Erdal Eren, head of the Turkish Contractors' Association, underlines the critical significance of this project: "Strengthening our political ties with Gulf nations, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iraq, has led us to prioritize initiatives that will bolster our presence in the region." He sees immense potential in Saudi Arabia, a market teeming with 10 billion dollars worth of annual business opportunities, a potential counterpoint to the recent setbacks in Russia.

The Development Road Project, once operational, will



dramatically swift-track logistics and minimize costs, making it a game-changer for regional trade and economic integration. Furthermore, Eren underscores the impressive global footprint of Turkish contractors, boasting a 500 billion dollars international project portfolio encompassing nearly 12,000 ventures across 135 countries. The sector aspires to capitalize on this momentum, setting ambitious targets of securing 20 billion dollars in short-term foreign construction projects,

scaling up to 50 billion dollars in the medium term.

This project presents a golden opportunity for Turkish construction giants to cement their dominance in the region and further expand their global reach. With a potent combination of ambitious vision, strategic partnerships, and proven expertise, Turkish contractors are poised to steer the course of this mega-project towards success, paving the way for a transformative era in regional connectivity and economic prosperity.

NUMBERS INDICATE NARROWING FOREIGN TRADE DEFICIT IN TÜRKİYE

Turkish Minister of Trade announced that Turkish exports hit record high November figure at 23 billion dollars. Overseas shipments also went up 5.2% when compared to the last year's numbers, the Minister added during a news conference in İstanbul as to the preliminary data on foreign trade.

Ömer Bolat, the Minister of Trade, stated that Turkish exports continue to rise on a monthly basis for the fifth consecutive month in November in spite of all the challenges and problems. It is also mentioned that Turkish imports fell 5.6% from the numbers of the last year to 28.9 billion dollars in November, which also leads a continuation of Türkiye's foreign trade deficit. The decline in foreign trade deficit goes on for the fourth month in a row. In November, the fell is 32.6% year-on-year to 5.9% billion. The Minister also stressed the rise in



the export-import coverage ratio going up to 79.5% with an increase of 8.2 points.

Bolat pointed out that in the January-November period, the exports hit 232.9 billion dollars as its inbound shipments were at 332.8 billion dollars. The earthquakes which hit southern part of Türkiye on 6 February had an estimated negative impact for Turkish exports over 6 billion dollars, Bolat added.

TURKISH STARTUPS GAINED ACCELERATION IN THEIR SUCCESS IN THE GLOBAL MARKET



Last year, Türkiye secured the 12th position in Europe for startup investments, with İstanbul ranking sixth among European cities. Moreover, İstanbul claimed the second spot in the gaming industry, following London. Over the past three years, Turkish startups have notably excelled in attracting investments, outpacing many of their European counterparts in the country's burgeoning entrepreneurial landscape. The trend towards digitalisation appears

to have accelerated across all sectors, especially in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Prominent among Türkiye's recent success stories are the emergence of 'unicorn' initiatives such as Getir, Dream Games, Hepsiburada, Trendyol, Peak Games, and Insider. Notably, unicorn startups were absent in Türkiye in 2019. Furthermore, the socially encouraging aspect lies in the fact that these unicorn ventures were founded by women.

TÜRKİYE'S FIRST ANIME MUSEUM EMBODIES 1,257 FIGURES



The founder of the Türkiye's first anime museum, a psychotherapist Ahsen Özakkaş exhibiting her 16 years of collection of anime figures. The museum consisting of 1,257 figures is named "Museum of Otaku" which Özakkaş clarified that she used this term to express her passion for anime while maintaining his role as a psychotherapist. Valued over 188 thousand euros, Özakkaş points out

that the most challenging piece to acquire took two years "The figure of 'Luffy', which is a character from the anime "One Piece", standing at 178 centimetres tall, was the most challenging to collect. It took me two years to obtain it piece by piece via cargo shipments to Türkiye.

The museum is at Taksim and it is open to visitors six days a week. Özakkaş said "I can't necessarily recommend collecting in therapy

because families of children tend to be quite prejudiced about it. My goal here is to support the effort you put into something. It's not just about spending money and accumulating things. I support the happiness you derive from the effort you put in. As a therapist, having such a collection feels a bit odd to some." Özakkaş adds new figures to her museum each month and also sells some from the website of the museum.

WORLD TURKISH COFFEE DAY CELEBRATED IN TIMES SQUARE



Back on 5 December 2013, UNESCO added Turkish coffee to the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and it has been celebrated for ten years now. This year on 5 December, Federation of Turkish American Associations (TADF) and the Turkish Coffee Lady Foundation organised an event on Times Square showcasing a 500-year-old culture.

Consul General of Türkiye in New York Reyhan Özgür, representatives of non-governmental organisations and citizens from the Turkish American community attended the event.

TADF President Gülay Aydemir thanked the Mayor of New York City Eric Adams in her opening speech, who recognised 5 December as World Turkish Coffee Day as a result of his

initiatives. President of Turkish Coffee Lady Foundation Gizem Şalcıgil White, emphasised that Turkish coffee is a very important cultural heritage for the world, White said, "Today, 400 million cups of coffee are consumed in the USA daily, thanks to the cooking method invented by the Turks in the 16th century," and continued as "The capital Washington D.C., Alexandria and Fairfax in Virginia, Ft. Lauderdale in Florida and Kalamazoo in Michigan also recognizes 5 December as World Turkish Coffee Day and Next year, in the 100th anniversary of our Republic, we aim to increase these cities to 100."

The program included live music and dance performances, while two separate digital screens near Times Square displayed visuals on the characteristics, culture and history of Turkish coffee. Gizem Salcigil White displayed artwork featuring Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, created by Microart artist Hasan Kale. Moreover, an exclusive dance performance was put on by Muge Sydorovych and Victor Sydorovych, renowned members of the esteemed Turkish dance ensemble Fire of Anatolia.

FREEZING OF LAKE ÇILDİR ATTRACTS INTEREST IN WINTER TOURISM IN TÜRKİYE



Preparations have commenced in the Eastern Anatolia Region as Çıldır Lake, the largest lake in the area after Lake Van, begins to freeze. Situated at an altitude of 1959 meters on the border of Kars and Ardahan provinces, the lake has attracted attention for its freezing spectacle. Local authorities and operators of horse-drawn sleighs, known for offering unforgettable experiences to both local and foreign tourists on the frozen lake, have initiated

preparations for the upcoming frozen period.

The event promises to be a remarkable visual delight, particularly for tourists partaking in the increasingly popular Orient Express tours in recent years. Visitors, both locals, and tourists, will have the opportunity to partake in various activities such as leisurely walks on the frozen lake, Eskimo-style fishing, ice skating, and photography, among other preferred pursuits.

LOST FOR MORE THAN TWO MILLENNIA, "DANCING MOSES" STATUE FOUND IN TÜRKİYE



Archaeologists have made a remarkable discovery in western Türkiye: a statue of the "Dancing Moses," a figure from ancient Greek mythology, that has been buried for nearly 2,200 years. The statue, which dates back to the 2nd century B.C., is believed to be the only original work by the famous sculptor Philiskos and will be exhibited in the Muğla Museum after restoration.

The statue was found in the ancient city of Stratonikeia, also known as the "City of Gladiators," which is located in the modern-day province of Muğla. The city is listed on the UNESCO World Heritage temporary list and is known for its impressive collection of marble ruins. The "Dancing Moses" statue is a

rare and valuable find. While copies of the statue have been found elsewhere in the Roman world, the Stratonikeia statue is the only known original from the Hellenistic period. This makes it an important piece of evidence for our understanding of ancient Greek art and culture. "This is a very important discovery," said Mehmet Kara, the head of the Excavation team. "The statue is in good condition, and it will provide us with valuable insights into the work of Philiskos and the art of the Hellenistic period."

The statue is currently being restored and it is expected to be on display at the Muğla Museum later this year. The discovery is sure to attract attention from archaeologists and art historians around the world.

A NEW PAGE IN TÜRKİYE-GREECE RELATIONS

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Athens is the most important step taken in recent years to resolve existing problems and increase cooperation between the two countries.

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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis signed the Athens Declaration on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourliness, which aims to strengthen Türkiye-Greece relations. Prime Minister Mitsotakis stated that this document, which will form the political infrastructure of the future relations between the two countries, is the second major step after the friendship agreement signed in 1930 by then Prime Minister İsmet İnönü and his counterpart Eleftherios Venizelos.

President Erdoğan paid a day-long visit to Athens on December 7 after a six-year hiatus and met with Prime Minister Mitsotakis and President Katerina Sakellariopoulou to strengthen relations between Türkiye and Greece and increase cooperation between the two countries.

Ties Between Türkiye and Greece Are Strengthening

In the meetings, it was generally observed that both sides acted in line with the goal of improving relations. This was supported by the efforts and decisions taken to end the long-standing disputes. During their meeting, President Erdoğan and Mitsotakis also discussed the Cyprus issue along with the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean problems.

Although disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean intensified, especially in 2019-2020, the atmosphere seems to have softened in recent years. Continuation of this softening and further rapprochement in relations were among the objectives of the meeting. President Erdoğan stated that there are other problems along with the continental shelf and that all of them should be addressed and resolved collectively, and that it would be useful to talk boldly about all the problems before they are



taken to international jurisdiction and to guide public opinion in the right way. Delegations from the defence ministries of Türkiye and Greece have also met in Ankara in recent months to resolve the issues and implement confidence-building measures.

The Cyprus issue was also on the agenda of the meeting. Previously, during the talks in Crans-Montana, Switzerland in 2017, Türkiye and the TRNC had declared that the Greek Cypriot side was not close to a solution and would henceforth discuss a two-state solution with the SCGA and the TRNC instead of a bicomunal federation model. The EU, the US, Greece and the UK were putting pressure on Ankara to solve the problem on the UN model. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also started working for the start of a new process in September. Guterres had argued that the Israel-Hamas war and the Turkish opposition to the appointment of a new special envoy for Cyprus were preventing the process from moving forward. On the issue, Mitsotakis stated that the UN Security Council resolutions on Cyprus are very important and

should be followed. President Erdoğan, on the other hand, stated that "a just, lasting and sustainable settlement of the Cyprus issue based on the realities on the island will benefit the entire region."

High-Level Cooperation Council

Turkish and Greek delegations signed a series of agreements as part of the High-Level Cooperation Council. The agreement signed between Minister of National Education Yusuf Tekin and Greek Minister of Education Kyriakos Pierrakakis aims at mutual recognition of diplomas in the field of technical education, exchange of knowledge and experience, organisation of joint training programs for teachers and students and establishment of student exchange programs. The agreement in the field of energy covers the electricity connection line between Babaeski and Nea Santa. The agreement, signed between Orhan Kaldırım, General Manager of the Turkish Electricity Transmission Corporation (TEİAŞ) and representatives of the Greek

Independent Authority for Electricity Transmission (ADMHE), aims to improve the electricity connection between the two countries. Minister of Culture and Tourism Mehmet Nuri Ersoy and Greek Minister of Tourism Olga Kefaloganni signed the agreement, which is expected to improve cooperation in the field of tourism, which is of great importance for both countries. In this context, Selahattin Bayramçavuş, Deputy Director General of Highways, and Konstantinos Koutsoukos, Director of EGNATIA Highways, signed the agreement on the construction of a second border bridge over the Evros River between Türkiye and Greece.

On the other hand, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Enterprise Greece, the official investment and trade promotion agency of the Greek State operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB). The agreement, signed by TOBB Board Member Cengiz Günay and Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Kostas Fragogiannis,

aims to support the development of trade and investment relations between the two countries. Finally, Deputy Minister of Trade Sezai Uçarmak and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Kostas Fragogiannis signed a declaration to establish a "Joint Economic and Trade Council" between the two countries. Accordingly, it was also proposed to hold a meeting on 2 February 2024 in Istanbul to discuss trade, energy, transportation and tourism. In addition, Sezai Uçarmak signed an agreement on customs union with Giorgos Pitsilis, President of the Greek Independent Unit of Public Revenues.

Ties Are Getting Stronger

The constructive statements made by both sides are very important for the course of Türkiye-Greece relations. The Greek press, which broadcast all the developments within the scope of the visit live, also made statements showing that they welcomed President Erdoğan's attitude positively. Especially with the period of reconciliation that started between the two countries after the aid provided by Greece in the aftermath of the 6 February 2023 earthquakes, the cooperation between the two sides by leaving the problems of the past behind can play a very important role in the positive progress of Türkiye-EU relations both economically and economically.

The end of these purely political disputes and the cooperation of both countries by increasing their connections will ensure the rapid development of both countries. What needs to be done is to resolve the differences between the two countries as soon as possible and move forward with a relationship based on peace and cooperation. Removing the symbolic borders between countries and ensuring that two cultures that are close to each other live in peace is of great importance for the welfare of future generations