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LAUNCH OF TURKEY-EU HIGH LEVEL ECONOMIC DIALOGUE

During the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue, the Turkish and European officials and representatives of the business community on both sides assessed strategies to reinforce bilateral trade and investment relations.



The first Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue aiming at further enhancing economic relations and creating a platform for representatives of the business communities was held in Turkey on 25-26 April 2016. The EU Delegation was constituted of Vice-President of the European Commission Jyrki Katainen, European Commissioners responsible for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs Pierre Moscovici, for

Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn and Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella. The Turkish delegation included Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Şimşek, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır, Minister of Economy Mustafa Elitaş, Minister of Customs and Trade Bülent Tüfenkci, Minister of Development Cevdet Yılmaz and Minister of Transport, Maritime

Affairs and Communications Binali Yıldırım.

Turkey-EU Business Dialogue

During the first day of the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue Meeting, officials from the Turkish Government and the European Commission came together with leading Turkey and European representatives of the business community and European

investment and development banks to discuss the means to reinforce economic relations between Turkey and the EU. During this closed session, Turkish and European representatives emphasised the importance of lifting the visa and transport quotas which create a situation of unfair competition for Turkey, revising the Customs Union and accelerating Turkey's EU accession process. Turkey's inclusion to the TTIP process was also a key

message highlighted during the discussions. The organisation of this meeting was praised since it was the first time the representatives of the business community of both sides had the opportunity to come together with Turkish and European policy-makers to discuss how to create a better business environment which will contribute in further enhancing economic and trade relations between both parties. **PAGE 2**

"There is a very important potential in terms of economic cooperation between Turkey and the EU, especially with the revision of the Customs Union and Turkey's participation to the TTIP process."

In regards to the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue, IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu underlined that the contribution of the Turkish business world and the civil society is extremely important for the accession negotiations to carry out successfully and for Turkey's final goal of joining the EU.

IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu stated the following: "As the only specialised institution of the

Turkish business world regarding Turkey-EU relations, in a time when rules are being reshaped in the global arena, we believe that obstacles in front of trade and investment for both parties need to be lifted in order to strengthen economic and trade relations between the parties and for Turkey to successfully implement its structural reforms." He further underlined that the key to the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue are the revision of the Customs Union

and Turkey's participation to the TTIP process.

"We, as IKV, would like to underline the following points which we brought to the attention at the occasion of the High Level Economic Dialogue:

- High-level dialogues between Turkey and EU must be complementing Turkey's EU accession process; in other words, it should bring our country closer to its goal of EU membership.
- Next year, a new period is about to

unfold in our bilateral relations as the Customs Union will be revised.

In that process, comprehensive solutions should be brought to problems faced by Turkey in its free trade agreements and transportation quotas issues.

- There should not be any deviation from the agenda fixed towards the lifting of visas with the goal of having visas removed in June 2016.
- The fact that some chapters in Turkey's EU accession process are

blocked is in contradiction with a democratic approach and is impeding a sound development of the relations.

- Turkey should be involved in the TTIP process and be included in the process.
- Until the next High Level Economic Dialogue meeting, Turkey's structural reform agenda and the reforms it foresees for 2016 should be implemented".



LAUNCH OF TURKEY-EU HIGH LEVEL ECONOMIC DIALOGUE

FROM THE FIRST PAGE

Foreign Direct Investments and Investment Climate Conference

The same day of the Turkey-EU Business Dialogue, a conference entitled "Foreign Direct Investments and Investment Climate" was organised by the Ministry of EU Affairs, Undersecretariat of Treasury and the EU Delegation to Turkey in cooperation with TOBB and TEPAV. This conference gave the opportunity to discuss thoroughly how to improve the business and investment environment especially in Turkey. In this respect, the need to accelerate the shift towards advanced technology and high value-added based industry and improve the quality of the education in Turkey was highlighted. Furthermore, the presence of strong, transparent and democratic institutions and the respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights are also considered as essential components of a sound and attractive business environment.

Economic Dialogue at Governmental Level

During the second day of the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue Meeting, officials of the Turkish Government and the European Commission shared information regarding the current economic situation in Turkey and in the EU, macro-economic policies, structural reform process as well as business and investment environments. During this meeting, a special emphasis was placed on investments. Within this framework, Europe's Investment Plan, the incentives for foreign direct investments, the investment opportunities in green and blue economic as well as the financial support provided by regional and multilateral investment and development banks were discussed.

At the end of the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue, in the context of a joint press conference, Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Şimşek and Vice-President of the European Commission Jyrki Katainen expressed their wish to reinforce and deepen further the economic integration between Turkey and the EU. Stressing the important role the business community will play during this process, further meeting with representatives of Turkish and European business community are scheduled in the upcoming period in order to determine the agenda of the second meeting of the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue which will be held in Brussels in 2017.

IKV CHAIRMAN PAID A VISIT TO EU MINISTER VOLKAN BOZKIR

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu and IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas paid an official visit to Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır at the Istanbul Office of the Ministry for EU Affairs on 16 April 2016. During this meeting, the latest developments regarding Turkey-EU relations were assessed.

Minister Bozkır revealed detailed information regarding Turkey's EU accession process, the joint refugee action plan, the agreement reached at the 18 March Turkey-EU Summit, the current status of the visa liberalisation process and the latest Turkey report of the European Parliament. IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu also informed about the projects foreseen by IKV for the upcoming period. During the meeting, both parties assessed the possible areas of cooperation between IKV and the Ministry for EU Affairs.



IKV CHAIRMAN ATTENDED THE WORKING DINNER HOSTED BY TOBB



IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu attended the Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue Private Sector Working Dinner hosted by TOBB President and EUROCHAMBRES Vice-Chairman M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu and held in Istanbul on 24 April 2016.

Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Şimşek, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır, Minister of Economy Mustafa Elitaş, Minister of Customs and Trade Bülent Tüfenkci, Head of EU Delegation in Turkey H.E. Ambassador Hansjörg Haber, European Commission Vice-President Jyrki Katainen, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella, Deputy Director

General of DG Research and Innovation Wolfgang Bartscher, EUROCHAMBRES CEO Arnaldo Abruzzini, BUSINESSEUROPE CEO Markus J. Beyrer and International Relations Director Luisa Santos attended this dinner along with distinguished representatives from the Turkish and EU business world, international financial institutions, civil society organisations, chambers of commerce and sectoral councils.

During the dinner, stressing the need to ensure Turkey's real integration to the EU, TOBB President Hisarcıklıoğlu

emphasised the key role played by the business community in reinforcing the economic integration between both parties.

IKV Chairman Ayhan Zeytinoğlu underlined the importance of establishing an economic dialogue mechanism and touched upon the necessity to revitalise Turkey's EU accession talks. On the other hand, he added that the fact that a country with a population of 800,000 inhabitants is blocking the opening of six chapters is not an example of a democratic approach. In this respect, IKV Chairman

Zeytinoğlu pointed out to the critical importance of opening chapters related to Judiciary and Fundamental Rights and Justice, Freedom and Security – which are still blocked by the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus – and for the reform process to be pursued in Turkey. He further explained that if the EU wants to find long lasting solutions to problems encountered in Turkey's reform process, issues pertaining to the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law and fundamental rights, it must lift the obstacles in front of these chapters.

USE OF EU FUNDS FOR BUSINESS WORLD AND CIVIL SOCIETY

IKV, in cooperation with ISO and within the framework of the First Regional Event of IKV Istanbul EU Information Centre organised a seminar entitled "Use of EU Funds by the Business Community and Civil Society Organisations" on 22 April 2016.



The opening remarks of the seminar were ensured by ISO Deputy Secretary-General Haktan Akin and IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas. In his speech, ISO Deputy Secretary-General Akin alluded to the importance of organising such events aimed at raising the awareness of EU funds for the business community and civil society organisations. He further thanked the IKV Istanbul EU Information Centre for its important contributions in organising this seminar.

As for IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Nas, she stressed the fact that the seminar was organised during a period where important developments are occurring in Turkey-EU relations and she further reminded that it had been decided on 19 April 2016 to grant to Turkey the first section

(187 million euros) of the 3 billion euros of financial assistance within the framework of the Turkey-EU Joint Action Plan regarding the refugee crisis. Highlighting the fact that the opening of accession negotiations with the EU in 2005 have led to an economic, social and political transformation within Turkey, IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Nas explained that IPA funds (Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance) and the financial burden that Turkey has to shoulder in that respect has decreased.

Following the opening speeches, in the first panel where the possibility to benefit better from EU funds was discussed, Project Implementation Section Coordinator at the Ministry for EU Affairs Murat Özçelebi, SME National Contact Point at TÜBİTAK Emre Yurttagül, KOSGEB EU Coordination Directorate

SME Expert İsmail Erdem, Sabancı University BUSINNOVA Project Manager Abdurrahman Türk and Arçelik A.Ş. R&D Directorate Team Leader Evrim Özgül delivered their presentations respectively. In the second panel of the seminar where less known EU fund opportunities were discussed, Ministry of Labour and Social Security EU Affairs Section Expert Hülya Tekin, Turkey National Agency Communication Coordinator Rana Kasaoğlu Önder and Turkey National Agency Communication Junior Researcher Nejla Vatanser revealed information regarding the Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI), Erasmus+ and Hoziron 2020 to the participants. Finally, towards the end of the seminar, EU Project Consultant Acar Şensoy briefed the participants regarding the important points to be considered during the preparation of EU projects.

JEAN MONNET SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS' VISIT TO IKV BRUSSELS OFFICE

Within the framework of the Jean Monnet Scholarship Programme financed by the EU and managed by the Ministry for EU Affairs, 2015-2016 academic year scholarship holders who are pursuing their studies in some of the most distinguished universities across Europe came together with IKV Brussels Representative Haluk Nuray within the framework of the Monitoring and Working Visit held in Brussels on 21-22 April 2016. IKV Brussels Representative Nuray explained the functioning of EU institutions and IKV activities to

the scholarship holders. 226 Jean Monnet scholarship holders who are pursuing their academic studies in the EU for the 2015-2016 academic year are representing 44 different public institutions, 25 universities, 30 private sector and civil society organisations of Turkey. Jean Monnet scholarship holders in the 2015-2016 academic year are working on 25 different EU *Acquis* chapters across 10 different Member States. Within the framework of the Monitoring and Working Visit held in Brussels, Jean Monnet scholarship holders gained the opportunity to share information and their experiences



along with creating networks with one another. The 2015-2016 academic year was the period which recorded the largest number of scholarship holders since the beginning of the Jean Monnet Scholarship Programme 25 years ago.

TIMELINE FEBRUARY 2016

1	
2	
3	
4	Implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement
4	Commissioner Avramopoulos' visit to Turkey
5	
6	Prime Minister Davutoğlu's visit to Finland
7	
8	
9	Ministers from 5 Member States' visit to Turkey (9-10 April)
10	
11	Minister for EU Affairs Bozır's visit to Austria (11-12 April)
12	
12	10 th EU Youth Forum organised by TOBB (13-14 April)
13	Minister for EU Affairs Bozır's visit to the Netherlands (13-14 April)
14	IKV Chairman Zeytinoğlu's visit to Minister for EU Affairs Bozır
14	2015 Turkey Report was approved at EP General Assembly
15	IKV-UND Survey on Road Transport Sector launched
16	
17	
17	Prime Minister Davutoğlu's visit to Strasbourg (18-19 April)
18	IKV Seminar on New Perspectives in Turkey-EU Relations in Antalya
19	Publication of Commission's Second Report on refugee deal
20	Jean Monnet Scholarship holders met with IKV Brussels Representative (21-22 April)
20	EU Representatives and German Chancellor Merkel's visit to Gaziantep
21	IKV Brief on "A Comparative Analysis of the EU and Turkish Inland Waterways Policies" published
22	IKV seminar on the use of EU Funds
23	IKV Brief on "What 2015 EP Turkey Report Includes: Key Points of the most strict EP Report" published
24	IKV Chairman attended the Economic Dialogue Working Dinner hosted by TOBB
24	Launch of Turkey-EU High Level Economic Dialogue (25-26 April)
25	IKV Brief on "Progress achieved within the TTIP negotiation process" published
26	President Erdoğan's visit to Croatia (26-27 April)
26	IKV Brief on "Nine Candidates; an Impossible Mission: Gaining speed for the next UN Secretary-General position" published
27	
28	IKV Seminar on New Perspectives in Turkey-EU Relations in Izmir
29	
30	

NEW PERSPECTIVES IN TURKEY-EU RELATIONS

The third and fourth panels of the series entitled "New Perspectives in Turkey-EU Relations" were held in Antalya on 18 April 2016 and in İzmir on 28 April 2016 in cooperation between IKV and Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Latest Developments on Migration Crisis Discussed at Akdeniz University

Following the opening speech of the panel given by Akdeniz University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences Head of International Relations Department Prof. Şenol Kantarcı, IKV Junior Researcher Büşra Çatır made a presentation of the studies published by IKV on the European Commission's Progress Reports entitled "Mathematics of Progress" and "Linguistics of Progress". During the panel discussion, which was moderated by IKV Project Director Çisel İleri, Marmara University Faculty of Political Sciences Political Science and International Relations Department Lecturer Assoc. Prof. Erhan Doğan, IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Marmara University EU Institute Head of Department of EU Politics and International Relations Assoc. Prof. Yonca Özer and Hürriyet Daily News Journalist Barçın Yınanç shared their views regarding the latest developments in Turkey and the EU and the future of Turkey-EU relations.

In the first round of the panel, the participants discussed the refugee crisis and the latest developments in relation to the Turkey-EU refugee deal. Reminding that the dialogue regarding the

refugee crisis has been reinforced between the two parties since the Turkey-EU Summit which was held on 29 November 2015, IKV Project Director İleri asked the discussants to share their ideas on the effects of this dialogue on the Turkey-EU relations. In this respect, it was pointed out that both parties approach the problems from a pragmatic perspective due to the recent developments. It was also mentioned that the demand for revitalising the accession negotiations along with the financial aid towards the refugees shows that the accession process is still important for Turkey.

In the second round of the panel during which the future of Turkey-EU relations was assessed, the discussants underlined that the EU recently faces multiple crises such as sustainability of the welfare state, the EU's inability to reduce the inequalities among Member States as well as the lack of finalisation of the supranational structure. Within this framework, it was also pointed out that Turkey's accession to the Union could be an important leverage as a solution to such crises. The discussants also underlined that Turkey should define its relations with the EU from the perspective of the accession negotiations and as part of the EU rather than solely depending on short term interests.



IKV Discussed the Future of Turkey-EU Relations at Dokuz Eylül University

Following the opening speech of Dokuz Eylül University Graduate School of Social Sciences Head of the Department of EU Studies Prof. Zeki Erdut regarding the European Commission's 2015 Progress Report on Turkey, IKV Junior Researcher Büşra Çatır made a presentation of the studies published by IKV on the European Commission's Progress Reports entitled "Mathematics of Progress" and "Linguistics of Progress". During the panel discussion, which was moderated by IKV Project Director Çisel İleri, İzmir University of Economics Faculty of Business Department of

Political Science and International Relations Lecturer Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Kentmen, IKV Secretary-General Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Marmara University EU Institute Head of Department of EU Politics and International Relations Assoc. Prof. Yonca Özer, MEF University Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences Department of Political Science and International Relations Lecturer Assoc. Prof. Beken Saatçioğlu and İstanbul Kültür University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences Department of International Relations Lecturer Assist. Prof. Özge Zihnioğlu discussed the European Commission's Progress Reports on Turkey as well as the latest developments in Turkey-EU relations.

Following the presentation on the European Commission's Progress Reports on Turkey, IKV Project Director Çisel İleri asked the discussants how Turkish authorities and Turkish public should read the Progress Reports. In this respect, the discussants underlined the bias in Turkish public opinion towards the European Commission's Progress Reports, yet they provide an objective and important insight

to the latest developments in the political and economic sphere as well as to Turkey's performance with regard to alignment with the EU *acquis*. It was also pointed out that the Progress Reports are closely followed by the European decision-makers through which Turkey could improve its performance with regard to accession negotiations.

In the second round of the panel during which the refugee crisis and its implications on Turkey-EU relations were discussed, the participants underlined that the refugee crisis has changed the balance of Turkey-EU relations as an exogenous factor and that the EU approached Turkey as it remained unable to solve the crisis by itself due to disagreements among the Member States regarding the issue. Reminding that the Turkey-EU Statement of the 18 March and its potential to solve the crisis remain unknown for the time being, the discussants argued that Turkey should ensure the continuity of the dialogue on the basis of the accession negotiations rather than focusing on the short-term gains of the deal.



10th EU YOUTH FORUM WAS HELD IN DENİZLİ

IKV attended the 10th EU Youth Forum organised by TOBB as part of the EU Information Centers Network Project, with the support of the EU Delegation in Turkey which was held on 13-15 April 2016 in Denizli. The EU Youth Forum was held with the participation of representatives from the academia and civil society along with 120 university students from twenty provinces

where EU Information Centres are located (namely; Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Denizli, Edirne, Erzurum, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, İstanbul, İzmir, Kayseri, Kocaeli, Konya, Mersin, Samsun, Sivas, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon and Van).

President of Assembly of Denizli Chamber of Industry, Mehmet Tosunoğlu, TOBB Board Member and President of Denizli Chamber of Commerce Necdet Özer and Deputy Head of the

Delegation of the European Union to Turkey Béla Szombati launched the event on 14 April 2016 in Pamukkale.

During this forum, students from different provinces participated to the informative seminars organised under the themes of "Democracy", "Active Citizenship and Pluralism". Within the scope of the Forum, a democracy simulation game, choral work, youth concert and social

programme as well as other various cultural activities were organised with the aim of encouraging students to interact with each other. The forum ended with a

debate and e-voting through the interactive participation of writers, directors, artists, scholars, representatives from civil society, activists and students.



TURKEY-EU MIGRATION AGENDA IN APRIL

Since the management of migration is considered to be a major cooperation area between Turkey and the EU following the refugee crisis, the process has been accelerated after the Turkey-EU Statement of 18 March.

The most significant development was the publication of the Commission's report on the implementation of the Turkey-EU Agreement which assessed that good progress has been made to operationalize the statement. However as stated in the report, continued efforts and commitments are needed to consolidate this position and to carry out sustained return and resettlement operations. Regarding the outcomes of the report, European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans stated that the Commission will remain engaged to ensure full and timely delivery of all elements of the Turkey-EU Statement, including

projects for Syrian refugees in Turkey, the visa liberalisation process and compliance with EU and international law.

For enhanced implementation of Turkey's commitments in regard to the migration crisis and to ensure better conditions for the Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey, the EU's financial support was also pursued in April. Under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the Commission delivered 110 million euros for the implementation of the Turkey-EU refugee agreement. 60 million euros of the additional support is designated to cover the expenses for food, healthcare and accommodation of the migrants who have returned from Greece to Turkey.



The remaining 50 million euros in humanitarian aid will address the immediate needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Therefore, the total support of the Commission through the Facility so far has reached an amount of 187 million euros.

Concerning the migration agenda, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos delivered a statement after his

meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara. Underlining that the meeting was very constructive, he highlighted the importance of the Turkey-EU partnership on the refugee crisis and the joint fight against terrorism. Commissioner Avramopoulos emphasised the importance of the safe and legal implications of the refugee agreement and pointed out the necessity of fulfilling the

72 criteria in order to achieve visa liberalisation by the end of June. He mentioned terrorism as another significant threat for both Turkey and the EU. Commissioner Avramopoulos finished his speech by expressing his mourning for all victims of the Ankara, Istanbul, Diyarbakır, Brussels terror attacks and further underlined the importance of cooperation in tackling shared challenges.

TOBB SUPPORTS SYRIAN REFUGEES' INTEGRATION TO THE ECONOMY



TOBB President and EUROCHAMBRES Deputy President M. Rifat Hisarcıkıoğlu attended the EUROCHAMBRES Presidential Council Meeting which was organised by the Italian Chambers Union and held in Rome on 13 April 2016. The main topic discussed during the meeting was the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe. Pointing out that the migration issue is a major concern for both Turkey and the EU, TOBB President Hisarcıkıoğlu stressed the importance of the close cooperation between Turkey and the EU. Within this framework, TOBB President Hisarcıkıoğlu gave information on a project conducted by TOBB in close cooperation with local chambers to support the integration of Syrian refugees into the Turkish economy. With this project, TOBB aims to increase the vocational proficiencies of the Syrian refugees.

NEW GOVERNMENT FORMED IN TRNC

Following the collapse of the left-right grand coalition in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) on 8 April 2016, President Mustafa Akıncı mandated the Chairman of the National Unity Party (UBP) Hüseyin Özgürğün with forming a new government. The Turkish Party-United Forces (CTP-BG) and UBP coalition, in power since 15 July 2015, fell apart after the junior partner UBP withdrew from the government on 2 April 2016 because of a dispute over economic policies. In the aftermath of this dispute, Prime Minister Ömer

Kalyoncu offered his resignation to President Akıncı on 5 April 2016.

UBP leader Özgürğün formed a coalition with the Democratic Party-National Forces (DP-UG) led by Serdar Denktaş and obtained the backing of the independent deputies. The new cabinet led by Prime Minister Özgürğün was approved by President Akıncı on 16 April 2016 and won a vote of confidence in the parliament on 27 April 2016. In the new cabinet, Serdar Denktaş will serve as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister and Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu as Foreign Minister.



PRIME MINISTER DAVUTOĞLU'S VISITS TO FINLAND AND FRANCE

Prime Minister Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu paid an official visit to Finland on 6 April 2016 and met with his Finnish counterpart Juha Sipilä. On 18-19 April 2016, Prime Minister visited France to address the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Visit to Helsinki

During his visit to Finland, Prime Minister Davutoğlu met with the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament Maria Lohela as well as former President Martti Ahtisaari and former Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen. Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu accompanied Prime Minister during this visit.

At a joint press conference organised after the meeting, Prime Minister Davutoğlu thanked Finnish President for the cooperation and for the support in the resolution of the refugee crisis. He expressed that the refugee crisis is not only the problem of Europe or the Middle East but also a universal and humanitarian

problem. Reminding the commercial relations between the two countries, Prime Minister Davutoğlu stressed that the trade volume between the two countries could increase from 1.3 billion to 5 billion dollars. Finnish Prime Minister Sipilä pointed out to the importance of the agreed measures to prevent human smuggling and to stop irregular migration and expressed that the EU funds for the Syrian refugees in Turkey must be made available in an appropriate and swift manner. Prime Minister Davutoğlu and his committee also participated to the Turkey-Finland CEO Forum.

Visit to Strasbourg

Prime Minister Davutoğlu addressed the Parliamentary

Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. Since Turkish is one of the working languages of the Assembly, Prime Minister addressed the Parliamentary Assembly in Turkish. Prime Minister Davutoğlu stressed that Turkey has strengthened its cooperation with the Council of Europe and became one of its major contributors. In his visit to Strasbourg, Prime Minister Davutoğlu met with President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Pedro Agramunt and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker. Deputy Prime Minister Ömer Lütfü Elvan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator



Volkan Bozkır accompanied Prime Minister during this visit. At this occasion, Minister Çavuşoğlu signed the Additional Protocol to the Convention

on Cybercrime concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems.

TURKISH COULD BECOME OFFICIAL EU LANGUAGE



The European Parliament has advised to make Turkish an official language of the EU in its latest Turkey Progress Report, which was adopted on 14 April 2016. As it is known, this February Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus' leader Nicos Anastasiades has asked the Dutch EU Presidency to make Turkish an official EU language, as a "gesture" which could help reunification and improve Turkey-EU relations. The EU has currently 24 official languages, which in other words results in the translation of all legislation, including international treaties, which can be more than 1,000 pages long, into 24 different languages.

PROSECUTION OF GERMAN COMEDIAN BOEHMERMANN

Comedian Jan Boehmermann in his program on the ZDF Channel in Germany read a satirical poem about President Erdoğan on 31 March 2016, which contained distasteful references to bestiality and oppression of minorities. The poem created a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Germany. Based on a German law against insulting foreign heads of state, Turkey demanded the prosecution of the Comedian. The event

triggered a debate over the limits of freedom of speech. Chancellor Merkel allowed legal proceedings to be initiated on the alleged insult of President Erdoğan while she also voiced the importance she gives to freedom of speech. If found guilty, Boehmermann could face up to three years of imprisonment. The result of the legal process will be interesting to see since it will be a ruling on the limits and understanding of freedom of speech and artistic freedom.

FINALISATION OF THE EU/COE HORIZONTAL FACILITY FOR TURKEY

The signing ceremony of the finalisation of the EU/CoE Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey was held on 11 April 2016 in Brussels with the participation of the European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn and the Secretary

General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland.

This initiative launched jointly by the European Commission and the Council of Europe aims at assisting Turkey and Balkan countries in addressing challenges in the areas of rule of law and human rights with a particular focus on reforms of the judiciary,

fight against corruption and organised crime, protection of the rights of vulnerable groups and the promotion of anti-discrimination policies. It is foreseen that the European Commission will allocate 20 million euros and the Council of Europe 5 million euros towards the initiative for the next three years.



EU MINISTER BOZKIR'S VISITS TO EU

Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır paid official visits to the Netherlands and Austria in April 2016.

During his visit to the Netherlands on 11-12 April 2016, Minister Bozkır attended the Informal Meeting of Ministers and State Secretaries for European Affairs hosted by the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the EU. At this occasion, Minister Bozkır met Minister of Foreign Affairs Bert Koenders and Ministers for EU Affairs of the EU Member States and candidate countries. Minister Bozkır assessed the latest developments regarding Turkey-EU relations, Turkey's EU accession negotiation process,

visa liberalisation, terrorism and migration.

Following his visit to the Netherlands, Minister Bozkır paid an official visit to Austria on 13-14 April 2016 and met President Dr. Heinz Fischer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Europe and Integration Sebastian Kurz, Chairs and Members of EU Committees of National Parliament and Federal Council of Austria. At a joint press conference with Minister Kurz, Minister Bozkır shared his criticism regarding Turkey's 2015 Progress Report which was approved

with 375 votes in favour to 133 opposed and 87 abstentions in the EP's General Assembly on 14 April 2016. At the occasion of his visit to Austria, Minister Bozkır also gave a conference at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna.

During his visits to both countries, Minister Bozkır and EU officials assessed bilateral relations and the latest developments regarding Turkey-EU relations, with a special focus on visa liberalisation. They also tackled regional issues mainly related to migration and the joint fight against terrorism.



İKV'S NEW PUBLICATION ON THE ACCESSION NEGOTIATION PROCESS

The new publication entitled "What is the State of Play in the Chapters Blocked" (in Turkish) gives a general overview of the 17 chapters that are not opened to the negotiations.

In the new publication entitled "What is the State of Play in the Chapters Blocked", İKV experts provides information on the current developments in the EU *acquis* and Turkey's level of alignment with the EU in regard to the 17 chapters which are not opened to the negotiations at present.

The negotiations on 8 chapters (Free Movement

of Goods; Rights of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services; Financial Services; Agriculture and Rural Development; Fisheries; Transport Policy; Customs Union; External Relations) are blocked as a result of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council of 11 December 2006. In addition, 6 chapters (Free

Energy; Judiciary and Fundamental Rights; Justice, Freedom and Security; Education and Culture; Foreign, Security and Defense Policy) were unilaterally blocked since 2009 due to the decision of Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus. Only 3 chapters (Public Procurement; Competition Policy; Social Policy and Employment)

remain to be opened to the negotiations if Turkey fulfills the requirements of opening benchmarks on these chapters. In order to better understand the progress made by Turkey in complying with opening benchmarks on 17 chapters, this publication gives a general overview of the current situation in Turkey's EU accession process.

EU OFFICIALS AND GERMAN CHANCELLOR VISITED A REFUGEE CAMP IN TURKEY

EU Council President Donald Tusk, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans visited a refugee camp in the Gaziantep province on 23 April 2016. Anadolu News Agency reported that the officials visited a camp close to the Syrian border which is hosting currently more than 4,800 refugees. The visit comes following the Turkey-EU Summit held in Brussels on 18 March 2016 which was concluded with the signing of an agreement between the parties to stem

irregular migration. They toured the refugee camp with Prime Minister Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu along with Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır. At the press conference which was held following the visit, EU Council President Tusk praised Turkey's efforts in helping refugees on its soil whereas German Chancellor Merkel was quoted as saying that Turkey's issuing work permits for Syrian refugees is a "very brave step". The EU had pledged to provide Turkey with 6 billion euros in exchange for its help in stemming the flow of migrants into Europe through its borders.



EP ADOPTS HIGHLY CRITICAL TURKEY REPORT

The 2015 EP Turkey report, which highlights shortcomings in areas such as the independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression and the rule of law, praises Turkey for its role as a key strategic partner and hosting the largest refugee population in the world.

Yeliz Şahin, IKV Researcher

The European Parliament (EP) in its plenary session on 14 April 2016, adopted its annual resolution assessing Turkey's progress towards EU membership. The non-binding resolution, widely referred to as the "2015 EP Turkey Report", was passed by 375 votes in favour to 133 with 87 abstentions. The Report, which is the second one prepared by Dutch MEP Kati Piri from the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the EP, received a record number of amendments. A total number of 592 amendments were tabled for the 2015 draft report, whereas amendments for the 2014 and 2013 Turkey Reports totalled 480 and 338, respectively.

What's in the 2015 Turkey Report?

As in previous years, the report focuses on the state of play in Turkey-EU relations as well as the respect for the rule of law, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, but this year special attention is paid to the Kurdish peace process and the situation in the Southeast of Turkey, Turkey-EU cooperation in the context of the refugee crisis as well as progress in Cyprus reunification talks.

The 2015 EP Turkey Report is extremely critical of the recent developments in the area of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental freedoms. From the EP's perspective, the current situation in Turkey is characterised by a slowdown in the overall pace of reforms and regression in certain key areas such as the independence of the judiciary, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, respect for human rights and for the rule of law. The EP observes that Turkey has been moving increasingly away from fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria. As regards the rule of law and fundamental rights, the EP expresses concern regarding the backsliding on freedoms of speech, expression and opinion. MEPs underscored the urgency of the need for further reforms in the areas of judiciary and fundamental rights and justice, freedom and security and call on the Council to propose, once



the opening benchmarks are met, the opening of chapters 23 and 24 covering these areas.

On the positive side, the report praises Turkey's critical role as a key strategic partner for the EU. MEPs confirm that credible negotiations provide the suitable framework for exploiting the full potential of Turkey-EU relations. Furthermore, MEPs underscore Turkey's strategic importance for the EU's energy security and express support for more frequent high-level dialogue on key issues of shared interest namely; migration, counter-terrorism, energy, economy and trade. It is important to note that the MEPs urge the EU to take Turkey's interests into consideration when concluding free trade agreements with third countries especially in the case of TTIP.

Regarding the alarming situation in the southeast of Turkey, MEPs call for the resumption of immediate ceasefire. They strongly condemn the terrorist organisation's attacks on civilians and security forces and acknowledge Turkey's legitimate right to protect itself and fight against terrorism, but at the same time underscore the need to ensure respect for the rule of law and human rights while taking security measures. MEPs urge the Turkish government to resume the negotiations for resolving the Kurdish issue.

In the context of the Turkey-EU cooperation on the refugee crisis, the report praises Turkey for

its tremendous contribution to humanity in hosting the largest refugee population in the world as well as opening up its labour market to and providing free healthcare and education services for the Syrian refugees. In the report, while praising the Turkey-EU joint action plan on the refugee crisis, MEPs are highly critical of the EU and emphasize that outsourcing the refugee crisis to Turkey in no way amounts to a credible long-term solution to the refugee crisis. In that context, MEPs urge the member states to show solidarity by increasing the number of countries that will accept refugees for resettlement. Furthermore, MEPs denounce the EU executive's decision to postpone its annual progress report until after the 1 November 2015 elections and argue that this gave the impression that in an attempt to secure Turkey's cooperation on refugees, the EU was willing to remain silent on violations of fundamental rights. Moreover, underscoring that Turkey-EU cooperation on migration and the accession negotiations should be dealt with separately; MEPs stress that Turkey-EU cooperation on migration should not be linked to the calendar, content and conditionality of the negotiation process. In that respect, the report could be regarded as a criticism from within, whereby the EP openly voices its disapproval of the policies of the Commission and the Council.

Regarding the reunification talks in Cyprus, MEPs welcome the

considerable progress achieved and praise the strong determination and tireless efforts of the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders for reaching a fair, comprehensive and viable settlement as soon as possible. Highlighting the effects a prospective settlement to the decades-long Cyprus issue would have for the region and the EU, MEPs express strong support for the possibility of new referenda on reunification. MEPs welcome the agreement reached between the two leaders of the island for a series of confidence-building measures and urge the parties to implement those without further delay. MEPs commend the Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades's initiative to make Turkish an official language of the EU and the establishment of a bi-communal *ad hoc* committee to prepare the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus for implementing the EU *acquis* following the entry into force of the prospective settlement deal. Moreover, MEPs encourage the Commission and EP to intensify their efforts to engage with the Turkish Cypriots.

Out-Of-Scope Reference Causes Tension

Ironically, the 2015 EP Turkey Report caused a major criticism on part of Turkey not because of its excessively critical tone, but mainly because of a completely out-of-scope reference. In its preamble, the report included a reference to the EP's controversial resolution of 15 April 2015 on the

centenary of the 1915 events. The resolution, which offers a selective interpretation of the 1915 events and calls on Turkey to recognise the 1915 events as "genocide", had been rejected by Turkey.

Last year, a reference to the abovementioned resolution had caused a crisis between Turkey and the EP and led to the 2014 EP Turkey Report being declared "null and void". As previously stated by Turkish Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Volkan Bozkır, references to EP Resolution of 15 April 2015, together with calls for "the removal of the PKK from the EU's list of terrorist organisations" and "suspension of negotiations or pre-accession funding to Turkey" constitute Turkey's redlines in EP reports. This, in turn, has led to an episode similar to last year. Minister Bozkır confirmed that the 2015 Turkey Report was considered "null and void" and would be returned to the EP.

As was the case last year, this year's report was overshadowed by an element totally unrelated to the accession negotiations and Turkey-EU relations. Therefore, the EP, if it wants its criticisms to be taken seriously by Turkey, should avoid including politically-motivated and out-of-scope references to its reports. If it wants to remain a marginal actor in Turkey's relations with the EU, however, the EP is on the right track. For, such incidents serve neither the interests of Turkey nor those of the EU, but cause unnecessary tension between Ankara and the EP.