



# İKVM NİHİLİ

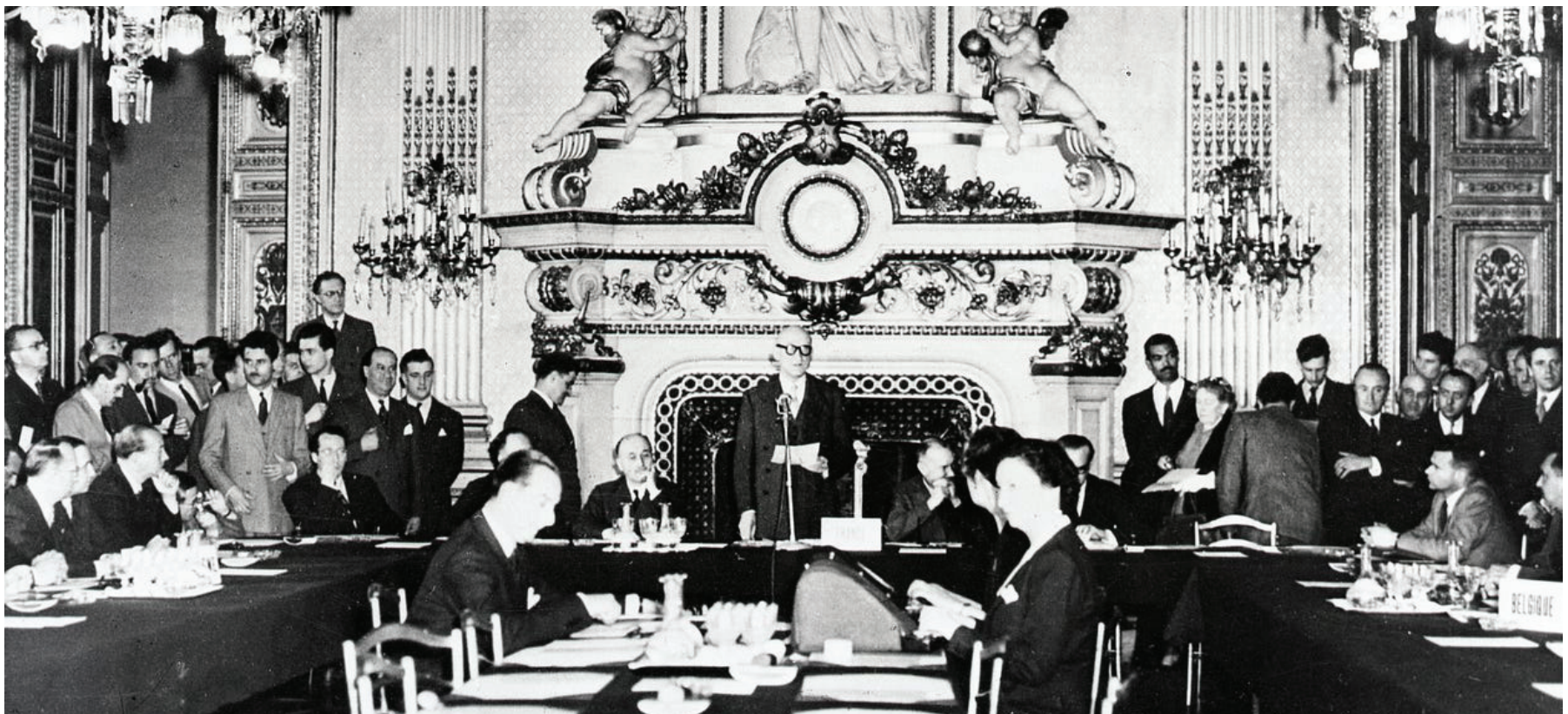


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## EUROPE DAY AND FUTURE OF TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS

Türkiye-EU Relations need to be revitalised and upgraded in view of the vital contribution that Türkiye can make to the EU's strategic autonomy and European security.



Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem NAS  
IKV Secretary General

The European project commemorates its 74<sup>th</sup> year on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2024. Since French Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman's call to establish a coal and steel community in war-ravaged western Europe on 9 May 1950, both Europe and the wider World changed immensely in many ways. In addition to the tectonic geopolitical changes such as the demise of the Soviet Union, ending of the Cold War, foundation of the European Union and rise of China, climate crisis and digitalisation put immense pressure on conventional systems be it in the realm of economy, society or labour market. Digital connectivity and digital skills are now primarily important for a functioning economy. Moreover,

the use of artificial intelligence opened the Pandora's box and brought forth major debates about the changes in the labour market and the role and risks involved in increasing use of AI systems. Climate change which has reached the intensity of a crisis also displays the rightfulness of the "limits to growth" argument and confirms that humanity cannot survive much longer if fundamentals of economic production and consumption patterns do not change towards a circular and green economy model.

Despite immense technological developments, humanity could not establish the basis for perpetual peace despite the fact that more than two centuries have passed since Kant's famous treatise on the subject. Wars, atrocities, even genocide is still being experienced in today's world. Humanity that was able to achieve the technology

and wisdom to prolong human life even until after 100 years have also developed skilful weapons that can destroy whole houses onto innocent civilians and even babies as we are witnessing in Gaza and Ukraine today. The paradoxes of today's world between affluence and poverty, war and peace, freedom and oppression and law and arbitrary rule are strong indicators showing why we need organisations like the EU to transform international relations. The EU is also finding it more and more difficult to remain true to its values and act as a civilian and normative power under compelling circumstances whereby war has once more returned to the Continent. Nevertheless, the Union's twin priorities in the areas of green and digital transitions embody a significant leadership for the regulation of new policy areas and facilitate efforts to fight against climate change.

Under such volatile and ambiguous conditions, Türkiye-EU relations remain as relevant, if not more, today as they did in 1963 when the Association Agreement was signed between the European Economic Community of the time and Turkish government. Türkiye has become a candidate country which started to negotiate for its membership since then. However, this road was full of hardship and obstacles such as the long shadow of the Cyprus dispute, problems over the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean, limits of the EU's integration capacity, prejudices and effect of geopolitical competition and inconsistencies and disruptions in Türkiye's reform process. The need to revitalise the relations are felt acutely due to the stalemate in the relations and mutual need for cooperation and engagement between the parties. The Borrell-Varhelyi report

which was published in November 2023 brought to the agenda a number of proposals to facilitate a revitalisation of the relations. These proposals have been discussed by the European Council in its meeting in April this year. However, the EU leaders failed to adopt a decision on the issue and conferred the discussions on the Report's recommendations to the Coreper (Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Member States). On this Europe Day, it is time to rethink the current state of the relations and come up with novel ideas to facilitate dialogue and engagement between Türkiye and the EU. The common challenges of our time require common solutions that can only emerge if the parties upgrade their relations involving Türkiye more and more in the EU policies contributing to overall strategic autonomy.





## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU SPOKE AT THE CONFERENCE ON UPDATING THE CUSTOMS UNION



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu participated in the conference titled "Updating the Customs Union and the Expectations of the Business World" organised by Marmara

University Institute for European Studies as part of the Europe Week activities and discussed the process of updating the Customs Union from the perspective of the business world

on 13 May 2024. The other speakers of the meeting moderated by Prof. Mesut Eren were Founder of FARBA Ahmet Bayraktar and SARKUYSAN Chairman Hayrettin Çaycı.

## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU: "WE HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING AN EVER-GROWING NUMBER OF PROBLEMS AND BOTTLENECKS IN THE SCHENGEN VISA APPLICATION PROCESS"



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu issued a statement regarding the difficulties and obstacles experienced during the Schengen visa application process especially for businesspeople and truck drivers. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu noted the severity of the issue and explained the problems caused by delays and bottlenecks in the process:

"Since last year we have been experiencing an ever-growing number of problems and bottlenecks in the Schengen visa application process. Especially for businesspeople who wish to travel to the Schengen area for business purposes such as participating in a fair or engaging in a business meeting, it has become harder to get appointments in time to be able to take part in these activities. The waiting period may be more

than 2 months which makes business planning very difficult. We also receive many complaints about the increasing number of refusals despite the presentation of valid documents. Even for businesspeople who have visited the Schengen area many times before, the period of validity is quite short. The truck drivers' problems have become even more acute. Due to failure to get a visa or renew their Schengen visas, the goods that need to be transported have to wait. This situation delays and prevents swift and effective transportation of goods from Türkiye to the EU. It creates a non-tariff barrier which creates disruption of the Türkiye-EU Customs Union. We expect that EU Member States and relevant institutions will take note of the matter and take steps to ease the process and facilitate visa applications.

## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU: "TÜRKİYE IS IN SECOND PLACE IN TERMS OF THE NUMBER OF SCHENGEN VISA APPLICATIONS"



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu evaluated the issues through newly published 2023 Schengen statistics.

"As IKV, we follow the Schengen visa process, which is one of the painful fields of the Türkiye-EU relations. We shared problems faced by Turkish citizens with the EU and convey our demands for a solution. Besides, we call for completion of the six remaining criteria as soon as possible in the visa liberalisation process. According to 2023 Schengen visa statistics, Türkiye is the second country behind China in terms of number of Schengen visa applications with a total number of

1.055.885 applications. With these applications, 612.841 multiple entry Uniform Schengen Visas were given while the rejection rate was 21.7%. Average rate of rejection was 15.7% in 2022, which indicates 6 points of increase. Number of applications from Türkiye went up 36.5%.

When we merely consider 80 euros fee for visa application, Turkish citizens paid 85€ million in 2023. The total cost increases up to an amount between 120 million euros and 150 million euros if spendings for banking, translation and notary procedures and additional fees for process acceleration are considered. This situation creates non-tariff barriers for citizens of Türkiye, which is a candidate country and an associate for the Customs Union."

In 2023, the highest number of applications were received by Greece, Germany, France and Italy in 2023. The rate of rejection was 21.7% with 6 points increase. Estonia, Denmark, Finland and Belgium were the countries with the highest rejection rates while the least rate of rejections belongs to Slovakia, Italy, Slovenia and Portugal. The details for approval

and rejection rates of the countries as follows: The highest number of applications were received by Greece, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Portugal, Hungary and Austria in order. Greece received 254.377 applications, and these applications were made in Greek missions in İstanbul, Edirne, İzmir and Ankara. The least rate of rejection was for the applications made in Edirne (2.3%) and İzmir (7.2%). Germany received 253.472 applications. Rejection rate for applications made in Ankara was 27.1%; 21.5% for İstanbul and 13.1% for İzmir. Estonia has the highest rate of rejection with 42.5%; Denmark with 39.4%; Finland with 31.3%; Belgium with 27.5%; Germany with 22%; Croatia with 21%; Spain with 20.8%; Czech Republic with 20.6%. Countries with the least rejection rates are listed as Slovakia with 6.6%; Italy with 8.7%; Slovenia with 10.92%; Portugal with 11.94%; France and Greece with 14.6%; Hungary with 14.9% and Sweden with 19.22%. 2023 rejection rates have not been announced by some countries such as the Netherlands, Norway and Poland.

## EP MEMBERS INMA RODRIGUEZ-PINERO AND CLARA AGUILERA PAID A WORKING VISIT TO IKV



Inma Rodriguez-Pinero and Clara Aguilera, Members of the EP Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, visited IKV on 10 May 2024 to exchange views on Türkiye-EU relations. During the visit, members of the EP Rodriguez-Pinero and Aguilera met with IKV Research Director Çisel İleri and

Media Advisor Mehmet Poyrazlı and gave information about the committees they serve in the EP and their work. During the meeting where IKV and its activities were conveyed, the issues of updating the Türkiye-EU Customs Union and improving bilateral relations were discussed.

İKv AGENDA

## İKv ORGANISED A MEETING TITLED "THE FUTURE OF THE EU AND TÜRKİYE"

İKv organised a meeting titled "The Future of the EU and Türkiye", in collaboration with İstanbul University COPFUTUREU Jean Monnet Module on 2 May 2024. In his opening statement, İKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu reminded that the Europe Day is going to be celebrated on 9 May, stating that there have been important recent developments on the European integration. Stating that Türkiye is an important economic and trade partner for the EU, Zeytinoğlu maintained that modernisation of the Customs Union is an important step for improving bilateral relations. In his concluding statements, Zeytinoğlu noted that alignment with the EU's green and digital agenda is crucial for Türkiye, and there is a need to carry out the process of adaptation more effectively.



Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Türkiye to the EU Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı started his special address by mentioning the most important factors that are going to directly influence the future of the EU in the coming five years. Kaymakcı maintained that currently, the most important issue for the future of the EU is the Russia-Ukraine war due to the Union's security concerns, the economic hardships arising from the increase in energy and food prices, and migration from Ukraine. Pointing to the necessity of aligning Turkish foreign policy towards Russia with that of the EU, Kaymakcı held that Türkiye's non-violation of the EU sanctions against Russia is important for Türkiye-EU relations. Furthermore, Kaymakcı emphasised that the issue of irregular migration management is also important concerning the

Türkiye-EU relations. Kaymakcı concluded his speech by stating that the EU agrees that Türkiye's membership will be the most valuable among candidate countries; however, mutual trust should be renewed between the parties.

Following the opening and keynote speeches, the panel discussion started under the moderation of İKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit. The first speaker of the panel section was Prof. Özgün Erler Bayır. Bayır started her speech by highlighting how critical it is to mainstream the EU projects in Türkiye. Prof. Bayır emphasised that the EU devotes sustained effort to develop policy papers on ways for the EU to become a stronger actor in the future.

The second speaker of the panel İKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof.

Çiğdem Nas started her speech by underlining that the upcoming EP elections in the EU will be an important process. Nas maintained that the newly established Parliament is going to be crucial as it will develop new strategies and objectives for the upcoming five years and highlighted that the process should be followed. Assoc. Prof. Nas argued that the recent strategic agenda includes the topics of security, defence, resilience and competitiveness, energy, migration, global engagement and enlargement. Assoc. Prof. Nas concluded her speech by stating that the Cyprus issue, issues with Greece and Türkiye's declining alignment with the Copenhagen criteria are among the most crucial issues that hamper membership. The meeting ended following the Q&A session.

## İKv ORGANISED A CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE DAY

İKv organised a conference titled "The Current Situation in Türkiye-EU Relations" in cooperation with Marmara University Institute of European Studies on 9 May 2024. The event started with a concert prepared by Marmara University Music Department and continued with the opening speech of Marmara University Vice Rector Prof. Mustafa Çelen as part of 9 May Europe Day.

Following the opening session, the session was chaired by İKV Vice President Prof. Halûk Kabaalioğlu and the keynote speaker was Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador



Mehmet Kemal Bozay. Vice President Prof. Kabaalioğlu gave a historical overview of important turning points in Türkiye-EU relations. Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Bozay stated that

Türkiye is a very important country for the EU in terms of its own future at a time of increasing crisis in the international arena. The session ended with questions from the participants.

## TIMELINE MAY 2024

1	
2	İKv organised a meeting titled "The Future of the EU And Türkiye".
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5	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay had a meeting with Director General of Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Gert Jan Koopman.
6	İKv Secretary General Nas attended a civil society meeting.
7	İKv Secretary General Nas participated in the Europe Day events organised by Bahçeşehir University, and İBB.
8	İKv Secretary General Nas spoke at İstanbul Arel University Europe Day panel.
9	
10	EP members Inma Rodriguez-Pinero and Clara Aguilera paid a working visit to İKV.
11	İKv Secretary General Nas gave a lecture in the training programme organised by the SDGS Network.
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13	İKv Chairperson Zeytinoğlu spoke at the conference on updating the Customs Union.
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16	President Erdoğan came together with Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze.
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19	İKv İstanbul EUIC participated in the study visit in Poland.
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23	Deputy Foreign Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay came together with Swiss State Secretary Alexandre Fasel.
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27	President Erdoğan exchanged views with President of the Government of Spain Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón.
28	
29	Deputy Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay received Ambassador of Greece to Türkiye Theodoros Bizakis.
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31	



## IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS



IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in various programmes and events this month. On 6 May, Assoc. Prof. Nas attended the civil society working breakfast held at TOBB on the occasion of the visit of the Director-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission, Gert Jan Koopman. On 7 May 2024, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in the Europe Day seminar titled "Current Crises and Future of the EU" organised by Bahçeşehir University Department of Political Science and International and on the same day, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas attended the Europe Day reception organised by the EU Delegation to Türkiye at the Haliç Congress Center, hosted by İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality.

On 8 May 2024, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker in the "Türkiye-European

Union Relations from Past to Present Erasmus, Health, Culture, Political Life" panel at İstanbul Arel University. On 9 May 2024, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in the Europe Day seminar organised by the International Relations Student Club at İstanbul Bilgi University. On 10 May 2024, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, attended 8<sup>th</sup> Türkiye-Germany-EU Relations joint conference arranged with cooperation of Cologne University at the Turkish-German University. On 11 May 2024, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave a lecture titled "European Union, General Structure and Development" within the scope of the SDG5 Network Critical Security, Foreign Policy, and Economy Training Programme. On 16 May, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker at the congress titled "Türkiye-EU Relations in a Changing International System" organised by

Trabzon Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Trabzon EU Information Centre in cooperation with KTU Strategic Research Centre and KTU International Relations Club.

On 22 May, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas attended the workshop on Türkiye-EU relations held in Sweden. On 30 May, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in the "Development of Multi-Actor Operational Cooperation in Migration Management: Networking Among Migration Management Authorities (MAGNET) Regional Conference". On 31 May, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave a speech at the webinar titled "European Parliament Elections" organised by Marmara University International Relations Research and Application Centre. In her speeches, Assoc. Prof. Nas touched upon the past and the future of the Türkiye-EU relations and possible opportunities regarding to those relations.

## IKV ORGANISED A PANEL AT THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CONGRESS



IKV participated in the International Relations Congress held in Ordu on 23-26 May 2024 and organised a panel on "The Future of the EU and Türkiye". Current approaches and issues in international relations were discussed in the light of various panels at the Congress that the International Relations Council convened, with cooperation of Bahçeşehir University.

Speakers at the IKV organised panel talked about the major issues affecting Türkiye-EU ties as well as the future of the EU. The speakers of the panel were IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Prof. Dr. Selcen Öner, Assoc. Prof. Başak Alpan and Dr. Betül Ayanoğlu. In the panel moderated by Assoc. Prof. Fulya Aksu, Prof. Dr. Öner

discussed the rising right-wing parties in the EU and their impact on the upcoming EP elections, while Assoc. Prof. Alpan presented two separate papers on Türkiye-EU relations after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the European Political Community and then discussed the concept of "transactional Europe". In their statement on "The Future of the EU and Türkiye", Assoc. Prof. Nas drew attention to the main concerns and opportunities for the future of the EU and focused on their effects on Türkiye-EU relations. Dr. Ayanoğlu presented a statement examining the impact of the European Green Deal on Türkiye-EU relations. The panel concluded with a question and answer session.

## IKV İSTANBUL EUIC PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY VISIT IN POLAND

IKV İstanbul EU Information Centre participated in the study visits to Warsaw and Krakow, Poland, between 19-23 May 2024, within the scope of the EU Information Centres Network Support Project in Türkiye carried out under the umbrella of TOBB.

While the first part of study visit took place in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, its first meeting was held at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this meeting, in addition to touching on Poland's foreign and security policies, ideas were exchanged about the current situation in the EU's common security and defence policies. In addition, the EU's enlargement policies and the impact of possible



enlargement on the EU's common security and defence were mentioned.

Following the visit to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a meeting was held at the Polish EU Representation. At the EU Representation, views were exchanged on Poland-EU relations, recent international crises and the

EP elections to be held in June 2024. Following this visit, information was given at the Polish Chamber of Commerce about Türkiye-Poland commercial relations and Poland's adaptation to the twin transition in sustainable development and trade policies.

On the second day of the study visit, during the visit to the Turkish

Embassy in Poland, a meeting was held with the Ambassador of the Türkiye in Poland Rauf Alp Denktaş about Türkiye-Poland relations. The main agenda of the meeting was Türkiye-Poland relations. In addition, information was shared about Türkiye's EU membership process. After the meeting, Erasmus students from Türkiye were given

information about the activities of EU Information Centres, and discussions were held about the questions the students were curious about. After the meeting with Erasmus students, the Frontex office in Warsaw was visited and the aim of Frontex's establishment and the EU's attitudes and policies in the face of international crises were discussed.

The last day of the study visit was held in Krakow, Poland. At the meeting held in Krakow with Head of the Communication Department of the EU Delegation to Türkiye Undersecretary Ramunas Janusauskas ideas were exchanged about the activities of the EU Information Centres in the future.



HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

## PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN DELIVERED EUROPE DAY MESSAGE



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that May 9 Europe Day not only commemorates the economic and political integration of Europe, but also represents peace and stability on the continent as the fruit of decades-long common effort. On the other hand, President Erdoğan addressed that just as the whole world has been affected by the recent international crises, the European continent has also been affected and is under threat.

President Erdoğan emphasised that terrorist incidents and hot conflicts, which are felt as a threat in Europe and are fuelled by these international crises, create an escalating hostility towards Islam across the continent. President Erdoğan stated that in addition to Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism also pose a major

problem, especially for Turkish citizens living in Europe.

President Erdoğan also highlighted the crises in Gaza in the Europe Day message. President Erdoğan stated that 35 thousand Palestinians, including 15 thousand children, have been murdered so far. Stating that European institutions and EU Member States did not react adequately to the human rights violations in Palestine and the crises in Gaza, Erdoğan addressed that these attitudes shook European values. President Erdoğan added that unless a permanent solution is found to these crises, these shaken values of Europe will continue to be questioned.

President Erdoğan also underlined that, within the current geopolitical conjuncture, the EU should pursue inclusive, cooperative and fair policies in the wide European geography

and the Mediterranean Basin. President Erdoğan stated that in this process where the EU's expansion policy is gaining momentum, cooperation should be developed in all areas, including accession negotiations, which are the basis of Türkiye-EU relations. Referring to the importance of the Union carrying out its relations with Türkiye with a fair and result-oriented approach within the framework of the principle of pacta sunt servanda, Erdoğan also announced with this message that Türkiye will not refrain from using and developing its strategic opportunities and capabilities.

Finally, President Erdoğan congratulated May 9 Europe Day of all Europeans, especially Turkish citizens, by reminding that Türkiye is ready to work with the EU by becoming a more prosperous and solidarity society.

## GREEK PRIME MINISTER MITSOTAKIS PAID A WORKING VISIT TO TÜRKİYE



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visited President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 13 May 2024 after President Erdoğan's visit last year on 7 December 2023 which marked the beginning of a new page in Türkiye-Greece relations. After previously signing the Athens Declaration on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourliness, the dual came together once again in Ankara to display mutual determination to preserve calmness in relations.

The two leaders evaluated the outcomes of the 5<sup>th</sup> High-Level Cooperation Council, which was held in Athens on 7 December 2023. Both leaders welcomed the progress made in Joint Action Plan, which includes the establishment of Turkish-Greek Business Council. They expressed satisfaction with finalisation of a memorandum of understanding for cooperation on disaster and emergency management alongside of agreement on cooperation in health and medical sciences.

President Erdoğan stated "It is up

to both countries to thaw bilateral relations, attempted to be squeezed between walls of prejudice which we should tear down" in an interview conducted by Greek newspaper Kathimerini. President Erdoğan added by emphasising the need for developing a holistic approach to overcome disagreements, by not prioritising one over another. Touching upon the visa-on-arrival application adopted by Greece, President Erdoğan commented "This should not be even necessary and the EU should grant visa liberalisation to Türkiye."

Prime Minister Mitsotakis expressed his satisfaction for the positive progress of Türkiye-Greece relations and added that the visa-on-arrival application adopted by Greece for Turkish tourists in ten islands contributed to the local economy significantly, in a visit to Agrinio where he met with locals before the European Parliament elections to be held on 9 June 2024. The leaders are expected to meet again in NATO Summit to be held in Washington, USA on 9-11 July.

## EU COMMISSIONER VÁRHELYI PAID A WORKING VISIT TO TÜRKİYE



EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Olivér Várhelyi was in the Türkiye for two

day visit on 22-23 May 2024. This visit has been his fourth visit to Türkiye between 2019-2024, and his last visit was in September 2023. Várhelyi

held talks with Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz, Minister of Trade Ömer Bolat and Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya. After Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hakan Fidan hosted Várhelyi, a joint press conference was held. Both representatives discussed the regional and global issues.

Foreign Minister Fidan stressed that the EU and Türkiye's engagement is more necessary than ever. Fidan underlined that Türkiye is committed to its relations with the EU and said Türkiye would not hesitate to move forward its economic and political cooperation with the EU institutions. Minister Fidan also stated that there has been a serious problem regarding visa issues with the EU and he added Türkiye is negotiating with the EU to facilitate visas, especially for businesspeople and students. Foreign Minister Fidan highlighted that the aim of Türkiye is to fully initiate negotiations with the EU on visa liberalisation. Modernisation

of the Customs Union was the other issue of the meeting. Fidan emphasised a consensus between the parties exists on modernising the Customs Union.

For his part, Várhelyi stated that the necessary technical preparations are being made for the Türkiye-EU investment fund to start functioning. The Commissioner pointed out it is hoped that the preparations would be completed this year, and the projects would emerge as of next year. Várhelyi also emphasised both countries needed each other, and high-level dialogues would continue. The Commissioner underlined Türkiye is the fifth biggest trade partner of EU, and he added that they discussed with the Foreign Minister about how to improve the visa situation to accelerate the process.



## ZERO WASTE PROJECT EARNED TÜRKİYE A PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

The Zero Waste Project, which has yielded significant results in preventing waste and protecting the environment, received the Parliamentary Assembly of Mediterranean Award.

Türkiye's Zero Waste Project received the Parliamentary Assembly of Mediterranean (PAM) Award on May 15<sup>th</sup> in the award ceremony held at the Braga Conference Hall in Portugal. Turkish Minister of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change Mehmet Özhaseki accepted the award presented by PAM Secretary-General Sergio Piazzì on behalf of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Türkiye's First Lady Emine Erdoğan.

Speaking at the event, Özhaseki emphasised that the Zero Waste Project has become both an environmental movement and an economic cycle model and stated that the project transforms waste into economic value. Minister Özhaseki drew attention to climate change and stressed the importance of working towards saving the future of our planet. Minister Özhaseki also underscored that the award is the



result of Turkish nation's efforts in this area and highlighted the global admiration for the Zero Waste Project. In 2022, the United Nations

General Assembly unanimously passed the Resolution on Zero Waste submitted by Türkiye, proclaiming March 30<sup>th</sup> as the International Zero Waste Day.

The Zero Waste project was launched by Türkiye's First Lady Emine Erdoğan, aiming at avoiding waste, decreasing waste generation and reincorporating waste into production processes through recycling. Since its launch in 2017, it has achieved considerable outcomes.

As the Minister Özhaseki mentioned in his speech at the ceremony, the project resulted in 185 billion liras of economic gains and saved 498 million trees. Özhaseki addressed that Türkiye also combats marine pollution through the Zero Waste Blue movement, resulting in the successful recycling of 7.8 million tonnes of plastic waste. By 2023, the rate of recycling from waste in Türkiye has reached a record level of 35% and the ministry plans to increase this rate up to 65% by the year 2035.

## GERMANY AND TÜRKİYE TO EXPLORE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Turkish-German Economic Day, an event dedicated to exploring economic opportunities between Germany and Türkiye was held in Dusseldorf on 4 May 2024. The 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the event featured notable attendees, including Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek and German Finance Minister Christian Lindner. Business and government officials from Germany, Türkiye and Europe convened to discuss various pressing economic topics. Minister Şimşek emphasised the inseparable bond between Türkiye and Germany in his speech, stating "We can never be separated from Germany. Together, we are stronger. We have very strong ties. We can work together not only in bilateral trade but also in many other areas, including regions like Africa and Central Asia." He also addressed Türkiye's economic



strategies, assuring attendees of the government's commitment to fiscal discipline.

Minister Lindner echoed the sentiment of strong bilateral relations, remarking, "We have a special relationship with Türkiye. There are many success stories of Turkish-origin entrepreneurs in Germany. This success is also an indicator of successful integration." Lindner supported Türkiye's efforts to stabilize its economy, stressing

the importance of combating inflation and promoting growth through sound financial practices. He acknowledged challenges in Türkiye's economic policies but was hopeful they would be addressed. He highlighted Türkiye's rich potential and favourable conditions for foreign investment, particularly for expanding the German value chain. Critical discussions at the event focused on the future of green energy, advancements in artificial intelligence, corporate social responsibility, and broader economic issues. Politicians, public officials, private sector representatives, and experts from both countries attended the event. In addition to the main event, there were dedicated sessions for company cooperation meetings and a spotlight on the social economy.

## TÜRKİYE RANKED 4<sup>TH</sup> LAST YEAR IN EUROPE FOR FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT PROJECTS



Ernst and Young, an international consulting, audit and tax services company, published the "European Country Attractiveness Survey 2024" report. According to the report, Türkiye ranked 4<sup>th</sup> last year in Europe for foreign direct investment projects. While the number of investment projects announced by foreign companies in Türkiye increased by 17% in 2023 compared to the previous year, Türkiye surpassed Spain in the ranking in Europe.

Making statements on the report, President of the Investment Office

of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Ahmet Burak Dağlıoğlu stated that Türkiye has become a prominent destination for investors with its strategic location and strong investment environment and that the international direct investment of 10.6 billion dollars in Türkiye in 2023 was the most concrete indicator of this success.

The report also included an annual analysis of foreign direct investments made within Europe. In this context, it was stated that in 2023, there was a 4% decrease in foreign direct investment in Europe compared to the previous year and an 11% decrease compared to 2019, when the pandemic was experienced. While most of the foreign direct investments in Europe were in France, the UK and Germany respectively, the same three countries ranked in the top three, accounting for about half of the total projects.

## FOREIGN MINISTER FİDAN SAYS TÜRKİYE'S PRIORITY IS CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING



Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan, on a live broadcast on diverse perspectives on foreign policy, emphasised the significance of peace and security by underlining the

act of Türkiye on stimulating stability and economic development in the region. Minister Fidan stated that Türkiye has progressed significantly, and the country's stance principally has been conditioned on touching upon conflicts independently from its involvement. Minister Fidan also stated that there is a need for strategic alliances and institutionalisation in the region.

In terms of the condition in Ukraine, Minister Fidan specified Türkiye as an appearing third voice on advocacy for a peaceful resolution

and refusing occupation or destructive warfare and also highlighted the gravity of identifying a third way towards peace stressing the important part of Türkiye on economic and political terms in the region. Minister Fidan also addressed that preventing conflict is key to facilitating development, trade, and education while pointing out the requirement for methodical approaches to sustain security and peace.

Minister Fidan mentioned the significance of balancing tradition with necessary changes by highlighting

the outreach efforts of Türkiye in regions like Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific concerning organisational reforms inside the Foreign Ministry. With reference to Türkiye-USA relations, Minister Fidan noted that disputes on problems like Gaza, the distinction between their way of approach and the need for the expansion of the pressure on Israel to eliminate more violence are also pointed out the moral loss by the West, specifically by the USA and claimed the fact that the ongoing oppression and massacre are possible

due to their support.

Minister Fidan stated the international growing awareness of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and summoned a reassessment of the denial of Israel to accept internationally recognised borders. Furthermore, he underlined the need for a change in the international system's response to challenges similar to this situation and referred to the decision of the USA to stay abstinent on a UN Security Council resolution on humanitarian aid and a cease-fire which would allow it to pass contrary to Israel's wishes.



## TURKISH-GREEK THEATRE COLLABORATION OF ROMEO AND JULIET PREMIERED IN BOTH COUNTRIES



Turkish-Greek theatre collaboration of Romeo and Juliet made its debut in both Türkiye and Greece. The play, which started rehearsals in January, premiered in İstanbul on April 21 and in Athens on May 16. This first ever collaboration in theatre started after President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Mitsotakis' meeting in December 2023 is fosters cultural ties. In the premiere made in Athens, Minister of Culture and Tourism Mehmet Nuri Ersoy and his Greek counterpart Lina Mendoni watched the play together after

having a bilateral meeting and visiting the Acropolis Museum.

Türkiye's Director General of the State Theatres Tamer Karadağlı, Turkish Ambassador to Athens Çağatay Erciyas and Consul General of Athens and Piraeus Mustafa Somuncu were also attended to the premiere which staged under the direction of Lefteris Giovanidis. After the premiere, Minister Ersoy said "As a result of recent meetings between the two leaders, the decision to bring Turkish-Greek relations to the forefront with a positive agenda

quickly triggered this positive atmosphere in relations. In the bilateral meetings we held today, we decided to further increase the cultural activities between the two countries. We will take the relevant steps in a very short time."

The project modernizes Shakespeare's poetic work, setting it in a contemporary context through the lens of two families residing in a Balkan city. The tale of a Turkish Romeo and a Greek Juliet plays out amid a backdrop of diverse cultures and religions, where crime, violence, and madness are woven into daily life.

## SAILORS BECOME THE YOUNGEST TURKS TO RACE AROUND WORLD



Ezgin Mistikoğlu at 22, and Deniz Derin Binaroğlu at 21 finished off circumnavigating the globe on 6 May 2024. They returned to England at the end of 8 months, where they started, successfully completing the Ocean Globe Race on the Translated 9 boat. The race where the pair came in the first place in the "IRC", "line honours" and "flyer" classes had two stages; first of which was held between England and Cape Town and the second, between Cape Town and New Zealand.

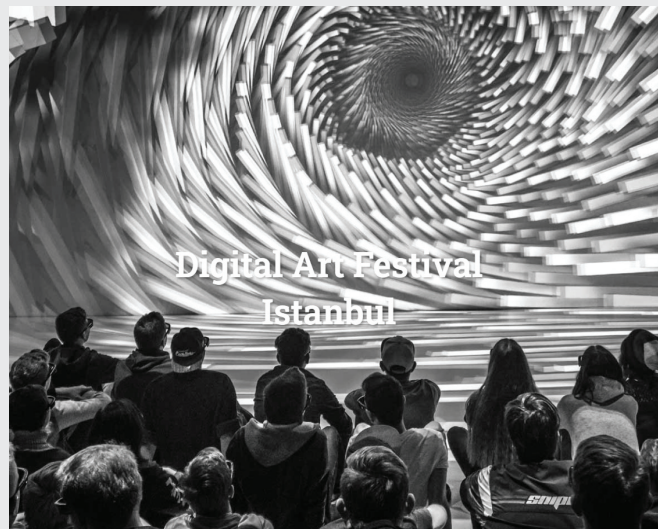
Despite enduring the jeopardy of sinking during the New Zealand-Uruguay and Uruguay-England stages, the athletes were able to complete the race successfully.

Mistikoğlu expressed her feelings commenting "We took refuge in the Falkland Islands, where we made the boat ready for the next stage in 10 days with superhuman struggle. Unfortunately, we cracked our boat again in Madeira, repaired it again and completed the world tour. We have shown the world that we Turks and the Translated 9 team can complete the world tour without giving up. That's why we are very happy and proud." The race did not involve any use of technological devices such as computers, satellites, GPS and telephones by the participants and a total of 256 sailors in 14 boats from 23 countries raced through four stages.

## 4TH İSTANBUL DIGITAL ART FESTIVAL WAS HELD IN AKM

The 4th İstanbul Digital Art Festival (IDAF), Türkiye's first and only international digital art festival, was held between 2-5 May at the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) and was sponsored by Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry with Anadolu Agency as the global communications partner. The festival presented artworks by artists both domestic and international, who integrated past and future ideas, considering the blend of art and technology as a creative domain. The festival, under the theme "searching\_ connection...", investigated what insights the past, present and future offer and explored how interactions among nature, science, production techniques and human behaviour connect to art.

Festival Director Nabat Garakhanova thanked sponsors and the AKM team for their support since 2018, noting the



festival's sustainability efforts. She presented a plaque to Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Batuhan Mumcu, who promised continuing support. Cinema curator Samed Karagoz introduced an AI-driven "100 Years, 100 Cinema Works"

exhibition and fashion curator Niyazi Erdoğan launched a new fashion section. Music curator Julie Walsh featured VR works from international artists and video game curator Rahim Unlu showcased interactive virtual experiences.

## ANTALYA'S SAND SCULPTURE MUSEUM OFFERS A SPACE ADVENTURE



Nearly 200 sand sculptures made by 25 sculptors using more than 10 thousand tons of river sand at Antalya's Lara Public Beach attract the attention of local and foreign visitors. This sculpture exhibition, with the theme of "Space Adventure", reveals the interest and curiosity in space with sand sculptures. In the museum, humanity's space adventure, from Galileo to Da Vinci, from Neil Armstrong to Elon Musk, is revealed to visitors. The exhibition also includes scenes from important films

with a space theme and statues of characters.

The exhibition also offers visitors the opportunity to watch Saturn, Jupiter and the Moon with very powerful telescopes, especially in the evenings. One-hour basic training is given in special areas created for children, and children create three-dimensional works of art. The sculptures become the centre of attention of visitors with the colourful lighting in the exhibition area during night.



# FORGING A NEW PATH: TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS IN A CHANGING EUROPE

The EU which has struggled with many challenges such as COVID-19, the Ukraine-Russia war and refugee crises in the last five years, may experience political changes after the EP elections.

Laura Batalla Adam  
Researcher

As the European Union emerges from critical elections, the political landscape may undergo significant shifts, reshaping the dynamics of power and policy direction across the continent. The last five years have seen the EU navigate unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, followed by Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 signalling the return of war to the continent and the subsequent refugee influx, have tested Europe's resilience and challenged its unity in responding quickly and effectively.

Despite these challenges, the EU has achieved significant legislative milestones. Among these are the European Green Deal, which sets ambitious targets for climate neutrality by 2050 and the Digital Services Act, aimed at regulating digital markets and safeguard consumers. These legislative achievements demonstrate the EU's commitment to tackle long-term concerns, even in the face of crisis.

In response to the conflict in Ukraine, the EU has placed renewed emphasis on security and defence, reigniting discussions about enlargement. Türkiye, with its strategic location and longstanding candidate status, becomes a pivotal player in this evolving landscape. As the European Union embarks on a new five-year institutional cycle, it faces both challenges and opportunities in redefining its strategic priorities and strengthening partnerships with key actors like Türkiye.

## Return of Enlargement to The Political Agenda

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has highlighted the need for stronger security and defence measures, requiring a rethinking of



the EU's strategic autonomy. The emphasis on developing a strong defence mechanism reflects a larger move toward ensuring that Europe can safeguard its own interests.

The war has also reignited discussions about EU enlargement, driven by geopolitical and geostrategic considerations. Countries such as Ukraine and Moldova have welcomed the fresh drive for enlargement, while those in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, who have waited longer, are cautiously optimistic. However, enlargement is not projected to be a simple or quick process due to the new accession methodology adopted in 2020, which prioritizes negotiations on fundamental reforms. Progress has been hampered by both the need for internal reforms and unsolved bilateral concerns, such as those between Serbia and Kosovo.

## Türkiye's Accession Process

Türkiye's EU accession process has been particularly challenging, marked by uneven support from Member States, a lack of reforms, and setbacks in the rule of law and

fundamental rights. The European Parliament has asked for an official suspension of accession talks, but this has not occurred since Member States have weighed the perceived high political cost of stopping the process. Türkiye's role in hosting over 4 million Syrian refugees has resulted in a transactional partnership that has damaged the normative foundation of the relationship.

Tensions with Greece and GCASC, along with Türkiye's sometimes diverging foreign policy, such as its balancing act with Russia and its actions in Libya, have made it harder for it to make progress. As a result of efforts to defuse tensions, the EU created a forward-looking strategy to revitalize the cooperation in 2023. This plan includes an update to the Customs Union and targeted visa liberalisation, though it is unclear what precise actions will be made to put the plan into reality.

## Opportunities for Cooperation

Although the relationship between Türkiye and the EU has been marked by difficulties recently, there are still many chances for cooperation, especially in the areas

of digital and green transitions. Türkiye may have a significant role to play in the framework provided by the European Green Deal. Türkiye's unique location as a bridge connecting Europe and Asia makes it essential for energy transit routes. Collaborative projects in renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transportation might make a substantial contribution to the EU's climate goals.

Similarly, the EU's digital agenda provides another path for cooperation. Türkiye's ICT sector is expanding, with a thriving startup culture and increased investment in digital infrastructure. Joint actions to improve cybersecurity, develop digital skills and encourage digital innovation may result in stronger economic relations and mutual progress.

## The Enlargement Question and Europe's Future

The enlargement debate centres on Europe's future identity. In an increasingly multipolar world, the EU must not only strengthen its political, economic, and social union, but also broaden its scope.

Türkiye's accession, which used to be a major topic of discussion during EU election campaigns, has not figured prominently this time around. Nonetheless, its geopolitical relevance in Europe remains critical. As the EU navigates these complicated circumstances, it must find ways to use Türkiye's geopolitical position while remaining true to its core ideals and principles.

One might argue that the elections in the European Parliament on 6-9 June may mark the beginning of a new era. If there is a commitment to common principles and interests on both sides, a shift in power within EU institutions may present new chances to review and even revitalize the accession process.

Türkiye and the EU can collaborate to overcome global concerns. Cooperation can bring major benefits in a variety of areas, including climate change and digital transformation. Strengthening economic ties, improving security collaboration and developing people-to-people relationships through educational and cultural exchanges can all contribute to a more resilient and linked Europe.

In this moment of global uncertainty, Türkiye and the EU can reap significant mutual gains. They can form a relationship that boosts economic growth, supports regional security, and promotes technical and environmental improvements by using their common strengths and approaching their disagreements with a forward-thinking mindset. A renewed commitment to cooperation and shared ideals will be critical in navigating their relationship's complicated dynamics and ensuring a prosperous future for both sides.