

Turkey's accession will be an asset for enlarged Europe



Turkey's 41 years-old Association with the EU is the oldest and the most deep-rooted relationship compared with that of all other acceding and Candidate States. Turkey-EU association was focused on Turkey's full membership since the very beginning. Customs Union, which has been in force since 1996, is the economic pillar of our relations.

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■ **In fact following** the Customs Union, a significant economic convergence was already achieved between the EU and Turkey. Turkey has done so without tangible assistance from the EU and became the only country that has formed a functioning Customs Union with the EU before becoming a full member. For almost a decade, our economy has been able to meet the competitive pressures coming from the Customs Union with the EU.

In fact Turkey's European Union membership is a major transformation project encompassing the whole society. Yet the long-standing Turkey-EU relations are on the edge of an **important** turning point since on December 2004, the EU will give its decision concerning the launching of the accession negotiations. Thus Turkey has been decisively continuing with the EU harmonisation works. The main reason behind this decisiveness is the Parliament's and the Government's firm commitment to the aim of full EU membership, the strong support displayed by the business community and NGOs and most important of all, the fact that 75% of the entire Turkish public embraces this target.

Turkey is aimed to complete the legislative harmonisation works with a view to fully comply with the Copenhagen political criteria and focused mainly on implementation in 2004. We have been resolutely progressing in this direction. Turkey has adapted various reform packages

and constitutional amendments in this regard.

A parallel reform process is underway in the economy. All the indicators show that it has given positive results. The Turkish economy is stronger and more stable now. Confidence has been restored.

The decision to open the negotiations with Turkey is expected to be taken at the end of this year on the basis of the EU Commissions Progress Report. Thus, it is of crucial importance that these reports include impartial, fair and objective assessments.

The opening of accession negotiations with Turkey will demonstrate the determination of the EU to unify Europe without creating new dividing lines. This is a historical mission both for the EU and Turkey. It will reaffirm the common values that constitute the very basis of the European Union. We share these values. It will promote peace, security and stability, especially in the still volatile Southeast Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. We believe that Turkey will thus be contributing to the global role of the EU.

Turkey is aware that the membership criteria should not be fulfilled only for EU integration process but primarily for conforming to the standards of a democratic welfare state. In this regard, she is striving hard for completing them and is aiming to attain a significant move in the 'Copenhagen Economic Criteria' as well as harmonisation of 'Acquis' by the end of this year. On the economic

front, Turkey is progressing well with her economic stability programme, which coincides with the Copenhagen economic criteria.

The positive economic developments raised confidence in Turkish economy and increased Turkey's credibility in international economic environment. However Turkey is aware that, achievements in inflation can only take root through a sustainable fiscal policy and structural reforms. Considering that the ultimate anchor for Turkish economy is the EU membership, the start of the negotiations will be a crucial turning point in macroeconomic trends. In the lack of a clearly set calendar towards accession, Turkey cannot fully utilize the long-desired convergence in a pace comparable to the other candidate countries. It's a fact that prospective EU membership will enhance the business and investment environment in Turkey rapidly from which Business circles of the EU will benefit the most.

Turkey strongly believes that, on the economic front, Turkey's full membership will be a "win-win" case for all the parties involved. The synergy brought by Turkey's membership will pave the way for the EU to attain new successes.



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