



# IKV MONTHLY



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## DENMARK'S TURN IN THE EU COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

Denmark has taken over the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the second half of 2025, outlining its priorities as a secure, competitive, and green Europe.

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Between 1 July and 31 December 2025, Denmark will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU. Taking over the presidency from Poland, Denmark assumes this role for the eighth time. Following Denmark, the rotating presidency will be handed over to the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus.

A member of the EU since the first enlargement in 1973, Denmark is a Northern European country with a history dating back to the Viking Age. Known for its strong welfare state, Denmark ensures access to healthcare and education for all its citizens.

In line with the turbulent times marked by ongoing wars, emerging geopolitical challenges, and increasing global uncertainty, Denmark has chosen the slogan "A strong Europe in a changing world" for its presidency. According to Denmark, the EU must play a greater role in defending its interests and upholding the international order in the face of growing global strategic and economic competition, as well as rising conflicts.

In this context, Denmark has set its key priorities for the presidency as ensuring "a secure Europe" and promoting "a competitive and green Europe" with the aim of strengthening the EU through effective responses to global challenges.

### The Danish Presidency Priorities

According to Denmark, due to the rising conflicts and global uncertainties, EU must be able to act in its own right. Therefore, Denmark will undertake its responsibilities contribute to making Europe



safer and enhancing its level of competitiveness.

- **A Secure Europe:** The first priority set by the Danish Presidency is "a strong Europe." In light of this, Denmark emphasises that, due to international developments, the EU must be prepared to defend itself by 2030. Highlighting the Russia-Ukraine war as a clear indication of the urgent need to develop the EU's defence industry, Denmark also, stresses the importance of addressing critical capability gaps. Furthermore, in order to fight against global challenges and increase the EU's influence, Denmark states that efforts will be made to strengthen the EU's partnerships with third countries. Additionally, referring to the importance of critical infrastructures, technological security, and supply chains, Denmark underscores the necessity of enhancing the EU's economic security. Moreover, it is emphasised that the protection

of borders and the prevention of irregular migration are essential to maintaining cohesion within the Union.

- **A competitive and green Europe:** The second priority of the Danish Presidency has been selected as "a competitive and green Europe". Denmark asserted the need to enhance the EU's competitiveness through coordinated actions in response to increasing global competition. In this regard, it advocates improving conditions for business growth and investing in new technologies. At the same time, Denmark highlights that the green transition, which is closely linked to economic growth and competitiveness, contributes to strengthening competitiveness of EU. Furthermore, Denmark stresses that the EU must continue its efforts to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. It also underlines the importance of the Commission's simplification policies and commits to

prioritising this initiative. On the other hand, addressing one of the most significant issues on the global agenda, Denmark emphasises that the EU will work to expand its number of trade agreements and strategic partnerships.

### The Programme of Danish Presidency

Denmark has also announced the areas in which it plans to take action during its six-month Presidency. There are some key points highlighted in the program prepared by the Danish Presidency:

- While holding the Presidency, Denmark will support efforts to implement the EU's Preparedness Union Strategy,
- Financial support to Ukraine will be sustained, and Russia's frozen assets will continue to be used for assistance of Ukraine,
- Denmark will lead the process of preparing the EU's annual budget for 2026,
- Partnerships with third countries will be developed to combat

organised and cross-border crime,

- The Affordable Energy Action Plan and the REPowerEU Roadmap will be followed to achieve the goal of providing affordable and clean energy,
- Simplification policies in the agricultural sector will continue, alongside efforts to align with the green transition.

### What Developments Can Be Expected in Türkiye-EU Relations?

One notable aspect is that, while Denmark includes Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans among the enlargement countries, it excludes Türkiye. Another important point in the programme is Denmark's commitment to strengthening partnerships with UK, Switzerland, African, Gulf, and Indo-Pacific countries, as well as deepening relations with Latin America, yet Türkiye is again omitted from this agenda.

In addition to these developments, it is important to note that Türkiye has long-standing relations with the EU and extensive experience in partnership across various fields. An analysis of Denmark's programme reveals that defence and security are among the most prominently highlighted areas. In this context, there appears to be significant potential for cooperation between the EU and Türkiye, particularly in the field of defence industry, given Türkiye's strong capabilities in this sector and its role as a key NATO member.

Denmark Presidency also aims to prioritise the "green and competitive Europe" perspective. Türkiye can contribute to this aim in lieu of its competitive industry and renewable energy capabilities. Customs Union modernisation could be a way of enhancing Türkiye-EU dialogue in this regard.





## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU ATTENDED EUROMED SUMMIT



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in the European-Mediterranean Economic and Social Councils and Similar

Institutions (Euromed) Summit held in Istanbul on 23-24 June 2025.

The summit was also attended by TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıkloğlu, President of the

European Economic and Social Committee Oliver Röpke, and Head of the External Relations Section of the European Economic and Social Committee Dimitris Dimitriadis.

## IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS ATTENDED GREEN ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT



IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker at the Green Economy and Sustainability Summit organised by Ekonomist Magazine and Capital Magazine on 18 June 2025. The summit addressed the structural transformation process triggered by climate policies at both the global and national levels, with a particular focus on the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

At the summit, Assoc. Prof. Nas emphasised that Türkiye needs to adapt to the transformation driven by the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, which is significantly reshaping the EU market. "This transformation requires comprehensive climate legislation," she said. "However, many non-experts are currently dominating the public discourse. Therefore, it is essential to inform the public in detail before the legislation is adopted."

## IKV CHAIRPERSON AYHAN ZEYTİNOĞLU ATTENDED THE AHK TÜRKİYE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu attended the 34<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the German-Turkish Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AHK Türkiye) held in Istanbul on 26 June 2025. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu delivered a speech on behalf of TOBB as a member of the General Administrative Board at the opening of the Economic Meeting organised within the scope of the General Assembly. Other speakers at the meeting included Deputy Foreign Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay, German Consul General in Istanbul Dr. Rengine Grienberger, and AHK Türkiye President Pinar Ersoy.

The members of the AHK Türkiye Board of Directors for the 2025-2028 term were determined in the elections that took place. Following the meeting held by the newly elected Board of Directors, Legal Advisor and Member of the Board of Directors at Siemens Türkiye Bilge Yücel was elected as the new President of AHK Türkiye.





## IKV AGENDA

# IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS



IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated in various programmes and events in May 2025. On 23 May, Assoc. Prof. Nas attended the "Türkiye-EU Special Day" event held in Lisbon. As part of the event, a conference on "Challenges, Difficulties and Opportunities in Türkiye-EU Relations" was held for students at the Autonomous University of Lisbon. In her speech, Assoc. Prof. Nas noted that despite the obstacles and setbacks in Türkiye-EU relations, the relations hold great potential for the future of the European continent.

On 26 May, Assoc. Prof. Nas participated in the "Turkish Opinion Formers" information programme organised by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division and the International Relations Council. During the programme,

presentations and information exchanges were held on NATO's changing strategies, hybrid threats, Türkiye's position, and transatlantic relations.

On 27 May, Assoc. Prof. Nas attended a briefing meeting for business organisations organised by Türkiye's Permanent Representation to the EU. The meeting addressed the customs union between Türkiye and the EU and the update process, the current state of trade relations between the two sides, trade barriers, and recent developments.

On 28 May, Assoc. Prof. Nas participated in the roundtable meeting titled "Participatory Approach to the New NDC Process: Towards 2035." The meeting focused on exchanging views on the process of determining Türkiye's Nationally Determined

Contribution (NDC), which includes the country's greenhouse gas reduction and adaptation targets. While evaluating Türkiye's climate policy goals, participants emphasised the need for the new NDC process to be participatory.

On the same day, Assoc. Prof. Nas participated in a webinar organised by Marmara University International Relations Research and Application Centre as part of the "Wednesday Talks" series and gave a presentation on Climate Law. Assoc. Prof. Nas emphasised the need for a climate law in Türkiye and evaluated the process leading up to the withdrawal of the Climate Law from Parliament and stated that there was a lot of misinformation in the public sphere regarding the issue and that topics unrelated to the law were being linked to it.

## IKV PARTICIPATED IN THE HORIZON EUROPE EIT EVENT

IKV participated in the Horizon Europe EIT Roadshow event held at Bilişim Vadisi in Kocaeli on 16 June 2025. The opening speech at the Kocaeli leg of the event was delivered by Chairperson of Kocaeli Chamber of Industry and IKV Ayhan Zeytinoğlu.

Chairperson Zeytinoğlu spoke about Kocaeli's strength in industry and foreign trade, its strong commercial ties with the EU, and the importance of modernising the Customs Union. He emphasised that it is critical for Turkish industry to align with the EU's priorities of digitalisation and the Green Deal. He outlined the gains achieved



through Türkiye's active participation in EU research and innovation programmes. As the Kocaeli Chamber of Industry, he discussed the projects

they are carrying out with EU funds and their new applications. Finally, he stated that they are open to digital transformation and collaborations.

## TIMELINE JUNE 2025

Deputy Minister and Director for EU Affairs, Ambassador Bozay attended the reception at the Embassy of Portugal on the occasion of the Portuguese National Day.

Foreign Minister Fidan attended South East European Cooperation Process Summit.

President Erdoğan came together with UNAOC High Representative Moratinos and UNRWA Commissioner General Lazzarini.

President Erdoğan attended the Hague Summit and held bilateral talks with various European leaders.

Foreign Minister Fidan came together with his Hungarian counterpart Szijjártó.

IKV participated in the Horizon Europe EIT event.

IKV Secretary General Nas attended Green Economy and Sustainability Summit.

IKV Chairperson Zeytinoğlu attended Euromed Summit.

IKV Chairperson Zeytinoğlu attended the AHK Türkiye General Assembly.



## HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

## NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS CONVENED IN BRUSSELS



**N**ATO Defence Ministers gathered at the alliance's headquarters in Brussels ahead of the upcoming NATO Summit in The Hague, aiming to agree on a new and ambitious set of defence capability goals designed to strengthen deterrence and collective security.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, speaking at the opening of the meeting, emphasised the strategic importance of the talks underlining the importance of setting new set of capability targets. While most discussions focused primarily on military capability goals, Secretary-General Rutte highlighted the necessity of increased defence spending to achieve them. Currently discussed capabilities

include enhanced air defence systems, manoeuvrable ground forces, long-range missile systems, and modernised command-and-control infrastructure. According to Secretary-General Rutte, meeting these targets would likely require members to spend more than 3% of their national gross domestic product on defence, surpassing NATO's current 2% guideline.

Türkiye was represented at the meeting by Turkish Minister of National Defence, Yaşar Güler, who joined other allied ministers to review NATO's long-term military readiness in the face of evolving threats from state and non-state actors.

## SECOND ROUND OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE PEACE TALKS HELD IN İSTANBUL



**A** high-level meeting aimed at ending the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia was held on 2 June 2025 under the chairmanship of Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. Türkiye was represented by the Director of the National Intelligence Organisation İbrahim Kalın, and the Chief of the General Staff Metin Gürak. From the Russian side, the participants included the Aide to President Vladimir Putin, Vladimir Medinsky, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mikhail Galuzin, the Deputy Minister of Defence Aleksandr Fomin, and the Director of Military Intelligence Igor Kostyukov. Representing Ukraine were the Minister of Defence Rustem Umerov, the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergiy Kyslytsya, the Deputy Head of the Security Service Oleksandr Poklad, and the Deputy Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service Oleh Luhovskiy.

The meeting focused on humanitarian issues such as prisoner exchange, the repatriation of fallen soldiers' remains, and the return of Ukrainian children. During the talks, Russia proposed a two-phase memorandum for a potential ceasefire. The first phase called for the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from the regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donbas, and Luhansk. The second phase included halting troop redeployments within Ukraine, ending mobilisation, ceasing foreign military assistance, launching a demobilisation process, and ensuring the departure of all foreign military forces from Ukrainian territory. Following the meeting, Ukraine and Russia initiated a new round of exchange, covering soldiers under the age of 25, the severely wounded, and the remains of those who had lost their lives in the conflict.

## NATO SUMMIT TOOK PLACE IN THE HAGUE



**T**he NATO Summit was held in The Hague on 24–25 June 2025. Thirty-two NATO member states came together with the primary aim of increasing defence spending to 5% in line with the U.S. President Donald Trump's aspirations. Following the meeting, the Hague Summit Declaration was published.

At the summit, the Allies reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which guarantees that an attack against one Ally is considered an attack against all. In response to evolving security threats, particularly those posed by Russia, they also agreed to allocate 5% of their annual GDP to essential defence needs, in line with Article 3 of the Treaty. This investment will support NATO's core tasks: deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. Within this 5% pledge, at least 3.5% of GDP will be directed towards meeting core defence requirements and fulfilling NATO Capability Targets, while 1.5% will be dedicated to protecting critical infrastructure, enhancing cyber defence, ensuring civil preparedness and resilience, fostering technological innovation, and reinforcing the defence industrial base. Allies also reiterated their continued support for Ukraine, including direct contributions to its

defence capabilities and industrial capacity. Furthermore, a commitment was made to deepen transatlantic defence industrial cooperation and to harness emerging technologies and innovation in support of collective security. It was also announced that the upcoming NATO meetings will be hosted by Türkiye and Albania in 2026.

During the NATO Summit, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with President Trump to discuss bilateral relations, as well as regional and global issues. Most notably, President Erdoğan emphasised that enhancing cooperation in the defence industry would accelerate efforts to reach the target of a 100 billion dollars total trade volume. After the meeting, President Erdoğan told the press that President Trump is keen on selling F-35 fighter jets to Türkiye.

President Erdoğan also held a meeting with the UK's Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Prime Minister Starmer expressed his gratitude to President Erdoğan for supporting the Coalition of the Willing planning process and for Türkiye's role in the Ukraine peace talks. Both leaders welcomed progress in strengthening military cooperation and advancing negotiations on a free trade agreement.

## MINISTER OF TRADE BOLAT CAME TOGETHER WITH EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR TRADE ŠEFČOVIČ

**M**inister of Trade Ömer Bolat attended the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting held at the OECD Headquarters in Paris, on 3 June 2025. Sharing a post on his X account regarding the meeting, Minister Bolat stated: "At the meeting, which brought together ministers from over 40 countries as well as heads of international organisations, we discussed the role of trade policies within the framework of structural transformation in the global economy and explored opportunities for international cooperation in the face of global challenges."

On the margins of the meeting, Minister Bolat met with Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maroš Šefčovič. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye, the two officials discussed recent trends in global trade and explored opportunities for deepening cooperation between Türkiye and the EU under the Customs Union framework. They also exchanged views on key issues on the bilateral trade agenda, including the expectations and concerns of the business community, particularly regarding difficulties experienced



in the EU's Schengen visa procedures. In addition, both sides stressed the need for closer coordination between the EU and Türkiye in response to the growing climate of uncertainty in the global economy and the rise in protectionist tendencies, reaffirming their shared commitment to strengthening bilateral integration. It was announced that the two sides had agreed to hold the second meeting of the High-Level Trade Dialogue mechanism on 1 July 2025 in Ankara, with the participation of business representatives and civil society organisations.



## FIVE TURKISH PRODUCTS GOT EU RECOGNITION

Five iconic Turkish products have been granted EU Protected Geographical Indication status, marking another milestone in Türkiye's growing recognition for its unique regional specialties.

June was an important and exciting month for Turkish products as five of them got EU recognition. Commission announced that the EU approved the "Erzincan Tulum Peyniri", "Aydın Çam Fıstığı", "Aydın Pastırması", "Aydın Sucuğu" and "Antep Fıstık Ezmesi" from Türkiye as Protected Geographical Indication.

On 27 May, "Erzincan Tulum Peyniri" received geographical indication. *Erzincan Tulum* Cheese is renowned for its bright appearance and rich, vibrant aroma. On 2 June, "Aydın Çam Fıstığı" got EU recognition. Aydın pine nuts are cherished for their exceptionally high yield producing nearly twice the national average per hectare thanks to the region's unique climate and soil.

"Aydın Pastırması" received geographical indication on 11 June followed by "Aydın Sucuğu" on 12 June. These products are the first to

get geographical indication from Afyon. *Aydın Sucuğu* is distinguished by its bold, spicy flavour, garlic, cumin, and red pepper creates a robust and tangy taste signature. *Aydın Pastırması* features a soft texture that literally melts in your mouth when sliced thin, thanks to its traditional pressing and fenugreek curing process.

Finally, as the last registration of this month, "Antep Fıstık Ezmesi" received geographical indication on 25 June. Antep pistachio butter stands out with its intense nutty flavour and naturally vibrant green colour. The geographical indication registration processes for all these products were conducted by TOBB. The protection and promotion of these products will contribute to both the development and the strengthening of Türkiye's cultural identity.



## TÜRKİYE TO EXPORT 48 FIGHTER JETS TO INDONESIA IN LANDMARK DEAL

Türkiye has finalised its largest-ever defence export deal with Indonesia, marking a milestone in its defence industry. Under the agreement, Türkiye will produce and deliver 48 KAAAN fifth-generation fighter jets to Indonesia over the next 10 years. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced the deal on 11 June 2025, describing it as a symbol of Türkiye's growing technological capabilities and international partnerships.

KAAAN, developed by Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI/TUSAŞ), represents the cutting edge of Türkiye's aviation sector. The jets will feature domestically manufactured engines, and the agreement includes significant technology transfer and collaboration with Indonesian defence firms. TAI officials emphasised that the project will serve as a model of joint production and strategic cooperation.

The KAAAN fighter jet can have supersonic speeds, advanced stealth, and AI-assisted combat operations. Its export to Indonesia places Türkiye among the few nations capable of producing and exporting fifth-generation fighter aircraft.

The deal was signed during the INDO Defence 2025 expo in Jakarta, following a series of high-level visits between the two countries earlier this year. It also follows agreements on drone production and missile technology cooperation. Türkiye's defence exports reached a record 7.1 billion dollars in 2024, and officials see the KAAAN deal as a further boost to the country's global defence industry profile.





## PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN SENT OFF TÜRKİYE'S FIRST FLOATING GAS PRODUCTION PLATFORM TO THE BLACK SEA

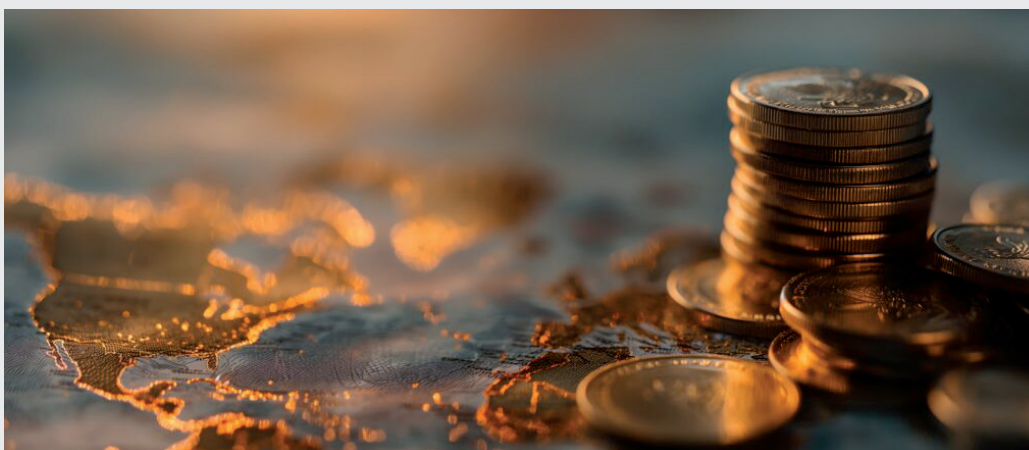


The floating gas production platform Osman Gazi which is expected to double the maximum natural gas processing capacity in the field was sent off to its duty by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 29 May 2025 to Sakarya Gas Field,

Black Sea where it will serve for the next 20 years. While Türkiye has the sixth largest hydrocarbon fleet in the world with its 4 drill ships and 2 seismic exploration ships, Osman Gazi, is also planned to be added to Türkiye's hydrocarbon

fleet. To facilitate natural gas, a 161 kilometres-long transmission line from the platform to mainland will also be established. The natural gas will be ready to be used by households as it arrives the mainland.

## TÜRKİYE ATTRACTED 3.3 BILLION DOLLARS IN FDI IN FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF 2025



Türkiye drew 3.3 billion dollars in foreign direct investment (FDI) between January and April 2025, marking a 13% increase compared to the same period last year, according to data published by the International Investors Association (YASED) based on Central Bank of Türkiye's balance of payments statistics.

The composition of April's FDI shows that 327 dollars million came from debt instruments,

while 140 million dollars stemmed from real estate acquisitions by foreign nationals. Total equity capital inflows were recorded at 435 million dollars. The financial and insurance sectors captured the largest share of equity capital, accounting for 21.4% of the total with 93 million dollars in investment. The textile and apparel manufacturing sector also saw robust performance, drawing 21.1% of total capital inflows and

surpassing its cumulative past performance. Other significant sectors included wholesale and retail trade (19%) and professional, scientific, and technical activities (11%), underscoring a broad sectoral interest among international investors. The latest figures highlight Türkiye's continued appeal as a destination for international capital, particularly in strategic sectors such as banking, manufacturing, and trade.

## RABEN GROUP LAUNCHED OPERATIONS IN TÜRKİYE



Raben Group, a leading logistics company, has just launched operations in Türkiye, making it the 17<sup>th</sup> country where the group is active. Inspired by Türkiye's strategic geographical location, positioned between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, Raben sees Türkiye as a key link, especially as the importance of the Middle Corridor continues to grow each day.

Headquartered in the Netherlands, Raben Group has been operating for more than 95 years, offering a wide range

of services including contract logistics, road transportation, temperature-controlled logistics, intermodal transport, and cargo shipment by both sea and land. Guided by its three core principles of responsible organisation, environmental protection, and social impact, the company now offers two million square metres of storage capacity across 17 European countries, including Türkiye. The company plans to improve its operational capacity and invest more in Türkiye.

## İSTANBUL AIRPORT RISES TO BECOME EUROPE'S LARGEST AIR CARGO HUB



The German Aviation Association (BDL) published a five-point programme entitled "Strong Air Freight for a Strong German Economy" (*Starke Luftfracht für eine starke deutsche Wirtschaft*), aimed at preserving the competitiveness of airlines and airports, in May 2025.

The programme drew attention to Türkiye and, in particular, the rising role of Istanbul Airport in the European air cargo market. As of 2024, Istanbul Airport had surpassed Frankfurt in terms of total air cargo volume, becoming the largest air cargo hub in Europe. According to the published data, Istanbul Airport handled a total of 1,970 thousand tonnes of air cargo (loading and unloading) in 2024, while Frankfurt Airport recorded a volume of 1,950 thousand tonnes. Compared to 2019, Istanbul's air cargo growth

represented an increase of 39.6%, whereas Frankfurt saw a decline of 2.5% over the same period.

It was noted that a significant share of air cargo originating from Germany is being redirected to Istanbul, which offers logistical and cost advantages, rather than departing directly from airports in Germany. This shift is attributed to factors such as high ground handling costs, limited operational hours, and stricter enforcement of sustainable fuel requirements. To illustrate the issue, the programme provided the example of direct flights from Frankfurt to Hong Kong, where the use of costly sustainable aviation fuel is mandatory along the entire route. However, if the cargo is routed through a hub such as Istanbul, the fuel requirement only applies to the initial leg of the journey departing from the EU.



## HAGIA SOPHIA UNDERGOES MAJOR RESTORATION TO WITHSTAND EARTHQUAKES



Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, one of the world's most iconic historic landmarks, is undergoing its most comprehensive restoration in over a century to address growing seismic risks. The Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism launched the restoration on 14 April 2025, focusing on long-standing structural vulnerabilities in the monument's dome.

With nearly 1,500 years of history, Hagia Sophia has survived numerous tremors, but time and earlier repairs have left its dome and supporting arches fragile. Restoration efforts are now focused on reinforcing these elements (particularly the connections between the main dome and semi-domes)

to prevent structural collisions during earthquakes, a phenomenon known as 'hammering'.

This latest restoration phase marks a shift from past restorations, which often prioritised aesthetics over structural integrity. The current approach relies on seismic simulations and advanced engineering techniques to extend the building's lifespan while maintaining its historical authenticity. Experts taken part in the restoration also stress the need for broader preparedness across Istanbul's vulnerable cultural sites, highlighting measures like securing artefacts, reinforcing buildings, and installing safety systems as essential to mitigate potential damage.

## 8TH INTERNATIONAL EPHEBUS OPERA AND BALLET FESTIVAL TAKES PLACE



Izmir is hosting the 8th International Ephesus Opera and Ballet Festival from 27 June to 13 July at the ancient theatre in Ephesus, located in Aegean Türkiye. Organised by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the festival opened with the iconic ballet Swan Lake, performed by the Izmir State Opera and Ballet on 27-28 June under the direction of Tolga Taviş. The festival stands out for its unique

setting, the Ephesus amphitheatre, situated in one of the best-preserved ancient cities in the world. This historic site lies in western Türkiye, in the town of Selçuk, which is renowned for the Temple of Artemis, built around 550 BC. Featuring a wide variety of classical and contemporary performances, the festival will conclude with Zorba the Greek, performed by the Ankara State Opera and Ballet on 13 July.

## BALLOON RELEASE EVENT HELD FOR ALİ ASAF, WHO BEAT LEUKAEMIA



Istanbul witnessed a heart-warming event on 25 May 2025. Samet Demir whose son Ali Asaf recovered from leukaemia recently had shared a post in social media. The post by the father which goes "Dear friends, we do not have much of a circle. My son beat cancer and wants to fly balloons. Would you join us?" garnered a lot of attention as the post became viral on social media. A huge crowd responded to the invitation

and thousands gathered in Cumhuriyet Square in Sancaktepe, a district of Istanbul. The crowd flied balloons and celebrated Ali Asaf's recovery. The father's call was also responded across the country. In one instance, three teachers in Diyarbakır called children and their families to fly balloons for Ali Asaf. Children played games and had fun together after they released balloons into the sky.

## IMMERSIVE CREATIVITY MEETS AI IN İSTANBUL



The fifth İstanbul Digital Art Festival launched on 11 June at the Atatürk Cultural Centre in İstanbul, with Anadolu serving as its official global communications partner. After making its debut in Paris, Türkiye's sole international digital art festival runs through Sunday under the theme "searching\_connection..." On opening day, visitors were particularly intrigued by Türkiye's first AI-powered social robots. The festival showcases the work of 80 artists from both Türkiye and abroad, alongside a rich program of children's and youth workshops, theatre

productions, digital installations, robot demonstrations, panel discussions, and live audiovisual performances. Highlighting the lineup is Memory Anadolu, an AI-generated installation by Ouchhh Studio, which was composed from millions of images in Anadolu's visual archive and curated by Samed Karagöz. Additionally, attendees can explore a multi-sensory journey within the outdoor Immersive Dome. Organizers emphasise that the event's goal is to broaden public engagement with digital art through thoughtfully curated digital and mixed-media creations.



# A PRECARIOUS BALANCE: THE ISRAEL-IRAN CONFLICT AND EUROPE'S REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Amid escalating tensions between Israel and Iran, restoring diplomatic engagement, particularly through a renewed nuclear deal, offers the clearest path to preventing a wider regional war and preserving Europe's role as a credible actor in Middle East diplomacy.

Laura BATALLA ADAM

Analyst

As tensions between Israel and Iran continue to evolve, the strategic and diplomatic landscape surrounding the conflict remains fluid. The region appears to be teetering on the edge of broader confrontation, with implications not only for the Middle East but also for Europe, which now finds itself watching closely from the sidelines, concerned, reactive, and increasingly exposed.

## The Path to Escalation

The current situation did not emerge in a vacuum. It is the product of compounding regional crises, failed diplomatic processes, and the diminishing credibility of containment strategies. The war in Gaza, which erupted following Hamas' October 2023 attacks, catalysed the deterioration. What began as a response to these deadly attacks soon escalated into a sustained and disproportionate Israeli military campaign, with devastating humanitarian consequences. International calls for restraint were largely ignored, and the conflict contributed to broader tensions with Iran, which has long provided financial, military, and logistical support to militant groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and various factions in Syria, Iraq, and Gaza. These groups are openly hostile to Israel and designated as terrorist organisations by the EU and other Western governments.

Iran's direct involvement in the confrontation came gradually. After months of rhetorical condemnation and proxy engagement, Tehran became the target of a series of Israeli strikes against military and nuclear infrastructure. These strikes significantly raised the stakes. In response, Iranian forces began launching more direct retaliatory actions, bringing the two states into a new and highly volatile phase of military exchange.

The decision by Israel to target senior Iranian personnel and infrastructure signalled a shift in its approach from deterrence to pre-emption. Some diplomatic circles have interpreted this move as a means to refocus attention away from Gaza, at a moment when international scrutiny

of Israeli conduct there had been intensifying. The sequence of events has led many observers to conclude that regional dynamics are becoming increasingly interconnected, with local crises feeding broader conflicts.

## The Role of the United States

Washington's role in the conflict has evolved significantly. Initially cautious, the United States has moved toward more explicit military and political support for Israel as tensions with Iran have fluctuated. While the U.S. continues to emphasise deterrence and regional stability, its posture has shifted toward containment through force rather than diplomacy.

This development carries long-term consequences. The U.S. is now more deeply embedded in a conflict that shows few signs of a lasting resolution, though moments of de-escalation remain possible. While military pressure may degrade Iranian capabilities in the short term, it is unlikely to dismantle the country's nuclear ambitions or bring about internal political change. On the contrary, the risk is that such pressure further entrenches hardline elements within Iran, while weakening the prospects for any diplomatic return to nuclear negotiations.

## The Diplomatic Vacuum: What Happened to the JCPOA?

At the heart of this crisis lies the collapse of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), once regarded as the most effective tool to limit Iran's nuclear program. The 2018 U.S. withdrawal from the agreement under President Trump, despite Iran's compliance, undermined the deal's credibility. In the years that followed, Europe's efforts to salvage the accord proved insufficient.

The E3 (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom) offered continued rhetorical support, but ultimately failed to provide the economic guarantees Iran needed to stay engaged. The EU lacked the mechanisms and political will to counter U.S. sanctions, which effectively made the deal unworkable for Tehran. As a result, Iran's nuclear programme gradually accelerated, inspections became more limited, and the agreement became diplomatically and operationally obsolete.



What followed was a period of missed opportunities. Attempts to revive the JCPOA faltered amid shifting political calculations, growing regional insecurity, and the absence of sustained trust. Without a credible diplomatic alternative, the space for negotiation has steadily narrowed, and the current conflict now unfolds in a vacuum where dialogue once stood.

In this context, the most viable path to de-escalation remains a renewed agreement that reinstates strict limits on Iran's nuclear activities, ensures robust international inspections, and offers calibrated sanctions relief in return, an approach that, while politically difficult, presents the clearest route to averting full-scale war.

## Europe's Constrained Position

For Europe, war presents a complex challenge. The EU has repeatedly called for restraint and the need to prevent regional escalation, but its ability to influence the course of events appears limited. In contrast to its strong and coordinated response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the European reaction to Israel's military operations in Gaza and the broader regional escalation involving Iran has been far more fragmented and less assertive.

While a majority of EU foreign ministers in May backed a proposal to review the bloc's relationship with Israel, no substantial measures have followed. There has been no move to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement, despite evidence, largely from EU institutions themselves, suggesting breaches of its human rights clause. At the same time, Israel's

strikes on Iranian targets have been met with implicit approval by several European capitals, which see them as part of a legitimate defensive strategy.

This disparity in response raises questions about Europe's consistency. Legal and moral frameworks that were vigorously invoked in Ukraine have been far less prominent in the case of Gaza or in the broader regional escalation. While security and historical alliances certainly shape policy, the perception of unequal standards is real, and it risks eroding the EU's standing as a reliable advocate for international law.

## Türkiye's Strategic Calculation

For Türkiye, the conflict presents a delicate balancing act. Ankara has long viewed Iran as a strategic competitor but not as an outright adversary. Economic interdependence, particularly in energy and trade, underpins the relationship. At the same time, Türkiye's relations with Israel have been steadily deteriorating, particularly in light of recent developments in Gaza.

Türkiye is deeply concerned about the potential fallout of the conflict. A collapse of the Iranian regime, or a sudden regional realignment following a decisive Israeli military victory, could lead to instability along Türkiye's eastern border. Refugee inflows, increased activity by non-state actors, and shifts in the regional balance of power are among the scenarios Ankara is seeking to avoid.

So far, Türkiye has maintained a cautious posture. Recent diplomatic overtures toward Washington suggest Ankara is seeking to align its regional

policy with its broader goal of regional stability, without becoming directly involved in the conflict. At the same time, Türkiye is likely to advocate for diplomatic channels to remain open and for de-escalation to be prioritised.

## Looking Ahead

As the Israel-Iran conflict continues to unfold amid uncertainty, the immediate priority for all actors, regional and international, should be to prevent further escalation. The risks of a wider war, involving multiple state and non-state actors, remain significant. Any disruption to energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz, or the emergence of new theatres of conflict in Syria or Lebanon, would have far-reaching consequences.

Europe, despite its constrained position, should resist the temptation to disengage. While it may not have the leverage to halt the conflict, it does retain diplomatic, economic, and political tools to shape its trajectory. Rebuilding dialogue with Iran, restoring confidence in non-proliferation norms, and applying existing legal frameworks consistently, regardless of the party involved, remain achievable goals. These steps would not resolve the conflict overnight, but they would help contain its worst consequences.

There are also signs that diplomatic backchannels, regional mediators, or shifting domestic pressures could lead to de-escalation. Whether these avenues can gain traction remains uncertain, but they should not be discounted. Türkiye, with its regional ties and pragmatic approach, is well-placed to support this objective. Coordinating efforts with both Western allies and regional powers, Ankara could help establish communication channels that reduce misunderstandings and lower the threshold for confrontation.

The current moment requires more than symbolic gestures or reactive statements; it demands measured diplomacy, strategic restraint, and a sober assessment of the risks at hand. Even an imperfect strategy to contain the crisis is preferable to the uncertainty and danger of broader regional escalation. For Europe, this means engaging with consistency and credibility, anchored in a realistic understanding of its role and a long-term commitment to regional stability, regardless of how events unfold.