

EUROPE DAY ANNIVERSARY

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WELCOMING REMARKS

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Turkey's membership process to the EU is not only an issue followed closely by scholars or other professionals but it is also keenly watched by a large section of society. This is because the process has been directly linked to Turkey's fundamental political and social policies, going as far back as the late years of the Ottoman Empire. Principal goals that Turkey set itself right from the beginning to this day for its social and economic programs and reforms have been in harmony with its membership ambitions to the EU.

One of the core activities of FNF in Turkey is especially EU-Turkey and German-Turkish relationship. And FNF's position is very clear and unambiguous: We are negotiating the full membership of Turkey and if Turkey fulfills the Copenhagen Criteria it should be full member of EU.

And I guess as off today we must admit: Neither does Today's Turkey fulfill the criteria and is thus not ready for membership as well as Today's EU is not read to integrate Turkey, or in other and plain words: The Turkey of today will not be a member of Today's EU.

Both sides, both actors have to undergo a reform process. Both actors should concentrate on two basic principles:

1. Both actors should enforce the necessary reforms independent from this membership aspect. A Turkey, that only takes the reform just to become a member of EU will be as unsuccessful and fail as an European Union which modernizes itself just to be able to absorb Turkey. Both actors should and must do the reforms because they are necessary to face the challenges of tomorrow and their own future.
2. Both actors should concentrate more on doing their own homework and reforms rather than just watching the progress or sometimes even regress of the other and critically commenting on it. But even if such an evaluation is necessary in my view it would be much smarter and more productive to start concentrating on the successful developments in order to create a positive atmosphere encouraging each other to go on with the

reforms. I am convinced in such an atmosphere there is much more hope and options to solve the more difficult problems

The advantages for both actors are very much obvious:

Turkey has a geostrategic position:

- It is an energy hub and thus of vital importance of Europe
- Despite all deficits it is the only country with a predominantly Muslim population and a secular constitution
- Traditionally and historically it could be a mediator and bridge between Europe and the so called Muslim world.
- With its direct borders to countries like Iran Iraq, Syria it is of high importance in security and military issues

All these are advantages, EU could make use of if Turkey were a EU member. On the other hand or simultaneously, Turkey has these advantages mostly because it is a candidate country and Turkey could make the best of these advantages if it is a member. As a national actor, as a single country, Turkey can make use of these qualities only in a limited way.

Thus, it is so obvious and so clear:
Turkey needs the EU
and the EU needs Turkey.

Under this precondition the critical question comes up: Where does Turkey stand and where does EU stand in this process?

Well the latest progress report of the EU and the EU Parliament speaks for itself; it is the most critical report since progress reports have been written.

As a Liberal and even as a strong supporter and promoter of Turkey's full membership I unfortunately must agree with many aspects mentioned, especially if it comes to the freedom of press and freedom of expression. And YES, also the speed of the reforms and the enthusiasm of EU perspectives have decreased in Turkey.

So far so good,
so far so true.

But progress and a negotiation process are never only one sighted. As true or justified as most of the criticism documented in the latest progress report is, I miss two important aspects in order to have made it a real balanced report:

1. If the report reminds Turkey to fulfill or stick to its promises regarding Cyprus, it should also mention the promises that EU has given to Turkey and which it should fulfill. Rule of law is never a ONE Way Street

2. If “pacta sunt servanda” is declared as a principle even by those that do not want Turkey to become an EU member, then the progress report should also criticize that expressions like “privileged partnership” or similar terms, not only humiliate the respective candidate country and its population, it should be clearly stated that such utterances violate the principle of “pacta sunt servanda”, that these terms are out of treaty, and have no official basis or legitimization at all in the negotiating process.

And especially today, if we look at the developments and turmoil in the Arab World. EU has lost a lot of credibility in the Arab world due to the EU policies of the last decades. FNF knows this and learns this every day. We have project offices in all these countries, Marokko, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel/Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. Some of our counterparts or partners are closely involved in the transformation process in countries like Egypt or Tunisia.

Whereas EU has lost a lot of credibility, Turkey still has this credibility, sometimes has even increased its credibility.

Thus the situation is a great chance to improve EU-Turkey relations and make use of Turkey’s influence, whereas Turkey could use its good relations to this part of the world playing a very constructive role in cooperation with EU and thus create a more positive atmosphere in the EU-Turkey relations.

I really hope politicians and other authorities on both sides recognize these opportunities and act accordingly and responsibly.

Even though the desire to become a member has been weakened from time to time, the ultimate goal of membership has been a general expectation of Turkish society. This makes the need to understand the relationship between Turkey and the EU, which has been evolving for all those years, even greater.

Together with our partners we as FNF organize conferences, workshops, round tables, and also exhibitions like the one today. We are very grateful to our partner ATAUM, who took all these efforts, who did all the necessary research and work to design and develop this exhibition. We also thank the EU Commission and all the other partners involved in this precious project.

Print media is one of the best sources of information for understanding a process, especially the one that a society has been closely, almost obsessively in for a very long time. Press is important not only to evaluate historical developments in their right context and to follow their trajectory, but also for seeing how they were perceived and presented at the time.

This is especially true of Turkey EU relations, a process that either side seems determined to maintain despite its ups and downs and the one both sides attribute much higher significance than the reality of the situation seems to merit.

This exhibition has brought together the review of the EU-Turkey relationship as seen by one of the most important sources, the printed press. It is an archive based study of the 50 year-long relationship, starting from 1959 all the way to 2009. It gathers news reports from a diverse selection of publications together with 850 illustrations.

The papers reviewed are

- Birgün
- Cumhuriyet
- Hürriyet
- Milliyet
- Radikal
- Sabah
- Ulus
- Yenicag
- Yeni Safak
- Yeni Yüzyil
- Zaman

In this exhibition you will be able see, all at once, how various developments, some long forgotten, others that have become engraved in collective memory, were reported by different newspapers. Additionally, taking into the account that the Turkish public in general, and each segment of society in particular, tend to approach the EU process differently, you will be able to follow how each publication saw and reported events over this period.

This was the starting point of our project and we hope to bring you the experience of reliving these 50 years, whilst seeing the full picture of how different periods in this relationship were perceived by various parts of Turkish society.

The main objective is to be able to shine a new light onto the past and the future of Turkey-EU relations in a way that enables the visitor to question and re-evaluate the process which has all too often become cliché ridden.

By bringing together this historical data, we hope to be instrumental in starting a fresh debate.

Thank you very much and please enjoy the exhibition.