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TÜRKİYE'S TECHNOLOGICAL RENAISSANCE: FROM SPACE EXPLORATION TO ELECTRIC VEHICLES, A JOURNEY OF INNOVATION AND PROGRESS

Türkiye's technological leap sheds light on the story of innovation and progress across a wide spectrum, from space exploration to electric vehicles.

In our rapidly evolving digital era, technology occupies the central stage of our daily existence, continually sculpting and reshaping our lives. Each new technological advancement introduces novel skills and alters the fabric of our reality. Consider the evolution from the novelty of carrying a cellular phone in the 1990s, tethered to the internet via dial-up connections, to the ubiquitous presence of smartphones, smartwatches, and even cutting-edge smart glasses in contemporary times.

The versatility of these devices is striking; a tablet, for instance, serves myriad purposes across diverse domains. From aiding a physician in accessing and managing a patient's clinical records to assisting a pilot in charting a flight path, or simply providing entertainment, the tablet exemplifies the multifaceted utility inherent in modern technology. Indeed, the transformative impact of technology permeates every facet of our lives, offering boundless opportunities for innovation, connectivity, and productivity. As we continue to embrace and integrate these advancements into our daily routines, the boundaries of what is possible are continually pushed, ushering in a future shaped by the seamless fusion of humanity and technology.

Türkiye is also actively engaged in keeping pace with the rapid technological advancements shaping our world today, playing a significant role in driving innovation and progress. In recent years, Türkiye has increasingly prioritised technological development as a key driver of its rise and prosperity. Particularly noteworthy is Türkiye's remarkable strides in areas previously lagging behind, such as space exploration and artificial intelligence, with significant advancements occurring in the past few months alone.

This technological surge can be largely attributed to the burgeoning interest of Turkish youth in various facets of technology. A pivotal starting point was the widespread popularity



of video games in Türkiye, with young people flocking to internet cafes and homes to indulge in gaming experiences. This burgeoning enthusiasm sparked a desire among Turkish youth to create their own video games, ultimately leading them to dive deeper into the realms of computer programming languages. Through this journey of exploration and experimentation, many young Turks discovered the thrill of crafting unique digital creations and the potential for profitability therein. This grassroots movement of youthful innovation has served as a catalyst for Türkiye's burgeoning tech scene, laying the groundwork for unprecedented growth and success in the realm of technology.

Since the dawn of the Commodore 64 era in the 1980s, a generation of young enthusiasts in Türkiye has been captivated by technology, eagerly acquiring coding skills and laying the foundation for a thriving tech ecosystem. Fast forward to 2016, and the fruits of this passion culminated in a remarkable achievement: "Mount & Blade," developed by Ankara-based studio TaleWorlds Entertainment, emerged as an export champion. This captivating video game has garnered immense success, selling over 3.1 million copies across 212 countries, firmly establishing Türkiye's presence on the global gaming stage.

Building upon this triumph, TaleWorlds Entertainment continues to push boundaries with their highly

anticipated sequel, "Mount & Blade II: Bannerlord." Embraced by gamers worldwide, this sequel is currently in the early access stage, allowing players to purchase and experience the game's development journey firsthand. With each update, the game evolves, introducing new features and enhancements, further cementing its status as a beacon of innovation in the gaming industry. Notably, even in its developmental phase, "Mount & Blade II: Bannerlord" has already surpassed 3 million in sales, a testament to its enduring appeal and the studio's unwavering dedication to excellence. The Turkish video game industry has experienced remarkable growth, exceeding the \$1.4 billion mark, propelled by a diverse array of genre-defining titles from numerous studios. Among these standout successes is Phew Phew Games' "Anomaly Agent", which captivated audiences worldwide and emerged as one of the most played games of January 2024.

The burgeoning interest of Turkish youth in technology extends far beyond video games, catalysing advancements across various sectors, notably in the realm of defence technology. Over the past few years, Türkiye has undergone a transformative journey in its defence industry, marked by the development of numerous cutting-edge Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs). Renowned UAVs such as Bayraktar, KAAAN, and Anka

have garnered international attention, with several countries already placing pre-orders for these formidable defence assets. In addition to UAVs, Türkiye has made significant strides in aerospace technology, producing helicopters such as the Gökbey and T70 tailored for military and defence applications.

Furthermore, Türkiye's advancements in communication technology are equally noteworthy. The country is actively engaged in the development and deployment of satellites for both civilian and military communication purposes, collaborating with industry-leading companies to propel its space program forward. This concerted effort underscores Türkiye's commitment to innovation and excellence, positioning it as a formidable player in the global arena of technology and defence.

In a historic milestone for Türkiye's space program, January 2024 marked the launch of the country's inaugural astronaut, Alper Gezeravcı, to the International Space Station (ISS). As the first Turkish astronaut, Gezeravcı embarked on a mission comprising 30 groundbreaking experiments conducted aboard the ISS. His successful completion of these pivotal experiments not only showcased Türkiye's burgeoning capabilities in space exploration but also laid the groundwork for future endeavours.

Buoyed by the success of this maiden mission, Türkiye is poised to further assert its presence in

space exploration. Plans are already underway to dispatch a second Turkish astronaut to the ISS, with a focus on conducting additional experiments and advancing developments in the space industry. These forthcoming missions underscore Türkiye's unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries of space exploration and scientific discovery. Indeed, these recent developments have reignited Türkiye's participation in the global space race, signalling a renewed determination to carve out a prominent role in the ever-expanding frontier of space exploration.

Türkiye's automotive industry is also soaring to new heights with a fervent focus on electric vehicles. The country's pioneering brand, TOGG, unveiled its inaugural electric SUV in 2023, marking a significant milestone in Türkiye's journey towards sustainable mobility. Following its successful debut, TOGG has since expanded its lineup to include a sleek sedan variant, further solidifying its position as a trailblazer in the realm of electric vehicles.

The culmination of these significant technological advancements, coinciding with the centennial celebration of the Turkish Republic, signifies Türkiye's emergence as a formidable contender in the global arena of technology. With innovations spanning from space exploration to electric vehicles and video game development, Türkiye has firmly established itself as a key player shaping the trajectory of technological progress worldwide. This pivotal moment marks Türkiye's ascent into the forefront of the technology sector, poised to exert a substantial influence on the future of innovation and technological advancement. As Türkiye continues to harness its creative potential and embrace cutting-edge technologies, it is primed to cement its status as a powerhouse in the global tech landscape, driving forward progress and shaping the course of technology for generations to come.



IKV ORGANISED A WORKSHOP ON THE TÜRKİYE-EU CUSTOMS UNION



IKV, organised a workshop on Customs Union in cooperation with the BDU International Businesspersons and Diplomats Union on 16 February 2024. The opening speeches of the workshop were delivered by BDU International Association of Businessperson and Diplomats Union's Vice President Güneş Ferhat Batı and IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas.

In the special address section of the workshop, the Deputy Director General for International Agreements and Relations with the EU at the Ministry of Trade Bahar Güçlü started her presentation by touching upon the history and importance of the customs union in Türkiye-EU relations and stated that the customs union for Türkiye not only covers the free movement of goods but also focuses on developing Türkiye in every sense by creating responsibilities for compliance with the EU acquis. Expressing that it would be easier to solve the problems if the parties come together regularly, exchange ideas and have information about the free trade agreements that the parties have concluded with third countries, Güçlü also mentioned the importance that the EU has recently given to green and digital transformation. Güçlü concluded his speech by underlining that Türkiye should ensure a strong integration by not lagging this twin transformation process.

In the first panel moderated by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, BDU International Businesspersons and Diplomats

Union President Hnr. Prof. Musa Karademir stated that the Ankara Agreement, which entered into force in 1964, marked the beginning of Türkiye-EU relations and that this agreement was signed during the most severe period of the Cold War. Underlining that the customs union is one of the most important commercial issues in Türkiye-EU relations, Karademir stated that the Additional Protocol, which entered into force in 1973, was a very important step in the process leading to the customs union and that at that time it was expected that Türkiye would become a member of the EU in a short time after the completion of the customs union. Karademir pointed out that in the 1990s, the transition to the final stage of the customs union was discussed and that while the textile sector supported the process, whereas the automotive sector approached the issue with serious scepticism, and that today the automotive sector has surpassed the textile sector in terms of exports.

The second speaker of the first panel, IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit started his speech by emphasising the importance of the customs union in Türkiye-EU economic relations. The customs union put Türkiye in a highly competitive position, but the real progress for Türkiye was made after 1999, when it became a candidate country, and after 2004, when accession negotiations started. Kilit mentioned the high level of international direct investment between 2005 and

2008 as an example for his claim. Stating that the sectors in Türkiye have structural problems, Kilit emphasised that these structural problems should be solved, and the sectors should be made more competitive. Deputy Secretary General Kilit provided information on geographical indications and concluded his speech by stating that Türkiye's geographically marked products have increased significantly in recent years and that these registered products have made a great contribution to Türkiye's economy and recognition.

The last speaker of the first panel, Paris Bosphorus Institute President Dr. Bahadır Kaleağası stated that in 2014, there were intense discussions on the possibility of extending the customs union to areas such as services, agriculture, transportation, visa liberalisation and public procurement, but that while Türkiye-EU relations had the potential to evolve to a more advanced dimension, this was not achieved. Underlining that the world is changing rapidly, Kaleağası stated that there are still important opportunities for furthering bilateral relations.

The first speaker of the second panel of the workshop moderated by IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit, İstanbul Kent University Dean of the Faculty Of Economics, Administrative And Social Sciences Prof. Hasret Çomak started her speech by mentioning the concepts of protection of personal data, data privacy and

security. Çomak continued his speech by providing information on the features and obligations of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Stating that the EU has taken itself under protection through the GDPR, Çomak gave information on how data is processed in the GDPR. Çomak emphasised that this legal basis should be documented and the data subject should be informed in accordance with transparency. Çomak also touched upon the developments after GDPR and what needs to be done to process data securely. Çomak ended his speech by underlining that Türkiye should update the Law on the Protection of Personal Data and keep up with the new world.

The other speaker of the panel, Özyeğin University Faculty of Law Assistant Professor Özlem İnanç Şenses explained the history of the customs union in Türkiye-EU relations from a legal perspective. Şenses talked about the agreements and practices signed on green transformation and climate issues. In addition, Şenses shared information on the functioning of customs and the progress on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism during the digital and green transformation process, which is called the twin transformation. Şenses concluded her speech by emphasising that Türkiye is making efforts to harmonize with EU legislation but is not yet at a sufficient level.

The last speaker of the second panel of the workshop, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas

stated that in a period of increasing protectionist tendencies and authoritarianism globally, the EU embarked on a twin transformation process and took steps to increase its resilience. Emphasising that the EU put forward a political will for enlargement after the Russia-Ukraine war, Nas pointed out that the restructured EU entered an eastward expansion process. Providing information about the report on enlargement made public in September 2023 by a working group of French and German experts, Nas referred to the four-tier integration model in the report. Underlining that the first circle of this four-tiered integration model will be formed by more advanced forms of integration such as Schengen and the Euro Area, Nas stated that the second circle will include the EU itself, the third circle will include the "Associate Membership" model, which includes economic issues such as the Single Market, and the last circle will include the European Political Community strengthened with countries without membership perspectives. Nas emphasised that in the short term, it is not seen as easy for Türkiye to enter the first two circles, but Türkiye could be in the Associate Membership circle, which would include the updating of the customs union. Nas also warned that if the customs union update does not materialize and Türkiye fails to adapt to changing conditions, the EU could push Türkiye into the outermost circle of the four-tier integration model.

İKv AGENDA

İKv SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS

İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in various programmes and events this month. On 13 February 2024, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas delivered a speech on "Türkiye-EU Relations from Yesterday to Today" as part of the online training seminars organised by Bruxircle. Assoc. Prof. Nas discussed the historical development of Türkiye-EU relations starting from the association application in 1959 and the factors determining the relations. Stating that the EU reform process gained momentum after Türkiye was declared a candidate country in 1999, Assoc. Prof. Nas referred to various developments, particularly the Cyprus issue, which hindered the negotiations that started in 2005. Assoc. Prof. Nas emphasised that relations continue to be important for Türkiye and the EU, that democracy, human rights and the rule of law should be common values and that it is possible to revive relations in a spirit of trust and cooperation.

On 27 February 2024, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas delivered a speech and presentation on "EU-



Türkiye Relations in the Context of Current Developments" at the webinar organised by the Middle East, Eurasia and Asia-Pacific Research Platform (ODAP) on 27 February 2024. In her speech, Assoc. Prof. Nas, who covered the history of Türkiye-EU relations and current developments, also touched upon alternative scenarios that may be in question in the future shaping of relations. The webinar, which was moderated by ODAP Research Assistant Filiz Kahraman Keskin was ended with a question and answer session.

On 28 February 2024, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker in the panel on "Keys to Sustainability" organised under the

coordination of Kocaeli Chamber of Industry, Industry Support Center and in cooperation with Eastern Marmara European Union Business Development Center, Kent University Lifelong Learning Center and TOSB Automotive Supply Industry Specialised Organised Industrial Zone. Highlighting the importance of the steps taken by the EU to tackle the climate crisis, Assoc. Prof. Nas informed the participants on the European Green Deal, the EU's climate goals and decarbonisation agenda, the Border Carbon Regulation Mechanism, the Net Zero Industrial Plan, the reform of the European Single Market and the digital agenda.

NEW PUBLICATION FROM İKV: "GREEN TRANSFORMATION IN THE EU SINGLE MARKET AND TÜRKİYE"

İKv released a new publication titled "Green Transformation in the EU Single Market and Türkiye" written by İKV Researcher Ahmet Emre Usta. In this publication, the impact of the transformation process brought by the Green Deal on the Single Market and Türkiye is analysed. The international system is undergoing a major transformation. The economic order established after the Second World War, particularly since the global economic crisis of 2008, has reached a deadlock. Furthermore, China's remarkable rise in the military, political, and economic arenas over the last 30 years, along with Russia's aggressive foreign policy under Vladimir Putin, has challenged the dynamics of the existing system. The EU is among the actors most affected by this multifaceted crisis. Indeed, while the EU accounted for 25% of the global economy in 2008, this ratio declined to 17% by 2022. Additionally, the political



and economic influence of China and Russia is increasing in regions where the EU has historically exerted strong influence.

At a time when geopolitical tensions are at an all-time high, the climate crisis continues to demand urgent solutions. Indeed, the world, and Europe in particular, is witnessing a gradual increase in the frequency and severity of extreme temperatures, weather events, droughts, fires, floods, and other similar disasters. This publication analyses the significant

transformation of the Single Market, a cornerstone of EU integration and one of its most notable success stories, under the Green Deal. It examines the evolving rules and standards within the Single Market, framed by the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, the Circular Economy Action Plan, and the new Global Standards Strategy. Furthermore, the analysis extends to the impact of this transformative process on Türkiye and the measures Türkiye has undertaken to align with these changes.

TIMELINE FEBRUARY 2024

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5	Aydin Memecik Olive Oil got EU recognition.
6	Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan paid a working visit to Malta.
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13	İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas spoke at Bruxircle training program.
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15	Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan attended 60 th Munich Security Conference.
16	İKv organised a workshop on the Türkiye-EU Customs Union.
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19	Türkiye-EU High Level Trade Working Group meeting held at Brussels.
20	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came together with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.
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26	İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas spoke about Türkiye-EU relations at ODAP webinar.
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28	İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in the "Keys to Sustainability" panel.
29	Permant Delegate of the Republic of Türkiye to the European Union Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı came together with Ambassador of Republic of Ireland Aingéal O'Donoghue.

FOREIGN MINISTER HAKAN FIDAN VISITED THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER OF MALTA

Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan visited Malta on 5-6 February 2024. Minister Fidan met with his counterpart minister Ian Borg in the capital Valletta on 6 February. Then, Fidan met with Maltese Prime Minister Robert Abela and Maltese President George Vella.

As a result of the meetings, many issues of both international and regional importance were discussed. During the meetings, the EU membership process, developments in the Mediterranean, the situation in Libya, Türkiye's fight against irregular migration in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Russia-Ukraine war and its effects, and Türkiye's position and role in the Grain Agreement were discussed. In addition, steps were taken to strengthen commercial ties and deepen cooperation between the two countries, especially in the field of renewable energy.



During the meetings, Minister Fidan emphasised that Türkiye and Malta look at international crises from the same perspective. He also made statements about Türkiye's EU membership process. Minister Fidan stated that Türkiye's intention on the issue has always been in the perspective of full membership, as it is today, and asked whether the EU wants to include Türkiye or not.

Minister Fidan emphasised that

Türkiye wants to maintain its relations with the EU institutions and that progress will continue, especially in updating the customs union and completing the work on visa facilitation and liberalisation. In addition, Fidan stated that Türkiye is making efforts to improve its relations with EU member states as well as EU institutions. During his visit to Malta, Fidan also visited the Turkish martyrs' cemetery built in 1874.

FOREIGN MINISTER HAKAN FIDAN MET WITH OFFICIALS FROM MONTENEGRO, KOSOVO, ITALY AND GERMANY

The Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, who carried out an intensive diplomatic traffic at the Munich Security Conference on 17 February 2024, held separate meetings with high-level officials from Montenegro, Kosovo, Germany, and Italy.

According to diplomatic sources, Minister Hakan Fidan discussed the schedule of Milatovic's visit to Türkiye, bilateral political and economic relations and the effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on the Balkans during his meeting with Montenegrin President Jakov Milatovic.

During his meeting with Kosovo Foreign Minister Donika Gervilla-Schwarz, Minister Hakan Fidan congratulated Kosovo on its national day and discussed bilateral economic relations and upcoming high-level state visits. The Kosovo Foreign Minister also expressed his satisfaction with Türkiye's activities in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR).

Another high-level official Minister Hakan Fidan met with was Foreign Minister of Montenegro



Filip Ivanovic. During the meeting, which focused on bilateral political and economic relations, Minister Fidan expressed his satisfaction with the Montenegrin government's assistance and support for Turkish businesspeople in the country.

In another meeting between Minister Fidan and Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, Türkiye-EU relations were discussed in detail. It was emphasised that the political obstacles in front of the EU membership negotiations were expected to be removed and

it was underlined that the treatment of Türkiye compared to other candidate countries was unacceptable. The meeting also discussed the developments in Libya and assessed the joint efforts to achieve long-term peace in the region.

Most recently, Minister Fidan met with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. During the meeting, both sides agreed on the need for more efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza and emphasised the importance of cooperation in the field of energy.

TÜRKİYE TO INCREASE TRADE VOLUME WITH GREECE

Türkiye and Greece are solidifying their bilateral relations across multiple fronts, showcasing a gradual improvement in their ties. Officials from both nations are demonstrating a willingness to engage and find common ground on various aspects. Specifically, regarding trade, Turkish and Greek authorities express optimism in augmenting bilateral trade, with a targeted increase from the current 5.8 billion dollars volume to 10 billion dollars. This commitment was articulated during the Türkiye-Greece Business Forum held in Istanbul. Mustafa Tuzcu, Turkish Deputy Trade Minister, emphasised the importance of utilising time effectively to address trade imbalances between the two neighbouring nations. He highlighted the significance of the political groundwork laid by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Athens seven years ago, leading to the signing of 15 agreements spanning various sectors. Tuzcu's Greek counterpart, Kostas Fragogiannis, echoed this sentiment, emphasising the potential for collaboration across investment, trade, tourism, and construction sectors.



The recent signing of the declaration of friendship and good neighbourliness further underscores the commitment to enhancing cooperation. Additionally, the Türkiye-Greece Joint Economic Commission convened, culminating in the signing of the JEC Protocol. Discussions encompassed energy, agriculture, transportation, industry, customs, and tourism, with a focus on bolstering infrastructure, combating climate change, and facilitating trade and passenger transportation. Collaboration initiatives include promoting cooperation among small and medium enterprises, enhancing standardisation efforts, and organising future tourism forums. Notably, Greek authorities announced visa facilitation for Turkish tourists visiting Aegean islands, effective 1 March, signalling a step towards enhancing tourism ties.

FOREIGN MINISTER HAKAN FIDAN HOSTED HUNGARIAN COUNTERPART IN ANKARA

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan made a speech at the joint press statement following the meeting with the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Péter Szijjártó on 15 February 2024 at the ministry. Minister Fidan indicated that they held the opening ceremony of the "2024 Türkiye-Hungary Year of Culture" and announced that 2025 is "The Year of Science and Innovation". Fidan also stated that he will be hosting his counterpart Péter Szijjártó and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum on 1-3 March 2024 and pointed out that the two countries, as NATO allies, have developed their close cooperation in the field of defence industry with concrete projects. Fidan reminded that Hungary would assume the rotating presidency of the EU in July and continued as follows: "The EU needs to think strategically and end the identity politics in its approach to Türkiye. At the same time, Türkiye-EU relations should not be sacrificed



to the political calculations of some countries. We expect the EU to think more rationally in its attitude towards Türkiye's membership and adopt an attitude that will contribute to regional prosperity and stability. We count on Hungary's valuable contribution and support to overcome the obstacles to EU membership and to improve our relations with the EU." Fidan also expressed their hope that Hungary will make progress on issues such as the updating of the customs union and visa liberalisation during its EU Presidency.

TÜRKİYE CELEBRATES 72ND YEAR IN NATO

At a time of deepening international crises and heightened geopolitical tensions, Türkiye is celebrating the 72nd anniversary of its accession to NATO.

Türkiye has celebrated its 72nd anniversary of joining NATO. In the aftermath of the World War II, Türkiye made the historic choice of siding with the free world and the Western Bloc. This policy started the process leading to Türkiye's membership to NATO. Protocol regarding Türkiye's membership to NATO was signed on 17 October 1951. Law on the accession of Türkiye to the North Atlantic Treaty was endorsed on 18 February 1952 and Türkiye became a NATO member.

In a statement released on 18 February 2024, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "In this extraordinary period of unprecedented challenges the world is going through, we celebrate the 72nd anniversary of our country's membership to NATO, which maintains its unique and indispensable position for the Alliance. We will continue to support international peace and stability in the spirit of solidarity, which is the basis of alliance, and to have a say in the future of NATO".

Similarly, celebrating the 72nd



anniversary of Türkiye's accession to NATO, the Turkish Ministry of National Defence stated that Türkiye has successfully fulfilled and continues to fulfil all the tasks it has undertaken since the day it joined the alliance. The Ministry of National Defence also stressed that Türkiye, as NATO's second largest army, is at the heart of the alliance and Türkiye hosts of the NATO Allied Land Command and the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps (3rd Corps Command), which serves as a vital component of the High Readiness Force (Land) within the NATO force structure.

Commenting on the importance of Türkiye's NATO membership in the past 72 years, Türkiye's Permanent Representative to NATO Ambassador Levent Gümrükcü also emphasised that in the current environment where threat perceptions regarding Euro-Atlantic security have changed radically, NATO has started to move towards a collective defence structure again, and that Türkiye continues to provide a very important added value to NATO with its military capabilities, geostrategic position, strong foreign policy tools and special relations with countries in different geographies.

EU PROVIDED DISASTER RELIEF OF 400 MILLION EUROS TO TÜRKİYE



An agreement was signed to use 400 million euros of the support committed by the EU due to 6 February earthquakes in Türkiye in 2023. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay and European Commission Member Responsible for Harmonisation and Reforms Elisa Ferreira attended the signing ceremony held in Brussels. Türkiye's Permanent Representative to the EU, Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı, and officials from the European Commission also attended the signing ceremony.

After the signing ceremony, Bozay expressed his gratitude for the strong support given by the EU. Stating that he was grateful for the support provided to the citizens affected by the earthquake and the earthquake regions. Bozay also addressed that Türkiye and the EU showed great solidarity in this process.

Bozay announced that the aid allocated by the EU will be for various purposes, including the construction of schools and hospitals in the regions affected by the earthquake, as well as the restoration of cultural heritage buildings. Inviting Commissioner Ferreira to Türkiye to see the work to be carried out on site, Bozay emphasised that the priority is concrete projects to improve the conditions in earthquake zones.

Expressing his condolences on behalf of the European Commission, Commissioner Ferreira also emphasised that the EU and Türkiye are in solidarity. Additionally, Ferreira stated that the 400 million euro aid to be provided from the EU Solidarity Fund is the largest amount ever given to a candidate country and that Türkiye has received support from this fund for the first time.

TURKISH SCIENTISTS START NEW RESEARCH IN ANTARCTICA



The 8th National Antarctic Science Expedition started from Istanbul on 27 January and reached Horseshoe Island, where Türkiye's temporary science camp is located, on 10 February. The 24 scientists who arrived at Horseshoe Island will carry out 22 projects in different main fields such as earth, physical and life sciences, ranging from monitoring sea level and glacier change with

Global Positioning System (GPS), marine organisms, bacteria and biodiversity, zooplankton, geology and atmospheric conditions to microplastic measurements. Under the auspices of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye and the Ministry of Industry and Technology and under the coordination of the Türkiye-based TÜBİTAK MAM Polar Research Institute, the

seven scientists taking part in the expedition reached Dismal Island, the largest of the archipelagos opening to the Southern Ocean. Located 40 nautical miles away from Horseshoe Island, the team carried out maintenance and repair work at Türkiye's first permanent Global Navigation Satellite System station located outside its borders. While examining the island where the science camp is located, measures were taken to prevent the spread of bird flu, which was previously seen in places close to Antarctica and recently detected in the white continent. The deputy leader of an expedition of 24 scientists, Ersan Başar emphasised that space studies proceed in coordination with the studies carried out in Antarctica, saying: "We came to our base, unfurled our Turkish flag and started our studies by reciting our National Anthem together."

AYDIN MEMECİK OLIVE OIL GOT EU RECOGNITION

Türkish application to register Aydın Memecik olive oil for official recognition in EU finalised on 5 February 2024. Being the 20th product from Türkiye and 3rd product from Aydın, the Memecik olives contain 4 times more polyphenols than other olive types, and these polyphenols are very beneficial for human health. The climatic characteristics of the region, the suitability of the soil structure and pH level, as well as the rich vegetation of the mountains surrounding this region, ensure that Aydın Memecik Olive has its own unique characteristics.

TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıkloğlu extended his



congratulations to the President of the Aydın Commodity Exchange Fevzi Çondur as well as the Board and Council Members and everyone involved in the significant achievement. Furthermore, registration process for recognition on 45 geographical indications and five product names continues.

TURKISH MINISTER HAILS RETURN OF FIRST ASTRONAUT



Türkiye's Minister of Industry and Technology, Mehmet Fatih Kacir, celebrated the return of the nation's first astronaut, Alper Gezeravcı, from the International Space Station (ISS), heralding it as a significant milestone in Türkiye's journey into space exploration. Kacir highlighted the successful completion of 13 scientific experiments by Turkish scientists under microgravity conditions during Gezeravcı's mission, spanning various disciplines including biology, medicine, genetics, physics, and materials science.

The minister underscored the mission's importance in advancing research on human health, physiology, and the immune system in space. He expressed confidence that the mission would inspire Turkish youth and instil self-assurance. Looking ahead, Kacir outlined ambitious goals for Türkiye's space program, including continued scientific research on the ISS, strengthening international cooperation, and developing space technologies.

He emphasised Türkiye's commitment to independent access to space, with plans to

develop launch rockets, establish a spaceport by 2030, and embark on a moon program. Additionally, Türkiye aims to enhance its technological independence in both defence and civilian sectors through projects like the regional positioning and timing system and the Eastern Anatolia Observatory Project. Gezeravcı, echoing Kacir's sentiments, expressed gratitude for the support received from the Turkish government and institutions throughout his mission. He asserted Türkiye's determination to claim its rightful place in space activities.

TURKISH FIGHTER JET KAAAN MADE ITS MAIDEN FLIGHT



Türkiye's first 5th generation fighter jet KAAN made its first test flight on 21 February and was followed with attention by the world press. KAAN has superior air control, an increased air-to-air combat range with new weapons and a high-performance avionics system, offering precision strikes at supersonic speeds. In the upcoming period, new software and hardware will be added to this aircraft.

The first flight of KAAN, which is expected to be the future flagship of the Turkish Air Force, lasted 13 minutes and reached an altitude of 2440 metres, reaching a speed of 425 kilometres per hour. The media quoted Türkiye as increasingly striving for self-sufficiency in the production of modern fighter jets, pointing out that this is a historic milestone for Türkiye's fast-growing defence

industry. It was also stated that KAAN, which has been developed as a fighter aircraft to meet Türkiye's requirements, is intended to be in service until the 2070s. With KAAN, Türkiye will be one of the five countries in the world that can produce 5th generation aircraft. The aircraft has stealth features and therefore it is difficult to be detected by a radar.

TÜRKİYE TO INITIATE FAMILY AND YOUTH FUND



Family and Youth Fund in Türkiye was approved with the signature of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and published in the official gazette. Details regarding the working procedures and principles of the Family and Youth Fund, the sources of the fund and the resource transfers to be made from the fund were determined. The biggest goal of the Family and Youth Fund is to invest in the future of young people. The fund will be supported by revenues from Türkiye's underground resources. 20% of the income from oil, natural gas and mineral resources will be transferred to this fund.

The Family and Youth Fund, established under the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, aims to strengthen the family structure, and support the initiatives of young people. The people who will be on the board of directors of this fund are; it will be chaired by the Deputy Minister of Treasury and Finance, Deputy Minister of Family and Social Services, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Deputy Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and Deputy Minister of Industry and Technology. This board of directors will be in an authorised position to determine the projects to which resources will be transferred in the Family and Youth Fund, the number of resources to be transferred and the expenditure programs. Financial data of the fund's resources and transfers will

be shared with the public every six months.

During the preparation phase of the Family and Youth Fund, the most focus was on the earthquake region. First of all, applications for this fund are received from young people in Adıyaman, Gaziantep's İslahiye and Nurdağı districts, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş and Malatya. Then, the program will continue to include all young people and become widespread throughout Türkiye. Young people who can benefit from the fund must be under 30 years old. In order for many young people to benefit from this fund, a criterion was determined that the total income of the couple should not exceed two gross minimum wages. In addition, young people who want to benefit from this fund must be at least two months and at most six months away from their official wedding date as of the application date. With this fund, it is planned to support young people both in their marriage processes and in the different projects they are involved in. Interest-free loans will be offered to young people who take the first step towards starting a family. People whose applications are approved in the program will be offered 150 thousand Turkish Lira loan support with a total maturity of 48 months and a grace period of two years. The process will be carried out in proportion to the money accumulated in the fund.

TÜRKİYE-EU HIGH LEVEL TRADE WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD

Türkiye-EU High Level Trade Working Group Meeting was held in Brussels under the chairmanship of Deputy Minister of Trade Mustafa Tuzcu.

At the meeting, a common understanding was reached on the continuation of the work on the road map agreed in 2023 to improve trade and economic relations and to make the Customs Union more effective.



İSTANBUL MUSEUM SHOWCASES ANCIENT CELESTIAL GLOBE, 19TH CENTURY TRANSIT TELESCOPE

As Türkiye's first and only industrial museum reflecting developments in transportation, industry and communication history, Rahmi M. Koç Museum offers visitors the opportunity for astronomical exploration through its rich collection. It holds a special place for those interested in the history of astronomy, featuring an array of noteworthy astronomical instruments and models that span centuries. Among its treasures are a celestial globe crafted in the late 14th century by Cafer Ibn-i Ömer Ibn Devletşah el-Kırmani, and an Ottoman-Turkish astrolabe created by Ali al-Za'tari in 1671. These artifacts not only highlight the museum's rich collection but also offer insights into the astronomical knowledge and practices of their times. Additionally, visitors



can explore 18th century astronomical tools, a 19th century quadrant, sextants, octants, models of the solar system, telescopes, and various binoculars, each with its own story and significance in the journey of scientific discovery.

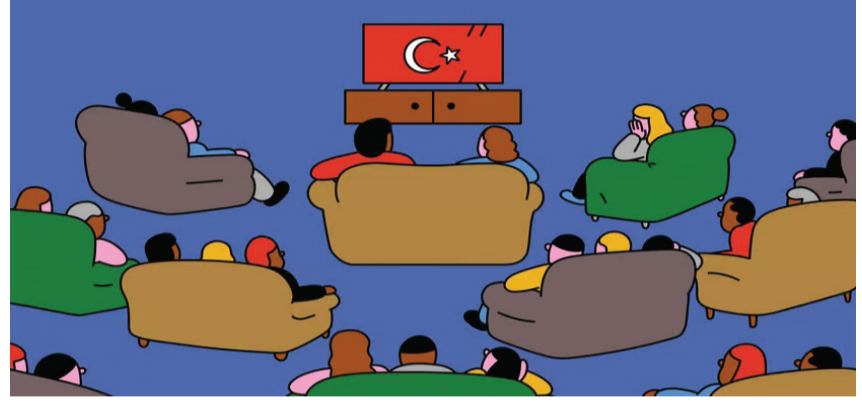
CERVANTES INSTITUTE CHIEF EXPLORES SPANISH-TURKISH CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN TÜRKİYE

Director General of the Cervantes Institute Luis Garcia Montero, made a recent visit to Istanbul, highlighting the burgeoning relationship between Türkiye and the Spanish-speaking world. Montero's insights illuminate the growing interest in Spanish language and culture in Istanbul, alongside strategic initiatives aimed at fostering cultural exchange between the two nations. During his visit, Montero expressed satisfaction with the Cervantes Institute's role in promoting interculturality and defending Spanish and Latin American traditions in Istanbul. He noted a significant rise in the popularity of Spanish language and culture in Türkiye, particularly among younger generations. Montero highlighted the global significance of the Spanish language, being the second most spoken language in the world after Mandarin Chinese. He emphasised its attractiveness for job seekers, travellers and those interested in cultures, globalisation, and international relations. Cultural connections between Spain and Türkiye run deep, rooted in historical interactions,



geographical proximity, and shared values. Historical ties between the Ottoman Empire and Spain have left lasting influences on architecture, cuisine, and language. Both cultures share an appreciation for music, dance, and vibrant festivals, reflecting a mutual zest for life. Moreover, Turkish TV series have gained popularity in Spain, further enhancing cultural interaction between the two countries since their introduction in 2018. Montero's visit underscores the growing interest and mutual exchange between Türkiye and the Spanish-speaking world, promising continued collaboration and cultural enrichment.

TÜRKİYE'S TV INDUSTRY SOARS WITH GLOBAL INFLUENCE AND CINEMATIC ASPIRATIONS



Türkiye has solidified its position as a leading force in the global television industry, ranking as the third-largest exporter of TV series worldwide. The demand for Turkish series surged by 184% between 2020 and 2023, with exports reaching \$600 million in 2022 and projected to increase further. Spain, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt emerged as top importers, with Spanish viewers particularly drawn to Turkish series. The success lies in the captivating narratives, stunning visuals, and appealing performances.

Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Batuhan Mumcu highlighted Türkiye's widespread influence in over 170 countries, reaching approximately 750 million viewers. Mumcu emphasised Türkiye's active participation in prestigious events like the Berlin International Film Festival, showcasing the country's cinematic prowess. Collaborations and negotiations at such events

foster international partnerships and boost the global recognition of Turkish cinema and television.

Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Türkiye's cinema sector received significant support, including financial aid and tax reductions, to sustain operations. Legislative changes aimed at increasing cinema attendance have yielded positive results, with a notable 34% increase in viewership by February 2024 compared to the previous year.

Mumcu underscored Türkiye's appeal as a filming destination for foreign productions, citing its diverse landscapes and historical richness. Türkiye's allure has attracted renowned Hollywood filmmakers and stars, indicating a promising future for the country's film industry. Overall, Türkiye's thriving television exports, coupled with strategic initiatives and support measures, position it as a key player in the global entertainment landscape.

"COLOURFUL AND COLOURLESS" EXHIBITION MET ART LOVERS AT AKM



Ayşegül Ekin Odabaşı's exhibition titled "Colourful and Colourless" met with art lovers at Atatürk Cultural Centre between 21 February and 4 March. The fact that Istanbul is a symbol of diversity and contrasts is the starting point and source of inspiration for the name of the exhibition. Istanbul has hosted many different cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles from past to present. This diversity has built and shaped the social fabric of the city and created a rich cultural heritage.

As the name suggests, some of the photographs in the exhibition are in colour and some are in black and white. Trying to reveal the vividness of colours and the depth of black and white sections in the photographs, Odabaşı aims to offer a visual experience as well as encouraging the viewer to think, feel and approach from different perspectives. The coexistence of opposing emotions and the way Istanbul balances them magnificently actually reflects a sociological reality.

72 YEARS OF TÜRKİYE'S MEMBERSHIP TO NATO: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHENING ALLIANCES

As Türkiye marks its 72nd year in NATO, its pivotal role within the alliance continues to grow stronger.

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IKV Researcher

Türkiye has been a member of NATO for 72 years, accompanying the Alliance for nearly its entire 75 year existence. In the aftermath of the World War II, Türkiye made the historic choice of siding with the free world and the Western Bloc. This policy started the process leading to Türkiye's membership to NATO. Protocol regarding Türkiye's membership to NATO was signed on 17 October 1951. Law on the accession of Türkiye to the North Atlantic Treaty was endorsed on 18 February 1952 and Türkiye became a NATO member. Since then, NATO has been the cornerstone of Türkiye's defence and security policy. Türkiye has been a staunch Ally of NATO and considers the Alliance as the linchpin of the Transatlantic ties and Euro-Atlantic security. NATO also has been the epitome of Türkiye's commitment to universal values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law and their defence and one of the elements that constitute its "Western identity", and Türkiye, in return, has successfully assumed its responsibilities in defending the common values of the Alliance.

Türkiye's Importance for NATO

Türkiye's strategic location straddling Europe and Asia, along with its control of vital maritime routes like the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, renders it a key NATO ally, especially in terms of defence along the alliance's eastern flank against potential threats from Russia and other regional adversaries. Its geographic and military assets, including one of NATO's largest armed forces and the critical Incirlik Air Base, enhance the alliance's defensive capabilities and operational reach, particularly in the Middle East. Türkiye's contributions are essential for NATO's collective security efforts, ensuring stability and access in pivotal regions from Eastern Europe to the Middle East.



Tensions In Türkiye-NATO Relations in Recent Years

In recent years, there have been several developments that have strained Türkiye-NATO relations. Tensions have increased due to diverging foreign policy interests, particularly in Syria and Libya, and Türkiye's purchase of the S-400 missile system from Russia. These factors have led to disagreements and strained relations within the alliance, particularly between Türkiye and the US. Despite historical cooperation on common security threats, the purchase of the S-400 system significantly increased tensions and led to Türkiye's exclusion from the F-35 programme.

Rifts Within NATO

Donald Trump's presidency of the United States was significant for transatlantic relations, as the EU-US relationship, built after the World War II on shared values such as democracy and the international rule of law, the functioning of the liberal economy, and international cooperation, reached a major impasse. Trump

openly demonstrated his lack of faith in the EU by supporting the Brexit process. He did not value alliances or multilateralism, and he saw NATO as an organisation through which the US "protects Europe almost for free." Trump even threatened to withdraw the United States from NATO if other members did not increase their military spending.

The election of Joe Biden as the new US President in 2021 held promise for the future of the deeply shaken transatlantic relationship. "America is back. The transatlantic alliance is back," declared Biden in his first message to European allies upon taking office. But was America really back? Indeed, during its first year, the Biden administration underscored the importance of transatlantic ties and adopted a much more cooperative stance compared to the Trump administration. However, the US's unilateral withdrawal from Afghanistan without consulting the EU, the establishment of the AUKUS pact with Australia and the United Kingdom—which provoked a strong reaction from France—and the

dispute with Germany over the Nord Stream II pipeline all signalled that not all aspects of EU-US relations had fallen into place.

Recovery of Türkiye-NATO and Intra-NATO Relations

Russia's aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 injected much-needed vitality into transatlantic relations, which had been languishing. Putin's declaration of war against Ukraine, in defiance of international law, unified the EU and the US around a common goal, leading the two allies to swiftly impose unprecedented sanctions against Russia. Moreover, the Russia-Ukraine war caused the allies to recall how important Türkiye is for NATO. Indeed, thanks to the efforts of Türkiye, which is currently the only country in NATO that can establish contact with Russia, the Black Sea Grain Initiative was signed. Following Türkiye's approval of Sweden's NATO membership, the US approved the long-awaited sale of F-16 fighter jets to Türkiye. Canada lifted its embargo on the import of spare parts for UAVs

and UAVs. In addition, other NATO member countries started to lift their embargoes against Türkiye.

Conclusion

At a time when international geopolitical tensions are at an all-time high, Türkiye's relations with its allies seem to be softening and Türkiye's important position in NATO is being recalled. Indeed, Türkiye's role in resolving regional crises, particularly the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict, is becoming increasingly important. By enhancing its military capacity and consolidating its role within NATO, Türkiye has significantly impacted the alliance's expansion and strategic direction, thus positioning itself as a critical member of the alliance. Türkiye's strategic manoeuvres reinforce NATO's commitment to the principle of collective defence, while at the same time strengthening its ability to navigate the complex dynamics in the Middle East, thus proving that it has a key role to play in ensuring security and stability at the regional and international level."