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HOPES FOR A REVITALISATION OF TÜRKİYE-EU RELATIONS: PIPE DREAM OR WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY?

A reinvigoration of Türkiye-EU relationship starting with negotiations on modernisation of the Customs Union and visa liberalisation supported by the legislative alignment to the EU on its European Green Deal and digitalisation agendas would pave the way to an eventual accession.

Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas
IKV Secretary General

Türkiye-EU relations have gone through ebbs and flows since the 1960's and evolved into a close relationship based on an association agreement and driven by the prospect of accession to the Union. Since President Erdoğan's new term in office started in the aftermath of the May elections in Türkiye, the subject of a revitalisation of the relations began to come up frequently. President Erdoğan talked with the President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen over the phone. He emphasised his commitment to the goal of membership to the Union and focused on the need to increase contacts at all levels on the basis of a concrete and positive agenda aiming for full membership. President Erdoğan also emphasised the need to step up Türkiye-EU cooperation by way of the modernisation of the Customs Union, visa liberalisation, migration management and fight against terrorism. President Erdoğan later brought up the issue of Türkiye's integration to the EU in connection with Sweden's membership to NATO and demanded the removal of obstacles in Türkiye's path to EU membership in return for lifting his veto over Sweden's accession to the Alliance. Minister of Treasury and Finance Mehmet Şimşek talked about the need to modernise the Türkiye-EU Customs Union in a panel he attended in Austria and said that the EU needed Türkiye just as Türkiye needed the EU.

While the long-running accession talks were at a standstill since 2016, a revitalisation of the process caught the headlines in Türkiye. At the same



time the Türkiye Rapporteur of the European Parliament Sanchez Amor recommended the start of a period of reflection on the future of the relations, the conclusions of the European Council meeting on 29-30 June 2023 included an instruction to the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell to prepare a report on the same topic. The underlying theme was quite clear: to propose new ways for engagement between Türkiye and the EU which could replace the accession track. Hence the "privileged partnership" offers which dated back to a 2004 report prepared for Germany's Christian Democratic Union by Karl-Theodor Zu Guttenberg. In an article published in the New York Times on 15 December 2004 Zu Guttenberg wrote:

"Should the European Union give full membership to Turkey? If we go by the European Commission's own report on the question, the answer should be no. The report's list of special regulations that would apply to Turkey — most notably regarding free movement of labour — shows that the EU's offer of

membership would only lead to second-class status for Turkey. A privileged partnership instead of an underprivileged membership is the better — and more honest — option for both sides."

Later Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy adopted the idea which formed the basis of a consensus between the two leading countries of the EU. Other concepts involved the formation of a strategic partnership or a process of gradual integration to the EU. However, it was not possible to replace the membership goal with any of these alternatives which depended on half-cooked conceptualisations. Once the goal of membership was accepted as the basis of the accession process, any such proposal would mean a downgrading of the relationship and would be very difficult to accept from the viewpoint of an aspiring candidate country. Accordingly, the Turkish governments since then categorically rejected the replacement of the membership perspective with some sort of privileged partnership even during the most problematic and tense times in bilateral relations. In addition, offering

a privileged or strategic partnership did not amount to a meaningful proposition since Türkiye was already an associated country with the EU and the Ankara Agreement was already quite extensive in the scope of the targets it set for the advancement of the relationship.

Based on this background, the EU is once again contemplating a "new" perspective to Türkiye which would replace the membership track. Yet the Turkish leadership is insisting on the membership perspective and stressing the need for a revitalisation of relations. At a time when the threats to European security in the aftermath of the Russian aggression against Ukraine require a united front and collaboration among all European countries, Türkiye's rapprochement with Europe and the EU acquired an urgency. The EU leaders also feel the need to engage with Türkiye and upgrade the relationship. Yet in spite of geostrategic developments which may create a susceptible environment for a re-engagement between Türkiye and the EU, the Union's priority concerns the protection of Ukrainian integrity in the face of Russian aggression and

its gradual integration to the EU as well as anchoring countries in the region in European structures. Türkiye's membership is not viewed as feasible or probable under the circumstances. Yet, Türkiye is still a candidate country "destined to join the Union" in the wording of the Helsinki Summit conclusions.

A reinvigoration of the relationship starting with the Customs Union modernisation negotiations and completing the visa liberalisation process would bring Türkiye closer to the EU, support the legislative alignment especially with a view to the European Green Deal and digitalisation agendas and pave the way to an eventual accession. Such a vision depends upon action in two important fronts: internal reform agenda and diplomatic efforts with regards to the Cyprus issue and engagement with Greece. It is vitally important to steer the country towards a more democratic direction by way of rectifying the current presidential regime with a view to introducing a system of checks and balances and ensuring independence of the judiciary. At the same time resolving the economic crisis through rational policymaking, ensuring the autonomy of regulatory institutions, achieving transparency and fighting against corruption are vital conditions for a return to the European perspective. An activism at the diplomatic front is also necessary while the Cyprus question blocks progress in not only the accession negotiations, but also the Customs Union modernisation, defence cooperation and visa liberalisation. Finally winning the hearts and minds of the European peoples and regular diplomacy and dialogue with the leading EU countries are also complementary and necessary items of a renewed EU strategy.



IKV COMMITTEE VISITED MINISTER OF TRADE PROF. ÖMER BOLAT

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and accompanying committee visited the Minister of Trade, Prof. Ömer Bolat on 21 July. During the meeting, information about the activities of IKV was given, while Türkiye-EU trade relations, the updating process of the Customs Union, steps to improve relations, and cooperation opportunities were discussed.

IKV Vice-President Prof. Haluk Kabaalioğlu, IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas and IKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit also attended the meeting.



IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU MET MEP İLHAN KÜÇÜK



IKV President Ayhan Zeytinoğlu met with European Parliament Member İlhan Küçük on 5 July 2023. In the meeting with Küçük, who is a member and former President of the liberal group "Renew Europe" in the EP, Türkiye-EU relations and the EP elections to be held next year were discussed.

Chairperson Zeytinoğlu especially mentioned the important role of the EP in the development of Türkiye-EU relations and criticized the proposal for a new form of relationship that would replace Türkiye's EU membership goal,

which was included in the draft report prepared by Rapporteur Amor. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu emphasized that for the future of Türkiye-EU relations, sticking to the goal of full membership would be the only valid formula.

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu was accompanied by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas and Junior Researchers Sema Nur Yeniylidiz and Ahmet Emre Usta. EP Member Küçük is the Vice-President of the EU-Türkiye Joint Parliamentary Committee and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee.

IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU MET WITH THE HEAD OF THE DIVISION OF EEAS RESPONSIBLE FOR TÜRKİYE

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu met with Baiba Aleksejuka-Tavaresa, Head of the Türkiye and Eastern Mediterranean Division of the European External Action Service, on 5 July 2023. During the meeting, developments in EU foreign policy, Türkiye-EU relations, security, and foreign policy cooperation were discussed.

Chairperson Zeytinoğlu touched upon the need for revival in Türkiye-EU relations and stated that the picture that



emerged after the Ukraine War highlighted Türkiye's role in European security and increased the need

for cooperation. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu brought up a proposal presented by IKV to overcome the existing problems by creating a "green and digital agenda" in Türkiye-EU relations. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu also noted that this proposal would not replace Türkiye's EU membership bid but could create an impetus to overcome the difficulties and obstacles blocking relations. IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu was accompanied by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas.

IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU MET WITH THE VICE GENERAL MANAGER OF TRADE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu met with the European Commission Deputy Director General for Trade and Head of Unit Nele Eichhorn on 5 July 2023. During the meeting with the Deputy Director General of Trade Nele Eichhorn, who is responsible for relations with Türkiye as well as EU's neighbours, the Middle East, Russia, and Central Asia, and industry, commodity trade, regulatory cooperation, public procurement, relations between Türkiye and EU, Customs Union and updating, visa liberalisation and the latest developments in trade were discussed.

During the meeting, Chairperson Zeytinoğlu discussed the problems experienced within the scope of the Customs Union



and emphasized the need for updating. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu brought up a proposal presented by IKV to overcome the existing problems by creating a "green and digital agenda" in Türkiye-EU relations. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu also noted that this proposal would not replace Türkiye's EU

membership bid but could create an impetus to overcome the difficulties and obstacles blocking relations. IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu was accompanied by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas and Junior Researchers Sema Nur Yeniylidiz and Ahmet Emre Usta.

IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU SPOKE AT THE MEETING ON IMMIGRATION IN BRUSSELS



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu delivered the opening speech of the event titled "Migratory Flows and Regional Challenges: Türkiye's Way Forward on Migration" held in Brussels on 4 July 2023. Organized by Türkiye's Permanent Representation to the EU on the occasion of Türkiye's International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICPMD) Executive Group Presidency, the event was held at the TOBB-İKV Brussels Representative Office conference hall.

In his speech, Chairperson Zeytinoğlu touched upon the latest developments in migration, which is one of the critical areas of Türkiye-EU relations. While addressing the issue of increasing

cooperation on migration, Chairperson Zeytinoğlu also stated that a holistic approach is necessary in Türkiye-EU relations and emphasized that it will not be possible for relations to progress only through migration.

Following Chairperson Zeytinoğlu, Türkiye's Permanent Representative to the EU Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı and European Commission Member for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi delivered speeches. The event continued with a panel where the Head of Migration Management of Türkiye, Savaş Ünlü, and the General Director of ICPMD, Michael Spindelegger, were speakers.

İKv AGENDA

EU INFORMATION CENTRES COORDINATION MEETING HOSTED BY İKV



The coordination meeting of the EU Information Centres Network Support Project, which is carried out by TOBB, was hosted by İKV in İstanbul on 12 July 2023. The meeting was attended by İKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, İKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit, Selda Düzenli from the EU Delegation to

Türkiye, the project coordination team, and the coordinators of the 19 cities where the project is implemented.

İKV Deputy Secretary General M. Gökhan Kilit delivered the opening speech and İKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas made a comprehensive presentation on Türkiye-EU relations.

Following the presentation, the coordinators made a general evaluation and exchanged views on future projects. After the meeting, EU Information Center Coordinators visited the İKV library, Türkiye's first EU library, and examined the books on the EU and Türkiye-EU relations and received information on the latest İKV publications.

İKv SECRETARY GENERAL NAS SPOKE AT JEAN MONNET WEBINAR



İKv Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker in the webinar organised by Prof. Beken Saatçioğlu, Jean Monnet Chair holder at MEF University EUTURDI (EU-Türkiye Relations in an Era of Differentiated Integration) on 10 July 2023.

Speaking at the webinar titled "The Future of the EU and Türkiye-EU Relations", Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas stated that Türkiye-EU relations have left behind a very challenging period and that new steps should be taken in order to bring relations closer.

Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas pointed out the importance of reviving Türkiye's EU membership goal, which was brought back to the agenda with the issue of Sweden's membership at the NATO Summit and emphasized the need for reforms in the fields of democracy, rights, and law to gain momentum again. The webinar was moderated by Prof. Beken Saatçioğlu, and the other speakers were Prof. Selcen Öner and Prof. Özgür Ünal Eriş. The webinar ended with the questions of the participants and the answers of the speakers.

NEW PUBLICATION BY İKV ON TÜRKİYE-EU MIGRATION DEAL

A new İKV publication on Türkiye-EU Deal of 18 March 2016 prepared within the scope of CATS Network research project is released. The CATS Network research project titled "A New Era in EU-Türkiye Cooperation- The Syrian Crisis and EU-Türkiye Deal of 18 March 2016: The Perceptions of European and Turkish Decision Makers" studies the 5-year experience of the cooperation between Türkiye and the EU within the process called "refugee crisis" about its structural and motivational aspects, as well as its positive and

negative outcomes. It also addresses how the 18 March 2016 Statement has impacted Türkiye-EU relations more generally. At the centre of its analysis, the research aims to uncover whether the EU-Türkiye Deal of 18 March 2016 has improved the relations and brought the parties closer together or made the existing problems more complicated and caused the relations to fall further apart. This publication is prepared by Prof. M. Murat Erdoğan, Dr. Nihal Eminoğlu, Laura Batalla Adam, Dr. K. Onur Unutulmaz and Friedrich Püttmann.



TIMELINE JULY 2023

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4	İKv Chairperson Zeytinoğlu spoke at the meeting on immigration in Brussels.
5	İKv Chairperson Zeytinoğlu met with the Vice General Manager of Trade of the European Commission Nele Eichhorn, EEAS responsible for Türkiye Baiba Aleksejuka-Tavaresa and EP member İhan Küçük.
6	Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met with his Finnish counterpart Elina Valtonen.
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8	Foreign Minister Fidan had a phone call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.
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10	İKv Secretary General Nas spoke at Jean Monnet webinar.
11	President Erdoğan attended to NATO Summit in Vilnius.
12	EU Information Centres coordination meeting hosted by İKV.
13	IPA Monitoring Committee Meeting was held with participation of Deputy Minister of MFA Türkiye & Director for EU Affairs Ambassador Bozay.
14	Deputy Minister Ambassador Kemal Bozay attended France's National Day reception.
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17	Minister of Treasury and Finance Mehmet Şimşek attended at G20.
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19	Civil Society Organisations addressed a letter to EU Officials in support of Türkiye's EU membership goal.
20	Edremit olive oil got EU Recognition.
21	İKv Committee visited Minister of Trade Ömer Bolat.
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24	Foreign Minister Fidan attended at International Conference on Development and Migration in Rome.
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28	Foreign Minister Fidan met with his Hungarian counterpart Peter Szijarto in Hungary.
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CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ADDRESSED A LETTER TO EU OFFICIALS IN SUPPORT OF TÜRKİYE'S EU MEMBERSHIP GOAL

EU leaders meeting in Brussels on 29-30 June 2023 tasked the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to prepare a "strategic and prospective" report on the future of the relations with Türkiye. Accordingly, civil society and business organisations came together and issued a letter addressing the relevant authorities in support of Türkiye's EU membership aspirations.

The letter, addressed to Olivér Várhelyi, the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy, and Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy emphasized the following points:

"It is highly important that Türkiye-EU relations move forward in line with the vision of full membership. Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and ongoing challenges such as green and digital transformation, energy security, control of irregular migration, and sustainability of supply chains have further necessitated closer cooperation between Türkiye and the EU and the revitalisation of the accession process. Given that the EU enlargement process is in the revival phase, it is urgent to accelerate Türkiye's relations with the EU in this regard.

Adopting such a visionary approach to the future of relations will also have the effect of putting Türkiye back on the reform agenda and rekindle the accession process. The process of alignment with the Copenhagen and Maastricht criteria could be accelerated again, as in the 1999-2006 period when the



EU accession perspective was strong. The continuation of the accession goal and fair treatment of Türkiye as an EU candidate country will be the most encouraging factors in this process.

The deterioration and erosion of relations between Türkiye and EU have been accelerated by the lack of dialogue in crucial areas such as the economy, energy, and transportation as well as the distance between the parties because of the decisions taken by the European Council in July 2019. It has contributed to growing mistrust between the parties, while at the same time blocking the realisation of the economic potential between Türkiye and the EU in the face of regional and global threats. The fact that the Schengen visa process has become more difficult and restrictive has made contacts between people and business circles difficult. We believe that it is critical to simplify and accelerate the visa process for citizens of the Republic of Türkiye until the visa liberalisation process is completed.

Opinion polls conducted by different organisations revealed that the Turkish public support to EU membership ranges from 58% to 79%. The Turkish business community has also supported Türkiye's alignment with the EU acquis and economic integration. The EU is the most important trading partner for Türkiye, while Türkiye is the EU's sixth trading partner. In 2022, total trade between Türkiye and EU reached 196.4 billion dollars.

In this context, the discussions that will take place in the General Affairs Council and later in the European Council on 20 July 2023, will pave the way for a new engagement process with Türkiye. Revitalising the accession process will accelerate the EU reforms in Türkiye and enable a higher level of alignment and rapprochement with the EU.

Our shared European agenda establishes the necessary foundation for rebuilding trust and reactivating integration. Shaping a rational framework for the future of relations, defining methods, timelines, and objectives, will ensure

the engagement of all stakeholders in the EU and Türkiye, encouraging their concrete and active contributions to the process. As civil society organisations, business associations, members of the Türkiye-EU Joint Consultative Committee, and members of the Civil Society Dialogue Türkiye Network, we will continue to support Türkiye's EU perspective, alignment with the EU acquis, wider integration with the EU, and deepening of Türkiye-EU cooperation.

Revitalising high-level dialogues between Türkiye and the EU on the economy, transportation and energy and initiating the modernisation of the Türkiye-EU Customs Union to include the green and digital agenda will be beneficial for all of EU countries.

We are eagerly looking forward to the outcome of your discussions, which we hope will contribute to the development of Türkiye-EU relations in line with the accession perspective."

The organisations signing the letter are listed as follows: The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), Türkiye Exporters Assembly (TİM), Turkish Industry & Business Association (TÜSİAD), İstanbul Chamber of Industry (İSO), İstanbul Chamber of Commerce (İTO), Economic Development Foundation (İKV), Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (TÜRKNÖFED), Women Entrepreneurs Association of Türkiye (KADİGER), Federation of Industrial Associations (SEDEFED), Economic Policy Research Foundation Of Türkiye (TEPAV), İstanbul Policy Center (İPM), Türkiye Europe Foundation (TAV), Association of Civil Society Development Center (STGM), Türkiye-EU Association (TURABDER).

RUSSIA SUSPENDED BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL, TÜRKİYE HOLDS CONSULTATIONS

After Russia suspended the Black Sea Grain Deal, Türkiye takes a step towards mutual consultations by assuming a mediator role.



After the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, the agreements were signed separately with both Russia and Ukraine on 22 July 2022 through the initiatives of the UN and Türkiye, to prevent a global food crisis. The agreement focused on grain and the re-sale of grain to the world market over the Black Sea. Due to the Grain Deal, which is tracked by the Joint Coordination Centre headquartered in İstanbul, more than 32 million tons of

grain in total have had the opportunity to reach the world market.

Russia announced last year that it was suspending the Grain Corridor Agreement. Kremlin Press Officer Dmitry Peskov stated that Russia cannot stay in the agreement under the current conditions. However, the agreement will be returned if the necessary conditions are met. Russia had informed Türkiye, Ukraine, and the UN about the decision to suspend the agreement. Then, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres stated that this decision of Russia will have many negative consequences on the world market, as the products that both Russia and Ukraine export to the world market are a very important need especially for developing and underdeveloped countries. Russia demanded that concrete steps be taken to remove the obstacles to their grain and fertilizer exports.

President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the situation after his trip to the Gulf countries

this month, saying that Türkiye's wish is for the Grain Deal to continue. He also stated that the diplomatic efforts on this issue are continuing by Türkiye and that he will meet with President of Russia Vladimir Putin in August to discuss these issues.

Among the topics to be discussed about grain exports are consultations on how to pave the way for grain and fertilizer shipments to Russia. Foreign Minister of the Turkish Republic Hakan Fidan, at a press conference held last week, stated that Türkiye believes that Russia will return to the agreement. He also added that other options would endanger food security.

Since Russia's suspended the Grain Deal, the rising prices of grain have triggered hunger and famine. On the other hand, in the face of sanctions against Russia and obstacles in grain exports, Putin states that Moscow's stance and politics are clear and that what is expected must be realized in order to return to the agreement.

TÜRKİYE'S FIRST LADY CALLS FOR GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN AFFECTED BY WAR



Türkiye's First Lady Emine Erdoğan visited the Ukrainian Centre in Vilnius on 12 July. She met with Ukrainian women, young people, and children who have been affected by the war. Erdoğan was pleased to see that war-affected orphan children from Ukraine were being offered socio-psychological support. She called on every country to lend a hand in support of women and children who are disproportionately affected by war. Emine Erdoğan believes that joining hands as a global community will be the strongest shield against new conflicts.

TÜRKİYE-EU WATCH

NEW BAYRAKTAR TB-2 DRONES DELIVERED TO KOSOVO



As Türkiye's investments in the defence industry continues. Turkish drones continue to increase their influence in the market by recently becoming preferred and popular by many countries.

Bayraktar TB-2 drones, which were sold to many countries, were finally purchased in Kosovo. The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, announced that Bayraktar UCAVs ordered from Türkiye have arrived

in Kosovo. Kurti posted a photo of the Bayraktar TB2 UCAV on his social media account, saying "Kosovo is now even safer."

In his statement, Kurti said, "We added Bayraktar TB-2 unmanned aerial vehicles, which we purchased from Türkiye as the government, to our army's arsenal. During the two-year government period, we increased the number of soldiers by more than 80 percent and the army budget by more than 100%. Kosovo is now safer than ever. We congratulated the officers who completed the unmanned aerial vehicle operation training together with the FSK Commander Lieutenant General Bashkim Jashari and Defence Minister Armend Mehaj."

TURKISH WOMEN'S NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL TEAM BECAME CHAMPION



Turkish Women's National Volleyball Team, which reached the finals after beating the USA in the FIVB Volleyball Women's Nations League, became the champion by beating China. The Turkish national team won the first set of the match by scoring 25-22. The second set ended in favour of China with the same score. In the second to last set, Türkiye took the lead in the set as well as the game with a score of 25-19 and took the advantage of 2-1 against China. Women's National Volleyball Team, which defeated its opponent 3-1 with sets of 25-22, 22-25, 25-19, 25-16, became the champion for the first time in the history of the organisation.

At the ceremony that started after the match, the gold medals were given to the champions by the President of the Turkish Volleyball Federation Mehmet Akif Üstündağ. With Captain Eda Erdem DüNDAR lifting the championship medal, the national players experienced great excitement and

joy in the hall. The team players also took photos with the audience after the championship celebration.

After the matches, Melissa Vargas was chosen as the "Most Valuable Player of the League of Nations and Best Opposite", Zehra Güneş was chosen as the "Best Middle Blockers", also Gizem ÖRGE, participated in the nations league's dream team as the "Best Libero".

Minister of Youth and Sports Osman Aşkın Bak congratulated the Women's National Volleyball Team, which defeated China 3-1 in the FIVB Women's Nations League and became the champion. Minister Bak addressed that it is a great source of pride for the team, which brings this excitement and happiness. President of the Turkish Volleyball Federation Üstündağ expressed that the medal was for the people who were affected by the earthquake. He also added that he shares the joy of winning this medal on the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic.

ZELENSKY MET WITH BARTHOLOMEW TO DISCUSS PEACE AND RECOVERY IN UKRAINE

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with Fener Greek Patriarch Bartholomew in İstanbul on 8 July to discuss the situation in Ukraine and the need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The two leaders also discussed the repatriation of Ukrainian children who have been taken to Russia. Bartholomew, who is the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, expressed his support for Ukraine and called on the Russian government to end the war. He also thanked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for his support to the Ukrainian people. Zelenskyy



thanked Bartholomew for his prayers for peace and his support for Ukraine. He also highlighted their discussions on implementing the peace formula and facilitating the return of Ukrainian children to their families.

The meeting between Zelenskyy and Bartholomew is a sign of the growing international support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia. It is also a reminder of the importance of religious leaders in promoting peace and reconciliation.

TURKISH TEEN IN ENGLAND HONOURED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT

As the leader of a project named "Plant4Life", Muhammed Safa Kaya, a 16-year-old of Turkish origin, received the prestigious annual "Youth Achievement Award" presented by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) UK to commend young individuals making a difference in their communities. An environmental activist, Kaya was also elected as the first young Green Mayor of Watford Municipality in England for his project.

"Plant4Life" is an initiative aimed at inspiring young people to embrace sustainability and foster a deeper appreciation for nature. Organising informative sessions at their local primary schools in Watford and passing on knowledge on the significance of plants and their vital



role in preserving the ecosystem have been activities through which Kaya and his team attempt to achieve their aim. In cooperation with private companies and municipalities, they also distribute free seeds to encourage students gain the habit of planting a seed every year of their lives. Targeting over 10,000 students across 30

schools, the aim of the project is to plant over one million new trees, thus making a huge positive impact on the environment and the ecosystem well as contributing towards raising a generation that is more aware of environmental problems and the importance of solving these problems.

16-year-old Kaya, who has been living in the UK with his family for the past four years, was awarded by Dean Russell, a Conservative Party MP for Watford at a ceremony in the British Parliament. As the first young Green Mayor, he is committed to representing the voices of young people and championing green initiatives. His future plans include expanding the project to Türkiye and all other countries around the world.

EDREMIT'S OLIVE OIL GETS EU RECOGNITION



Turkish application to register Edremit olive oil for official recognition in the EU is finalised on 20 July 2023. Edremit olive oil, produced in the region of Balıkesir on the Aegean side of Türkiye, has become the 5th product to receive EU recognition in 2023 and the 13th product overall.

The President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu extended his

congratulations to the President of Edremit Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Ahmet Çetin, as well as to the board and council members of Edremit Chamber of Commerce and everyone involved in this significant achievement. Furthermore, applications for the recognition of other Turkish products, such as Kayseri pastrami, Gaziantep melengiç coffee, Kırkağaç melon, and Sinop chestnut honey are currently pending approval.

HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

SPAIN TOOK OVER THE ROTATING PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU



On 1 July 2023, Spain took over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. It is the first 6 months of the 18 months long programme of the 12th Trio Presidency made up of Spain, Belgium and Hungary. The Spanish Presidency will end on 31 December and the position will be taken by Belgium as of 1 January 2024. Spain took the position for the fifth time after 1989, 1995, 2002 and 2010.

The country holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU is responsible for chairing working group meetings which discuss legislative proposals. Additionally, Council meetings are chaired by the ministers of the country holding the Presidency, who are responsible for the subject in question.

Moreover, the Presidency of the Council of the EU engages with organising and leading all Council meetings, represents the Council in its relations with EU institutions such as European Parliament and European Commission and in some cases represents the EU in international arena.

Spain declares four priorities for its term. The first one is reindustrialising the EU and ensuring its open strategic autonomy. It highlights the level of the external dependence of the EU on important strategic sectors such as digital technologies and energy and the vital need to avert this situation by empowering the industrial base of Europe. The second one is advancing in the green transition and

the environmental adaptation. This principle emphasises pursuing the green transition with creating new employment opportunities and decreasing dependence on energy sources and raw materials. Then, promoting greater social and economic justice is underlined with the aim of sharing the welfare with all segments of the society. The last priority is strengthening European unity, which intends to enhance coherence of the EU and operationalize new tools to cope with global challenges.

Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU covers a critical period because it will be determinative for the fates of several crucial legislative proposals to be adopted before European Parliament elections of June 2024.

PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN ATTENDED THE 2023 NATO SUMMIT IN LITHUANIA



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the NATO Summit on 11-12 July 2023 during which he held important meetings with leaders such as UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, US President Joe Biden, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, European Council President Charles Michel, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Fulfilling his diplomatic duties at the 2023 NATO Summit, President Erdoğan attended the trilateral meeting with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 10 July in Vilnius. In the written statement made after the meeting, it was stated that Türkiye would send Sweden's NATO Accession Protocols to the Parliament, and that Sweden would support efforts to revive Türkiye's EU membership process. In the statement, which was reported to have reiterated that Sweden will not support YPG/PYD and FETO, it was noted that they agreed that the cooperation between the two countries in the fight against terrorism will continue after Sweden's accession to NATO and that this is a long-term effort.

Attending a photo shoot on the first day of the NATO Summit, President Erdoğan later attended the North Atlantic Council meeting. President Erdoğan, who started bilateral talks after the session, met with French President Emmanuel Macron at LITEXPO Exhibition and Fair Center. President Erdoğan also met with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. During the meetings, bilateral relations, cooperation in the fight against terrorism, Türkiye's EU membership process, and Sweden's NATO membership process were discussed.

President Erdoğan continued his meetings at the LITEXPO Exhibition and Fair Center on the second day of the NATO Summit. President Erdoğan also met with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Greek Prime Minister Kiriakos Mitsotakis, and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

President Erdoğan also attended the Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the NATO-Ukraine Commission. President Erdoğan chatted for a while with US President Biden and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg in the hall where the session was to take place.

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY PAID A WORKING VISIT TO İSTANBUL

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy paid a working visit to İstanbul on 7-8 July 2023 upon invitation of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It is the first official visit by President Zelenskyy to Türkiye after the war broke out in February 2022. The visit consisted of one-on-one and inter-delegation meetings which were organized to discuss the regional and global issues including Russia-Ukraine war and one of the crucial elements of this war, Black Sea grain deal. Russia has expressed its position as not being in favor of extending the deal as Russian exports were weak due to some articles of the deal.

In a joint press conference, two leaders declared their support for Black Sea grain deal, as it stands important for global food supply and security. President Zelenskyy emphasised his gratitude for Türkiye's constant support for



Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. After mentioning the significance of President Erdoğan's visit to Ukraine during one of the hardest times, he added that Ukraine and Türkiye can pursue many projects concerning cooperation in defence industry, technological advancement, production of UAVs and other strategic sectors.

President Erdoğan stated that Türkiye-Ukraine friendship has been strengthened to a great extent. He also said that Türkiye has tried hard to avert

armed conflict since the days the conflict was imminent. As for the NATO membership of Ukraine, President Erdoğan expressed his open support and despite disagreements between the parties, once again he declared his willingness to see the peace negotiations resume as soon as possible. President Erdoğan also conveyed his gratitude to President Zelenskyy for his efforts to guarantee the rights of Crimean Tatar Turks living in Ukraine and strengthen their autonomous status.

FOREIGN MINISTER HAKAN FİDAN CONVEYED HIS CONDOLENCES AND SUPPORT FOR THE FOREST FIRES IN GREECE

On 26 July 2023, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan sent a message to his Greek counterpart Giorgos Gerapetritis conveying his condolences and support for the forest fires in Greece. Foreign Minister Fidan also expressed his condolences for the two pilots who lost their lives in the crash of a fire-fighting plane.

Fires continue on many Greek islands. The newspaper Kathimerini reports that

thousands of tourists have been evacuated from some of the most popular destination islands. Greek and foreign firefighters continued to extinguish the fires as the wildfires spread to the island of Rhodes.

On 25 July 2023, two pilots were killed when a plane crashed in the coastal town of Karystos on the Greek island of Evia. The aircraft was on a mission to help extinguish forest fires in



the region. Several countries, including Türkiye, helped Greece to extinguish the fires, which burned houses and forests.

MUSICIAN ÖZKAN UĞUR DIED AT THE AGE OF 69



Özkan Uğur, a member of one of the most beloved music groups ever to exist in Türkiye, named MFÖ, passed away on 8 July at the age of 69. The band, established in 1979, was named after the first letter of the three musicians' names: Mazhar, Fuat, and Özkan. Uğur, the bassist and vocalist of the band, also wrote songs with lyrics that didn't have any specific meanings, which became his signature style.

MFÖ took part in the Eurovision contest twice with the songs "Didai Didai Dai" in Sweden in 1985 and "Sufi" in Ireland in 1988. They have released 11 albums to date. Besides his music career, Özkan Uğur was also an actor and appeared in various TV series and movies.

Additionally, he composed soundtracks for the movies and shows he starred in. Uğur was married to Aysun Aslan, a State Opera and Ballet artist, and they have a son named Alişan.

Uğur had been battling lymphoma for a long time. A ceremony was held at the Atatürk Cultural Center in his honor on 11 July, and many artists and musicians, as well as his band members Mazhar Alanson and Fuat Güner, attended. The ceremony commenced with a speech from the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy. It was followed by speeches from Mazhar Alanson, Fuat Güner, Uğur's wife, son, and many other friends from the TV shows and movies he was involved in.

ANCIENT SETTLEMENTS UNCOVERED DURING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY IN THE CITY OF MARDIN



Conducting an archaeological surface survey in four districts of Mardin, a city in southeastern Türkiye, a team of experts under the leadership of Ergül Kodaş, a faculty member in the Department of Archaeology at Mardin Artuklu University, uncovered evidence of ancient human habitation in the region. The archaeological remains appear related to the Pleistocene and early Holocene periods, and the survey is currently being conducted in the districts of Artuklu, Kızıltepe, Yeşilli and Nusaybin.

Many artifacts discovered in several caves found in the region and dating back to the Palaeolithic Age, had already provided evidence of human presence spanning hundreds of thousands of years. Analysing the settlements

from the prehistoric period, the researchers have come across remains of a concentration of ancient communities. Several settlements dating back to the Neolithic Age have also been identified within close proximity to one another. The findings are said to indicate the likelihood of a transition from a semi-nomadic to a more settled lifestyle.

Emphasising the significance of the area for research on the Neolithisation process in the Near East, Kodaş points to the fact that the findings not only highlight the ancient history of human habitation in the region but also provide insights into the transition toward a more settled way of life during the early stages of the Neolithic Age.

VAN GOGH MUSEUM FEATURES QUAKE-THEMED VIDEO ART BY TURKISH ARTIST



A video installation artwork centred around the theme of 6 February earthquake, created by Ahmet Emin Batman, a 23-year-old Turkish Dutch artist residing in Amsterdam, was showcased at the prestigious Van Gogh Museum. The exhibition took place during the museum's "Vincent on Friday" event, which translates Van Gogh's themes into engaging evenings with music, workshops, exhibits, and

talks, supporting young artists and presenting their works to art enthusiasts. Batman's piece, titled "Memento Diem," was featured on the main screen during this event.

Batman explained that "Memento Diem" is a video installation that intertwines the celebration of life with the contemplation of death, combining calligraphy, film, and photography. Batman expressed his intention to prompt people to question their stance between life and death and the choices they make. Mahmut Burak Ersoy, the Turkish Consul General in Amsterdam, commended the artist for establishing a connection between Van Gogh's paintings and the shared emotions evoked by the earthquake. He emphasized the importance of remembering such calamities.

Laura van Hasselt, a faculty member at the University of Amsterdam's Faculty of Humanities, admired Batman's artwork for incorporating elements like the sky that convey a sense of hope amidst the portrayal of a tragic event. She highlighted the message of hope in the artwork, emphasising the resilience of humanity even in the face of great tragedies. The event attracted around a thousand attendees, providing them with the opportunity to view diverse artworks from various fields over a four-hour duration. The exhibition succeeded in fostering a meaningful dialogue between art, history, and the human experience.

THE 30TH İSTANBUL JAZZ FESTIVAL STRIKES A CHORD WITH GLOBAL AUDIENCES



The 30th İstanbul Jazz Festival, a highly awaited event organized by the İstanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSv), was held between 7-19 July, leaving audiences enthralled with captivating performances. Boasting a rich variety of musical genres and a lineup showcasing more than 200 exceptionally talented artists, the festival has garnered significant acclaim and interest from music aficionados across the globe.

During the event, Turkish artists such as Elif Sanchez, Deniz Taşar, Adamlar, Ekin Beril, and Oktay Temiz shared the stage with international names like Takeshi's Cashew, Alfa Mist, Lumineers, Youn Sun Nah, and Lizz Wright. The event was held in various places such as Şişli, Beylikdüzü, Küçükçekmece and

ferries that transport passengers through Bosphorus.

While the festival has made a deliberate effort to feature accomplished international musicians, it has also placed special emphasis on fostering an environment conducive to young artists, encouraging their participation to infuse the event with dynamism. Moreover, the festival has taken a progressive approach by moving beyond exclusively catering to marginalised jazz enthusiasts and instead aims to resonate with all strata of society. This is achieved through the deliberate selection of diverse artists who skilfully blend various musical genres, offering a more inclusive and enriching experience to the festival's

NATO SUMMIT IN VILNIUS: A PROMISING STEP FORWARD AMIDST CRITICAL GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES

NATO leaders came together in Lithuania's capital Vilnius to discuss pressing issues of enlargement, security, spending limit and Ukraine's membership.

Batuhan Tezel
IKV Junior Researcher

Leaders from Europe and North America met in Vilnius, Lithuania, for the NATO Summit on 11 July 2023. Many pressing issues were raised at the Summit, including the war in Ukraine and the structure of the alliance. Critical issues concerning geopolitics such as Sweden's membership, the spending limit and the Ukraine's membership problem came to the fore as important topics.

President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the Summit and made both multilateral and bilateral contacts. During Erdoğan's meetings, important topics such as bilateral relations with the Atlantic and Europe, the fight against terrorism, Sweden's NATO membership and security were discussed.

The important agenda leading to and during the Summit was the question of Swedish membership. Türkiye had approved Finland's membership but had a negative attitude towards Sweden until the demanded conditions were met. President Erdoğan made a statement stating that Türkiye could approve Sweden's NATO membership if European countries "pave the way" for Türkiye's accession to the EU. Stoltenberg replied that he supports Türkiye's bid to join the EU, but that this was not one of the conditions that Sweden, Finland and Türkiye signed at the NATO Summit in Madrid last year. Stoltenberg also underlined that Sweden fulfilled the terms of the agreement and did its part.

Türkiye's negative attitude changed with the meeting between Türkiye, Sweden and NATO before the Summit. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said after meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in Vilnius that President Erdoğan agreed to withdraw his veto on 10 July. Thus, the biggest obstacle to Sweden's membership was removed.

According to the statements made by the officials from the three parties, Türkiye agreed to send Sweden's



NATO Accession Protocol to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) as soon as possible. In return, the Swedish government has committed to support Türkiye in reviving Türkiye-EU relations. In this context, Sweden has pledged to support Türkiye's efforts to revive the EU accession process and to assist in the modernisation of the EU-Türkiye Customs Union and visa liberalisation between the two parties. On the other hand, just before Türkiye's support for Sweden's entry into NATO, US officials announced that they support the supply of F-16 warplanes to Türkiye. A US official also stated that the US will continue to support Türkiye's EU membership process.

The fact that Türkiye lifted its veto against Sweden's membership just before the Summit can be considered as a positive development in terms of NATO's expansion and strengthening its hand along the Russian front line. This is a win-win situation for both Türkiye and Sweden, provided that the principles of the Alliance and pact loyalty are adhered to and the promises made are kept.

In this direction, Türkiye-EU relations can be expected to move forward after the reconciliation between Türkiye and Sweden. Meeting with President Erdoğan hours after the Türkiye-Sweden meeting, European Council President Charles Michel pointed out that the two sides decided to revive their relations. This can be considered as a very important and critical development. However, when the subject is Türkiye-EU relations, it would be appropriate to avoid precise

statements and inferences and to evaluate the subject from a more realistic perspective.

NATO's goal that member countries allocate at least 2% of their GDP to military expenditures was another important topic of the Summit. After Russia invaded Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014, NATO decided to halt their post-Cold War spending cuts and spend 2% of GDP on defence within a decade. This goal, which has not been achieved since 2014, was the topic of discussion again during the Summit. NATO members -once again- pledged to spend at least 2% of their GDP on their national military budgets on 11 July; however, no time frame has been set for reaching the target. In the Summit statement, the leaders agreed that spending in excess of 2% of GDP is essential to address existing deficiencies and meet the needs in all areas of the security order. Additionally, the leaders agreed to set this percentage as the floor rather than the spending ceiling at the Summit in Lithuania. However, according to the Alliance's latest estimates, only 11 out of 31 NATO member states are likely to meet their spending target this year.

One of the most important agendas of the Summit was Ukraine. Just as it was during the Cold War, NATO is undergoing a new paradigm shift as a Western stronghold against the expansionist Kremlin. In this regard, Ukraine's resistance and possible future membership is a very important and critical topic for NATO.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also stated during the

Summit in Lithuania that Ukraine reaffirmed that it would become a NATO member and that it was agreed to remove the membership action plan requirement. Many leaders, including US President Joe Biden, have shown the will to formalise the security guarantee and assurance by using the phrase "The future of Ukraine is in NATO". Thus, at the Summit, the 31 allies, including the leaders who did not agree on accepting Ukraine into the ranks of NATO, agreed that as soon as the war with Russia is over, the requirement of Ukraine's path to membership should be removed so that Ukraine can join NATO more quickly. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declared the Summit as an "important victory" for Ukraine's security in a statement after the Summit.

In fact, the biggest regret with the outcome of the Summit in Vilnius is the lack of a more concrete path for Ukraine's accession once the war ends. However, promising steps were taken at the Summit. The NATO-Ukraine Commission became a Council and provided Ukraine with a more concrete setting for its relations with NATO. The Council will be used to plan Ukraine's future membership "when allies agree and the conditions are met". Ukraine's current failure to achieve the desired gains from membership was somewhat counterbalanced by the G7 joint statement of support for Ukraine, which promised additional long-term security guarantees and regulations.

The NATO Summit in Vilnius can be considered as promising and successful in general terms. However, it should be

noted that its success is limited in many aspects. The Vilnius Summit could not go beyond serving as a bridge mechanism between last year's Madrid Summit and next year's Washington Summit. In Madrid, the Allies agreed on the nature of new threats and challenges from both Russia and China. With Madrid's new Strategic Concept, the Alliance was refocused. Accordingly, Vilnius was expected to be a kind of implementation Summit where the decisions taken would turn into action. In fact, progress has been made in many areas, from improved deterrence to hybrid warfare and climate change. However, it fell short on some key issues, such as Ukraine's membership, NATO's role in the Indo-Pacific, and the management of the nuclear weapons threat posed by both Russia and China. In addition, the fact that the NATO spending commitments are still not at the desired point has also revealed a negative picture in terms of NATO's current outlook.

The most critical element of the Vilnius Summit was to increase NATO's deterrence along the front line with Russia, from Northern Europe to the Mediterranean. It can be said that the Alliance has been largely successful in this regard. With Finland, Poland, the Baltic states and Türkiye -and soon to include Sweden- NATO has formed a solid line of defence against Russian aggression. NATO's New Force Model, agreed upon last year, will give members clarity and clarity on specific wartime responsibilities and incentives to meet NATO's defence spending base of 2% of GDP. This will contribute to the process of fulfilling these obligations and responsibilities. In addition, NATO must have a permanent brigade-level military presence in each of its allies bordering Russia, and the border needs to be further strengthened. Because it has been quite clear since 2008 Georgia and 2014 Crimea that it is not inaction and diplomacy that will stop and deter Russia. Historical experience shows us that the prudence of NATO and the West on certain issues, in order not to provoke Russia, causes Russia and its expansionist policy to inflame even more.