

VIADUCT

THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ONLINE, 22-23 OCTOBER 2020

REPORT

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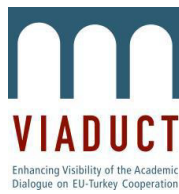


TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
ABOUT VIADUCT	5
ONLINE CONFERENCE (THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE)	5
OPENING SESSION WITH KEYNOTE	6
WORKING GROUP 1 : EU-TURKEY SECURITY RELATIONS – WHICH WAY FORWARD?	7
WORKING GROUP 2: TURKEY'S ROLE IN EU'S ENERGY SUPPLY - IMPORTANT PUZZLE PIECE OR JUST ANOTHER TRANSIT STATE?	8
WORKING GROUP 3: MIGRATION – THE ADHESIVE OF EU-TURKEY RELATIONS	9
WORKING GROUP 4: TEACHING EU-TURKEY RELATIONS	10
WORKING GROUP 5: THE FUTURE OF EUROPE	11
AWARD CEREMONY	12
POLICY DEBATE	13
CONCLUDING REMARKS	15

ONLINE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

22-23 OCTOBER 2020

Thursday, 22 October 2020

10:00-11:00 **Opening Session with Keynote**

Angelina Eichhorst, European External Action Service (Keynote)
Funda Tekin, Institut für Europäische Politik
Wolfgang Wessels, University of Cologne

13:00-14:30 **Working Groups**

Parallel working groups to discuss EU-Turkey relations and address the network's cross-sectorial issues. The working groups were open to registration beyond the network.

Group 1 - Turkey-EU Security relations – which way forward?

Chair: **Giorgos Kentas**, University of Nicosia

Input: **Eduard Soler i Lecha**, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs

Discussant: **Nilgün Arisan Eralp**, The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey

Rapporteur: Kim Schumann, University of Cologne

Group 2 - Turkey's role in EU's energy supply - important puzzle piece or just another transit state?

Chair: **Karlis Bukovskis**, Latvian Institute for International Affairs

Input: **Suhnaz Yilmaz**, Koc University

Discussant: **Johannes Pollak**, Webster Vienna Private University

Rapporteur: Adrian Krieger, University of Cologne

Group 3 - Migration - the adhesive of Turkey-EU relations?

Chair: **Selcen Öner**, Bahcesehir University

Input: **Ayhan Kaya**, Istanbul Bilgi University

Discussant: **Senem Aydin-Düzgit**, Istanbul Policy Center

Rapporteur: Anke Schönlau, University of Cologne

Group 4 – Teaching EU-Turkey Relations

Chair: **Anna-Lena Högenauer**, University of Luxembourg

Input: **Digdem Soyaltin-Colella**, Altınbaş University

Discussant: **Darius Ribbe**, University of Greifswald

Rapporteur: Giulia Bonacquisti, TEPSA & Marius Korte, University of Cologne

Group 5 – More, Less or totally different EU?

Chair: **Ebru Turhan**, Turkish-German University

Input: **Barbara Lippert**, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Discussant: **Julie Smith**, Cambridge University

Rapporteur: Lea Hopp, University of Cologne

Friday, 23 October 2020

11:30-12:15	Award Ceremony Chair: Atila Eralp , Istanbul Policy Center & Middle East Technical University Laudatory speeches: Julie Smith , Cambridge University Athanasios Manis , Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy Meltem Müftüleri-Baç , Sabancı University
13:30-15:00	Policy Debate: Pouring Oil on Troubled Waters: Bridge-building in EU-Turkey Relations Chair: Ilke Toygür , Elcano Royal Institute/ Centre for Applied Turkey Studies, German Institute for International and Security Affairs Panelists: Bernard Brunet , Turkey Unit, DG Near, European Commission Funda Tekin , Institut für Europäische Politik Fuat Keyman , Sabanci University
15:00-15:30	Concluding Remarks Wolfgang Wessels , University of Cologne

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT VIADUCT

“[VIADUCT – Enhancing the Visibility of the Academic Dialogue on EU-Turkey Cooperation](#)” is an academic network that aims to link universities and think-tanks from the European Union (EU), Turkey and the neighbourhood in order to build knowledge on EU-Turkey Cooperation. Funded by the Erasmus+/Jean Monnet programme of the EU, the network is coordinated by [Prof Dr Wolfgang Wessels](#) and [Dr Funda Tekin](#) at the [Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies \(CETEUS\)](#), University of Cologne. The network was launched on 1 September 2017 and runs – including a project extension granted in March 2020 - for a period of three years and four month till 31 December 2020.

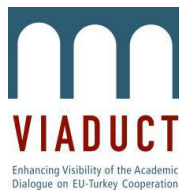
VIADUCT represents a network of [40 partners](#) and one extended network partner from all EU countries, Turkey as well as from Egypt, Georgia, Iceland, Iraq, Israel, Norway, and Switzerland. VIADUCT’s goal is to promote research, teaching and policy dialogue on EU-Turkey relations through a ‘[4x4 approach](#)’:

- 4-I strategy: intergenerationality, interdisciplinarity, internationality, intertemporality
- 4 possible scenarios for the future of EU-Turkey relations: managing the fragile status quo, upgrading existing forms of cooperation, reactivating the accession process, dealing with a difficult or even hostile neighbour
- 4 cross-sectorial issues in EU-Turkey relations: power, resources, people, Future of the EU
- 4 dimensions of activities: face-to-face meetings, online exchange, publications, multiplication.

ONLINE CONFERENCE (THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE)

VIADUCT’s Online Conference – the third annual conference – took place online on 22-23 October 2020. The conference was launched after the COVID-19 grounded cancellation of the third VIADUCT week, planned to take place on 9-13 March 2020 and co-organised by TEPSA, CETEUS and Sciences Po Grenoble. The conference’s purpose was to bring together academics, practitioners, policy makers and civil society representatives to discuss several cross-cutting issues within the broad theme of EU-Turkey relations (Power, Resources, People, Teaching EU-Turkey Relations), including in the context of the ongoing debate on the future of European integration. It gathered online more than 100 participants in the Keynote and Policy Debate sessions, and around 70 participants in the Working Groups. Among participants were leading scholars from the EU and beyond, university students, EU practitioners as well as civil society representatives.

The first day was kicked off by a keynote speech of Angelina Eichhorst, Managing Director at the European External Action Service for Western Europe, Western Balkans, Turkey and the United Kingdom, followed by five topic oriented Working Groups. On the second day, the VIADUCT project honoured this year’s Award Winners in different fields. In the afternoon, a policy debate on EU-Turkey relations closed the conference programme.



OPENING SESSION WITH KEYNOTE

Funda Tekin (Director of the Institut für Europäische Politik and VIADUCT Project Director) and Wolfgang Wessels (Director of the Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies, University of Cologne and VIADUCT Project Coordinator) opened the VIADUCT Online Conference by welcoming all network partners present and the wide public audience joining for the conference opening keynote speech of Angelina Eichhorst (Managing Director for Western Europe, Western Balkans, Turkey and United Kingdom at the European External Action Service).

Wolfgang Wessels introduced the project by pointing out that the VIADUCT project is a promise to everyone involved to build bridges between institutions and people even in times of political challenges.

In reaction to Wolfgang Wessels' comment that Angelina Eichhorst as Western Europe, Western Balkans, Turkey and United Kingdom covered various countries in which the EU faced challenges at the moment, Angelina Eichhorst underlined how important it was to build bridges with all of these countries, in particular with the UK after the end of the Brexit transition period.

Angelina Eichhorst said that there are many dates in history one could set as the starting point for intense EU-Turkey relations, but that the EU-Turkey statement of March 2016 was an important date for sure: Turkey and the EU reacted to joint challenges and worked on a comprehensive agreement that had to be implemented now.

Though there were many common challenges and interests, the Turkish domestic situation as well as the infringement on EU Member States' sovereignty absorbed a lot of energy in EU-Turkey relations. Nevertheless, with no other country the EU had as many instruments at hand as with Turkey, based on the various areas of institutional cooperation. The EU's current goal in the Eastern Mediterranean was to get into a motion of debate and to de-escalate. The EU fully supported the UN-backed Cyprus settlement talks and dialogue between Greece and Turkey on the Eastern Mediterranean.

In her keynote as well as in reactions to questions in the Q&A session, Angelina Eichhorst underlined the importance of solidarity between EU Member States in its relations with Turkey. She emphasised that the EU did not want a purely transactional relationship with Turkey. Their societies were far too deeply enringed to have a transactional relationship. Also, the accession process was good both for the EU and Turkey. Though EU-Turkey relations were in currently in a crisis mode, both would in the long term benefit from modernising the Customs Union. Both should work now on de-escalating and endeavour on a positive agenda.

WORKING GROUP 1 : EU-TURKEY SECURITY RELATIONS – WHICH WAY FORWARD?

Turkey has long been described as a cornerstone in European and Transatlantic Security, but tensions rise: In the Eastern Mediterranean or in questions of defense structures, Turkey and the EU seem to be at crossroads. The Working Group on EU-Turkey Security Relations – Which Way Forward? (‘Power’) was chaired by [Giorgos Kentas](#) (University of Nicosia). [Eduard Soler](#) (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs) and [Nilgün Arisan](#) (The Economic Research Foundation of Turkey TEPAV) discussed the ways forward in Turkey-EU Security relations.

In the following, the discussion emphasized that, when looking at the relations between the EU and Turkey, Turkey has always been a very difficult partner, but it has never been perceived as a rival. This was currently changing. As a result, a dangerously situation approached in which Turkey could start to be seen as a rival. The EU had to discuss if it wants to let it happen, if it can afford to let it happen, and at what cost. Conflictual incidents between both actors had become more frequent, and they had resulted in a lack of trust on both sides. In this regard, the following recommendations should be considered: First, the EU needed to engage more in a discreet manner with Turkey. It was important to take Turkish concerns and security perceptions more serious and understand them. Second, the EU couldn’t continue to show weaknesses in confronting Turkey. It should avoid threatening sanctions if it was not ready or able to impose sanctions.

The Working Group continued by elaborating on certain issues where Turkey was deemed as a potential threat, agreeing that both sides cannot afford to be adversaries to each other. However, it appeared that Turkey was not aware of the far-reaching problems that would arise when being adversaries, particularly in economic terms. Turkey needs capital inflows and for that to happen, it has to act as a credible partner, sustaining a stable relationship with the EU.

Especially since the formation of the EastMed Gas Forum, Turkey felt isolated in the region. In this context, the Working Group also highlighted the importance of the forthcoming US elections. In the past, the US had shown that it was able act as a mediator in the region in tense situations than the EU. However, the US had been very distant and absent recently. The election of Joe Biden as new President of the United States could in this regard create a window of opportunity. Furthermore, instead of proceeding with the aggressive military discourse in its foreign policy, Turkey should concentrate on voicing those security concerns that are legitimate and ask for dialogue. At the same time, the EU should include Turkey more comprehensively in its security structures, other than only NATO issues. In the end, both parties, EU and Turkey, should device a holistic comprehensive strategy to each other, contrary to the mostly reactionary policies implemented when a problem arose.

Regarding the question of what the EU could offer Turkey in order to advance their bilateral relations, the Working Group concluded that in light of the current situation, it was necessary to review the existing carrots and sticks policy respectively the instruments itself.

WORKING GROUP 2: TURKEY'S ROLE IN EU'S ENERGY SUPPLY – IMPORTANT PUZZLE PIECE OR JUST ANOTHER TRANSIT STATE?

The Working Group on Turkey's role in EU's energy supply was chaired by [Karlis Bukovskis](#) (Latvian Institute of International Affairs); inputs were provided by [Şuhnaz Yılmaz](#) (Koç University) and [Johannes Pollak](#) (Webster Vienna Private University).

It was discussed whether Turkey could evolve into an energy hub due to the southern gas pipelines, in addition to already playing a role as a security and migration hub for the EU. Globally, energy markets faced a form of energy transition, i.e. the price of renewable energy fell whilst oil prices were unstable. Turkey stood at an “energy crossroad”: It could be an important corridor for Middle Eastern and Caspian Oil (East-West-Energy Corridor), but was dependent on Russian gas imports. Turkey now faced a new opportunity in the Black Sea. The combination of geostrategic, geopolitical and domestic political aspects put Turkey at the crossroad to become a big player in energy politics, or to rise up to be an important puzzle piece as a regional power, especially due to the energy producing nature of Turkey's neighbours. To achieve such a role Turkey, would have to consolidate the rule of law and strengthen the economy.

The working group put the viability of the found resources in the Black Sea into question: The exact quantity of the gas deposits in the Black Sea was unknown, estimates of 350 billion m³ could be exaggerated; extraction would take at least 8 years until the first “new” gas entered the market; many companies, e.g. Exxon, had already abandoned the project. The impact of COVID 19 on global energy prices needed to be considered. If gas extraction started, Turkey would use this gas to satisfy the domestic market to diminish the dependency on Russia. In case Turkey also phases out coal, the demand for gas will rise sharply.

It was furthermore argued that also prospects for Azerbaijani pipeline gas were rather bleak: TANAP and the Trans-Adriatic-Pipeline (TAP) will connect to the European network in the future, but gas production in Azerbaijan was shrinking. Due to the nature of these pipelines the transport costs were especially high, resulting in higher gas prices (25-30%), resulting in uncompetitiveness in comparison to other shipping methods or shorter routes. For stock market listed companies, the gas price was much more important than geostrategic needs of the EU.

It was further argued that Europe missed out on a big opportunity with the Nabucco-pipeline. In the future, Europe will mostly depend on Norwegian and Russian Gas, circumventing Ukraine as a “problematic” transit state, due to corruption and Russian interferences, with the help of Nordstream 2.

Despite these considerations, it is important to think about a post-fossil era in European energy politics, especially in Eastern Europe since dropping gas prices could spawn instability in Russia, leading to challenges evolving in Eastern Europe. In any case, the political and legal situation as well as diminishing trust between the EU and Turkey put a high burden on any future energy relationship.

WORKING GROUP 3: MIGRATION – THE ADHESIVE OF EU-TURKEY RELATIONS

The Working Group on ‘People’ was chaired by [Selcen Öner](#) (Bahçeşehir University), and benefitted from the contributions of [Ayhan Kaya](#) (Bilgi University) and [Senem Aydın-Düzgit](#) (Sabancı University).

The discussion of the Working Group focused on the implications of the EU-Turkey statement of March 2016 and its ramifications for both for directly affected refugees and EU-Turkey relations as such.

While the European Commission continuously underlined the positive results of the mechanisms implemented after March 2016, the “deal”, which was brokered by Germany and the Netherlands, rather than the EU-28, questioned the value basis of the European project. The EU had fully accommodated itself with the externalisation of migration. Somewhat unease amongst the Working Group caused the observation that, the more externalisation of migration was consolidated, the more the support for far right groups across the EU slowed down. One could thus argue that externalisation of migration was good for the EU’s internal cohesion, but this was only based on observations and did not consider other potential factors. It was also argued that the basis of far-right movements was predominantly motivated by economic motives, rather than xenophobia or islamophobia. Furthermore, the closure of the Balkan route rather than the deal contributed to decline of numbers.

Five years after the statement, the Turkish administration had accepted that many Syrians would stay in Turkey. While it in the beginning invested mostly in temporary protection, its instruments would now transition to a longer term strategy. At the center of this strategy was the economic integration of Syrians in Turkey’s labour market and the expiration of cash disbursements.

It was questioned whether visa liberalisation and upgrading the Customs Union were indeed effective tools or carrots in working with Turkey. The Working Group discussed whether Turkey had indeed a real interest under the current government to allow more travel of its citizens to the EU. Additionally, on the Customs Union, sincere negotiations would at some point reach the sensitive issue of public procurement. Instead, Turkey would in the future claim more financial flows for the central government.

The Working Group concluded that the EU would continue to externalise migration. The great challenge to find a succeeding regulation for Dublin III would in the long term potentially lead to more bilateral agreements amongst Member States on migration. Turkey would work on disassociating this branch of cooperation from other, more conflictual issues in the EU-Turkey relationship. The EU would continue to develop and negotiate new cooperation instruments on migration based on externalisation against cash flows. For the time being, migration was an interest based field where Turkey and the EU are likely to cooperate on in the future.

WORKING GROUP 4: TEACHING EU-TURKEY RELATIONS

The Working Group on Teaching EU-Turkey relations was chaired by [Anna-Lena Högenauer](#) (University of Luxembourg) and started with an input by [Digdem Soyaltin-Colella](#) (Altınbaş University). Digdem Soyaltin-Colella is also the author of the third VIADUCT Teaching Paper “EU Good Governance promotion in Turkey”. Her input was followed by a comment by [Darius Ribbe](#) (University of Greifswald).

When teaching EU-Turkey relations, it was important not only to look at the very recent conflictual developments in the relationship but also to take into account that EU-Turkey relations have had many ups and downs in its long history. When teaching EU-Turkey relations instead of only looking at the very broad questions it makes sense to follow a policy-focused approach and look into individual policy fields where the EU and Turkey are cooperating (e.g. migration, energy, customs union). Such a policy-focused approach also enables students to learn about the EU’s policy toolbox. Another important factor is to look at a future relationship between the EU and Turkey besides the less and less realistic prospect of membership.

In terms of teaching methods, blending traditional lectures with more interactive group discussions as well as the use of posters. During the pandemic digital tools have become more relevant. One example of a tool that works both in digital as well as on-campus education is using blogs. Those can be very helpful as they enable students to write more freely and become more creative than during traditional (mid-term) papers. Simulation games are a further way of making education more entertaining and give students a real-life experience of how negotiations work.

Due to the conflictual character of the relationship, it remains important to always emphasise that EU-Turkey relations is much more than just a discussion about membership, as many students mainly think of conflicts and the accession negotiations when discussing EU-Turkey relations. This is further reinforced by media coverage in Europe, which often lacks the Turkish perspective. A simulation game can help students to understand all perspectives. Furthermore, courses could move away from covering the historic perspective on EU-Turkey relations and rather focus on single issues, hence cover more policy-oriented questions. Concrete fields for future cooperation and analysis could be migration, trade, energy and environmental affairs.

WORKING GROUP 5: THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

Working Group No. 5 on the EU's future was chaired by [Ebru Turhan](#) (Turkish-German University) and started with an input by [Barbara Lippert](#) (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), followed by a comment by [Julie Smith](#) (Cambridge University).

The participants discussed how the COVID 19 Pandemic had affected European integration, i.e. though its influence on political reform processes. It certainly had pushed the EU towards more integration but foremost limited to financial and economic policies. Hence, the crisis made clear that economic integration was the core area of the EU where it was also able to act, i.e. with its decision on own resources.

The pandemic has been able to build (some) bridges between (some) Member States, and domestic politics was less hostile. On the other hand, no spill-over effect of integration across policy areas needed to be expected. Some divides between North and South and East and West prevailed.

Potential partnership models for today's non-Members, respectively the UK after Brexit, were the Canada model, the Switzerland model or Norweigan model. The group reflected on whether Turkey's relation with EU – a Customs Union and deep integration in selected areas – could be applicable for the UK.

Which scenario(s) of more or less Europe would emerge after the crisis was depended on whether the economic tools now introduced were perceived successful or not and the new growth model of the EU – the Green Deal and digital transformation – will work for all Member States.

The Group concluded that Differentiated Integration was here to stay. But more integration in other areas was not to be expected until the next crisis – certainly a driver for financial and economic integration.

AWARD CEREMONY

With the VIADUCT Awards, the project aims to honour excellent research and teaching activities in the fields of EU-Turkey relations and the future of Europe. In 2020, the Award session was chaired by [Atila Eralp](#), Professor emeritus for International Relations at Middle East Technical University and Senior Fellow at the Istanbul Policy Center. Atila Eralp received in 2018 the VIADUCT Award for this lifetime achievement.

The VIADUCT project has awarded [Ebru Turhan](#) (Associate Professor at the Turkish-German University) with the VIADUCT Teaching Award for her Jean Monnet Module INSITER "Inside EU-Turkey Relations (2016-2019)". VIADUCT's Steering Group has decided to award Ebru Turhan for her outstanding teaching performance and thus contribution to the future of EU-Turkey relations.

[Julie Smith](#) (Cambridge University) held the laudatory speech for Ebru Turhan. She stressed not only the module's contribution to the research and teaching agenda, but also its bridge function between junior and senior academics. References from her students were outstanding. Being the first module on EU-Turkey relations at a rather young university, senior scholars underlined Ebru Turhan's effort to put the EU (back) on the Turkish academic map.

The VIADUCT Research Award in the field Migration ('People') was given to [Gerasimos Tsourapas](#) (Senior Lecturer in Middle East Politics at the University of Birmingham) for his work on 'The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Foreign Policy Decision-Making in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey' in the *Journal of Global Security Studies* (October 2019).

[Athanasios Manis](#) (Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy) held the laudatory speech for Gerasimos Tsourapas. He stressed that the research contributed to the understanding of migration diplomacy through the exploration of refugee rentier states, based on extensive fieldwork in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon with more than 80 interviews conducted.

The prize for the best Student Paper was given to [Osman Toksöz](#) (at the time of writing graduate and Jean Monnet scholar at the College of Europe) for his paper entitled 'The Modernisation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union: Between Indispensable and Deadlocked' ([click here](#) for the full Student Paper Series). [Meltem Müftüleri-Baç](#) (Sabancı University) said in her laudatory speech that the paper was selected because of its excellent use of Putnam's 'two-level game framework' and its strong empirical analysis of the progress of the EU-Turkey customs union negotiations.

Further honours were given to Selin Türkeş-Kılıç (Yeditepe University), Damla Cihangir-Tetik (Istanbul Ayyansaray University) and Digidem Soyaltin-Colella (Altınbaş University) for their contributions to the [VIADUCT Teaching Paper Series](#). All contributions were discussed in the framework of the VIADUCT Conferences of the past years and contributed significantly to a deeper understanding and sharing of best practices in teaching EU-Turkey relations.

POLICY DEBATE

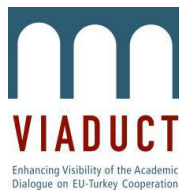
The policy debate entitled “Pouring Oil over Troubled Waters: Bridge-building in EU-Turkey relations” was chaired by [Ilke Toygür](#) (Elcano Royal Institute & German Institute for International and Security Affairs). The round table hosted contributions from [Bernard Brunet](#) (Head of Turkey Division at the European Commission’s Directorate General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations), [Funda Tekin](#) (Director of Institut für Europäische Politik), and [Fuat Keyman](#) (Sabancı University & Istanbul Policy Center).

[Ilke Toygür](#) opened the session with remarks on the developments in the past weeks that were characterised by tensions; and, at the same time, differences both in approach and opinion regarding Turkey in the EU Member States that made a coordinated response difficult. The future of EU-Turkey relations was quite open, though it was not as fragile as expected, which led to multiple core questions: How can Turkey be kept close both to the EU and NATO? What will the future of the relationship between Turkey and the EU look like? What are Turkey’s opinions regarding the future of the EU-Turkey relationship?

[Bernard Brunet](#) – making statements in his personal capacity – stated that there had recently been an overwhelming concentration on foreign policy issues in EU-Turkey relations, mainly because developments in the Eastern Mediterranean had pushed domestic politics and EU accession reforms off the agenda. Within domestic politics, one could see a deterioration in the accession conditions: i.e., with regards to the rule of law and fundamental rights, lower courts refused higher courts decisions, thus undermining the integrity of the Turkish legal system; the non-implementation of rulings from the European Court of Human Rights, economic governance and development reforms that have been stalling in the past years; pending public administration reforms.

Nevertheless, there were also positive developments in some fields. Potential for cooperation could be identified with regards to the Customs Union, the European Green Deal, particular in transport and the production of renewables, People-to-people contacts, further integration of Turkey in EU programmes, and migration, where the EU and Turkey could build on existing institutions. However, all the areas required further reforms by Turkey, otherwise the relationship would become more and more transactional, which was undesirable for an accession country.

[Fuat Keyman](#) addressed the importance of understanding the complexity and heterogeneity of approaches and visions in Turkey. The Turkish government followed a doctrine of unilateral actions in its foreign policy by using hard power to achieve its goals. This approach had not always been successful but was useful for building a narrative of security, independence and sovereignty in domestic politics. Other visions of Turkey are being pushed by Turkey’s parliamentary opposition, especially CHP and HDP, as well as the key cities of Turkey (e.g. Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir etc.), the latter mainly because of economic reasons. These visions are shaped by an open approach regarding cooperation with the EU and other international actors as well as exchanging the unilateral hard power foreign policy with one built around soft power grounded in rule-based multilateralism. The EU needs to see these complex varieties



of vision in order to revitalise EU-Turkey relations. At the same time, Turkey had to view itself as a balancing power between East and West whose influence is based on diplomacy and dialogue.

Funda Tekin pointed out that there had always been challenges in EU-Turkey relations, therefore the state of relations could be described as a rollercoaster ride. The recent downturn in relations had been hard and may be enduring but the multi-dimensional and interdependent relationship between Turkey and the EU, i.e. migration, security, identity, economics, energy etc., creates a demand for cooperation. On the EU's side it was important to acknowledge the multi-dimensional perspectives of the EU's Member States, shaped by Turkish diaspora, economic links, geographical proximity and neighbourhood, the latter being especially important for Greece and Cyprus.

To return to a more constructive relationship, an honest broker and common interests were needed. Germany held the roles as honest broker at the moment, especially due to cooperation with Turkey during the migration crisis. Turkey considered Germany as the main negotiation party in the EU, as the one that needs to be convinced in order to strike a deal with the EU. France had taken the counterpart to Germany, especially due to its military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Areas of mutual interest for the EU and Turkey could be migration - if Member States overcame their differences – and the modernisation of the Customs Union. Ms Tekin outlined that there were multiple pathways from here which should be explored in parallel to find a common ground. The approach should not entirely be based on mere interests of states since this held the danger of turning the EU-Turkey relationship into a zero-sum-game. Hence, the EU needed to further support democratic reform in Turkey.

The following lively discussion covered numerous aspects such as the tools the European Commission had at hand to transform the European approach regarding Turkey into one of cooperation and foreign policy, EU's relations to Turkey's Civil Society, EU-Turkey relations after the elections in Germany in 2021, a potential conference on the Eastern Mediterranean and prospects for a resolution of the Cyprus conflict. Possibilities to revitalise EU-Turkey relations were there, for example in cooperation on renewable energies or with the Civil Society. Return to a trust-based dialogue was however inevitable.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Wolfgang Wessels (University of Cologne) concluded the conference by drawing from the discussions of the two conference days his remarks, based on a “Three A” approach:

In Analysis, further dialogue and cooperation was needed to uphold the existing relations. Not all bridges have been burned down, but many have also not been used. Turkey’s unilateral approach in foreign policy isolated itself and the use of foreign policy to strengthen the government’s position in domestic issues is a danger to EU-Turkey relations. The EU had to be united in its approach, especially France and Germany had to share the work load.

In Assessment, it was important to look at the long-term prospects and whether or not the EU and Turkey are drifting apart or getting closer. Both sides need to look for starting points for cooperation, especially in civil society sector. Regarding economic cooperation one has to look at the future of Turkey’s economy, i.e. the fall of the Turkish Lira and the possibility that the Turkish government has to turn to the IMF.

In Advice, he concluded that advice had to be given both on a political and on a civil level. It was important to look at the potential benefits and conflicts of interest regarding an upgrade to the customs union as well as to look at the consequences of sanctions. Especially the academic world had to keep up the dialogue between Turkey and the EU. New forms of dialogue had to be found and new bridges over troubled waters to be build, even if they will smaller than the existing ones.