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EU GLOBAL GATEWAY AND TÜRKİYE'S KEY ROLE

Oğuz Güngörmez
IKV Researcher

Sema Nur Yeniyıldız
IKV Junior Researcher



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Oğuz Güngörmez, IKV Researcher

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In December 2021, the European Commission unveiled its 300 billion euros Global Gateway strategy to support the development of physical and digital infrastructure worldwide and to challenge China's influence in the Balkan region, Africa, and Asia.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the insufficiency of global infrastructure and fragility of global trade, transport and communication networks that remains incomplete, incompatible, and disconnected in many instances. More clearly, recent developments such as the global shortage of semiconductors, increase in energy prices and problems in the supply of medical devices, the main impacts of the pandemic, have underlined the importance of infrastructure and connectivity. Furthermore, what we have seen is that infrastructure and connectivity are quite necessary, and this period demonstrated how interdependent and vulnerable international trade is. Moreover, the G20 report forecasts that the global infrastructure investment deficit will reach 13 trillion euros by 2040.¹ 1,3 trillion euros are needed each year to cover the global infrastructure deficit, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, limit climate change and environmental degradation – when taking into consideration the infrastructure investment required. The geostrategic and geopolitical importance of “connectivity”, which refers to the institutional and physical connectivity infrastructure, including ports, roads, railways, airports, fibre optic cables, customs arrangements, mobile networks, internet connections and even container sizes, is increasing.

For instance, China has made large-scale investments in transportation projects in Asia and Africa. It realizes these investments as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a roof design. China, which is purchasing most of the transport infrastructure even in Europe, seems to be ready for this transformation and open-ended evolution of the world. In the face of these changes and developments, the EU needs to strengthen its influence in world trade, in the meanwhile defending its values and interests while building this capability.

The Importance of Integrated Infrastructure and Connectivity: Impacts on Growth, Production, and Trade

Connectivity has become one of the most important trends of the 21st century and is high on the policy agenda of many countries. There are also numerous initiatives to improve infrastructures to meet the growing demand for transport, energy, and telecommunications networks that span across the globe and to enhance economic, political, and social interaction. At this point, it is essential to clarify why connectivity is quite significant.

International organizations that finance infrastructure initiatives have different definitions of connectivity. However, a unique and significant characteristic of connectivity for everyone is that it is “networked” and “a set of nodes that connect

¹ Infrastructure Outlook, 2021, “A G20 Initiative: Forecasting Infrastructure Investment Needs and Gaps”, <https://outlook.gihub.org>, Access date: 06.07.2022



networks". These nodes can consist of people, companies, countries, roads, airports, or any other physical or organizational entity. What the definitions have in common is that connectivity is a multi-layered concept consisting of different types of networks, including physical and virtual. The value and importance of connectivity, therefore, lies in the role that a node and its hinterland play in the network, the cost of accessing that node, and the reliability of connecting to that node.² For example, full connectivity is achieved when the cost of interaction between nodes is low, while interaction is limited at a high cost. Improving a node's weak connectivity with another node benefits the network. Therefore, investment in the weak parts of a network with limited capacity, where it underperforms, is given high priority.

Connectivity is one of the most defining characteristics of the modern economy since it expresses the interdependence of multiple economies. Connectivity is therefore largely about increasing interaction, productivity, competition, and market opportunities between cities. Infrastructure connectivity within and between countries is crucial in terms of serving economic growth, increasing supply chain efficiency, and ensuring resilience.

Straub found that there is a positive and significant link between infrastructure and development outcomes when he carried out a study in 2018 on infrastructure spending and economic growth rate in developing countries.³ There is enough data on the positive effects of connectivity of infrastructure on the economy even at the micro-scale. It has short-term effects as well as medium and long-term effects on strengthening the foundation for economic growth while making labour markets more efficient.

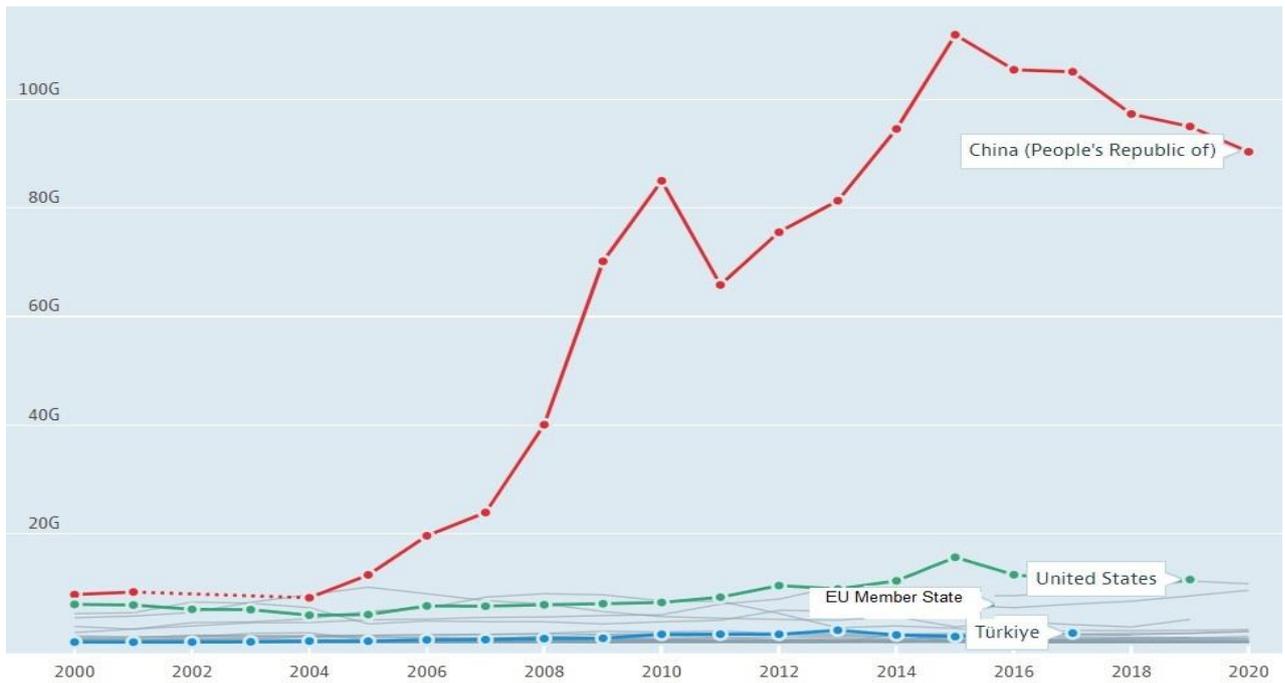
At this point, it must be stated that in the last 25 years, China has sharply increased its economic power and got ahead of the U.S. and the EU. Due to this fact, it is important to indicate various data regarding the U.S., China, and the European Union to understand better the need for the Global Gateway initiative.

² "Why Connectivity Matters", GICA, 10 May 2018, <https://www.gica.global/sites/gica/files/Discussion-Paper-Why-Connectivity-Matters-May-10-2018.pdf>, Access date: 06.07.2022

³ Straub, Stéphane, 2008, "Infrastructure and Growth in Developing Countries: Recent Advances and Research Challenges", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4460. Washington, DC. World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/349701468138569134/pdf/wps4460.pdf>, Access date: 06.07.2022

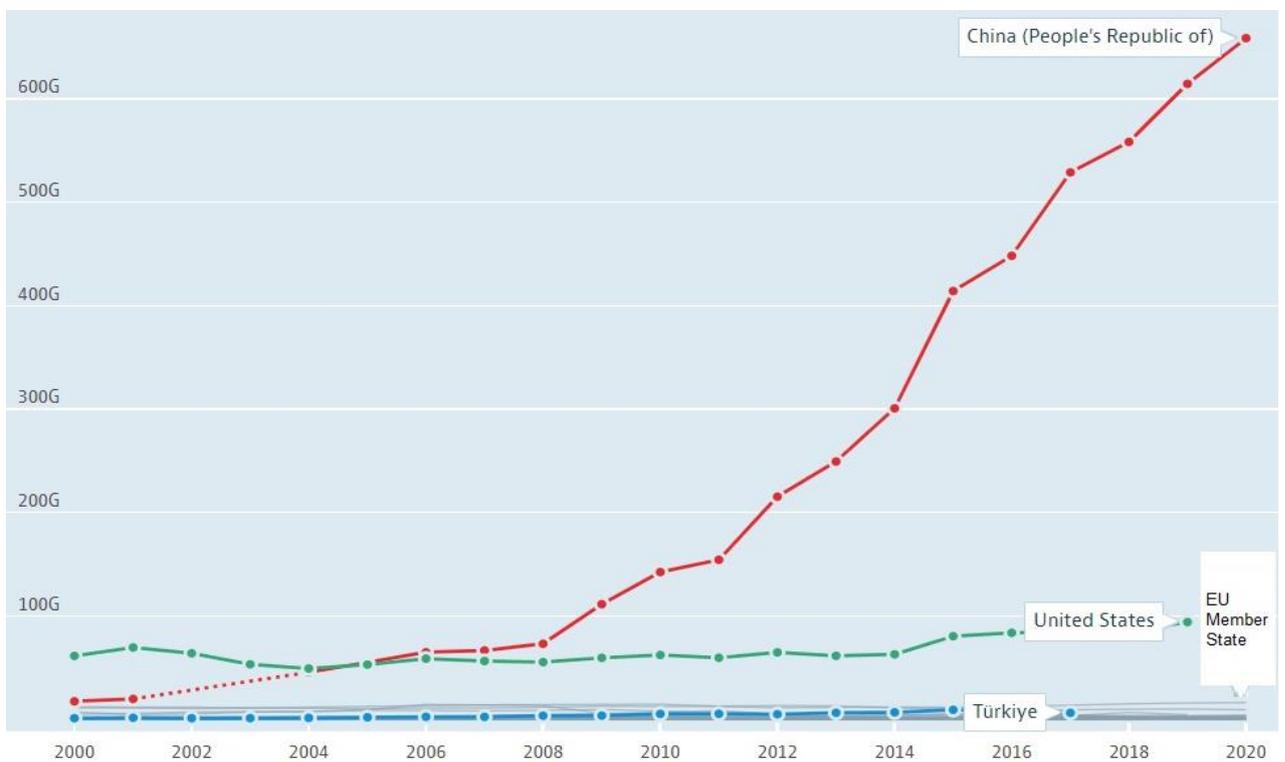


Image 1: Infrastructure Investment, Rail (euro, 2000 – 2020)



Source: Transport infrastructure investment and maintenance, <https://data.oecd.org/transport/infrastructure-investment.htm>

Image 2: Infrastructure Investment, Road (euro, 2000 – 2020)

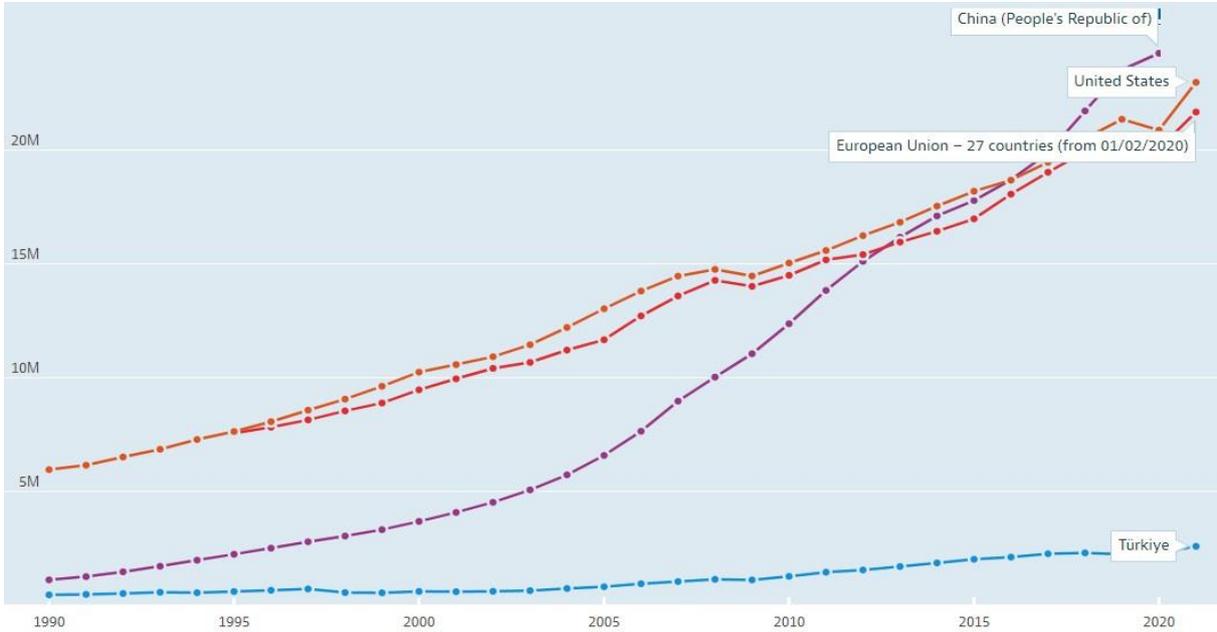


Source: Transport infrastructure investment and maintenance, <https://data.oecd.org/transport/infrastructure-investment.htm>



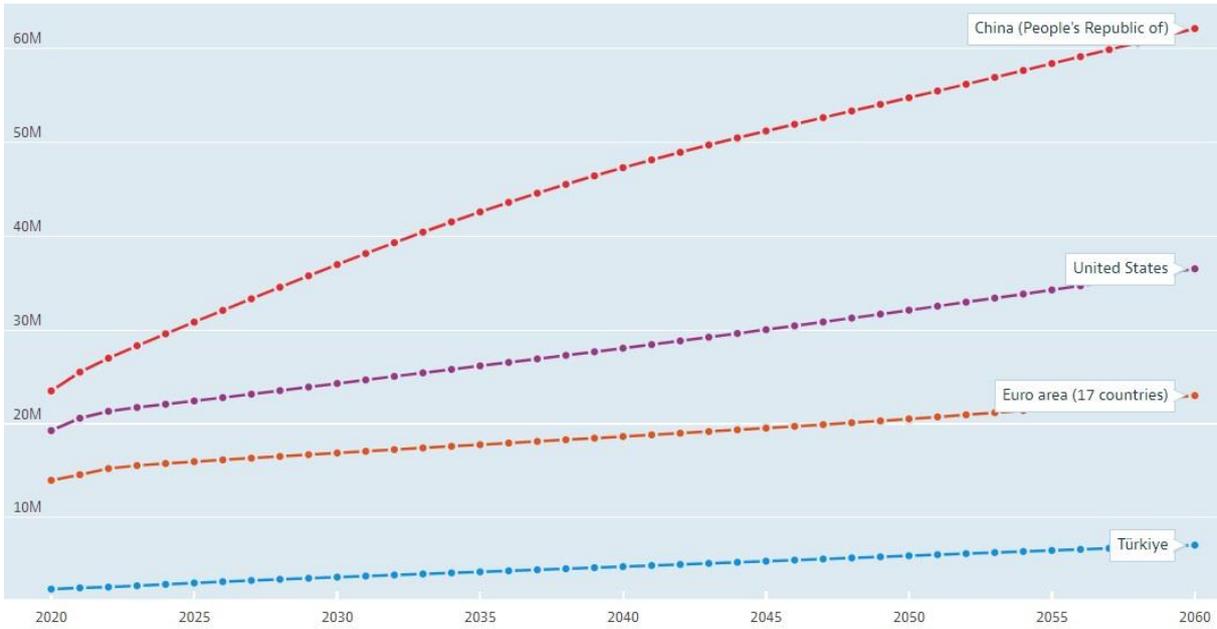
It has been observed in the images that China has increased its railway and road investments since the 2000s. However, when looking at the United States and the EU Member States, it is seen that they have fallen far behind China's investments. Although Türkiye's railway and road investments data after 2017 are not available, data up to 2017 indicate that Türkiye is far behind all three actors.

Image 3: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Total (million US dollars/capita, 2000 – 2021)



Source: Aggregate National Accounts, SNA 2008 (or SNA 1993): Gross domestic product, <https://data.oecd.org/gdp/gross-domestic-product-gdp.htm>

Image 4: Real GDP Long-term Forecast Total (million US dollars, 2020 – 2060)



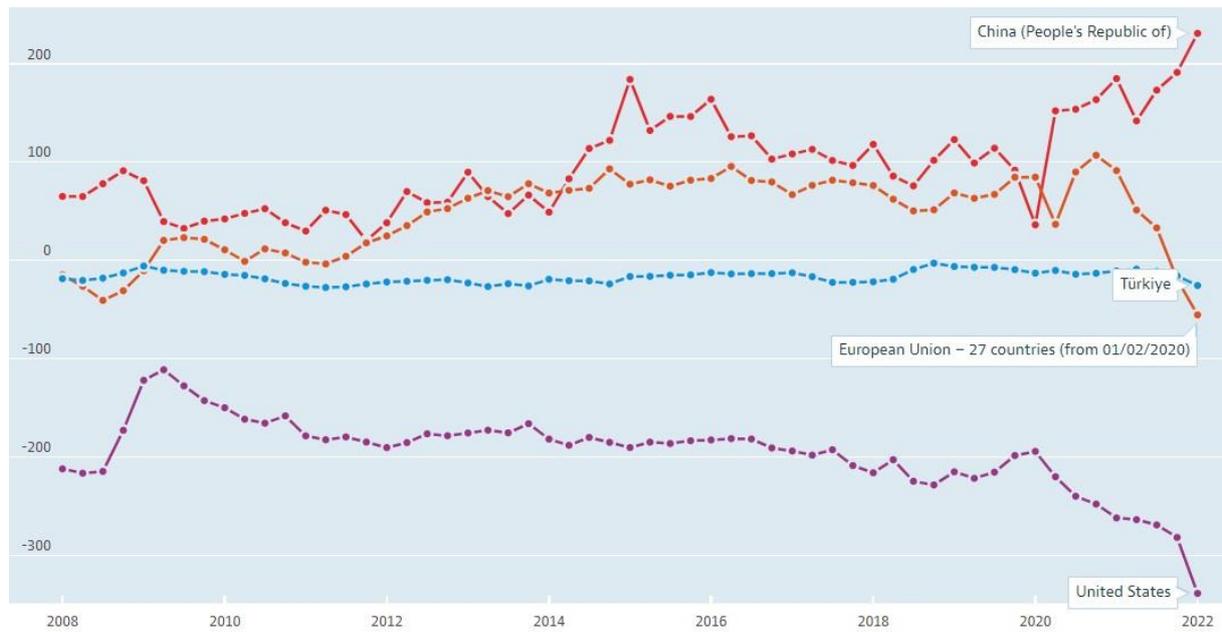
Source: Long-term baseline projections, No. 109 (Edition 2021), <https://data.oecd.org/gdp/real-gdp-long-term-forecast.htm#indicator-chart>



When we look at the data, it is seen that China has increased its GDP at a significant rate since the 2000s. China caught up with the EU in 2013 and the US in 2016. In 2000, China was above 24.274,126 million US dollars, both the US and the EU. Türkiye, on the other hand, was well below the GDP of all three actors.

Based on the data obtained, according to GDP forecasts for the year 2060, the US and the EU will remain far behind China, even though their GDP ratios will increase (Similarly, Türkiye is far behind three actors.)

Image 5: Trade in Goods Net Trade (billion US dollars, Q1 2008 – Q1 2022)



Source: OECD International Trade, [International trade - Trade in goods - OECD Data](#)

While the net trade of the US started to decline from 2009 onwards - albeit with some increases - the rate of decline has been sharp from 2020 onwards. Türkiye was balanced in terms of net trade and while the EU was competitive in terms of net trade with China until the beginning of 2020. Its fate after 2020 is the same as that of the US.

Finally, an examination of the graphics reveals that Straub is correct.⁴ Since China boosted its infrastructure investments -mainly by building new roads-, it has achieved economic growth by increasing both its net trade and GDP. In this context, China’s Belt and Road Initiative - even if problematic - is quite important. Because with the Belt and Road Initiative, it has connected countries to itself by improving the broken buttons of connectivity by enabling them to increase their infrastructure investments.

⁴ Straub, Stéphane, 2008, “Infrastructure and Growth in Developing Countries: Recent Advances and Research Challenges”, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4460. Washington, DC. World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/349701468138569134/pdf/wps4460.pdf>, Access date: 06.07.2022.



In an environment of such competition between these actors, the cost of not investing in infrastructure and ultimately connectivity for the EU was growing day by day. It can be argued that the EU was late in declaring the Global Gateway.

EU Global Gateway: Brussels Acts Against China

In response to the growing strategic importance of connectivity, for the first time in July 2021, the Council of the EU requested the European Commission and the High Representative to initiate an EU global connectivity strategy. The Council's decision emphasized that ensuring a strategic approach to connectivity is fundamental for economic growth, security, and resilience within and outside the EU. The decision of the Council of the EU paved the way for a new "geostrategic and global EU approach to connectivity".

Following the Council's decisions, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented the EU's new Global Gateway plan in the State of the Union Address on September 15, 2021.⁵ Von der Leyen stressed that the EU will be a reliable partner worldwide with its connectivity strategy; it will adopt a 'values-based and transparent' approach to create connections, not dependencies. Although von der Leyen did not address China's infrastructure investments, experts have interpreted the EU's Global Gateway strategy as an EU response to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The Global Gateway initiative, designed for a "new era of hyper-competitiveness", was presented in its final form on 1 December. The program envisages a €300 billion budget for infrastructure, digital, health, energy transition, education, and research projects globally by 2027 to improve Europe's supply chains and global infrastructure, strengthen transport and energy networks, boost EU trade, support the green and digital transition and help to fight the climate change.⁶

In the details of the Global Gateway, the strategy focuses on connecting infrastructure, global products, people, and services. First, it envisages investing in fibre optic cables, satellite communications and cloud infrastructure between countries and building a secure internet network for the development of global cooperation in the digital field, such as digital infrastructure, data sharing and artificial intelligence-specific technologies. With the scope of the initiative, for example, the EU intends to extend its 35,000 km high-speed fibre optic network to Latin America.

Secondly, it is planned to support the transition to renewable energy and to increase renewable hydrogen production with its partners under the umbrella of Global Gateway. Through this initiative, the EU is committing 2.4 billion euros to Sub-Saharan Africa and 1 billion euros to North Africa to increase renewable energy production and energy efficiency.

Thirdly, the EU plans to invest in transport infrastructure - railways, roads, ports, harbours, airports, and border crossings - in developing countries. Thus, the EU aims to diversify its supply chains, especially due to the supply crisis it experienced during the

⁵ European Commission, "2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen", 15.09.2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_21_4701, Access Date: 13.03.2022

⁶ European Commission, "Global Gateway", JOIN (2021) 30 final, 01.12.2021 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/joint_communication_global_gateway.pdf, Access date: 06.07.2022.



pandemic. In addition, with the supply routes to be created by the EU, it is planned to challenge China's "China-Europe Express Railway" project, which reduces the delivery time from China to Europe to 15 days.

The Global Gateway's transport-based objectives will also have a significant impact on Türkiye. To expand the Trans-European Network, 9 billion euros are planned to grant for the region between the Western Balkans and Türkiye. The initiative also announced an additional 4.6 billion euros in support, including linking North African countries to the Union with the establishment of a trans-Mediterranean network.

Fourth, as a response to pandemics like COVID-19, the initiative aims to strengthen countries' local vaccine production capacities and to help diversify pharmaceutical supply chains, but the initiative does not provide a specific financial target for this objective.

Finally, in the field of education and research, it is also envisaged to invest in education, including the global expansion of online education/learning in case of a pandemic.

Together with these five areas, the Global Gateway aims to bring countries, societies, and people closer together. However, the feasibility of the project regarding Global Gateway will depend on the EU values and international rules, such as democracy, rule of law and human rights.

According to statement made by the European Commission, the initiative will be financed by €135 billion in grants (plus an additional €18 billion) and €145 billion in investments from the Member States, national development banks, the private sector and EU financing institutions, including the European Fund for Sustainable Development+ (EFSD+), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The Commission also stated that it will create a new credit facility to improve the competitiveness of the European companies trading in markets outside the EU.

In conclusion, the implementation of the Global Gateway is expected to make a strategic contribution to the European continent, especially through investments in sustainable connectivity and quality infrastructure. Some of these benefits are

- enhancing EU interests and competitiveness worldwide,
- contribute to the diversification of value chains,
- reducing strategic dependencies, including on critical raw materials,
- effective in building a secure, flexible, and human-centred digital ecosystem
- it also makes Europe more active as a global player and is an alternative to the Belt and Road Initiative.

An Alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative?

Since the 1980s, China has pursued an investment strategy that encourages domestic enterprises and companies to invest in strategic sectors outside the country. As an official manifestation of this strategy, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, formerly known as One Belt One Road.⁷

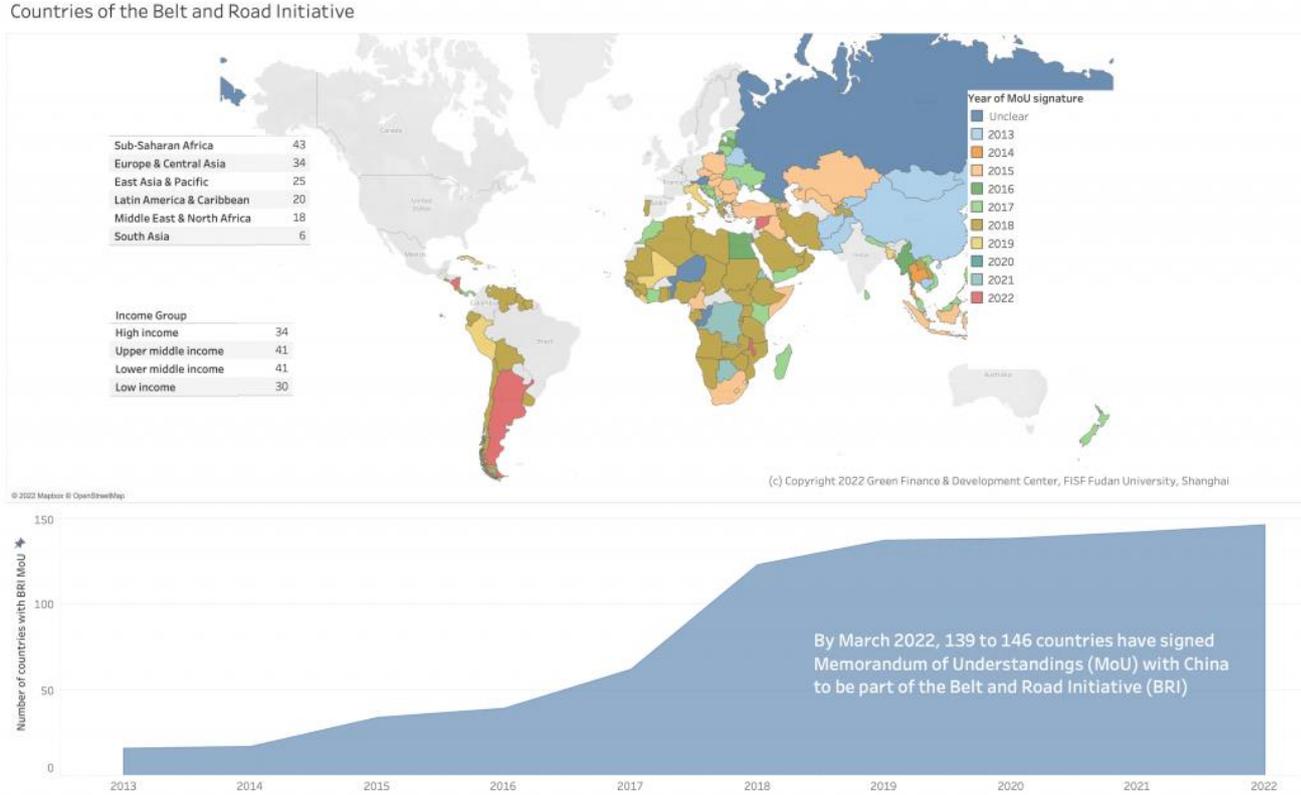
⁷ Gruebler, J. (2021) China Connecting Europe? <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10308-021-00616-4>, Access date: 06.07.2022.



BRI, which aims to connect Asia to Africa and Europe by sea and land, seeks to create trade links by investing in infrastructure such as roads, ports, rail and railway tunnels, bridges, airports, dams, coal-fired power plants. With the BRI, China has expanded its political and economic influence significantly and spread its reach across the globe with the implementation of high-budget loans and investments. Most importantly, however, this strategy has become the main tenet of China's foreign policy.

BRI emphasized the benefits of the initiative for especially developing countries, and the number of countries being part of the BRI is increasing day by day. For example, in March 2022, the number of countries that have joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China reached 146.⁸

Image 6: Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative



Source: Green Finance & Development Center

Although developing countries benefit more from BRI, China has signed agreements with countries from all income levels (26 low-income, 39 low-middle-income, 41 middle-income, 33 high-income countries). Especially this data alone reveals that the Beijing governments try to utilize the BRI for its long-term foreign policy aims. Investments in 139 countries, including 18 EU member states such as Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal, Austria, and Portugal have exceeded 2.5 trillion dollars. It is noteworthy that last year

⁸ Green Finance & Development Center, "Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)", https://greenfdc.org/countries-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri/#:~:text=In%20March%202022%2C%20the%20number,%20with%20China%20is%20146*.&text=The%20countries%20of%20the%20Belt,are%20in%20Sub%2DSaharan%20Africa, Access date: 06.07.2022.



alone - despite the COVID-19 pandemic - China invested around 47 billion dollars in overseas BRI projects. With all these infrastructure and transport investments, China appears as an immensely influential actor in Asia, Indo-Pacific, Africa, Europe-Eastern Europe, and Western Balkans.

Since its debut in 2013, BRI has attracted support and attention on a global scale thanks to its generous financing opportunities. However, it has been criticized for its problems and limitations regarding effectiveness, deployment, scope, and content. This is because, according to economic analysts, the easy credit terms lure certain countries into a debt trap and are a means of offering loans, especially to undeveloped and developing countries, using them as a hunt. The BRI has been criticized since the loans provided by China use the relevant country's resources as collateral, unreasonable contract terms (debts cannot be structured in the contracts), lack of transparency and confidentiality in the negotiations. It is claimed that China's debt traps provide the host countries participating in the BRI with the advantage of exerting pressure on both domestic and foreign policy. Commission President von der Leyen's statement on transparency and commitment to values, EU standards and rules while introducing the Global Gateway strategy is very important in terms of signalling that the EU's project will be different from China's initiative.

There is a growing concern in EU policy circles not only regarding the extent of the BRI's global expansion but also China's rising economic, social, political and diplomatic influence through the BRI. Examples of some of the concerns in the EU's creation of the Global Gateway vis-à-vis the BRI:

- China's construction of coal-fired power plants, especially in the Western Balkans (even in countries with EU enlargement prospects such as Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), despite the commitment of all 27 members to reduce carbon emissions by at least 55% by 2030,
- Montenegro's failure to repay a 1 billion dollars loan from China in 2014 for road construction and its request for EU assistance,
- Sri Lanka's inability to repay its debts, forcing it to lease the strategic port of Hambantota to China for 99 years,
- Uganda's loss of its only international airport due to a debt of more than 200 million dollars to China,
- China establishes military bases on the territory of some host countries,
- China's settlement in many ports in Europe (Antwerp, Bilbao, Dunkirk, Le Havre, Marseille, Nantes, Valencia, Rotterdam etc.)

These examples caused the EU concerned about China's projects and felt to need to initiate a counter strategy to balance Beijing objectives.

The potential relationship of the Global Gateway with the BRI is important in two aspects. First, the EU has internalized the strategic competitive logic of connectivity and wanted to go on the path to brand itself with the Global Gateway, similar to what China has done. Secondly, this EU's step shows that the geopolitical importance of investments in global connectivity is recognized by the decision makers of the EU: It is recognized by the EU that the BRI is both an economic corridor and a strategic narrative success by becoming a brand.



The announcement of the Global Gateway clearly shows the EU's growing discomfort with China's assertive foreign policy and its rising influence in European countries. However, the EU plans to make a difference by choosing, as always, a European way of dealing with the BRI. This European way is intended to be an alternative to the BRI based on the following points:

- green infrastructure investment globally,
- economic recovery, at the heart of a sustainable growth model
- transparency, equal opportunities, anti-corruption, and affirmation of human rights in public contracts

Will the EU's Global Gateway be Successful?

The EU has made numerous attempts to develop its connectivity strategy to finance infrastructure projects outside the EU. However, all these strategies have been temporary and disconnected, and no single broadscale and coherent strategy that brings together the different pieces of the puzzle has been implemented. This is because the goals of fostering global recovery, tackling climate change, and building resilience and inclusiveness were long-term. It is undeniable that realizing long-term goals requires swift and decisive action. In this respect, it can be asserted that the EU's response to China's influence has been rather late. Moreover, since the launch of the Global Gateway, its estimated success has been questioned at certain points by many experts.

First of all, it seems difficult for countries that are willing to benefit from Global Gateway projects and investments to participate in the initiative, as opposed to the more pragmatic and feasible BRI. This is because it is obligatory to meet the European standards for participation in the initiative, especially for African countries. Secondly, China offers a model of rapid economic growth and industrialization in a relatively short period time. It can therefore have more influence in less developed countries rather than the EU. China also benefits from anti-Western narratives, and this enables it to find a fertile ground in Africa and Asia. Third, the Global Gateway strategy is unlikely to offer a significant alternative unless it is coordinated with other infrastructure initiatives.

Considering these three possibilities, it can be claimed that the Global Gateway can be seen as an important step towards breaking the cycle of continued dependence on the BRI by countries in need of infrastructure investment, building mutually beneficial relations with the EU, and a true partnership.

EU Global Gateway and Türkiye: Strong Support from Business Community

The eyes of many international actors have turned to Brussels with the announcement of the EU's Global Gateway strategy. Türkiye is one of the countries that closely follow the developments and statements regarding the strategy because the initiative aims to expand The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. Although politicians or decision-makers in Türkiye have not yet made any statement or official assessment of the initiative, it seems that Turkish non-governmental organizations and the business community are quite excited.

It should be stated at this point that non-governmental organizations and the business communities in Türkiye support the initiative and are closely interested in it. Leading non-governmental organizations in Türkiye such as The Union of Chambers and



Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), Economic Development Foundation (İKV), the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Türkiye (DEİK), Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD), and International Freight Forwarders Association (UND) came together and issued a declaration regarding the EU Global Gateway initiative.

The representatives of the NGOs met in Brussels, the heart of the EU, hosted by the Permanent Representation of Türkiye to the EU. They issued a declaration titled “EU Global Gateway for the Solution of the EU-Asia Trade Bottlenecks”. They stated in this declaration that 4.6 billion euros would be given to investment projects within the scope of the initiative, and this was an opportunity to strengthen the logistics links between Türkiye and the EU. Noting that Türkiye is the most convenient and safest route for the EU to reach the Central Asian markets, representatives also underlined the support given by the business community in Türkiye to the initiative. At this point, it should be pointed out that Türkiye should be a part of the projects within the scope of the EU Global Gateway. This brings many mutual interests for both Türkiye and the EU.⁹

- The inclusion of Türkiye in the projects will further strengthen the economic cooperation between the two actors and will enable EU countries to benefit from Türkiye’s increasing export capacity.
- Türkiye will also become a hub country in road transportation as well as energy, and its relations with the EU will gain a much more strategic perspective.
- It will ensure that the supply chain problem of the EU, which has still been experiencing disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is resolved.
- It will contribute to the improvement of Türkiye’s deteriorated image in Europe.
- It will make it easier for the EU to reach distant geographies and Türkiye’s current infrastructure will greatly reduce the cost of this transportation.

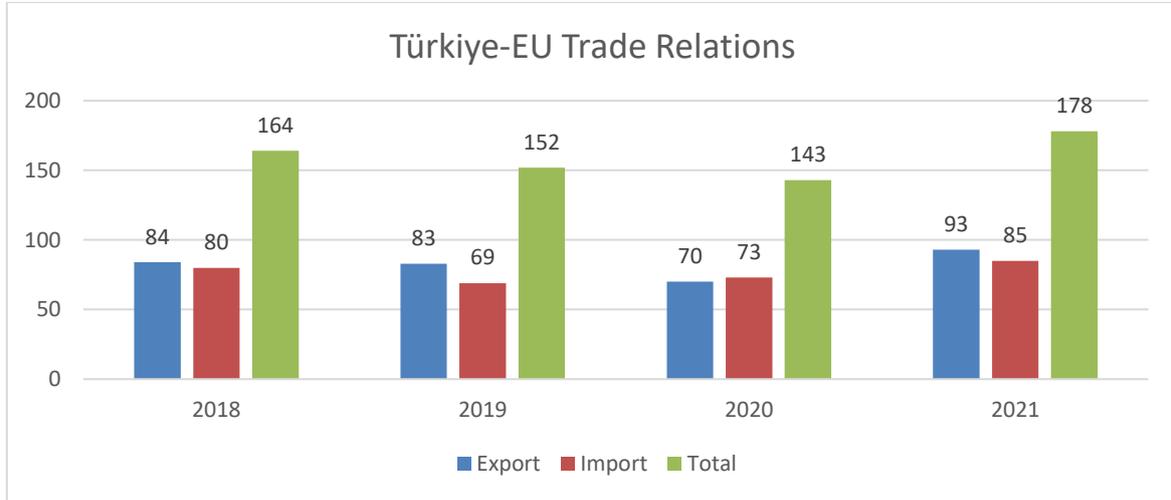
First of all, as mentioned above, Türkiye’s involvement in the projects will further strengthen the economic cooperation between the two actors. It is known that Türkiye’s economic relations with the EU are quite advanced. Thanks to the Customs Union, the EU has become Türkiye’s largest trading partner, and Türkiye has become the EU’s sixth largest trading partner.¹⁰ The trade volume between the two actors exceeded 178 billion \$ in 2021. [Chart 1]

⁹ “Global Gateway Declaration issued to solve EU-Asia Trade Bottleneck”, *TOBB*, 08.03.2022, <https://www.tobb.org.tr/Sayfalar/Eng/Detay.php?rid=11937&lst=Haberler>, Access date: 06.07.2022.

¹⁰ “EU trade relations with Turkey. Facts, figures and latest developments.”, European Commission, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/turkey_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20is%20by%20far,amounted%20to%20%E2%82%AC132.4%20billion, Access date: 06.07.2022.



Chart 1: Türkiye's Export and Import Data for EU (billion \$)



Source: TÜİK Foreign Trade Data

The cooperation of the two actors within the scope of the Global Gateway is very significant in terms of maintaining and protecting these economic achievements. It is stated that the Global Gateway, which is expected to reach 300 billion euros by 2027, will be devoted to improving the infrastructure in areas such as digitalization, transportation, energy, and health. The fact that Türkiye's involvement in these investments will enable the economic relations to reach a new level and bring the bilateral trade volume to easily exceed 200 billion \$.

At this point, it should be noted that Türkiye has become a key trade partner day by day for the EU. Türkiye has significantly increased its exports, especially with the steps it has taken in recent years. Exporting 225 billion dollars in 2021, Türkiye has set an export target of 300 billion dollars in 2023, 400 billion dollars in 2026 and 500 billion dollars in 2030.¹¹ As a matter of fact, while Türkiye becomes a serious production base and export country, the strengthening of its economic relations with the EU also becomes strategic. The involvement of Türkiye in the EU's Global Gateway will enable EU countries to benefit from its increased export capacity and will be a significant gain for EU countries.

Secondly, Türkiye can become a hub country in transportation as well as energy and its relations with the EU can improve. Being in a strategic position in terms of energy transmission routes, Türkiye has similar importance in terms of road transportation and connectivity. However, delays and long waiting times, especially at the Bulgarian border, negatively affect trade between Türkiye and the EU. Considering that 45% of the trucks passing through this border consist of transporters belonging to EU countries, solving the problem becomes very significant for the sustainability of the supply chain between the

¹¹ "TİM Başkanı Güllü: İhracat ailemizin gayretleri ile 2023 yılında 300 milyar dolarlık ihracatı hedefliyoruz", Anadolu Ajansı, 01.06.2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/tim-baskani-gulle-ihracat-ailemizin-gayretleri-ile-2023-yilinda-300-milyar-dolarlik-ihracati-hedefliyoruz/2602837>, Access date: 06.07.2022.



two actors. For this reason, as a starting project, the business community in Türkiye recommend launching new border crossing projects between Türkiye and the EU to reduce waiting times.

When the slightest problem arises, it is seen that tailback exceeding 60 km appears at the Hamzabeyli and Kapıkule Border Gates where are located between Türkiye and Bulgaria. When the tailback situations appear at the gates, the transit time of trucks from Türkiye to Bulgaria takes approximately one week.¹² It should be stated at this point that the importance of road transport has increased, especially due to Russia's intervention in Ukraine. Due to the occupation of Ukraine's leading ports, most of the export products previously sent by sea have shifted to the highway. The war seems to increase the burden on transportation and the intensity of border crossings between Türkiye and the EU.

Türkiye needs to be a part of the projects in terms of reducing this density and especially improving the Trans-European Network. In this context, as mentioned above, the Global Gateway will make a grant of nine billion euros for the region that will include the Western Balkans and Türkiye for the improvement of the trans-European line.¹³ Spending these grants on projects aimed at improving road transport between Türkiye and the EU and solving the problems at the border gates, will make Türkiye a key player in terms of transportation on the one hand, and make significant contributions to Türkiye-EU relations on the other hand. In this context, especially the new border gate project with digital and technical equipment included in the Global Gateway plan is a quite important step.

Image 7: Türkiye's Transport Route



Source: Foreign Affairs of Türkiye

¹² "Sofya 'operasyonu'nun faturası Türk TIR'ına kesildi", Dünya, 02.06.2022, <https://www.dunya.com/sectorler/lojistik/sofya-operasyonunun-faturasi-turk-tirina-kesildi-haberi-659639>, Access date: 06.07.2022.

¹³ "AB'den Türkiye'nin çehresini değiştirecek program", Bloomberg, 01.12.2021, <https://www.bloomberght.com/ab-den-turkiye-nin-cehresini-degistirecek-program-2293392>, Access date: 06.07.2022.

Thirdly, the involvement of Türkiye in the projects within the scope of the Global Gateway will also ensure that the supply chain problem that has been disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be resolved. The crisis in global supply chains and the raw material issues after COVID-19 adversely affected many states, especially the EU. The situation revealed the Chinese hegemony in global production and the dependence of the Western world on China. It has become significant to change trade and logistics map of Europe for the EU, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. As a matter of these facts, it has become vital for the EU countries to shift production to much closer and secure geographies and to overcome possible supply chain disruptions that may occur in the future.

The decision-makers in Europe have decided to overcome these issues by supplying from closer regions to member countries and from countries close to their political and economic systems. All these experienced supply chain disruptions and the war in Ukraine revealed once again the importance of Türkiye to the EU. The Global Gateway initiative will enable Türkiye to fill this gap and ease overcome these issues. *Fitch Ratings* also emphasized in its latest analysis that Türkiye is the country that will gain the most from the change in supply chains in European continent.¹⁴

In particular, it was observed that Türkiye prevented the disruption of the supply chain in Europe during the pandemic and ensured the continuation of production and trade smoothly. In this context, the procurement of emergency products such as surgical masks and ventilators by Türkiye remains in the memories. After the pandemic, many international companies operating in areas such as food, medicine, furniture, electronics, and packaging announced their new investment plans for Türkiye, which has a strong logistics infrastructure and industrial capacity.¹⁵ The grain crisis, which is also experienced due to the war in Ukraine, is trying to be resolved with Türkiye's efforts. Through the corridor to be opened over the Black Sea with the patrol of Türkiye, the supply problems in the grain are tried to be overcome. In today's world, where economic nationalism has increased considerably, furthering cooperation with Türkiye as a partner, neighbour and candidate country will prevent similar problems in the future and will enable early measures to be taken for EU countries.

Fourthly, it will also contribute to the improvement of Türkiye's deteriorated image in the West and its relations with the EU. After Russia's intervened in Ukraine, it was seen that the Western alliance demonstrated a will to take joint steps against Russia. In this respect, the EU's further cooperation with Türkiye within the scope of the Global Gateway will enable Türkiye to consolidate its political position in the Western bloc, especially in an atmosphere of new cold war discussions.

Türkiye's problems with the EU, disputes with some of its western allies including the USA and regression in its democratization process fuelled "The shift of axis" debates regarding

¹⁴ "Türkiye küresel tedarik zincirinin yeni merkez üssü olma yolunda", Anadolu Ajansı, 14.10.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/turkiye-kuresel-tedarik-zincirinin-yeni-merkez-ussu-olma-yolunda/2391713>, Access date: 06.07.2022.

¹⁵ "Türkiye küresel tedarik zincirinin yeni merkez üssü olma yolunda", Anadolu Ajansı, 14.10.2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/turkiye-kuresel-tedarik-zincirinin-yeni-merkez-ussu-olma-yolunda/2391713>, Access date: 06.07.2022.



Türkiye's foreign policy and international standing in the past years.¹⁶ Many prominent leaders and analysts noted Türkiye's favourable relations with countries such as Russia and Iran and asked the question whether the country was recalibrating its international position and leaving its European vocation. In this context, Turkey's relationships with several nations, including Iran, Russia, and China, came under fire, and claims that it had abandoned its commitment to the Western alliance were made.¹⁷ However, upon closer examination, it is evident that Türkiye has close and interdependent relations with the West and especially with the EU. The involvement of Türkiye in the projects within the scope of the Global Gateway will not only increase Türkiye's connection with Europe but will also ensure that these criticisms remain in the dusty pages of history and will improve Türkiye's image in Brussels as a "reliable partner".

Finally, it will facilitate the EU's access to distant geographies and reduce its transportation costs. It is known that Türkiye's geopolitical position is quite strategic for European countries. Türkiye is in a geography that interconnects two continents, Europe, and Asia, and has two significant natural straits in terms of international trade. The EU's targets on reaching the Central Asian markets with the Global Gateway make Türkiye's geopolitical position much more strategic for the EU.

In addition, Türkiye is increasing its export distance with each year. According to TradeMap data, Turkish exporters sell products to an average distance of 2,953 km today, whereas the average distance in the world is 5,156 km. Türkiye has the longest export distance in Defense and Aerospace Industry products with 5,282 km. It is followed by Mining Products with a distance of 4,992 km.¹⁸ This infrastructure and connectivity that has developed around Türkiye will also contribute to the EU's capacity to transmit its exports to more distant countries more quickly and easily.

¹⁶ Selin Nasi, "Turkey's shift of axis", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 01.08.2016, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/selin-nasi/turkeys-shift-of-axis-102315>, Access date: 06.07.2022.

¹⁷ Ted Galen Carpenter, "It's time to expel Turkey from the Western alliance", *The Washington Post*, 19.07.2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/07/19/its-time-expel-turkey-western-alliance>, Access date: 06.07.2022; Batuhan Üsküp, "Is Turkey Still A Sui Generis Ally For The West?", *Institute for a Greater Europe*, 10.05.2022, <https://www.institutegreatereurope.com/single-post/is-turkey-still-a-sui-generis-ally-for-the-west>, Access date: 06.07.2022.

¹⁸ "İhracat 2021 Raporu", *Türkiye İhracatçılar Meclisi (TİM)*, https://tim.org.tr/files/downloads/Strateji_Raporlari/TIM_Ihracat_2021_Raporu.pdf, Access date: 06.07.2022.



multidimensional gains for both Türkiye and the EU. This will strengthen the economic relations, which have been increasingly maintained for many years, and will ensure the protection of mutual interests between the two actors.

