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MOGHERINI AND HAHN VISITED ANKARA FOR HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL DIALOGUE MEETING

Turkey and the EU held a “positive, constructive, open and efficient” High Level Political Dialogue meeting in which they discussed Turkey’s long-stalled membership bid and issues of common interest.

On 22 November 2018, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn visited Turkey for the High Level Political Dialogue between Turkey and EU. The Turkish delegation was led by Foreign Affairs Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, who is also in charge of EU affairs. At the meeting, all issues of common interest and concern, such as developments in Syria, Iran, and Iraq as well as bilateral relations between the EU and Turkey, cooperation on migration and counter-terrorism and other important sectoral issues were discussed.

Following the Turkey-EU High Level Political Dialogue meeting, the parties issued a joint statement in which they underlined the strategic importance of Turkey-EU relations. Moreover, they stated that they remain committed to maintaining an open and frank dialogue, to discussing issues high on both of their agendas in a comprehensive manner in view of addressing common challenges and to cooperating in essential areas of joint interest.

Considering the recent statement of Commissioner Hahn in which he called for an end to accession negotiations with Turkey, it was important to underline that Turkey’s accession process can provide an important framework for fully realising the potential of the EU-Turkey relationship as well as for the economic, social and political reforms in Turkey. As it is known, during the Reform Action Group meeting of 29 August 2018, Turkey clearly



signalled its determination to rapidly undertake reforms in the area of the rule of law and fundamental rights. It was stated that the standards of the Council of Europe and EU norms would act as an anchor for these reforms. During the High Level Political Dialogue meeting, Turkey reiterated its commitment to the EU reform process and both sides discussed ongoing updates to the Judicial Reform Strategy and the possible contribution of the EU.

Both parties also repeated their strong will to enhance cooperation to combat terrorism. Turkey and the EU are pursuing

concrete actions to increase cooperation to counter the threat of terrorism in an effective manner.

Another important item on the agenda of the meeting was visa liberalisation. The two sides reconfirmed their intention to continue the visa liberalisation dialogue to implement all pending benchmarks. For that purpose, Turkey has started to issue second-generation passports as of 2 April and the negotiations for an operational cooperation agreement between the EU and Turkey on exchange of personal data between Europol and the Turkish authorities competent

for fighting serious crime and terrorism will start on 30 November.

As it is well known, over the recent years Turkey has become a home to the largest refugee population in the world and exerts outstanding efforts to provide access to services such as education and health. During the meeting, both sides reiterated the contribution of the 18 March 2016 Statement has allowed for a unique model of cooperation between Turkey and the EU to managing irregular migration.

Recently another controversial issue in Turkey-EU relations was

the financial cooperation within the framework of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). During the meeting, both sides underlined the importance of IPA funds for supporting Turkey’s compliance with the *EU acquis* in various areas.

The meeting was finalised with the agreement by both parties to intensify their cooperation through a series of high level dialogues on economy, energy, transport and they agreed to work on improving the functioning of the Customs Union and on its modernisation as soon as circumstances allow.



“THE CONTINUATION OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE IS OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE FOR TURKEY-EU RELATIONS”



IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu issued a statement on the Turkey-EU High Level Political Dialogue meeting which took place on 22 November 2018. IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu stated that with the continuation of political dialogue, both the EU reform process in Turkey and foreign and security policy will be positively affected. Zeytinoğlu continued as follows:

“It is significant that the Turkey-EU High Level Political Dialogue

meeting took place in a positive and constructive atmosphere. Although there are some differences of opinion, it is pleasing to see a mutual willingness to cooperate and improve relations. We support our Foreign Minister and Chief Negotiator Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu’s emphasis regarding Turkey’s candidate status and determination for the opening of new chapters, modernising the Customs Union and fulfilling the criteria for visa

liberalisation. Moving forward in these fields and particularly in the accession process would be an important gain not only for Turkey, but also for the EU.”

IKV Chairman also commented on High Representative Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn’s statements: “We consider the open and constructive approach to cooperation, which we see in the statements by Mogherini and Hahn representing the EU side, valuable. While Ms.

Mogherini stated that Turkey was a candidate country and a strategic partner, Mr. Hahn referred to Turkey as a close neighbour. The Commission as the EU’s executive body and the guardian of Treaties, should be a close follower of Turkey’s EU candidacy and negotiation process. Again, we consider it positive that these two officials have emphasised Turkey’s status as a stable, democratic and prosperous country and the cooperation in the foreign policy domain, especially concerning the security challenges in the neighbouring region.”

Lastly, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu expressed his wish for the continuation of the high level dialogue process between the EU and Turkey and declared that he hopes these mechanisms would reflect positively on processes such as Turkey’s accession negotiations, the modernisation of Customs Union and visa liberalisation: “The high level dialogue mechanism with the EU in fields such as politics, economy and energy demonstrates that the relations are getting normalised. However, we should go beyond this and work on concrete projects and programmes without further loss of time. First of all, the reform steps mentioned in the conclusions of the Reform Action Group meeting in

August and the realisation of judicial reform will mark important steps. Following these, the resumption of negotiations blocked by the EU, in particular the opening of Chapters 23 and 24 on the rule of law, the start of negotiations for the modernisation of the Customs Union and the finalisation of visa liberalisation remain the next targets. It goes without saying that an EU, of which Turkey is a part, would become a more powerful player both in its immediate surroundings and globally. On the other hand, we should also closely monitor the process that the EU is going through. The rise of the far-right in many EU countries, including Germany, and the weakness of the mainstream parties show that these groups will be effective in the European Parliament elections next May. Following the Brexit process, the EU needs to reform its institutional structure and make it more effective. All these processes and the increasing influence of countries such as China and Russia make the challenges that the EU is facing more difficult. In the face of this situation, what we should do is to explain that Turkey should not be seen as a problem for the EU, but rather a valuable gain and we should assert the positive role Turkey can play in the EU’s future.”

IKV CHAIRMAN ASSESSED EP’S DRAFT REPORT ON TURKEY

On 15 November 2018, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu assessed the EP’s draft Turkey Report following MEP Kati Piri’s revelations:

“When we take a look at the report as an initial draft, it is obvious to see that the rapporteur tries to reach a compromise reflecting the preferences of different political groups in the EP. Within the report, there is a call for the Commission and the Member States to officially suspend accession negotiations with Turkey. Yet, a dialogue with Turkey on democracy is recommended and the use of IPA funds during this process is advocated. However, as these funds are normally channelled to prepare a country for the membership goal, there is no way Turkey can benefit from these funds after the suspension of accession negotiations. Therefore, we see this proposal as a contradictory one.

The report includes the criticism that the accession negotiations have not been sustained as an effective tool because of the vetoes in the EU Council. The report also leaves the door

open for the modernisation of Customs Union. We welcome this specific recommendation.

The importance of visa liberalisation for all Turkish citizens is emphasised in the report and bringing the process to a positive conclusion after the fulfilment of all remaining criteria is also underlined. Considering the fact that EP stands as one of the institutions giving the last call on that issue, we see the positive attitude coming from the EP side as a significant development for the visa process.

Even though the suspension proposal is presented as a result of Turkey’s divergence from EU norms, consequently it would be to the benefit of the rising far-right tendencies within the EU.

Taking the state of play of EU politics into account, it is obvious that once a decision for suspension is taken, it would be really difficult to come to a point where the negotiations would be recommenced with the consensus of all Member States. Hence, suspending the negotiations would imply the



complete disappearance of Turkey’s EU objective. Considering that suggestions such as privileged partnership are nonsense, dropping the membership objective off the agenda is likely

to destroy Turkey-EU relations and endanger the region’s security.

What is more, it is clear that these kinds of sanctions will not encourage Turkey for reforms; to the contrary,

they will alienate Turkey from the EU. We are concerned and disappointed by the draft report’s non-constructive recommendation proposing the suspension of the negotiations”.

İKv AGENDA

“ENDING TURKEY’S MEMBERSHIP PROCESS WILL ALSO BE TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE EU”



İKv Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu commented on Commissioner Hahn’s remarks foreseeing ending accession negotiations with Turkey.

Zeytinoğlu assessed the statement coming from the European Commission, an institution that has traditionally supported Turkey’s accession talks, as extremely unfortunate and stated: “I found Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn’s interview to *Die Welt* newspaper really unfortunate. It was stated that the membership process with Turkey should be ended and it should be replaced by a different process. Until now, we have heard of the suspension of the negotiations with Turkey from some

Member States like Austria. However, European Commission, which is the the EU’s executive body, has displayed an attitude in favour of continuing the negotiations. In its latest Turkey Report published in April 2018, the Commission gave the message that the door remained open for Turkey depending on the fulfilment of the necessary criteria. The Commission has a special place in the EU. We are saying that it is the protector of EU law and ‘Guardian of the Treaties’. Therefore, a statement that does not take institutional and legal aspects of the relations with Turkey into account from such an institution is highly concerning”.

Stressing that any alternative falling short of full membership was unthinkable for Turkey, Chairman Zeytinoğlu continued: “Commissioner Hahn proposes that the accession talks should be cut off and a different kind of relationship should be put forward, which brings to mind models such as ‘privileged partnership’ and ‘strategic partnership’. We have been hearing about these proposals from time to time since 2004. However, nothing significant has been suggested for this relationship model called ‘privileged partnership’.

Turkey is already a partner of the EU fundamentally by means of the Ankara Agreement. After all this time, full membership is the only objective valid for Turkey. There is no alternative to that. From the fight against terrorism to foreign policy and from trade to energy, the ideal partnership on the issues that the EU needs Turkey, can only be realised with Turkey’s full membership perspective. If the full membership perspective is removed, Turkey’s view and approach to the EU would change.”

Stating that Commissioner Hahn’s statement should be alarming for Turkey, Chairman Zeytinoğlu concluded his words as follows: “It is worrying that the statement regarding the ending of Turkey’s accession talks is made by an authority responsible for conducting enlargement talks. It demonstrates that we, as Turkey, should take steps to revitalise the process without further loss of time. Our EU accession process has not been advancing for two years. We cannot tolerate losing two more years either. We should aim to put the EU process back on track by taking steps in the rule of law domain and by intensifying our diplomatic efforts.”

İKv CHAIRMAN DELIVERED A SPEECH AT KARTEPE SUMMIT



İKv Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas attended the Kartepe Summit on 26-28 October 2018 which was organised with the theme “Migration, Refugees and Humanity”.

During the panel on “Civilisation and Migration” held during the first day of the summit, İKv Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu stressed the importance of international cooperation on migration and asylum and stated that the fight against the motivations which lead people to leave their homes and to migrate should be done collectively. İKv Chairman Zeytinoğlu also emphasised the need for the utilisation of infrastructure projects in places where refugees are concentrated with the project finance

provided for Syrians in accordance with 18 March 2016 Turkey-EU Statement.

Speaking at the panel on “Migration and Economy”, İKv Secretary General Nas pointed out that advanced Western economies were seeking qualified migrants and stated that countries such as Australia, the US, Germany and the UK were implementing various programmes to attract qualified migrants. Stressing that migrants contribute in the most dynamic sectors of the economy, Assoc. Prof. Nas stated that migration generated 47 percent increase in the labour force in the US, and 70 percent increase in that of Europe, in the period 2004-2014.



TIMELINE NOVEMBER 2018

1	○	MEP assistants paid a three-day visit to Turkey in the context of an İKv project.
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6	○	Commissioner Hahn, in an interview with <i>Die Welt</i> , made controversial remarks on Turkey’s EU accession.
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10		World leaders gathered in Paris to mark the centenary of WWI armistice.
11	○	İKv Secretary General attended the Paris Peace Forum.
12	○	Vice - President Oktay met with Italian Prime Minister Conte.
13	○	Vice-President Oktay met with High Representative Mogherini.
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18		İKv organised a panel on “Intellectual Property Rights and Personal Data in Digital World”.
19	○	
20	○	İKv discussed Turkish-German relations at a panel.
21	○	Draft Report on Turkey was discussed at AFET Committee meeting.
22	○	Turkey-EU High Level Political Dialogue Meeting was held.
23	○	İKv organised a conference on EU Studies.
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25	○	EU 27 leaders endorsed the Brexit deal at Brussels summit.
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28	○	İKv panel on “Brexit, the EU’s Future and Turkey” took place.
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IKV DISCUSSED THE DRAFT TURKEY REPORT WITH MEPS

IKV's Brussels Representative Haluk Nuray and Senior Researcher Yeliz Şahin, held meetings with a number of MEPs concerning the 2018 Report on Turkey the first draft of which was revealed in the second half of November 2018. During the meetings with MEPs Nedzmi Ali (ALDE, BG), Ilhan Kyuchyuk (ALDE, BG), Miltos Kyrkos (S&D, GR) and European Parliament's Rapporteur for Turkey Kati Piri (S&D, NL), the draft report and Turkey-EU relations were thoroughly discussed.

During the meetings, the IKV side conveyed their concerns regarding paragraph 13 of the draft report suggesting the formal suspension of Turkey's EU accession talks. IKV is determined to continue its exchanges with MEPs and will aim to bring MEPs around the same table with Turkish civil society representatives, business people and academics in a sincere atmosphere prior to the debate on the draft Turkey Report which is scheduled for the plenary session in March 2019.



MEP ASSISTANTS VISITED TURKEY IN THE CONTEXT OF IKV PROJECT

A delegation consisting of MEP assistants paid a working visit to Turkey on 31 October-2 November within the scope of a joint project by IKV and the EP Turkey Forum. In the context of the project, the delegation consisting of the Secretary General of EP Turkey Forum Laura Batalla Adam, Franc Bogovič's (EPP, Slovenia) assistant Gregor Košir, Urmas Paet's (ALDE, Estonia) assistant Kati Parn, Claudia Ţapardel's (S&D, Romania) assistant Catalina-Elena Prisacaru and Javi López's (S&D, Spain) assistant Aranzazu Calvera Coscolluela, held meetings in Istanbul and Ankara.

In Istanbul, the delegation, which was accompanied by IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Researcher Ahmet Ceran and Junior Researchers Selvi Eren and Merve Özcan had meetings at the Istanbul Policy

Center (IPC) and Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD).

In Ankara, the delegation was received by Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı, Turkey's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs and Mehmet Kasım Gülpınar, Chairman of Turkish Grand National Assembly's Committee on EU Harmonisation. IKV Secretary General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Research Director Çiisel İleri and Researcher Ahmet Ceran also joined the meetings in Ankara.

On the last day of the visit, IKV brought MEP assistants together with NGO representatives working on migration in Turkey in Istanbul. The visit concluded with a final session at the IKV head office during which the participants exchanged views with IKV researchers on different dimensions of Turkey-EU relations.



INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS DISCUSSED AT IKV PANEL



On 19 November, IKV, in cooperation with the American Business Forum in Turkey (AmCham Turkey) and Esin Attorney Partnership, organised a panel entitled "Intellectual Property Rights and Personal Data in a Digital World".

Following the opening speech by AmCham Turkey Board Member and IBM Turkey General Manager Defne Tozan, Senior Associates Mine Güner and Can Sözer from Esin Attorney Partnership, along with Personal Data Protection Board Expert Cennet

Alas Şekerbay participated in the panel.

During the panel, it was scrutinised whether the intellectual property rights could be granted to the evolving artificial intelligence and it was underlined that no country has adequate laws regulating artificial intelligence. Information on KVKK and GDPR was also given, and it was expressed that despite the differences between the two regulations, Turkey is carrying on work to harmonise the KVKK to the GDPR.

IKV ORGANISED A PANEL ON TURKISH-GERMAN RELATIONS

The IKV panel entitled "Turkey-Germany Relations and their Implications for the EU Process" was held on 20 November 2018 in association with Friedrich Naumann Foundation and EuroPolitika in Istanbul. Senior Lecturer at Istanbul Bilgi University and Jean Monnet Chair of European Politics of Interculturalism Prof. Ayhan Kaya, *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP) Senior Researcher Günter Seufert and Senior Advisor to Chairman of the Executive Board on Public Affairs in the Eczacıbaşı Holding, Devrim Çubukçu spoke at the panel



moderated by IKV Deputy Chairman Prof. Halûk Kabaaloğlu. At the panel, during which the panellists discussed the reasons behind the rise of the far-right in Germany and future prospects for Turkish-German relations, it was reminded that relations with eastern countries could not be seen as an alternative to the ones with the West.

TURKISH AND RUSSIAN LEADERS INAUGURATED THE OFFSHORE SECTION OF TURKSTREAM

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin participated in the ceremony for the completion of offshore section of Turkish Stream Project (TurkStream) in Istanbul on 19 November 2018. This marked the second visit of Vladimir Putin to Turkey in a time shorter than a month. Russian news agencies have been drawing attention to the increasing intensity of the diplomatic contacts between Turkey and Russia, with their leaders meeting more than six times since the beginning of 2018.

The TurkStream gas pipeline will carry Russian gas to Turkey over the Black Sea and from there to south and southeast Europe. Its name has been given by President Erdoğan and the signatures for the project were put in October 2016 during the first official visit of Putin to Istanbul after the jet crisis of November 2015. Gazprom, Russia's energy giant, launched the construction of the offshore section of TurkStream in May 2017. The project envisions the construction of two parallel pipelines, each 939 kilometres

long. The first pipeline is going to be for Turkey and will supply 35 percent of the natural gas needed for the country's domestic consumption. The second pipeline will serve the needs of the countries in south and southeast Europe. The pipelines' capacities are expressed to be 15.75 billion cubic meters gas per year. The first stream of gas is foreseen to flow through the pipeline by the end of 2019 following the completion of necessary tests.

During the ceremony, President Erdoğan expressed that the project has a number of advantages not only for Turkey but also for the region and other peripheral countries. Similarly, Russian President Vladimir Putin underlined his country's willingness to increase the bilateral trade volume with Turkey to 100 billion dollars. Russian leader's emphasis on the mutual trust between Turkey and Russia for the success of TurkStream was of utmost importance for a rapprochement between the two countries. Moreover, Russian President Putin referred to the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant as a sign of the improvement in Turkey-Russia relations.



COMMISSIONER HAHN'S REMARKS ON TURKEY'S EU ACCESSION SPARKED REACTION

Hahn's controversial remarks calling for ending Turkey's EU accession talks were later dismissed by the Commission Spokesperson Schinas.



On 6 November 2018, Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, in an interview with German daily *Die Welt* made some controversial remarks on Turkey's accession talks. In his statement drawing reactions both from the Turkish and European side, Hahn argued that in the long term it would be "more honest and realistic for the bloc to give up talks on membership for Turkey". The Commissioner argued that the continuation of the accession process was only serving to restrain other possibilities for cooperation such as strategic partnership based on transactional relations. Turkish authorities completely reject this option of strategic partnership which was also suggested by French President Macron. Turkey insists on the adoption of European core values as well as European standards and regulations and stresses that it would not

possible to define Turkey-EU relations solely on the basis of converging interests particularly in trade and security domains.

Similarly, the spokesperson of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas said that the EU has chosen to continue to negotiate with Turkey and only Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker could state the official position of the European Commission on the accession talks. Underlining the fact that Johannes Hahn's statements were not representing the official view of the Commission, Schinas referred to the Varna meeting held on 26 March during the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU. The spokesperson reminded the statements of Juncker and President of the European Council Donald Tusk underscoring the need for deep reform and good neighbourly relations in the accession process.

TWO NEW CROSSING POINTS OPENED IN CYPRUS



On 12 November 2018, two new crossing points in Dherynia/Derinya and Lefka-Aplici/Lefke-Apliç were opened to mutual crossings, marking a first in eight years. With the opening of the Dherynia/Derinya border crossing in the northwest and Lefka-Aplici/Lefke-Apliç border crossing in the east of the island, the total number of crossing points reached nine. The opening of additional crossing points is perceived as a vital step for the revival of the UN-sponsored Cyprus peace talks which collapsed in July 2017.

This development was welcomed by the UN Secretary General's Special

Representative on Cyprus Elizabeth Spehar, who in a statement on the opening of the two border crossings expressed her belief that the crossing points would play an important role in helping increase people to people contacts, contributing to build much-needed trust and confidence between the communities on the island. The opening of additional crossing points was among the confidence building measures initially agreed between the two leaders in May 2015. The opening of the two crossing points was announced following the informal leaders' meeting on 26 October 2018.

THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS ASSESSED THE FACILITY FOR REFUGEES IN TURKEY



The European Court of Auditors (ECA) published on 13 November 2018 a report on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. The report assesses the use of the first tranche of under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey which supports refugees and their Turkish hosting communities. According to the report, the humanitarian projects have helped refugees address their basic needs but improvements needed to be made to deliver better value for money.

As known, Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world with nearly 4 million people mainly from Syria. The Facility for Refugees in Turkey is the EU's response to the European Council's call for significant additional funding to support refugees in Turkey. It is a mechanism for coordinating and streamlining aid from the EU and its Member States supporting humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance, with a total financing of 6 billion euros. ECA's report examines whether the facility effectively supported the refugees in Turkey by

focusing on the management of the instrument and on the results achieved so far. According to the report, the first tranche of this instrument corresponding to 3 billion euros, disbursed over the 2016-2017 period has provided a swift response to the crisis in challenging circumstances. The projects helped refugees address their basic needs and had been very effective allowing 500 thousand children to gain access to education and 1.2 million refugees to receive monthly cash transfers.

The report underlines that the instrument did not always deliver the expected value for money. Main shortcomings identified are namely; the complexity and excessive number of instruments used by the Commission, the lack of cost control and inconsistencies in cash flow. Turkey had repeatedly indicated that the promised amount had not been fully made available and that the aid was being released too slowly. While all the humanitarian projects audited have provided useful assistance to

refugees, half of these projects have not yet achieved their planned outputs and nine out of ten projects have had to be extended. The third tranche of the Turkey Refugee Facility is one of the points of disagreement between the EP and the Council for the 2019 budget. Parliament wishes for greater participation by the Member States and a contribution from the European budget limited to 1 billion euros.

The report recommends that, in the future, the European Commission should better address refugees' needs for municipal infrastructure and socioeconomic support, improve the streamlining and complementarity of assistance, implement a strategy for the transition from humanitarian to development assistance, improve the efficiency of cash-assistance projects, with the collaboration of Turkish authorities address the need to improve the operating environment for NGOs and scale up monitoring and reporting of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S DRAFT TURKEY REPORT WAS REVEALED

Rapporteur Kati Piri's draft Turkey Report, which asks for a formal suspension of the accession negotiations, was met with concern.



European Parliament's Rapporteur for Turkey, Dutch MEP from the S&D Group Kati Piri has released the first draft of the annual 2018 Turkey Report on 14 November 2018. The highly critical draft report, which claims that the relations between the EU and Turkey have become increasingly transactional and asks for the formal suspension of the accession negotiations, has caused controversy.

Rapporteur Piri based her claims on the rule of law breaches as well as

the current nature of the presidential system which was introduced after the 16 April 2017 constitutional referendum in Turkey. Yet, the draft report which was highly critical, included positive signals regarding two crucial ongoing processes namely, talks for the modernisation of the Turkey-EU Customs Union and the visa liberalisation dialogue.

In her report, Piri emphasised that accelerating the process and linking EU

normative conditionality to the Customs Union modernisation talks would be a signal to the broader Turkish public that the EU is not isolating Turkey. Moreover, she underlined the visa liberalisation criteria remained to be fulfilled by the Turkish side. The draft report was discussed by the EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) on 21 November 2018. The AFET members' amendment proposals would be gathered until 11 December 2018.



INTERNATIONAL LEADER RESEARCHERS PROGRAM WAS ANNOUNCED

Minister of Science, Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank announced the ministry's new project called "International Leader Researchers Program" at the Turkish Grand National Assembly's Planning and Budget Committee on 14 November 2018. According to this project, Turkey is aiming to attract qualified researchers and scholars in foreign countries, especially ones practicing high-level scientific and technological studies, to return to Turkey and carry out their studies at Turkey's prestigious academic and industrial institutions, organisations and public institutions.

Within the scope of the program, while the total scholarship starts at 500

thousand liras for young researchers and 1 million liras for more experienced researchers. Researchers will receive 20 thousand liras or 24 liras in scholarship per month depending on their experience level. The financial support will be provided for 24 to 36 months of the project. Doctoral students, who take part in the project, will also be able to benefit from this project, as their and their families' living expenses, insurance and travel expenses will be covered under the project. Minister Mustafa Varank also remarked that social and human sciences will be further supported by Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK).

HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGES

WORLD LEADERS MARK WWI ARMISTICE CENTENARY IN PARIS



World leaders gathered in Paris on 11 November 2018 on the occasion of the commemorations marking the centenary of the armistice that that ended World War I. The commemorative ceremony, which was hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron, was attended by around 70 leaders including President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The WWI commemorations come at a highly critical time for the liberal world order, with populists making strong gains in many

European countries. Addressing world leaders near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the *Arc de Triomphe*, French President Macron warned of the dangers of rising nationalism and stressed the fragility of peace. In his speech, Macron called on world leaders to come together in a joint fight for peace.

In the context of the commemorations, French President Macron together with German Chancellor Merkel and UN Secretary-General Guterres inaugurated the Paris Peace Forum designed to boost multilateralism and the cooperation between nations at a time of tension.



LEADERS OF TURKEY, RUSSIA, GERMANY AND FRANCE GATHERED IN ISTANBUL FOR SYRIA SUMMIT

On 27 October 2018, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hosted German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Istanbul for the four-nation Syria summit. The Syria Summit in Istanbul was significant for being the first Syria Summit held with the participation of Germany and France. The summit's main agenda items were making the agreement over Idlib, which was reached between Turkey and Russia on 17 September in Sochi, permanent along with drawing a road map on the basis of the latest developments in Syria to end the crisis entirely. In the wake of the summit, four leaders organised a joint press conference and published a declaration relying mostly upon cooperation and the need for a political solution.

Following the opening speech by President Erdoğan, the summit was held closed to the press. The leaders discussed the Turkish-Russian agreement to create a demilitarised zone, the

east of Euphrates, the latest developments in Manbij, possible areas of cooperation for a permanent solution in Syria, refugees, delivery of humanitarian aid and reconstruction of the cities destroyed during the Syrian civil war.

In the declaration adopted during the summit, the leaders called for the Syria crisis to be solved by political dialogue within the scope of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Secondly, all leaders expressed their strict opposition to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Thirdly, the leaders called for the completion of the constitution committee for the preparation of the Syrian constitution by the end of 2018 to create a suitable environment for fair and inclusive elections. In addition to preventing new military operations and migration flows from taking place, a political solution that gives the opportunity to Syrian citizens for deciding their future was the most outstanding output of the summit.

TURKISH VICE-PRESIDENT OKTAY VISITED ITALY TO ATTEND LIBYA CONFERENCE



Turkey's Vice-President Fuat Oktay paid a two-day visit to Italy on 12 November 2018 to attend the International Conference on Libya. On the margins of the high-level summit on the future of Libya in Palermo, Vice-President Oktay held a bilateral meeting with Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. During the meeting, bilateral relations between Turkey and Italy were on the agenda.

Along with Vice-President Oktay, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini as well as Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev were the policy leaders attending the summit. However, the Turkish delegation has withdrawn from the summit in the second day because of Ankara's exclusion from some meetings as Turkish

representatives claimed. Since 2011, Libya has been facing a political confrontation between two rival political groups based in Tripoli and Tobruk.

Vice-President Oktay also came together with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini. During the meeting, mutual willingness to improve the bilateral relationship between the EU and Turkey was discussed. High Representative Mogherini and Vice-President Oktay also exchanged views on the EU's continued support for refugees hosted in Turkey and on addressing the main regional crises. Vice-President Oktay and High Representative Mogherini agreed to keep in close contact with a view of continuing to discuss issues of common concern and interest to the benefit of the citizens of both the EU and Turkey.

THE OLDEST KNOWN SANCTUARY GÖBEKLİTEPE PRESENTED AT THE EP



Turkish Research and Business Organisation (TuR&Bo) organised a two-day event in Brussels on 6-7 November with a view to introducing the oldest known sanctuary of the world Göbeklitepe. Göbeklitepe is one of the most revolutionising discoveries of last decades. UNESCO announced its decision made during the ongoing 42nd UNESCO World Heritage Committee session in Manama, Bahrain to add Göbeklitepe to its World Heritage List on 1 July 2018. The coordinator of the Göbeklitepe project, archaeologist Dr. Lee Clare presented the 12,000-year-old settlement. The event

entitled "Göbeklitepe: The Land Where the Cultures Meet. From History to Gastronomy..." started with a gala dinner whose menu was inspired by the gastronomic tradition of south-eastern Turkey blending it with a modern touch.

On the second day of the event, a seminar was held in the EP gathering multiple speakers to present the importance of Göbeklitepe as a historical and cultural heritage site. The opening

of the conference also featured statements by Turkey's Ambassador to Belgium Zeki Levent Gümrükçü, MEPs Nedzhmi Ali and İsmail Ertuğ. As part of the event, a festive gastronomic exhibition, which showcased the glory of the Anatolian cuisine, providing a selection of dishes and treats specific to the region, was held in TOBB's Brussels Representation. The event was attended by many distinguished participants including TOBB Board Member Cihat Lokmanoğlu, TESK President Bendevi Palandöken and KOSGEB Vice-President Tuna Şahin.

EU ENDORSES MAY'S BREXIT PLAN BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN

The EU has agreed to Theresa May's Brexit deal. But challenges remain, since May must now get the UK Parliament to approve the plan amid strong political opposition in Westminster.

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More than two years after the UK voted to break from the EU, UK Prime Minister Theresa May and the leaders of EU 27 approved a hard-fought agreement setting out the terms of the UK's divorce from the bloc.

On 25 November 2018, at a special meeting of the European Council in Brussels, the leaders of the 27 countries remaining in the bloc endorsed both the Withdrawal Agreement which sets out the terms under which the UK will leave the EU in March 2019, and the Political Declaration which establishes the framework for negotiation of a future trade deal. The move is already seen by many as a landmark development, but the process is far from over. Theresa May will have to address powerful criticisms at home and get a deeply divided UK Parliament to approve the plan before the moment when the UK is scheduled to leave the bloc on 29 March 2019.

Key Aspects of the Brexit Deal

The Withdrawal Agreement covers all elements of the UK's withdrawal from the EU including a transition period, the financial settlement, citizens' rights, Protocols on Ireland and Northern Ireland as well as a range of other separation issues. In this manner, Britain will leave the EU on 29 March 2019 but remain inside the bloc's single market and be bound by its rules until the end of 2020, while the two sides work out a new trade relationship. The transition period can be extended for up to two years before 1 July 2020, if both parties decide more time is needed. Secondly, UK agrees to pay about 39 billion pounds to cover contributions to EU programs the UK made while a member for the funding period that runs to 2020. EU citizens living in



the UK, and Britons elsewhere in the bloc, will continue to have the rights to live and work.

The Withdrawal Agreement includes a Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland and a legally operational backstop, ensuring that the politically sensitive border between Northern Ireland (part of the UK) and the Republic of Ireland (an EU country) remains open, even if the UK and EU do not finalise border details in a post-Brexit trade deal. As it is known, Northern Ireland has featured heavily in negotiations on Brexit. Both the UK and the EU want to avoid a physical border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. But trying to find a way to avoid this if the UK leaves the EU without agreeing a

trade deal has proved problematic. Therefore, they have agreed to put in place a backstop – that is a sort of safety net to make sure a hard border never happens. It would mean that Northern Ireland - but not the rest of the UK - would still follow some EU rules on things such as food products. The Northern Ireland "backstop" is meant to be a last resort - the Prime Minister insists that if all goes as planned it will never be used. Both sides say they hope to have a new deal in place by the end of 2020, so the backstop is never needed.

Leaders of EU 27 also approved the political declaration on future EU-UK relations. The Political Declaration was a document published alongside the Withdrawal

Agreement on 14 November 2018. Whilst the latter outlines the exact plans for the UK leaving the EU, the Political Declaration looks past this to what the future relationship between the two will look like. It will not be legally binding but will form the basis for what a future trade agreement could look like and how relations will work once the UK is no longer a member state. The 26-page document outlines the agreed plans for how the UK and EU will work together on issues such as security, law, trade and immigration after Brexit. It specifically states that the future trade deal will be based on ensuring "a level playing field for open and fair competition" which will "respect the integrity of the Union's single market and customs union as

well as the UK's internal market".

Brexit Deal Needs Parliament Approval

Earlier on, Theresa May has praised the deal as not only the best agreement she could achieve, but also that it was the only one on the table. However, she still needs to get the deal approved by the UK Parliament. It is expected that the Parliament will vote on the divorce deal before Christmas. May needs 320 votes to pass the agreement, but it's not clear yet if she will have support.

The agreement is getting attacked by all sides in the UK from both pro-Brexit and pro-EU politicians. Large numbers on both sides of the debate are opposing the divorce deal and threatening to vote it down when it comes to the House of Commons. The opposition Labour Party immediately said it would vote against it, though as it had already signalled that its MPs would vote against any deal the Conservative Government agreed with the EU, this was not exactly a surprise. It is not only the Labour that is critical of the current Brexit agreement. Senior figures in May's Conservative Party as well as Scottish and Irish parties have announced that they will reject the deal, each citing their own reasons. Nearly eighty MPs in Theresa May's own party – both hard-line Brexiteers and pro-EU - also said they would vote against the deal. And crucially, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), on whose Parliamentary votes the UK government depends, rejected it.

In sum, Theresa May will now need to persuade MPs in the UK Parliament to back the deal before a parliamentary vote in December. If MPs reject the deal, a number of things could happen - including leaving with no deal, an attempt to renegotiate or a general election. However, EU leaders insisted after the summit on 25 November that there were no chances for a renegotiation of the Brexit agreement, saying that the deal reached with UK Prime Minister Theresa May over the course of the past two years was the best and only solution available. It seems that the deal can be considered as the start of a new chapter for the UK.