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THE TÜRKİYE-EU INTERDEPENDENCE DILEMMA

It is time to rethink the trade relationship for the new geoeconomic era.

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The European Union's shift toward a more assertive, security-driven economic model is creating structural tension in its relationship with Türkiye. While the two remain deeply economically integrated, their institutional relationship has not evolved in parallel. This growing mismatch, between deep market integration and limited decision-making inclusion, defines the Türkiye-EU interdependence dilemma.

Over the past decade, the EU has entered a new geoeconomic era shaped by geopolitical shocks, including Russia's war against Ukraine, intensifying rivalry with China, and pandemic-induced supply chain disruptions. In response, Brussels has moved beyond its traditional liberal trade model toward a framework centred on economic security, resilience, and strategic autonomy. Trade, industrial, and security policies are now increasingly intertwined.

This transformation is reflected in a range of new policy instruments. Expanded state aid frameworks, large-scale industrial subsidies, and initiatives such as the Net-Zero Industry Act prioritise domestic production in strategic sectors. Similarly, the Critical Raw Materials Act and defence-industrial initiatives aim to reduce external dependencies and strengthen internal capacity. However, these policies are largely designed for EU Member States and closely associated partners, leaving Türkiye, despite its deep integration into



European value chains, outside their institutional scope.

Türkiye is not a peripheral partner. It is embedded in key European industrial ecosystems, particularly in automotive, machinery, and textiles, and the EU remains its largest trading partner. Yet the institutional framework governing this integration, the 1996 Customs Union, has become increasingly outdated. Originally conceived as a transitional mechanism toward EU membership, it now functions as a permanent but incomplete arrangement.

This incompleteness generates multiple asymmetries. Türkiye is required to align with the EU's Common External Tariff but has no formal role in shaping EU trade agreements. As the EU expands its network of free trade agreements, third countries gain access to the Turkish market without reciprocal access for Türkiye. At the same time, Turkish firms compete within the EU market but lack access to EU industrial subsidies and strategic funding mechanisms.

The EU's internal industrial turn further deepens these asymmetries. Subsidy regimes and "Made in EU" preferences risk diverting investment away from Türkiye and fragmenting integrated value chains. In emerging areas such as defence-industrial cooperation, Türkiye's exclusion from EU-centred frameworks could lead to long-term marginalisation, despite its role as a major NATO ally. The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism also presents a growing challenge for Turkish sectors, especially in the absence of a strengthened domestic climate policy framework and effective regulatory alignment with the EU.

The core problem is therefore structural: the Customs Union governs trade integration but does not provide mechanisms for participation in the EU's evolving geoeconomic governance. As the EU becomes more interventionist and security-oriented, this governance gap becomes increasingly consequential.

Modernising the Customs Union is necessary but insufficient.

A broader and more realistic reform agenda is required. First, structured consultation mechanisms should be established to give Türkiye a voice in EU trade policy, particularly in free trade negotiations that directly affect its market access. Second, dynamic regulatory alignment mechanisms should replace the current static model, allowing for continuous adaptation to evolving EU standards in areas such as climate and industrial policy. Third, selective integration into EU industrial and defence initiatives should be explored under clearly defined conditions. Fourth, reciprocal access to public procurement markets should be expanded, supported by modern dispute settlement mechanisms.

These reforms do not require accession to the EU, which remains politically unrealistic at present. They require political clarity and a redefinition of the relationship as permanent rather than transitional. This also implies greater predictability through binding timelines, staged implementation,

and institutionalised monitoring mechanisms.

Ultimately, the costs of inaction are rising. If the EU continues its turn toward economic security and strategic rebalancing without adapting its framework with Türkiye, existing asymmetries will widen. This risks investment diversion, supply chain fragmentation, and a gradual erosion of the interdependence that has underpinned the relationship for decades.

A coherent EU geoeconomic strategy requires alignment between internal transformation and external partnerships. Given Türkiye's economic, geographic, and strategic importance, maintaining a structurally imbalanced relationship is neither sustainable nor compatible with the EU's own objectives of resilience and diversification.

(This article is a shortened version of a longer policy paper published by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF): The EU-Türkiye Interdependence Dilemma | German Marshall Fund of the United States)



IKV CHAIRPERSON ZEYTİNOĞLU: “EXCLUDING TÜRKİYE FROM THE “MADE IN EUROPE” CRITERIA WOULD HIT EUROPEAN INVESTORS IN TÜRKİYE THE HARDEST”



IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu commented on the EU’s “Made in Europe” initiatives and the problems in the Customs Union. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu underlined the importance of including Türkiye as well in the “Made in Europe” criterion, which sets out local content requirements that the EU plans to introduce in particular for public procurement. Chairperson Zeytinoğlu said the following:

“The EU is also following the protectionist trend in the world economy.

The draft of the ‘Industrial Accelerator Act’, which we expect to be announced in relation to the ‘Made in Europe’ criteria that are still at the design stage, has not yet been published. However, our expectation is that, especially in public procurement, a decisive EU content threshold will be introduced in critical sectors

such as automotive, advanced technology, batteries, and renewable energy. In view of global protectionism, such measures that the EU aims to introduce in order to support its own industry, reduce external dependence, and increase competitiveness in critical sectors are understandable.

What is critical for Türkiye here is that production in Türkiye should also be included in the ‘Made in Europe’ definition. The Customs Union has made Turkish industry an important component of the European economy. Just as the EU defines the Green Deal, which introduced the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, as a ‘European’ Green Deal and expects Türkiye to align with this process, Türkiye should also be part of this definition as a Customs Union partner and candidate country. In addition, issues such as how the definition of local content will be determined and what course will be followed in cases where input products used in production are imported must also be clarified.

Minister of Treasury and Finance Mehmet Şimşek drew attention to an important issue and noted that around 62% of Türkiye’s exports are carried out by foreign direct investments. Indeed, when we say that 42% of Türkiye’s exports go to the EU, it is also worth emphasising that two-thirds of these exports actually come from factories in Türkiye that are European investments. In other words, the products manufactured in Türkiye and exported to the European market are already the output of European investments. Excluding Türkiye from ‘Made in Europe’ would mean punishing not only Turkish producers but also European companies. Similarly, in issues such as the quotas applied to transport or the exclusion of Türkiye from the EU’s FTAs, the fact that Turkish industry is put at a disadvantage actually means that European investors who take Türkiye’s position in the European market seriously are put at a disadvantage. We must explain this issue clearly to our friends in the EU!”

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS SPOKE AT A PANEL ORGANISED BY THE İSTANBUL CHAMBER OF INDUSTRY



The panel titled “Made in Europe Criterion: Key Elements of Competitive European Industry and Potential Implications for Türkiye”, organised by the İstanbul Chamber of Industry on 17 February 2026, as part of the European Enterprise Network Project, was held with broad participation from the public, industrial, and business sectors. The program, hosted by ICI Board Member Celal Kaya, comprehensively addressed the effects of European production criteria on global supply chains and their potential implications for Türkiye.

IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, who participated in the panel discussions, drew attention to the

accelerated transformation in EU industrial policies following the Green Deal, stating that developments such as the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war have exposed vulnerabilities in supply chains. Assoc. Prof. Nas emphasised that the “Made in Europe” approach is shaped by the goals of economic security, reducing strategic dependencies, and competitiveness. She also pointed out the importance of updating the Customs Union for Türkiye and addressing the asymmetric effects arising from the EU’s free trade agreements with third countries. The program concluded with a question-and-answer session following the panellists’ evaluations.

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS SPOKE AT A WEBINAR ORGANISED BY İSTANBUL GEDİK UNIVERSITY



IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker in the webinar titled “European Union – India Free Trade Agreement and Its Effects on Türkiye” organised by the Asian Pacific Research and

Application Centre and the English Foreign Trade Department of İstanbul Gedik University on 19 February 2026.

During the webinar, Associate Professor Nas assessed the current status of the EU-India Free Trade Agreement negotiations and the potential implications of the agreement for Türkiye.

Assoc. Prof. Nas stated that the EU-India FTA presents both risks and opportunities for Türkiye, drawing particular attention to the possibility of unfair competition and market loss for Turkish industrialists. Assoc. Prof. Nas also emphasised the importance of updating the Türkiye-EU Customs Union and stated that Türkiye needs to be more effectively involved in decision-making mechanisms.

IKV SECRETARY GENERAL NAS SPOKE AT A WEBINAR ORGANISED BY TİSK



IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas participated as a speaker in the webinar titled

“Potential Impacts of the EU-India Free Trade Agreement” held on 12 February 2026 as part of the TİSK Meetings. Speaking at the webinar, which opened with remarks by TİSK Secretary General Akansel Koç, Assoc. Prof. Nas said that the EU-India FTA posed a serious risk of unfair competition and market loss for Turkish industrialists.

Assoc. Prof. Nas emphasised that in order to remedy this injustice, the Türkiye-EU Customs Union must be updated urgently, and Türkiye must be included in the decision-making processes.

HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

TÜRKİYE-GREECE 6TH HIGH-LEVEL COOPERATION COUNCIL MEETING WAS HELD

The Türkiye-Greece High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC), co-chaired by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, was held in Ankara on 11 February 2026. Following the bilateral meeting of the leaders, the HLCC which convened after two previous postponements, resulted in the signing of seven agreements covering investment, maritime trade, economic cooperation, earthquake preparedness, culture, science, and technology.

While the parties did not seek short-term solutions to key issues such as the continental shelf, airspace expansion, the Cyprus question, and the militarisation of the islands, they nevertheless demonstrated a willingness to keep dialogue channels open. With the latest meeting in Ankara, both sides signalled their determination to revitalise the positive agenda.

Speaking after the signing ceremony, President Erdoğan stated that both countries aim to



advance relations through positive agenda items and to increase the trade volume between the two countries from 7 billion to 10 billion dollars. Emphasising that disputes in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean are not insurmountable from a legal perspective, he also underlined the importance of Türkiye's participation in recent defence and security initiatives in Europe.

Prime Minister Mitsotakis, for his part, highlighted the

importance of good neighbourly relations and dialogue, noting that he and President Erdoğan had conducted a comprehensive review of bilateral ties. Stressing that Türkiye and Greece are "residents of the same neighbourhood", Prime Minister Mitsotakis remarked that while geography cannot be changed, cooperation can be achieved for the peace and prosperity of both nations through a sense of responsibility.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR ENLARGEMENT KOS VISITED TÜRKİYE



The European Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos paid an official visit to Türkiye between 6 and 7 February. As part of her visit, Commissioner Kos held meetings with Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan, Minister of Trade Ömer Bolat, and Minister of Treasury and Finance Mehmet Şimşek.

The most concrete outcome of Commissioner Kos's visit to

Ankara was the official return of the European Investment Bank to its operations in Türkiye. Following the bilateral meeting and the inter-delegation meeting held between Minister Şimşek and Commissioner Kos, a "declaration of intent" regarding the aforementioned development was signed between the Ministry of Treasury and Finance and the EIB. Within the framework of the reached agreement, the EIB will provide a

total of 200 million euros in loans, with 100 million euros each to Türk Eximbank and the Development and Investment Bank of Türkiye. This financing package will be used to support renewable energy, energy efficiency, and decarbonisation projects, in line with the Green Deal objectives. Furthermore, the demand regarding the modernisation of the Customs Union was also reiterated by Minister Şimşek.

TIMELINE FEBRUARY 2026

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6	Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan came together with European Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos.	
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10	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came together with Greek Prime Minister Kiriakos Mitsotakis.	
11		IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas spoke at a webinar organised by TISK.
12	President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came together with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić.	
13		IKV Chairperson Ayhan Zeytinoğlu commented on the EU's "Made in Europe" initiatives and the problems regarding the Customs Union.
14		
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16		IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas spoke at a panel organised by the İstanbul Chamber of Industry.
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19	Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan attended 1 st Board of Peace meeting.	IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Nas spoke at a webinar organised by İstanbul Gedik University.
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26	TRNC Prime Minister Ünal Üstel was received by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.	
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HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

TÜRKİYE AND FRANCE JETCO MEETING WAS HELD IN İSTANBUL



The Türkiye and France Joint Economic and Trade Cooperation (JETCO) meeting was held on 10 February with the participation of Trade Minister Ömer Bolat and French Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness Nicolas Forissier.

At the JETCO meeting the parties outlined a roadmap to enhance the economic and trade relations between the two countries. In the JETCO meeting organised by the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), Minister Bolat stated that the trade volume between Türkiye-France, which stood at 14 billion euros five years ago, had risen to 21.1 billion euros in 2025. Minister Bolat noted

that 1,749 French companies have made significant investments in Türkiye in sectors such as industry, energy, services, aviation and transportation. Minister Bolat also marked that two parties held comprehensive talks on matters related to Türkiye-EU relations, stressing that both parties expressed strong satisfaction with the mutually agreed steps aimed at resolving certain challenges within the Customs Union. Minister Bolat stated that French authorities issued 163,000 visas to Turkish citizens last year, their second-highest figure worldwide after China, and added that processing times were reduced and procedures simplified, especially for students

and businesspeople.

In his remarks assessing Türkiye-France economic relations, French Minister Forissier emphasised that economic cooperation has been steadily expanding and that there is a balanced structure in bilateral trade. Referring to a recent study, he stated that French companies provide employment to 400,000 people in Türkiye, adding, "This demonstrates the confidence in Türkiye." He also underlined that they are ready to offer all necessary support to Turkish companies wishing to invest in France.

The JETCO meeting scheduled for next year is planned to be held in France.

MINISTER FİDAN ATTENDED BOARD OF PEACE MEETING



Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, on behalf of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, participated in the first meeting of the Board of Peace in Washington on 19 February. The board's main goal is to achieve a peaceful settlement in the Gaza Strip and to promote peace making globally. The meeting was led by US President Donald Trump, who brought together representatives from more than 45 countries to discuss Gaza's reconstruction and international stabilisation efforts.

Speaking to the press, Minister Fidan stated that Türkiye is ready to contribute to Gaza in every possible

way, including humanitarian aid, the administration of Gaza, infrastructure and superstructure services, and multinational stabilisation force. He highlighted the importance of the meeting in terms of moving into the second phase of Trump's Gaza plan, which focuses on reconstruction and restoring local governance structures. Minister Fidan also underlined Türkiye's efforts since the beginning of the crisis, noting that Türkiye has been delivering aid via Egyptian ports, supporting patients through medical evacuations, and operating field hospitals. If all parties agree, Türkiye will also send troops to train the police force.

CYPRIT LEADERS ERHÜRMAN AND CHRISTODOULIDES HELD THEIR FIRST ONE TO ONE TALK

The President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) President Tufan Erhürman and the Greek Administration of the Southern Cyprus (GASC) leader Christodoulides came together on 24 February in the UN Peace Mission's Chief Khassim Diagne's house in the buffer zone. The meeting which came after the leaders' consensus to hold talks regardless of the UN Secretary General's leadership, became the first ever talk between the two leaders without the UN's mediation. At the meeting, TRNC President Erhürman was accompanied by undersecretary Mehmet Dana and the GASC leader Christodoulides was accompanied by negotiator Menelaos Menelau.

The bilateral meeting came after TRNC President Tufan Erhürman's meeting with the UN Secretary General António



Guterres on 11 February in New York. Returning from New York, President Erhürman said discussions focused on the Turkish Cypriot community's will for a resolution, their four-point proposals, and confidence building measures. President Erhürman noted that past Geneva and New York issues were revisited, stressing that the 5+1 format is unsuitable for confidence-building, which should be agreed directly

between the two leaders. President Erhürman called for reintroducing approaches used before Crans Montana to avoid new disputes, underlined the need for a resolution timetable to prevent deadlocks, and insisted that alternating presidency is non-negotiable. He emphasised that the process should not reopen every disagreement but ensure genuine progress so that future deadlocks could be avoided.

HEAD OF TÜRKİYE'S NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ATTENDS MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE



Head of Türkiye's National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) İbrahim Kalın participated in the 62nd Munich Security Conference, held in Munich, Germany, on 13-15 February 2026, where he held a series of high-level meetings on regional and international security issues.

According to official sources, İbrahim Kalın discussed a range of bilateral and regional developments, including the situation in Iran, the ongoing conflict in Gaza, developments in Syria, and security dynamics in North Africa. The meetings addressed broader geopolitical challenges affecting regional stability

and international security. İbrahim Kalın also engaged in discussions with foreign counterparts on intelligence cooperation, counterterrorism efforts, irregular migration, and cybersecurity.

The Munich Security Conference is regarded as one of the world's leading forums for security and defence dialogue, bringing together heads of state, ministers, military officials, and intelligence leaders. İbrahim Kalın's participation underlined Türkiye's continued engagement in international security discussions and its role in addressing regional and global challenges through diplomatic and intelligence channels.

TÜRKİYE PREPARES TO HOST COP31 IN ANTALYA

Türkiye aims for COP31 to produce measurable progress on climate finance and implementation, backed by stronger cooperation among parties.



Türkiye is stepping up preparations to host COP31, the 2026 United Nations Climate Change Conference, with government officials stressing a focus on delivery and broad-based participation. Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change Minister Murat Kurum, who is set to chair the summit, said Türkiye is aware of the high expectations surrounding the talks and intends to manage the process through dialogue, consensus and coordinated international action.

COP31 is scheduled to take place in Antalya from 9 to 20

November 2026. As host and presidency, Türkiye will oversee key organisational responsibilities, including operational planning, official communications and the overall conduct of the conference. The programme is also expected to include a two-day World Leaders' Summit, placing additional emphasis on political momentum and high-level engagement.

Türkiye will host COP31 in partnership with Australia, building on the bid secured at the previous climate talks in Brazil. While Australia is set to lead the

negotiations agenda, the two partners plan to work together with Pacific Island countries to strengthen the action agenda and elevate implementation. Minister Kurum has described climate change as no longer solely an environmental challenge, but an issue shaping economies and daily life across sectors such as trade, transport, food, energy and education.

At the Istanbul briefing, United Nations Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell underlined that COP31 will take place amid heightened global uncertainty, arguing that climate action can support stability and long-term investment. He pointed to the rapid growth of clean energy investment since the Paris Agreement and emphasised that wind and solar generation surpassed coal in the first half of 2025, underscoring that scaling up renewables and implementation remains in every country's self interest.

TÜRKİYE'S GLOBAL TRADE VISION: 2026 TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE TARGETS



The 2026 Performance Programme released by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure outlines a substantial capacity expansion in combined transport, rail, and maritime infrastructure, aiming to bolster Türkiye's strategic position within the global supply chain. According to the drafted programme, it is planned to increase the number of ports with direct connections to the railway network to 20, and the total length of the connection

lines to 473.1 kilometres. In an era where uninterrupted supply chains are of vital importance in global trade, the goal of raising the share of rail in Türkiye's total freight transport to 4% reflects the vision of creating a sustainable and cost-effective logistics ecosystem.

Alongside this, green transition and modernisation efforts in the railways are also gathering pace. The target is to raise the proportion of electrified railway lines to 55% and that

of signalled lines to 65%. In maritime transport, Türkiye is supporting its goal of becoming a regional transit hub with concrete steps. By 2026, it is envisaged that the total volume of containers handled at ports will increase to 15.1 million TEU, and the transit cargo volume handled will rise to 3.025 million TEU. In addition to the physical expansion of transport networks, supporting them with digitalisation and communication infrastructure also constitutes an important pillar of the programme. While a 4.8% increase in air cargo transport is targeted, Türkiye's global accessibility is expected to be raised to the highest level by expanding flight destinations to 133 countries and increasing the number of airports to 59.

TURKISH PROFESSOR ELECTED TO UNITED NATIONS' INDEPENDENT AI SCIENTIFIC PANEL



Turkish physicist Professor Melahat Bilge Demirköz has been elected to the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence, the Turkish Foreign Ministry announced on 13 February, marking Türkiye's representation in the UN's first global scientific body dedicated to artificial intelligence. In an official statement, the ministry described the appointment as a concrete indication of the importance Türkiye attaches to multilateral efforts on artificial intelligence governance, particularly within the UN framework. The statement added that Türkiye will continue to contribute to international AI governance through an inclusive and innovation-oriented approach.

Demirköz, a professor at Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ), also serves as Director of the university's IVMER research centre, which focuses on measuring, simulating and analysing the space radiation environment. The centre incorporates artificial intelligence models in its research activities. She was nominated by Türkiye and elected by the UN General Assembly in early February.

The Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence brings together 40 experts from 37 countries and aims to provide scientific, impartial assessments on the governance, risks and potential of AI technologies. It represents the first global scientific platform established under U.N. auspices to evaluate the societal, economic and security implications of artificial intelligence.

The panel is expected to present its first comprehensive report in July 2026. The report will examine the use of AI in both civilian and military domains and assess the risks and opportunities associated with the rapidly evolving technology.

NATO COMMANDER PRAISES TÜRKİYE'S CONTRIBUTION TO STEADFAST DART 26 EXERCISE



NATO officials have praised the significant contribution of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) to the Alliance's largest exercise of the year, Steadfast Dart 26, which began in Germany in January 2026 and is scheduled to continue until March 2026. The exercise brings together approximately 10,000 troops, over 1,500 military vehicles, and 17 naval assets from ten NATO member states.

General Ingo Gerhartz, Commander of NATO's Joint Force Command in Brunssum, highlighted Türkiye's prominent role in the exercise. Speaking in an interview, Gerhartz stated that

Türkiye had provided "by far the largest contribution" to Steadfast Dart 26, particularly through the deployment of the amphibious assault ship TCG Anadolu, accompanying naval assets, and ground forces.

Türkiye deployed approximately 2,000 personnel and military equipment across a distance of around 6,450 kilometres to Germany, demonstrating its operational readiness and commitment to NATO's collective defence. The Turkish contingent includes amphibious and naval units operating under the Allied Reaction Force (ARF), a high-readiness multinational force established in 2024 to strengthen deterrence and enable rapid deployment in response to potential threats.

The exercise focuses on testing NATO's ability to rapidly reinforce its eastern and northern regions, particularly in the context of evolving security dynamics following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. NATO officials noted that contributions from Türkiye, alongside other allied forces, reflect the Alliance's unity and readiness to defend its territory and ensure regional stability.

AYŞE NAZ KARA CROWNED CHAMPION IN NATURAL SCIENCES AT COPERNICUS OLYMPIAD



Ayşe Naz Kara, a high school student living in Hatay, has been crowned world champion in Natural Sciences at the prestigious International Copernicus Olympiad, earning the title of "Absolute Winner" at the global finals held in Houston, USA from 21-26 January.

17 years old Ayşe Naz Kara, who answered all the questions correctly in her category at the Olympiad, received a 2,000 dollars scholarship to attend the

event, which was organised in collaboration with NASA and Rice University. Kara, who took lessons from NASA professors, received her medal from NASA professor Dr. Kumar Krishen. Ayşe Naz Kara stated that being a world champion is both a very surprising and an incredible feeling, and she expressed her desire to make Türkiye proud in the future with gold medals she wins in different parts of the world.

GÖBEKLİTEPE AND TAŞ TEPELER EXHIBITION OPENS IN BERLIN WITH RARE NEOLITHIC FINDS

Türkiye is bringing the story of one of humanity's earliest turning points to Europe with a major exhibition in Berlin focused on Göbeklitepe and the Taş Tepeler region. Titled "Discovering Society: Life at Göbeklitepe and Taş Tepeler 12,000 Years Ago," the exhibition is being presented through a collaboration between Türkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Vorderasiatisches Museum, part of the Berlin State Museums.

The exhibition opened on 10 February 2026 at the James-Simon Galerie on Berlin's Museum Island and runs until 19 July 2026. It features 89 Neolithic artefacts from the Şanlıurfa Museum collection, along with

four replicas. Notably, 44 original works are on display for the first time, providing new insight into the material culture of early communities.

The exhibition examines the transition from hunter-gatherer life to settled societies, highlighting the development of shared rituals, belief systems, artistic expression, and new social structures. Architectural elements, symbolic imagery, reliefs, and figurative sculptures illustrate how early groups gathered and structured communal life. Photographs of the Taş Tepeler sites by acclaimed artist Isabel Muñoz add a contemporary visual perspective to the archaeological narrative.



TURKISH AND BULGARIAN SCIENTISTS STUDY ANTARCTICA'S ANCIENT GEOLOGICAL RECORD



Turkish and Bulgarian scientists are conducting joint fieldwork in Antarctica to better understand the continent's geological history and its implications for Earth's changing climate. This research is part of Türkiye's 10th National Antarctic Science Expedition, coordinated by the TÜBİTAK Polar Research Institute and based at Horseshoe Island, where Türkiye maintains a research camp.

As part of ongoing teamwork between the two countries, teams are collecting rock samples and recording volcanic and melted rock formations that show millions of years of changes in the land and environment. Researchers

point out that Antarctica's rocks are closely linked to the breakup of the ancient supercontinent Gondwana and the continent's subsequent movement to its current location. The area also holds signs of big climate changes, including the start of widespread ice cover about 34 million years ago and later periods when the ice sheets grew and shrank.

On Horseshoe Island, scientists have identified widespread Jurassic Cretaceous magmatic rocks and volcanic units formed in submarine or shallow-marine environments. Bulgarian researchers have also

documented gabbro exposures linked to copper mineralisation, including surface occurrences of oxidised copper minerals such as malachite and azurite. These findings suggest a potentially extensive mineral system at depth.

In addition to mapping Antarctica's geological evolution, this collaboration aims to strengthen scientific capacity and provide data for international studies on long-term climate dynamics. The expedition's findings are expected to inform future analyses and publications, further contributing to Türkiye's polar science programme.

TURKISH PHYSICIANS REPRESENTED EUROPE IN PRESTIGIOUS MEDICINE CONFERENCE AND WON FIRST PLACE



At the annual meeting of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) in New Orleans, US, Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine achieved a major accomplishment. The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a leading professional organisation in the fields of cardiovascular and thoracic surgery. Research Assistant Nazlı Melis Coşkun from the Department of Cardiovascular Surgery at Faculty of Medicine and

Research Assistant Atilay Koltuk from Department of Thoracic Surgery at Faculty of Medicine, representing Europe, defeated a team from Yale University and won first place.

This achievement not only highlights the academic excellence and global competitiveness of Hacettepe University but also underscores the dedication and talent of young Turkish professionals.

By earning this prestigious recognition on an international stage, the team has brought pride to both their institution and the broader European medical community. Their success serves as an inspiring example of how rigorous training, innovation, and collaboration can lead to world-class accomplishments in the field of medicine.

TÜRKİYE RANKED AMONG WORLD'S TOP FIVE WRECK DIVING DESTINATIONS IN 2026 READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

Türkiye has been ranked among the world's "Top Five Wreck Diving Destinations" in the 2026 Readers' Choice Awards organised by Scuba Diving Magazine, strengthening its position in global dive tourism. The annual awards, now in their 33rd year, were determined by the votes of more than 10,000 readers who evaluated destinations where they had dived over the past two years.

In addition to its top five placement in wreck diving, Türkiye received recognition in seven separate categories, underscoring its diverse underwater offerings. A key factor in the country's growing international profile is the Gelibolu Historical Underwater Park, opened

to dive tourism in 2021 through initiatives led by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Gallipoli Historical Site Directorate. The park is regarded as one of the world's first underwater museums to preserve World War I shipwrecks in their original locations, combining historical heritage with recreational diving.

The awards ceremony was held on 17 January in Germany Boot Düsseldorf, the world's largest international water sports exhibition. Turkish tourism authorities and sector representatives attended the event, highlighting ongoing efforts in sustainable dive tourism and marine conservation.

Officials from the Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency emphasised that destinations stretching from Kaş and Fethiye to Bodrum and Çanakkale offer high-quality experiences for divers of all levels. Beyond wreck diving, Türkiye was also recognised for its value for money, cave and cavern dives, beginner-friendly sites, shore dives, wall dives and snorkelling opportunities.

With a coastline exceeding 8,000 kilometres along the Mediterranean and Aegean seas, Türkiye continues to consolidate its competitive edge through strategic destination management and a sustainability-oriented tourism model.



TURKISH INSECTOLOGIST COUPLE NAMED THEIR DISCOVERIES AFTER TURKISH CITY HAKKARI



ATurkish entomologist couple, Prof. Levent Gültekin and Assoc. Prof. Neslihan Gültekin, have made a remarkable contribution to science by discovering two new insect species in eastern Türkiye. The discoveries were made in Erzurum's Pasinler district and Hakkari's Zap Valley, regions known for their rich biodiversity and unique ecological conditions.

One of the species, identified feeding on the artemisia plant in Pasinler, was named *Pholicodes Artemisiae*. The other, found in

Hakkari, was named *Pholicodes Hakkarius* in honor of the region where it was discovered. Both species belong to a distinctive group of beetles that have lost their hind wings, a rare evolutionary adaptation that makes them particularly interesting to the scientific community.

The findings, published in the internationally recognised peer-reviewed journal *PeerJ*, highlight the importance of Türkiye's ecosystems, which exhibit a high level of endemism, meaning many

species are unique to specific regions and cannot be found elsewhere in the world. The researchers emphasised that these discoveries not only enrich global scientific knowledge but also underscore the need to protect Türkiye's diverse habitats, which continue to reveal new and unique species.

This achievement reflects the dedication and expertise of Turkish scientists in advancing entomological research and further positions Türkiye as a country of significant importance in global biodiversity studies.

AS EUROPE REPOSITIONS, ITS APPROACH TO TÜRKİYE EVOLVES

Recent high-level engagements and debates in European policy circles suggest that Türkiye-EU relations are increasingly shaped by shared strategic concerns over connectivity, economic security and regional stability.

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The recent visit of Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos to Ankara in early February forms part of a broader recalibration in Türkiye-EU relations. Although the visit did not produce concrete steps on accession chapters or formally launch Customs Union modernisation talks, its timing and messaging signal a subtle but discernible shift in Brussels' approach to Türkiye. The joint statement issued following the meeting between Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Commissioner Kos reaffirmed Türkiye's candidate status and underscored the strategic value of the relationship for regional stability and economic resilience. While similar language has appeared before, the emphasis on connectivity, resilience and multidimensional cooperation reflects a broader evolution in EU strategic thinking. The focus extended beyond bilateral trade or conditionality, placing the relationship within a wider geopolitical landscape spanning the Black Sea, South Caucasus and Central Asia.

This gradual reframing aligns with structural changes in the international environment. Over the past two years, the EU has increasingly articulated its external economic policy around resilience, economic security and diversification. Russia's war against Ukraine, disruptions to global supply chains and uncertainties in transatlantic relations have reinforced the need for alternative corridors, reliable partners and secure interconnections. Against this backdrop, geography and infrastructure are once again gaining strategic weight.

Connectivity as Geoeconomic Strategy

Connectivity has become a core pillar of EU external engagement, now encompassing energy security, digital integration, trade facilitation and regulatory alignment. Initiatives such as the Global Gateway and renewed cooperation with Central



Asia and the South Caucasus reflect the EU's ambition to expand its strategic presence while mitigating vulnerabilities.

Commissioner Kos's remarks in Munich highlighted Türkiye's relevance for Europe-Central Asia connectivity discussions, particularly concerning the TransCaspian route. More broadly, in the ongoing reassessment of Europe's external strategy, there is increasing recognition that a more fragmented international order calls for pragmatic engagement with the wider neighbourhood. Cooperation is being anchored in regional realities and shared interests, rather than viewed solely through the lens of enlargement policy.

Within this evolving strategic setting, Türkiye's geographic position offers practical advantages across transport, energy and trade corridors linking Europe to the Caucasus and Central Asia. Infrastructure networks and logistical chains connecting European markets with eastern partners increasingly intersect with Turkish territory. However, while Türkiye's role is significant, it is not the sole determinant of Europe's connectivity agenda; it constitutes one important pathway among several regional options.

Navigating Interdependence in a Complex Political Context

For much of the past decade, Türkiye-EU relations were shaped by political tensions and stalled accession negotiations. Rule of law concerns, differences over regional issues and domestic political developments contributed to prolonged stagnation. The joint statement in Ankara reaffirmed that discussions on democratic standards and the rule

of law continue to form an integral element of the relationship.

At the same time, a more functional, issue based mode of cooperation has regained traction. Over the past year, five high level dialogues have taken place on trade, the economy, migration and security, signalling efforts to manage interdependence through structured technical and political channels.

Concrete steps, such as efforts to improve access to multiple entry Schengen visas for Turkish citizens and ongoing EU support for Türkiye's substantial refugee hosting commitments, illustrate incremental progress within established frameworks. The gradual return of European Investment Bank operations in Türkiye expands the financial dimension of cooperation, linking it more directly to EU objectives on climate action, sustainability and innovation.

These developments point toward a pragmatic form of convergence, where persistent political differences coexist with deep economic ties. The EU remains Türkiye's largest trading partner, and integrated value chains in manufacturing, machinery and textiles demonstrate the depth of this interdependence. As the EU reassesses its global trade relationships, these linkages represent both an opportunity and a set of constraints for both sides.

Customs Union Modernisation in a Shifting Trade Environment

Modernising the Customs Union remains a central but politically sensitive issue. Minister Fidan stressed the importance of updating the arrangement in light of global economic shifts, the green and digital transitions and the expanding

network of bilateral trade agreements. Numerous studies support extending the Customs Union to services, digital trade and public procurement.

However, political dynamics inside the EU, including enlargement fatigue, rule of law concerns and internal sensitivities, have delayed the launch of negotiations. At the same time, the EU's trade policy has grown more assertive, shaped by industrial policy tools and new trade agreements. For Türkiye, which is economically integrated with the EU without participating in its decision making structures, these shifts can create asymmetries.

In this context, discussions on connectivity and Customs Union modernisation increasingly intersect. As the EU expands its trade and connectivity initiatives across neighbouring regions, ensuring coherence with its most integrated non-member partner becomes strategically relevant. The debate therefore extends beyond market access to the broader architecture of Europe's external economic relations.

Security Debates and Regional Stability

The Munich Security Conference provided a wider lens through which economic and connectivity debates intersect with security concerns. Discussions emphasised Europe's growing focus on defence capabilities, strategic autonomy and democratic resilience. President Ursula von der Leyen's call for enhanced European defence capacity reflected a broader recognition that geopolitical fragmentation requires coordinated responses.

Türkiye, as a key NATO ally bordering multiple conflict zones, forms part of this strategic environment. The Black Sea region has gained prominence since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Analysts increasingly argue that regional stability in the Black Sea requires structured coordination with Türkiye as a central coastal actor. While policy differences persist, including on sanctions implementation and aspects of regional diplomacy, cooperation remains strategically important.

Commissioner Kos's references to sanctions compliance and Cyprus underscore the EU's ongoing

emphasis on legal and normative consistency. This combination of strategic pragmatism and normative expectations characterises the current phase of engagement.

Toward a Structured Strategic Dialogue

Taken together, recent developments do not amount to a dramatic transformation but rather a steady recalibration. Türkiye now features more visibly in Brussels' discussions on connectivity, resilience and geoeconomic strategy. This shift does not resolve existing political concerns or revive accession talks on its own; it reflects a recognition that managing interdependence with key neighbours forms part of the EU's response to global fragmentation.

For the EU, closer alignment with Türkiye in connectivity and resilience offers practical benefits in supply chain diversification, infrastructure development and regional stability. For Türkiye, alignment with these priorities can reinforce its role as a central economic and logistical hub, provided regulatory convergence and institutional cooperation continue.

The challenge now lies in giving this multidimensional engagement greater structure. Dialogue mechanisms provide flexibility, but sustained progress requires clearer coordination and political commitment. Advancing Customs Union modernisation, embedding connectivity initiatives within coherent regional frameworks and deepening cooperation on green and digital transitions would help anchor the relationship more firmly.

The visit to Ankara reflects a relationship adjusting in tone, even if its formal architecture remains unchanged. Türkiye-EU engagement is increasingly influenced by shared exposure to supply chain risks, regional instability and geographic realities. These pressures do not erase long-standing differences, but they reshape the context in which they are managed. The direction of travel will ultimately depend on whether both sides are willing to turn strategic awareness into consistent, predictable cooperation that can endure beyond immediate political cycles.