



# IKVM MONTHLY

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## TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS IN THE TWENTIETH YEAR OF NEGOTIATIONS: OPPORTUNITIES, DREAMS AND REALITIES

As Türkiye marks twenty years of EU negotiations, the journey from enthusiasm to disillusionment reflects deeper shifts in both sides' priorities.

Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem NAS  
IKV Secretary General

Türkiye began accession negotiations with the EU on 3 October 2005, during the 82<sup>nd</sup> year of the Republic. This moment was a true reflection of the vision set out by the Founder of our Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, to "reach the level of contemporary civilisations", what was once considered a dream had now become a reachable goal. A negotiation process, defined by a negotiation framework document, lay ahead. In this process, to be conducted across 35 chapters, opening and closing criteria would be established for each chapter, and decisions to open or close a chapter would be taken by unanimous agreement at intergovernmental conferences.

Looking at the events that brought Türkiye to this stage, the Ankara Agreement stands out as the foundation of Türkiye-EU relations. This agreement established an association relationship between Türkiye and the European Economic Community, the predecessor of today's EU. Article 28 of the agreement stated the goal of this partnership: "As soon as the operation of the Agreement has advanced far enough to justify envisaging full membership, the Contracting Parties shall examine the possibility of accession of Türkiye to the Community". The association relationship was designed as a tool to bring Türkiye closer to full integration with the EU. Over time, Türkiye would develop economically, harmonise its legislation, and reach a level where it could undertake the obligations of membership. The final phase of this association relationship, the Customs Union, came into effect on 1 January 1996.

Although Türkiye did not initially achieve what it had hoped for after its application for membership, it was able to convey a strong message to its European counterparts that it was determined in its EU goal and willing to develop its relations. The



Matutes Package, presented by the European Commission on 6 June 1990, proposed the advancement of relations through the association framework, the completion of the Customs Union by the end of 1995, and the enhancement of financial and political cooperation. In line with these proposals, the framework of the Customs Union was established by the Association Council Decision No. 1/95. Despite various challenges, the Türkiye-EU Customs Union, which will soon mark its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, continues to be the backbone of relations.

### Unmet Expectations, Structural Problems, and the Loss of Hope

The end of the Cold War and the turn of Central and Eastern European countries towards European integration pushed Türkiye further down the list of potential EU members. As the European Community transformed into the EU, defining its new borders and spreading integration across the continent became one of the most controversial issues. The question of whether countries on Europe's periphery such as Türkiye, Ukraine, and Russia belonged in European integration came to the fore. The Greek Administration of Cyprus (GASC), known by the EU as the "Republic of Cyprus", applied for

membership on 4 July 1990. Türkiye objected, arguing that "the Cyprus" recognised by the EU was not the same state established in 1960. Nevertheless, Türkiye was unable to stop this process, which ended in 2004 with the GASC's accession to the EU. At the 1997 Luxembourg Summit, the EU decided to open accession negotiations with six candidate countries, including the GASC. In response, Türkiye reacted strongly, stating that if the EU included the GASC, Türkiye would deepen its integration with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). However, the 1999 Helsinki Summit, where Türkiye was officially declared a candidate country, ushered in a period of enthusiasm and momentum for Türkiye's EU process.

After Helsinki, Türkiye officially obtained candidate status and, like other candidates, embraced the goal of meeting the Copenhagen political criteria as quickly as possible to start accession negotiations. Constitutional amendments and harmonisation packages followed, leading to significant reforms in areas such as democratic balance, civilian governance, human rights, fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, judicial independence, impartiality and effectiveness, and cultural rights. As a result, in 2004, the European Commission published a

positive report and recommendation, and the Council officially decided to open accession negotiations with Türkiye on 3 October 2005. Negotiations began with the screening process, and the chapter on science and research was opened and provisionally closed on 12 June 2006, becoming the first and only chapter to be closed to date.

However, negotiations in eight crucial chapters, such as free movement of goods, customs union, transportation, external relations, agriculture, and rural development, were suspended. Moreover, even if other chapters were opened, their closure was blocked. Proposals were made, such as opening a single Turkish port in exchange for direct flights to Northern Cyprus, but these were never implemented. In April 2025, claims reported in the Greek press were rejected by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus, the negotiation process effectively came to a halt approximately two years after it began. Later, France under President Sarkozy opposed Türkiye's membership and vetoed the opening of chapters directly related to membership. The process was further derailed in 2009 by unilateral vetoes from the GASC. Although the initial blow came in 2006, the lack of political will from key member states such as France and Germany, and the preference for a "privileged" or "strategic" partnership instead of full membership, made Türkiye's accession highly difficult. Public opinion surveys by the IKV show that about 66% of the public in Türkiye supports EU membership, but belief in its actual realisation is significantly lower.

### Reflecting on the Past, Foreseeing the Future

The last chapters opened in the negotiations were during the 2015-16 period, when the Syrian refugee crisis revitalised Türkiye-EU relations and led to the opening of the chapters on economic and monetary policy and financial and budgetary provisions. After that, following the July 15 coup attempt in Türkiye, the government's measures were perceived by the EU as a step away from European values.

The shift to the presidential system in Türkiye was viewed as a centralisation of power, weakening the oversight capabilities of the legislative and judicial branches. Issues regarding the rule of law, judicial independence, and restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms such as freedom of expression and assembly were seen as Türkiye moving further from meeting candidacy criteria. As the credibility and momentum of the EU membership process waned over time, Türkiye ceased reforms aligned with EU expectations. Instead, regional developments in the Middle East and aspirations for regional leadership began to dominate the national agenda.

Despite this, no formal decision has been taken to suspend the negotiation process as foreseen in the negotiation framework. EU Member States have refrained from taking steps that would completely end the process, considering their own interests and expectations from Türkiye. While Türkiye's official candidate status remains, the negotiation process has de facto come to a standstill. The Turkish government maintains at the highest level that full membership is still the goal, but the necessary steps to fulfil this objective are not being taken. EU officials, meanwhile, increasingly view Türkiye not as a candidate country but as a neighbouring state and a significant regional actor. They are moving toward a transactional partnership based on mutual interests rather than a membership oriented approach.

Nevertheless, it is crucial for Türkiye to return to a determined stance in the EU process and fulfil the requirements of candidacy. As in the early 2000s, the goal of EU membership today still aligns with the vision of a democratic, free, fair, and prosperous Türkiye. Despite global and regional developments calling for closer cooperation between Türkiye and the EU, the fatigue, inaction, and mutual distrust built up over the years make it difficult to take new steps. Breaking out of the vicious cycle in relations will depend on fresh ideas, visionary leadership, and the courage to forge new paths.





# IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU PAID A WORKING VISIT TO BRUSSELS

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu, Board Members Ercan Özboyacı and Mustafa Zeytin, Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, and Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit paid a working visit to Brussels, the capital of Belgium.

Chairperson Zeytinoğlu travelled to Brussels to gather the views of EU officials on Türkiye-EU relations and to convey the views of the IKV on this matter. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu carried out activities aimed at contributing to Türkiye's EU integration process, one of the foundation's core objectives.



## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU EXCHANGED VIEWS WITH AMBASSADOR KAYMAKCI



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and IKV delegation visited Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Türkiye to the

European Union Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu expressed his gratitude to Ambassador Kaymakcı for

receiving the IKV delegation and he provided information about the foundation's current work and planned activities.

## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU HAD A MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR TANTEKİN

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and IKV delegation visited, Türkiye's newly appointed Ambassador to Brussels Gökem Barış Tanteğin. During the meeting, Türkiye's representation before the EU institutions and the priorities for strengthening bilateral relations were discussed.



## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU EXCHANGED VIEWS WITH BRUCE MACFARLANE

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and IKV delegation came together with CEO of Forum Europe Bruce Macfarlane as part of their last meeting in Brussels. In the meeting with CEO Bruce Macfarlane, the focus was placed on key issues on the EU policy agenda and the opportunities for cooperation between the business community and think tanks.



## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU HAD TALKS WITH DG ENEST HEAD OF UNIT TÜRKİYE COLOMBANI



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and IKV delegation came together with DG ENEST Head of Unit Türkiye Antoine Colombani, at the Commission's Berlaymont headquarters. During the

meeting, views were exchanged on the accession negotiations process and various aspects of Türkiye-EU relations, and steps that need to be taken to revitalise relations were emphasised.



İKV AGENDA

## İKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU CAME TOGETHER WITH GERMAN MARSHALL FUND BRUSSELS DIRECTOR IAN LESSER

İKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and İKV delegation came together with Brussels Director of the German Marshall Fund Ian Lesser, for a working lunch. Current issues in Türkiye-EU relations were discussed during the meeting. During the working lunch with Executive Director Ian Lesser, transatlantic relations, Türkiye-EU ties, and current regional developments were discussed.



## İKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU: “TÜRKİYE’S UPDATED NDC DEMONSTRATES OUR DETERMINATION IN THIS REGARD”

İKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu assessed the “Türkiye’s Updated Nationally Determined Contribution” announced by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the Climate Summit held on to the sidelines of the 80<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu said:

“President Erdoğan delivered a speech on Türkiye’s updated climate targets at the Climate Summit held on to the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, on a platform created to enable countries to submit their Nationally Determined Contributions in advance of COP30. Our country published its first National Contribution Statement in 2012; in 2023, it updated its commitment by submitting its ‘First Updated National Contribution Statement’ with a reduction target of 41% by 2030. This commitment was determined based on the understanding that countries have different responsibilities. In other words, Türkiye is in a special position because it was responsible for only a very small portion of greenhouse gas emissions in the past. In this regard, President Erdoğan stated that the target is to achieve a reduction of 466 million tonnes of emissions by 2035 and to reduce emissions to 643 million tonnes. In this context, Türkiye’s setting of a 2035 emissions target that is ambitious for a developing economy and lower than the previous 2030 target during the climate session held within



the framework of the UN General Assembly demonstrates Türkiye’s determination on this issue and strengthens its resolve. Although our country does not present an absolute reduction target, it commits to remaining below the emission projections based on reference scenarios. In this context, the targets announced by President Erdoğan are significant.

Türkiye has been making intensive efforts in the field of climate and environment in recent times. The latest of these is the Climate Law, which is the first of its kind in Türkiye. The regulations prepared within the framework of the Climate Law will play a supporting role in the implementation phase of the law. In this context, regulations such as the draft ‘Carbon Credit and Offsetting Regulation’, ‘Türkiye Emissions Trading System Regulation’

and ‘Türkiye Green Taxonomy Regulation’ will bring the objectives of the Climate Law to life and give concrete form to Türkiye’s efforts to combat climate change. This will facilitate compliance with the responsibilities envisaged by other EU regulations, primarily the ‘Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)’, which is shaped within the framework of the European Green Deal and concerns traders and industrialists in third countries, including our country, as well as compliance with the ‘EU Emissions Trading System’.

Although the EU has softened its climate legislation and targets somewhat in recent years, it is crucial that our country’s climate targets progress with concrete steps and determination. The updated target announced by President Erdoğan is now expected to be officially announced during COP30.”

## TIMELINE SEPTEMBER 2025

1	İKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu gave a statement on Türkiye’s inclusion in the Leaders’ Summit by Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.
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5	Deputy Foreign Minister and Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay attended the informal meeting of EU Ministers for European Affairs held in Copenhagen.
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11	Foreign Minister Fidan came together with Deputy Prime Minister of Italy and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani.
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13	President Erdoğan came together with the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos Giannopoulos.
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17	İKV Secretary General Nas attended the European Economic and Social Committee Summit.
18	İKV Secretary General Nas attended annual meeting of Center for Applied Turkey Studies.
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20	İKV Secretary General Nas attended panel titled “The Future of the EU and Türkiye-EU Relations”.
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22	İKV EU Information Centre held an event titled “Mobility Talks – Building Sustainable Cities for All”.
23	İKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and his delegation held a series of official meetings in Brussels.
24	İKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu gave a statement on the “Türkiye’s Updated Nationally Determined Contribution” announced at the Climate Summit.
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## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU ATTENDED WORLD CHAMBERS CONGRESS



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu attended the 14<sup>th</sup> World Chambers Congress held in Melbourne, chaired by TOBB President M. Rifat Hisarcıkloğlu. As part of the sessions and meetings bringing together representatives of the international business world, he met with ICC Secretary General John Denton.

In his assessment on the subject, Hisarcıkloğlu said, "At the Congress, whose main theme is 'Development in partnership with the business world, government and chambers,' we come together with 1,000 business people from 100 countries at a time when uncertainties

in the world economy are increasing, protectionism and trade wars are spreading: We will discuss the current state of the global business environment, the opportunities and risks for the future, and the steps to be taken for inclusive development. At the opening, I shared our World Federation of Chambers vision and priorities for the period 2025-2028, while assessing the challenges facing the world economy. Collaboration between business, governments and chambers is critical for a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable global economy."

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

IKV Secretary General Nas participated in various programmes and events in September. On 17 September 2025, Assoc. Prof. Nas attended the ceremony to mark the end of the term of President of the European Economic and Social Committee Oliver Röpk. Opening speeches were delivered by Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness Roxana Minzatu, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs Li Andersson, Deputy Prime Minister of Spain Yolanda Diaz, President of the European Trade Union Confederation Wolfgang Katzian, President of Business Europe Maekus Beyrer and Secretary General of Solidar Mikael Leyi. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama also delivered a speech at the ceremony. Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Türkiye to the European Union Ambassador Faruk Kaymakcı, and representatives of civil society organisations from Türkiye, such as The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye, IKV, and the Türkiye Europe Foundation, also attended.

On 18-19 September 2025, Assoc. Prof. Nas attended the annual meeting of the Centre for Applied Turkey Studies (CATS) at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) think tank in Berlin. The meeting, which focused on Türkiye-EU relations and developments in the Middle East, was attended by CATS members, experts, academics, and representatives of other network partners. IKV is among CATS' network partners.



On 20-21 September 2025, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas attended the IV. National Political Science Congress of the Turkish Political Science Association (STİD) held in İzmir. As part of the congress, a panel was organised in partnership with the İstanbul Policy Centre, TEPAV, and IKV. Prof. Atila Eralp moderated the panel on "The Future of the EU and Türkiye-EU Relations." The speakers were IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, IPM Director Prof. Senem Aydın Düzgüt, Prof. Atila Eralp, and TEPAV EU Studies Director Nilgün Arısan Eralp. The panel discussed topics such as the EU agenda, the EU's new priorities and challenges, the enlargement process, defence and security policy, relations with the US, the Ukraine War, China's rise, and the search for competitiveness. The direction in which all these developments would affect Türkiye-EU relations was discussed. IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas organised another panel within the scope of the Congress, titled "Crises and Responses in Europe: Opportunities for Türkiye-EU Cooperation" and Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas gave a presentation on "Opportunities and Challenges in the EU's Green Transition and Türkiye-EU Relations."

## IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU: "GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS ARE CRUCIAL FOR TÜRKİYE TO BE INFLUENTIAL IN THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ORDER"

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu commented on developments following President Erdoğan's participation in the 25<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu stated that the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation covers 24% of the world's land area and 42% of the world's population and is an important bloc bringing together developing countries.

Chairperson Zeytinoğlu commented: "President Erdoğan attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, of which Türkiye is a dialogue partner. The SCO includes countries such as China, Russia and India, which account for a significant portion of the world's land area and population, as well as the Central Asian Turkic countries, with which Türkiye has close cultural and ethnic ties. In particular, the US turning its back on global organisations under President Trump's leadership and linking its foreign economic and political relations to bilateral negotiations and bargaining under the slogan 'America First' has created a power and leadership vacuum in the international system. Platforms such as the SCO and BRICS, which have their origins in the Shanghai Five established in 1996, have now begun to play a more effective role in



the search for a new order. It is important for Türkiye to closely monitor such formations and engage with them.

While security and trade issues take centre stage at the summit, Türkiye's participation in this platform as a dialogue partner, even if not a member, is of strategic importance. However, platforms such as the SCO should not lead to Türkiye's EU goal being sidelined. Formations such as the SCO or BRICS are not alternatives to the EU. The EU remains a major commercial and political actor shaping the European economy. In the first half of 2025, 59% of Türkiye's trade (43.9% of which was with the EU) was conducted with Europe. In this respect, our relations with Europe should be given at least as much strategic importance as those with China and Russia."

## IKV İSTANBUL EUIC ORGANISED THE EUROPEAN MOBILITY WEEK EVENT



IKV İstanbul EU Information Centre, in cooperation with the EU Delegation to Türkiye and hosted by İstanbul Commerce University, organised a meeting entitled "Mobility Talks – Building Sustainable Cities for Everyone" on 22 September 2025 within the framework of European Mobility Week.

The opening speeches were delivered by Director of the Transportation Systems Application and Research Centre at İstanbul Commerce University Prof. Mustafa Ilıcalı, Vice-Rector of İstanbul Commerce University Prof. Berk Ayvaz, IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of İstanbul Commerce University Dr. İsmail Kuralay. Speakers highlighted the importance of sustainable mobility, Türkiye-EU cooperation in related projects, and the need to prioritise walking and cycling in urban planning. Prof. Ilıcalı underlined joint EU projects on traffic management, while Dr. Kuralay drew attention to the challenges posed by İstanbul's geography for pedestrianisation and cycling.

Deputy Secretary General Kilit emphasised the social dimension of this year's Mobility Week theme "Mobility for All," stressing that reducing

car dependency is crucial for lowering carbon emissions and creating healthier cities. He noted that over 2,500 cities joined the campaign in 2025, focusing on barrier-free access, particularly for disadvantaged groups. Prof. Ayvaz pointed out that transport choices play a decisive role in reducing emissions and that sustainability depends not only on infrastructure but also on the awareness and responsibility of individuals.

The panel discussion, moderated by Deputy Secretary General Kilit, featured three key speakers. During the session, speakers emphasised sustainable and inclusive mobility solutions. Prof. Mustafa Ilıcalı called for promoting public transport, cycling and maritime transport, while Murat Suyabatmaz highlighted cycling's role in health, safety and the environment, urging stronger infrastructure and supportive policies. Cemil Oğuz presented WRI Türkiye's projects on inclusive and climate-resilient mobility, stressing the broader link between mobility, access to services and quality of life. The event concluded with a question-and-answer session, reinforcing the shared message that sustainable mobility requires integrated approaches combining environmental, social and economic dimensions.



HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

## PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN CAME TOGETHER WITH LEADERS IN SCO SUMMIT



The 25th Summit of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was held on 30-31 August 2025 in Tianjin, China. The summit brought together leaders from more than 20 countries as well as representatives of regional and international organisations. Participating as a dialogue partner of the SCO, Türkiye once again demonstrated its active foreign policy in the fields of multilateralism and regional cooperation through the diplomatic engagements conducted under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

During the summit, President Erdoğan met with Chinese President Xi Jinping. They emphasised that

sustaining high-level bilateral relations benefits both countries and the Global South. President Xi noted that Türkiye and China are rising major powers and called for elevating strategic cooperation to build a fairer and more equitable global governance system.

In the meeting, which comprehensively addressed economic cooperation between the two countries, President Erdoğan underlined the importance of supporting bilateral trade with investments to ensure that it remains balanced and sustainable. President Erdoğan noted that there is significant potential particularly in the fields of digital technologies, energy, health and tourism, and

stressed that increased investments by Chinese companies in Türkiye would be beneficial in this regard. President Erdoğan also emphasised the importance of taking joint steps to align the Middle Corridor initiative with the Belt and Road Initiative.

President Erdoğan also held bilateral meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Finally, within the framework of the summit, President Erdoğan attended the dinner hosted by President Xi in honour of the leaders.

## PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN RECEIVED GREEK PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM GIANNOPOULOS



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos Giannopoulos and was presented with a framed replica of a covenant issued by Umar ibn al-Khattab (Caliph Hazrat Umar), who governed Jerusalem after its conquest in 638. The meeting, which took place at Dolmabahçe Palace, addressed the humanitarian crisis in Palestine as well as other regional issues.

In this context, President Erdoğan conveyed the message

that Israel's aggression, which undermines the unity of societies of different faiths, is unacceptable. In addition to Patriarch Giannopoulos and his delegation, the meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the Presidency's Head of Communications Prof. Burhanettin Duran, and the President's Chief Advisor on Foreign Policy and Security Akif Çağatay Kılıç. The meeting concluded with an exchange of gifts.

## ANOTHER ROUND OF TRILATERAL CYPRUS TALKS WAS CONCLUDED



The TRNC President Ersin Tatar received the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy to Cyprus María Angela Holguín Cuéllar on 15 September. This meeting followed her talks with the GASC leader Nikos Christodoulides on 12 September. The meeting laid the groundwork for the three-way discussion on Cyprus between President Tatar, GASC leader Christodoulides, and the UN Secretary General António Guterres.

Subsequently, Tatar and Cuéllar met again on 26 September, followed by a meeting between Cuéllar and Christodoulides on 27 September.

Finally, on 28 September, a trilateral meeting was held under the leadership of UN Secretary-General António Guterres. It was reported that the GASC leader Christodoulides requested the negotiations resume from where they left off at the 2017 Crans-Montana talks, while President Tatar emphasised that the two-state solution remains at the top of his agenda and that the federal model is no longer viable. The readout published by the Secretary General Guterres also indicated that a 5+1 meeting with representatives of the guarantor countries would be held by the end of 2025.

## TÜRKİYE AND ARMENIA ADVANCE ON NORMALISATION EFFORTS



Türkiye's special envoy for the normalisation process with Armenia Ambassador Serdar Kılıç made some statements before he crossed the border to Armenia to hold talks for normalisation. He

emphasised that there are several technical works for the step to be taken after saying that Armenia was receptive and positive on reopening the border between the two countries.

On 12 September 2025, a day after these statements, Ambassador Kılıç went to Yerevan where he met with his Armenian counterpart, Ruben Rubinyan, on the occasion of the sixth round of talks between Türkiye and Armenia. The two reiterated their commitment to advance on the normalisation process without preconditions and accelerate the process extending it to reach an agreement on border crossings between both countries. They also agreed on that authorities from both countries would perform technical works on Kars-Gyumri railway and electricity interconnectors. In addition, new scholarship opportunities for higher education and joint restoration of the historic Ani Bridge were discussed in the meeting.



## TURKISH AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR MAKES ITS MARK AT IAA MOBILITY 2025

The Turkish automotive sector made its mark at IAA Mobility 2025, featuring new cars from TOGG, Hyundai and Renault.



**B**ringing together car manufacturers, technology companies, start-ups and pioneers in sustainable mobility, IAA Mobility 2025 was held in Munich. The fair featured highly significant showcases directly concerning the Turkish automotive industry.

TOGG's second model, the T10F, which will expand the brand's product range and offer a new alternative for different user profiles, was unveiled for the first

time on 8 September 2025 in the fair. Positioned in the C segment, the fastback model drew attention with its aerodynamic design, advanced driving technologies and high battery capacity. On the day the T10F was introduced to the world, TOGG announced that both the T10X and T10F models had received the highest safety rating of five stars from Euro NCAP, the independent vehicle safety assessment organisation. Securing

five stars simultaneously for both models marked a world first for new automotive brands. While the T10F became available for pre-order in Türkiye on 15 September 2025, the order process for both the T10X and T10F started in Germany on 29 September 2025.

Another highlight of the fair for Türkiye was Hyundai's unveiling of its new electric concept model, named Concept Three. Planned to enter mass production in 2026 with 80% of the same design, this concept will evolve into the IONIQ 3 model, which is set to be manufactured in Türkiye. With this step, Hyundai will become the second brand to produce electric vehicles in Türkiye, and the first foreign automotive manufacturer to do so. Another notable launch in Munich was Renault's sixth generation Clio, produced in Bursa. Having entered production in September, the model will be available for sale in Türkiye in the first quarter of 2026. It is expected that the model will be exported to 45 countries via Türkiye.

## TÜRKİYE NOMINATES AMBASSADOR AHMET YILDIZ FOR UN REFUGEE CHIEF POST



**A**s the current term of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi nears its end, several countries, including Türkiye, are submitting nominations for his successor to the Secretary General António Guterres. Türkiye has put forward its Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Ahmet Yıldız, as a candidate for the position. Yıldız has served in the diplomatic corps for 37 years, holding posts in a number of countries from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Iraq.

Throughout his career, Yıldız worked extensively with refugees,

internally displaced persons, and migrants. Highlighting the growing scale of global displacement, Yıldız stressed that the role of the UNHCR is more vital than ever. He underlined the importance of international cooperation in addressing challenges on the ground, preparing for crises, and ensuring a more effective global response through complementary regulations. Ambassador Yıldız emphasised that, regardless of the outcome of the selection process, Türkiye will continue its close cooperation with the United Nations and international organisations.

## TURKISH STUDENT WINS DIPLOMA OF EXCELLENCE AT STOCKHOLM JUNIOR WATER PRIZE



**T**urkish high school student Kağan Mehmet Özkök, received the "Diploma of Excellence" at the Stockholm Junior Water Prize for his project WAGUSE, an AI powered water guard sensor that detects leaks from faucets and flushes. The annual competition, organised by the Stockholm International Water Institute as part of World Water Week, is considered the world's most prestigious event for young researchers in water technologies. Özkök, who had won first place in Türkiye's national selection organised by the State Hydraulic Works, was among 57 students from 37 countries presenting their projects in Stockholm.

His device uses sound signal processing and artificial intelligence to identify water leaks within seconds, even in noisy environments, and sends instant alerts to prevent waste. The system, which can be plugged into any nearby socket, was praised for its innovative approach of training AI to recognise water leakage sounds. Özkök expressed his pride in representing Türkiye at the award ceremony, held at the Stockholm Concert Hall and attended by Crown Princess Victoria. He emphasised that protecting water resources is crucial in the face of climate change and noted that his sensor will soon be implemented in public spaces in Gaziantep.

## NATO SECRETARY GENERAL VOICES SUPPORT FOR TÜRKİYE'S SAFE APPLICATION



**N**ATO Secretary General Mark Rutte has expressed his support for Türkiye's application to join the EU's SAFE defence initiative. Speaking at a meeting

with EU ambassadors on 11 September 2025, Rutte underlined that stronger ties between Türkiye and the EU would also contribute to closer cooperation within NATO.

Rutte noted that Türkiye's participation in SAFE could help address Ankara's concerns over the sharing of sensitive information between the EU and NATO, a long-standing issue in transatlantic defence relations. According to Rutte, integrating Türkiye into the initiative would not only strengthen NATO-EU interoperability but also provide a platform for building greater trust.

Rutte called on EU Member States to acknowledge Türkiye's military capabilities and to demonstrate goodwill toward Ankara. Stressing that Türkiye plays a critical role in the Alliance's security architecture, Rutte argued that constructive engagement with Ankara would benefit both the EU and NATO in addressing common security challenges.



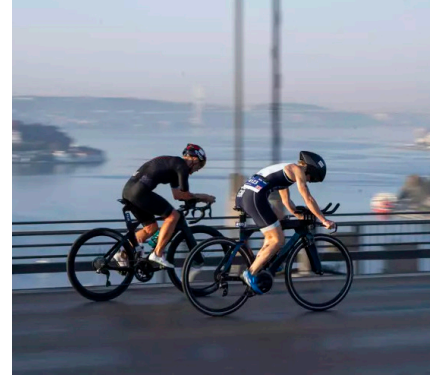
## MIXED FORTUNES FOR TÜRKİYE AT VOLLEYBALL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

**T**ürkiye's women's volleyball team won the silver medal at the 2025 FIVB Women's Volleyball World Championship. The team fell to Italy in the final match. It marks the first time that the Turkish national team has won a silver medal at the tournament. Meanwhile, at the 2025 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship, Türkiye's men's volleyball team lost to Poland in the second quarterfinal match. The loss meant Türkiye's national team was eliminated from the championship.



## İSTANBUL HOSTED INTERCONTINENTAL TRIATHLON CHAMPIONSHIP

**O**n 30 August 2025, both European Triathlon Championship and Asian Triathlon Championship took place simultaneously for the first time. Istanbul was the location of the organisation in which more than 400 athletes from 52 countries attended. As the 1,500 metres long section of the Bosphorus was crossed by the athletes by swimming, 40 kilometres long cycling lap of the competition necessitated the competitors to change continent from Asia to Europe. The successful organisation has contributed the prestige of the city which will be hosting 2027 European Games.



## TURKISH SWIMMER CONQUERS OCEANS SEVEN AS NATIONAL ATHLETES WIN GOLD



**T**urkish swimmers have added new achievements to their records. Bengisu Avcı became the first Turkish swimmer to complete the Oceans Seven, a collection of seven of the world's most challenging open-water swims, over seven years. Meanwhile, Turkish national swimmers won two gold medals at the 2025 World Aquatics Junior Swimming Championships in Romania. Kuzey Tunçelli claimed the title in the 1500m freestyle, while Nusrat Allahverdi won the men's 50m breaststroke with a time of 26.98 seconds.

## TÜRKİYE WON SILVER AT EUROBASKET 2025 AFTER THRILLING FINAL



**I**n a thrilling final in Riga, Türkiye's National Men's Basketball Team won silver at EuroBasket 2025 after an 88-83 loss to Germany. It was Türkiye's second-ever silver, the first since 2001. Alperen Şengün shone throughout the tournament, averaging standout numbers and making history as the youngest player and the first Turk to record a triple-double at EuroBasket. Coached by Ergin Ataman, who was named the tournament's best coach, the "12 Dev Adam" delivered a performance that captured the nation's pride.

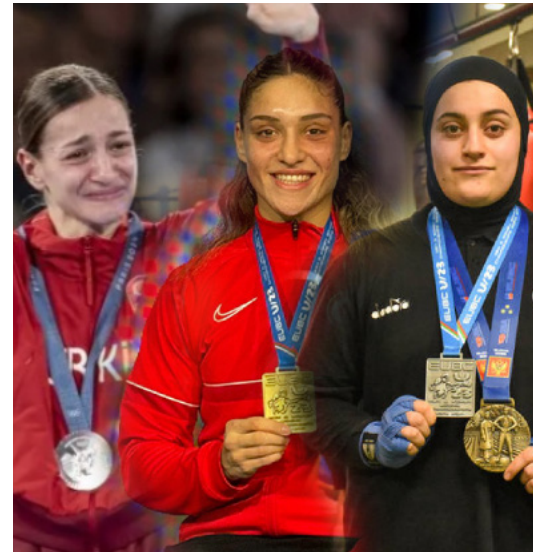
## TURKISH WOMEN WRESTLERS' SUCCESS IN 2025 WORLD WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**T**he 2025 World Wrestling Championships took place in Zagreb on 13-21 September. Turkish women wrestlers succeeded in getting medals in tournaments for different weight classes. Evin Demirhan Yavuz who competed in women's 50kg category. She managed to turn the game around after falling behind of her opponent despite she suffered from knee injury during the match. Another success story was written by Nesrin Baş. She competed in women's 72kg category. She defeated Chinese champion Zelu Li and Ukrainian wrestler Alla Belinska. National wrestler Baş got silver medal at the end of the match.



## TÜRKİYE WINS THREE MEDALS AT WORLD BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**A**t the 2025 World Boxing Championships in Liverpool, Türkiye's women boxers delivered a strong performance, securing three medals. Buse Naz Çakıroğlu earned silver in the 51 kg category, adding another world medal to her career. In the 75 kg division, Büşra Işılдар also captured silver after an impressive run to the final. Meanwhile, Şeyma Düztaş claimed bronze in the +80 kg class, marking her first senior world championship medal. These achievements highlight Türkiye's rising power in women's boxing and strengthen hopes for future international successes.





# VON DER LEYEN'S 2025 STATE OF THE UNION: EUROPE'S INDEPENDENCE MOMENT AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR TÜRKİYE?

Von der Leyen's call for Europe to build independence in defence and competitiveness points to new opportunities; if Türkiye is part of this broader vision of Europe, both sides stand to gain in resilience, autonomy and growth.

Laura BATALLA ADAM  
Analyst

Ursula von der Leyen's 2025 State of the Union was marked more by urgency than ceremony. It was framed as Europe's "independence moment", a warning that complacency is no longer an option in the face of mounting geopolitical and economic pressures. The speech mixed realism with ambition: a candid admission that the Union has often been slow to deliver, combined with a series of proposals to accelerate defence readiness, strengthen industrial sovereignty and restore competitiveness.

Three themes ran through the address. First, security. Von der Leyen argued that Europe must be prepared to act more decisively, with regular defence reviews, joint procurement programmes and measures to reduce its reliance on external suppliers. Second, competitiveness. The Commission announced plans for AI gigafactories, a battery booster and new funds for scaling up industry, tying these initiatives to the Draghi competitiveness report, which had diagnosed Europe's chronic implementation gap. Third, geopolitics. Trade and sanctions were presented as tools of strategy rather than neutral instruments, with tougher measures on Russian energy and a clear message that market access is increasingly tied to political alignment.

Enlargement, however, received only passing reference. Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans were acknowledged in aspirational terms, but Türkiye was absent. This silence was notable given von der



Leyen's repeated use of "Europe" rather than "EU". The broader language suggested a wider vision, but in practice it did not extend to one of Europe's most important neighbours. These risks overlooking opportunities to reinforce value chains, security and resilience at a moment when Europe needs them most.

## Europe's Core Priorities

Competitiveness was perhaps the most urgent theme. By tying new initiatives to Draghi's report, von der Leyen conceded that Europe knows what must be done but has often failed to deliver. That honesty gave weight to the speech, but also underscored the gap between ambition and implementation. For Türkiye, this gap is an opening. As a large industrial economy with deep ties to European markets, it is well placed to contribute to Europe's competitiveness drive. Regulatory alignment in key sectors, participation in EU lead markets, and joint research projects could allow Turkish industry to plug into Europe's strategic agenda and generate tangible results.

The speech's approach to defence was similarly pragmatic.

Rather than presenting a grand new security architecture, von der Leyen focused on capability: readiness, procurement, practical steps. This creates clear avenues for cooperation with Türkiye, whose strategic geography and growing defence industry make it a valuable partner. Joint efforts on Black Sea security, pooled procurement of counter-drone systems, or industrial partnerships in defence electronics would all add value. Crucially, these can be framed as project-based initiatives, sidestepping the politically sensitive debate about formal membership while delivering real security dividends.

Industrial policy was another central pillar. Von der Leyen placed AI infrastructure, batteries and automotive electrification at the heart of Europe's strategy. These choices reflect the sectors that will decide Europe's place in the global economy. Türkiye is already active here: its research institutions take part in European AI consortia, and its automotive industry is tightly woven into European supply chains. With appropriate frameworks on standards, certification and investment, Turkish firms could become critical nodes in Europe's

green and digital transitions, from battery assembly to EV component manufacturing. Such cooperation would benefit both sides: Europe gains scale and resilience, while Türkiye secures investment and stable access to key markets.

The geopolitical dimension adds urgency. Europe's shift from open trade to strategic conditionality, linking economic access to political alignment, reflects today's realities. But it also risks narrowing Europe's room for manoeuvre if key partners are left outside. Engaging Türkiye selectively and pragmatically would broaden Europe's base of trusted partners and diversify its industrial capacity. For Türkiye, deeper access to EU markets would bring investment, technology and greater security of integration. The political obstacles are real, from concerns over rule of law to regional disputes, but these argue for a phased, technocratic approach: concrete projects with measurable results, shielded from wider political disagreements.

## Building a Broader Europe

Transforming the ambition of the State of the Union into practice requires Europe to think creatively about partnership. For

Türkiye, this could mean sectoral agreements in areas like AI, batteries and automotive, where regulatory alignment would be rewarded with access to EU markets. It could mean participation in flagship projects such as AI data centres or battery gigafactories, supported by EU financing. Defence cooperation could also evolve in practical clusters such as logistics, maritime surveillance, counter-drone systems, tied to capability delivery. Even the enlargement debate could be reframed, offering performance based steps for integration in economic and standards domains without the all-or-nothing stakes of accession.

Taken together, these approaches would give substance to von der Leyen's insistence on "Europe". They would expand the concept beyond the Union's borders, grounding it in supply chains, industrial ecosystems and shared security arrangements. They would also meet the central challenge she identified: turning Europe's admitted weaknesses into real strengths through decisive action.

Von der Leyen's State of the Union was a clear statement of intent: Europe must deliver on defence, competitiveness and industrial capacity. Its language pointed to a wider understanding of "Europe", but the absence of a clear role for Türkiye leaves open questions about how inclusive that vision will be. Still, the opportunities are real. By working incrementally, sector by sector, Europe and Türkiye can build a partnership that is both pragmatic and ambitious. For Brussels, this means greater resilience and autonomy. For Ankara, it means access, investment and recognition as part of Europe's strategic ecosystem. For both, it offers a path to a stronger, more complete Europe.