

# EU Frontiers

**Policy Paper**

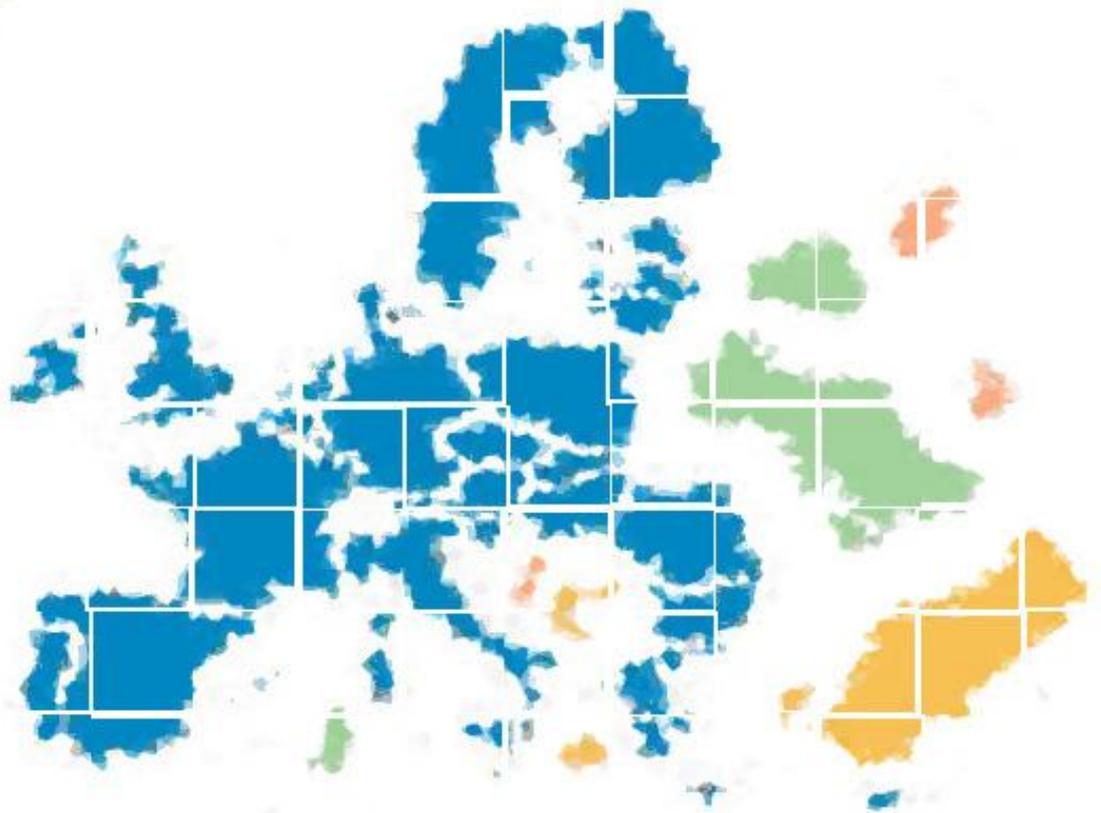
**No. 13**

## **Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?**

---

**Lucia Najšlová**

with Adam Balcer, Rebecca Murray and Zsuzsanna Végh



**June 2016**

## Center for European Neighborhood Studies

---

The Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS) is an independent research center of the Central European University (CEU) located in Budapest, Hungary. Its main goal is to contribute to an informed international dialogue about the future of the European Union in the world, while capitalizing on its Central European perspective and regional embeddedness.

The strategic focus of the center is academic and policy-oriented research on the place and role of the European Union in its rapidly changing and increasingly volatile neighborhood. Through its research, CENS seeks to contribute to the understanding of the environment where the EU, its member states and partners need to (co)operate, and it aims at supporting the constructive development of these relations by providing opportunities for discussion and exchange. The center's geographic focus areas are Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Russia.

## EU Frontiers

---

The 'EU Frontiers' publication series aims to provide an account of actors and developments along the enlargement frontiers of Europe. It fills an academic gap by monitoring and analyzing EU related policies of the broad Central – and Eastern European region, studying the past and evaluating the prospects of the future. Furthermore, it follows and gives regular account of the EU Enlargement process both from an inside and an applicant perspective.



This report has been produced with the kind support of the International Visegrad Fund ([www.visegradfund.org](http://www.visegradfund.org)). The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors.

## About the authors

---

### **Lucia Najšlová (Charles University, Prague)**

Najšlová is a Faculty member at the Charles University in Prague, her research and teaching focuses on EU foreign policy, EU leverage as a democracy promoter and perceptions of the EU (and the West) in its neighborhood. Najšlová is a co-founder and chief editor of V4Revue, a hub of policy analysis and commentary on Central European politics. Since 2014 she has been member of external advisory team of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. Najšlová is an Associate Fellow at the Institute for International Relations in Prague, she has served as a policy fellow at SFPA (2006-2010) and EUROPEUM (2011-2015) and has provided research and expertise for various think-tank and media outlets in Europe.

*Adam Balcer, Rebecca Murray and Zsuzsanna Végh contributed research on Poland, Slovakia and Hungary respectively, and provided valuable feedback.*

### **Adam Balcer (College of Eastern Studies, Warsaw)**

Balcer is a political scientist focusing on the Balkans, Turkey and the Black Sea and a permanent collaborator of European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). Previously, he lectured in East European Studies (SEW), Diplomatic Academy and the Polish Institute of Diplomacy. He managed the project “Turkey after the launch of EU accession negotiations – foreign policy and internal affairs” at the Centre for Eastern Studies (2005–2009). In the past, he was one of the members of the Advisory Group to the Committee of Foreign Relations at the Polish Parliament (2010–2012) and adviser at the Presidential Expert Programme (2013–2014).

### **Rebecca Murray (Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava)**

Murray graduated from the Comenius University in Bratislava with MA degree in European Studies and International Relations. Since 2007 she has worked with the Slovak think-tank SFPA focusing on the Eastern Partnership, Europeanisation and transition and sharing of Slovak transition experience with Eastern European and Western Balkan countries. Previously, she also worked at the Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA). Murray is Executive Directress at the civic association Democracy in Central Europe, publisher of the V4 Revue.

### **Zsuzsanna Végh (Central European University, Budapest)**

Végh is research fellow at the CEU Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS), where she has been focusing on the Visegrad cooperation, the Visegrad countries' foreign and international development policy, as well as the European Union's relations with its Eastern neighborhood (Eastern Partnership) since 2012. She holds a Master's degree in international relations and European studies from the Central European University (2012) and one in international studies from the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest (2011). Previously, she worked at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs as an adjunct fellow.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?<sup>1</sup>

---

### Introduction

At a time when the Visegrad Group (V4) is becoming a more ambitious regional bloc, several policymakers and analysts have floated the idea of deepening a dialogue with Turkey, a country of tremendous importance for the EU, and one that is enjoying unprecedented interest of policymakers, business circles and publics at large.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this should not come as a surprise – although the V4’s approach to the refugee crisis left some Western EU leaders questioning whether accepting the Eastern Europeans in the 2004 enlargement was a mistake – the V4 has a track-record of constructive engagement in the EU neighborhoods, and consistent support for further enlargement, including Turkey’s accession.

The V4 (originally the V3) was established in 1991<sup>3</sup> as a forum for the coordination of Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak post-communist transformations and integrations into Euro-Atlantic institutions. In the 25 years since its conception the group has expanded its portfolio beyond a focus on intraregional cooperation and gradually reached out to third countries. The V4 does not have a permanent secretariat, its only institutions being a rotating presidency and a joint endowment – the International Visegrad Fund (IVF). While there are sometimes similar trends in the group’s domestic developments and foreign policy agendas, V4 countries have rarely acted in unison, and from a long-term perspective, the group format has served mostly as a consultation forum. The political cooperation with third countries has likewise followed a consultative format in what came to be known as V4+, and occasionally common declarations were adopted.<sup>4</sup> The IVF has financed numerous civil society initiatives in the region and collaborative projects with third parties.<sup>5</sup> Sharing lessons learned during the post-1989 political and socio-economic transition and the Euro-Atlantic integration constituted the V4’s primary angle in their outreach to countries in Eastern Europe and the

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper, financed by the International Visegrad Fund, is an outcome of a research project led by Charles University in Prague. The authors would like to thank Dr. András Rác (Finnish Institute of International Affairs) and Dr. Tomáš Weiss (Charles University in Prague) for providing valuable comments on earlier drafts, and Jaromír Volf and Marek Vondříč, Charles University MA students, who assisted in the data collection. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors.

<sup>2</sup> Interest in upgrading the V4-Turkey dialogue has also come from Turkey, and we warmly appreciate the feedback of Elif Özmenek Çarmıklı (USA).

<sup>3</sup> Until the 1993 dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the cooperation took place in the V3 format.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of recent V4+ meetings, see, Dostál, V. (2016) “Understanding New Polish Intermarium: Trap or Triumph for the Visegrad Group?” *Association for International Affairs*, p. 7, [http://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/amocz\\_PP\\_03\\_2016\\_web.pdf](http://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/amocz_PP_03_2016_web.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> In addition to V4 government contributions, the IVF has received financing from governments and non-state actors in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. See, <http://visegradfund.org/about/>.

Western Balkans, and briefly to the post-2011 Middle East and North Africa (MENA). At the same time, while the V4 members have their individual and regional foreign and development policy initiatives, what matters in relation to Turkey is primarily their clout as EU members; the V4 represents almost 65 million EU citizens and holds corresponding leverage in the EU Council.

Having assessed both the group and individual V4 states' interests and track records, we conclude that while the V4+Turkey consultative format offers a number of opportunities, the group should mainly focus on the identification of the niches they can occupy to further improve EU-Turkey relations. The EU is a crucial framework for addressing all major policy areas of interest for the V4, including energy, trade, foreign and development policy in the EU neighborhoods and the management of the refugee crisis. Importantly, Turkey's EU accession process is still the best tool for deepening a mutual relationship, since it can strengthen the country's democratic institutions and facilitate the establishment of the functional tools for foreign policy coordination.

## 1. EU-Turkey Relations

In the past decade, EU-Turkey relations have been characterized by two seemingly counterintuitive trends: a diminishing trust, due to stalled accession negotiations and divergent perspectives on a wide range of security and democracy-related issues; and a growing awareness on both sides of a number of shared economic, security and political interests, despite how the accession process might end. While talk of a strategic partnership<sup>6</sup> has, for now, effectively overshadowed the debate on Turkey's potential EU membership, (non)developments in the accession process definitely shape the relationship and are likely to continue doing so.

---

<sup>6</sup> The strategic partnership (via NATO) has effectively preceded the accession talks. The EEC (later the EU) members justified their demand for the harmonization of governance standards with the expectation that it would make cooperation smoother. EU members frequently suggested that a "privileged partnership" rather than a full membership would be a better option for Turkey, and Turkey's leaders have occasionally suggested the same. Yet the "privileged status" proposals seem to reflect more a lack of ambition and increasing securitization of EU politics, rather than a viable alternative that might bring benefits comparable to those the accession process and eventual membership could deliver. See, e.g. Diez, T. (2005) "Turkey, the European Union and Security Complexes Revisited," *Mediterranean Politics*, 10(2): 167-180; Macmillan, C. (2010) "Privileged Partnership, Open-Ended Accession Negotiations and the Securitization of Turkey-EU Accession Process," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 18(4): 447-462; Pope, H. (2009) "Privileged Partnership Offers Turkey Neither Privilege, Nor Partnership," *International Crisis Group*, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/privileged-partnership-offers-turkey-neither-privilege-nor-partnership.aspx>; Hakura, F. (2005) *Partnership is No Privilege: The Alternative to EU Membership is no Turkish Delight*, Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Europe/bpturkeyeu.pdf>.

### The Accession Talks

While only a few years ago there was a high dose of optimism regarding both Turkey's EU prospects and the EU's capacity to facilitate democratization in the country, the process has quickly turned sour. Many in the EU are concerned by growing authoritarianism in Turkey, and the country's deteriorating human rights record, but the EU is not the only disappointed party. Criticism of the EU's unfulfilled pledges and the contestation of the EU's will and capacity to deliver on them, are rare issues of consensus between Turkey's governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the opposition.

While the EU and Turkey have worked in parallel, rather than together, over much of the recent period, the refugee crisis has brought them behind one negotiating table. The longevity and impact of the newly intensified dialogue are yet to be seen. However, the crucial question for the policy community on both sides is rather clear: can EU-Turkey cooperation be driven by more than ad-hoc responses to crises, and, more importantly, can both players jointly govern their common space, based on a shared understanding of democracy and security?

The history of cooperation and competition between Western European states and Turkey long precedes the current policy framework. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Ottoman Empire undertook many reforms inspired by European examples, and the modernization continued in greater speed and depth after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The contractual relations between the European Economic Community (EEC), an EU predecessor, and Turkey were established with the 1962 Ankara Agreement, an association treaty that envisaged Turkey becoming part of the supranational European bond. While the treaty stipulated a number of common interests that the EEC and Turkey were to address on equal footing, the agreement established an asymmetric relationship, in which the Western European partner was to assist Turkey with democratization and economic development.<sup>7</sup> In 1987 Turkey applied for EEC membership only to be informed that it did not yet meet the requirements. In 1999 the country received EU candidacy status, and in 2004 the European Council voted to open accession negotiations, which officially started in 2005.<sup>8</sup>

In 2006, soon after accession talks were opened, the EU Council voted for their partial suspension because Turkey had signed the additional protocol of the Ankara Agreement with reservation, objecting to the extension of the Customs Union to southern Cyprus, on the grounds that the Cypriot government did not represent Turkish Cypriots.<sup>9</sup> The Council decided that

---

<sup>7</sup> Agreement Establishing an Association Between the European Economic Community and Turkey (signed in Ankara, September 1, 1963), <http://www.ab.gov.tr/index.php?p=117&l=2>.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that between the signing of the Ankara Agreement and the opening of Turkey's accession talks, the EU grew from six to 24 member states – another point that had a bearing on EU-Turkey relations.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey (2005) Press Statement Regarding the Additional Protocol to Extend the Ankara Agreement to All Members, July 29<sup>th</sup>, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/\\_p\\_no\\_123---](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/_p_no_123---)

eight of the 35 EU *acquis* chapters would not be opened, and that all remaining chapters, if open, would not be closed until Turkey abided with EU demands.<sup>10</sup>

The Cyprus conflict was not an obstacle when the Greek Cypriot-governed Republic of Cyprus joined the EU in 2004; in this instance the EU applied no conditionality. On the contrary, it was believed that the accession process might facilitate conflict resolution.<sup>11</sup> However the unification plan, accepted by the Turkish Cypriots, but rejected by the Greek Cypriots, faltered, and Cyprus became part of the Union while the EU *acquis* was suspended in the Turkish Cypriot-inhabited north of the island. While the EU pledged to end Turkish Cypriots' isolation after their affirmative vote on the unification plan, it only partially delivered. In the meantime, Cyprus' EU membership has enabled it to exert significant influence on accession talks with Turkey. In addition to chapters blocked by the Council, Cyprus has applied several unilateral vetoes.<sup>12</sup> France has done the same, albeit for different reasons; in the words of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, opening the chapters would bring Turkey "too close to membership."<sup>13</sup>

Since the beginning of the accession talks, a number of member state leaders have expressed concerns about the potential impact of Turkey's EU membership that can briefly be summed up as Turkey being "too big, too poor, too different."<sup>14</sup> At the same time, member state publics are unconvinced that Turkey's membership would benefit the Union. While an appetite for further EU enlargement has been generally weakening in recent years, Turkey has been scoring lower than most other candidates.<sup>15</sup> It is justified to argue that even the supporters of Turkey's EU bid have not done enough to facilitate a more informed public discussion on the EU-Turkey partnership. At the same, while support for EU membership in Turkey is still

---

[july-29th -2005 -press-statement-regarding-the-additional-protocol-to-extend-the-ankara-agreement-to-all-eu-members- unofficial-translation \\_p .en.mfa.](#)

<sup>10</sup> The eight blocked chapters: Chapter 1: Free movement of goods, Chapter 3: Right of establishment and freedom to provide service, Chapter 9: Financial services, Chapter 11: Agriculture and rural development, Chapter 13: Fisheries, Chapter 14: Transport policy, Chapter 29: Customs union and Chapter 30: External relations. Council of the European Union (2006), General Affairs and External Relations, December 11<sup>th</sup>, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_PRES-06-352\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-06-352_en.htm?locale=en).

<sup>11</sup> Diez, T., ed. (2002) *The European Union and the Cyprus Conflict: Modern Conflict, Post-Modern Union*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press; Tocci, N. (2004) *EU Accession Dynamics and Conflict Resolution: Catalysing Peace or Consolidating Partition in Cyprus?*, Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate.

<sup>12</sup> Tocci, N. (2010) "The Baffling Short-Sightedness in the EU-Turkey-Cyprus Triangle," *Documenti IAI*, Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, <http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai1021.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Insel, A. (2012) "Boosting Negotiations with Turkey: What Can France Do?" Global Turkey in Europe Policy Brief 4, *Istanbul Policy Center*, [http://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/en/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/GTE\\_Policy\\_Briefs\\_04.pdf](http://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/en/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/GTE_Policy_Briefs_04.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Lamb, S. (2004) "Turkey and the EU: The Pros and Cons," *Spiegel Online International*, December 16th, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/turkey-and-the-eu-the-pros-and-cons-a-333126.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Toshkov, D., E. Kortenska, A. Dimitrova and A. Fagan (2014) "The 'Old' and the 'New' Europeans: Analyses of Public Opinion on EU Enlargement in Review," *MAXCAP Working Paper*, No. 2, [http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/kfgeu/maxcap/system/files/maxcap\\_wp\\_02.pdf](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/kfgeu/maxcap/system/files/maxcap_wp_02.pdf).

high, it has seen a considerable drop from the over 70% approval at the opening of the accession talks.<sup>16</sup>

In May 2012, after several years of stagnation, the European Commission introduced the so-called “positive agenda,” an initiative that aimed to inject optimism into the frustrated relationship, and trigger progress in the technical talks regarding the politically-blocked *acquis* chapters.<sup>17</sup> While the positive agenda was “better than nothing,” in the words of a number of policy practitioners, it has hardly led to a substantial upgrade in the EU-Turkey relationship; while its contribution to one of the key goals of the accession process, improving democracy and human rights in Turkey, has barely been visible.

The AKP government, in office since 2002, came under growing fire for backtracking on earlier commitments to facilitate political liberalization in Turkey. Several human rights watchdogs have called attention to the country’s deteriorating press freedoms, increasingly constrained judiciary and growing authoritarian tendencies.<sup>18</sup> The EU has been critical of these developments in regular European Commission progress reports, and via statements by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and a number of member state representatives, but has not done much more.<sup>19</sup> Advocates of Turkey’s EU membership have found it harder and harder to convince their opponents that the process (and the endgame) is indeed desirable.

In fact, in the wake of the refugee crisis, Turkey’s democratic deficit moved further down the EU’s priority list, as striking a deal to decrease the amount of people crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands became a more pressing issue. Thus Angela Merkel travelled to Istanbul in November, shortly before Turkey’s parliamentary elections, a move criticized by the opposition and a number of observers, who believed it conveyed support for the political forces whose pro-democracy credentials are increasingly questionable.<sup>20</sup> Following

---

<sup>16</sup> Economic Development Foundation (2015) “Perception of Europe and Support for EU Membership in Turkish Public Opinion,” <http://www.ikv.org.tr/images/files/Public%20opinion%20survey%202015-%20final%20version%283%29.pdf>; German Marshall Fund of the United States (2013) “Transatlantic Trends – Key findings,” <http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2013/09/TT-Key-Findings-Report.pdf>;

<sup>17</sup> See more in, Najslava, L. and T. Weiss (2012) “Who is Afraid of Cyprus EU Presidency?” *EUROPEUM Working Paper*, Prague: EUROPEUM.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Human Rights Watch (2015) “World Report 2015: Turkey,” <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/turkey>; International Press Institute (2015) “Press Freedom in Turkey’s Inter-Election Period,” [http://www.freemedia.at/uploads/media/IPI\\_Turkey\\_Inter-Election\\_Press\\_Freedom\\_Report\\_-\\_Final.pdf](http://www.freemedia.at/uploads/media/IPI_Turkey_Inter-Election_Press_Freedom_Report_-_Final.pdf); To illustrate: in 2016, Turkey ranked 151<sup>st</sup> on Reporters Without Borders’ Press Freedom Index, a considerable slump in comparison with the previous decade. In 2005, Turkey ranked 98<sup>th</sup>; <https://rsf.org/en/turkey>.

<sup>19</sup> European Commission (10.11.2015) “Turkey 2015 Report,” November 10<sup>th</sup>, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2015/20151110\\_report\\_turkey.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_turkey.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Bryant, R. (2015) “The EU’s Dirty Deal with Turkey: Why the Refugee Agreement Could Have Dangerous Consequences,” <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2015/10/22/the-eus-dirty-deal-with-turkey-why-the-refugee-agreement-could-have-dangerous-consequences/>, [Accessed December 27, 2015 ].

this, the European Commission postponed an annual progress report on Turkey, usually published in October, until after the November elections.<sup>21</sup>

The refugee crisis, discussed in more detail below, is likely to continue being an important factor in the EU-Turkey relationship. While the refugee deal has been criticized from numerous perspectives, its consequences for the mutual relationship do not necessarily have to be negative. European policy circles, the media and the public's renewed interest in Turkey has also created more space to discuss the partnership's common grounds and both actors' to-do lists.

### **The EU and Turkey in their common neighborhoods: principles, instruments and conflicts**

From a foreign policy perspective, the longest bond between Turkey and (most of) the EU member states is security cooperation through NATO; Turkey has been a member since 1952. In the framework of the accession process, Turkey is expected to align with EU declarations and Council decisions on foreign policy. So far the alignment is rather low although it has increased from 29% in 2014 to 40% in 2015.<sup>22</sup> There has not been much EU-Turkey cooperation on long-term development projects in the common neighborhoods, and a lack of convergence in domestic standards of governance is an important explanation for this. Both the EU and Turkey base their neighborhood outreach on the assumption that their examples can inspire, yet there are substantial differences in their contractual frameworks, forms of assistance provision, available resources, thematic priorities and types of actors supported and engaged.

The EU approach to its direct neighborhood, especially since the 2004 enlargement, has been based on the assumption that neighboring states are interested in having a closer political and economic bond with the Union, and in order to achieve it, will adopt (parts or all of) the EU *acquis*. This has been propped up by reliance on the Union's "transformative power,"<sup>23</sup> its ability to bring about more efficient governance standards and greater access to civil liberties, as well as the Union's leverage of the world's largest free-trade zone, or "market power Europe".<sup>24</sup> Neighbors are either on the accession track (Turkey and the Western Balkans) or have been offered "everything but

---

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, P. (28.10.2015) "Withheld EU Report Raps Turkey on Rights, Media, Justice," *Reuters*, October 28<sup>th</sup>, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-election-eu-idUSKCN0SM2CT20151028>.

<sup>22</sup> Pierini, M. and S. Ulgen (2014) "A Moment of Opportunity in the EU-Turkey Relationship," *Carnegie Europe*, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2014/12/10/moment-of-opportunity-in-eu-turkey-relationship/hwak>; European Commission (10.11.2015) Turkey 2015 Report, November 11<sup>th</sup>, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2015/20151110\\_report\\_turkey.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_turkey.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Borzel, T. (2010) "The Transformative Power of Europe Reloaded: The Limits of External Europeanization," [http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/docs/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/FUDOCs\\_derivate\\_00000000909/WP\\_11\\_February\\_Boerzel.pdf](http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/docs/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/FUDOCs_derivate_00000000909/WP_11_February_Boerzel.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Damro, C. (2012) "Market Power Europe," *Journal of European Public Policy* 19(5): 682-699.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

the institutions”<sup>25</sup> (Eastern Europe and MENA), becoming part of the common market without the formal channels (i.e. voting rights) to shape it. To facilitate convergence, the EU has set up a variety of financial tools<sup>26</sup> and a visa liberalization process. The common EU foreign policy is however still a project in the making, and member states have kept their bilateral instruments for cooperation with neighboring countries. Regional priorities are usually influenced by geographic proximity and a common history – thus the Mediterranean member states typically focus more on MENA, while the EU’s eastern members accent the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans. Consensus building in the EU-28 is a delicate process and takes place amidst the competition of a number of national interests, based on different understandings of the balance that should be struck between business opportunities and civil liberties in partner countries.

Turkey’s approach to its neighborhoods, including those it shares with the Union, has been marked by growing activism over the past decade. This has been evident in the liberalization of visa regimes, trade growth, intensification of political contacts and the increasing development assistance it has provided.<sup>27</sup> Turkey’s leaders frequently emphasize greater flexibility and shorter response time in contrast with the 28-member consensus needed by the EU.<sup>28</sup> Turkey’s foreign development policy, when compared to the EU’s, is the product of a dialogue between fewer stakeholders and is less institutionalized; mid and long-term strategy papers and planning documents rarely exist.<sup>29</sup> This certainly plays into the EU agencies and member states’ reluctance to coordinate with the country or pool resources. The country’s leaders and also a number of foreign observers have frequently reiterated that Turkey’s own past experiences, with a unique constellation of factors shaping domestic politics, can serve as a model, especially for Muslim majority countries transitioning towards democracy.<sup>30</sup> While framing Turkey as a “model/inspiration” has come under fire in the wake of Erdoğan’s growing authoritarianism, it has not yet completely lost appeal, especially since the current backsliding is not irreversible.

More coordinated cooperation between the EU and Turkey, and a convergence in the common neighborhood are unlikely without significant

---

<sup>25</sup> Prodi, R. (2002) A Wider Europe – A Proximity Policy as a Key to Stability, speech delivered at the 6<sup>th</sup> ECSA-World Conference in Brussels, December 5-6, 2002, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-02-619\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-02-619_en.htm).

<sup>26</sup> These include: The European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI), European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA 2) and European Endowment for Democracy (EED).

<sup>27</sup> Öktem, K., A. Kadioğlu and M. Karlı (eds.) (2012) *Another Empire? A Decade of Turkey’s Foreign Policy Under the Justice and Development Party*, Istanbul: Bilgi University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Davutoğlu, A. (2011) Vision 2023: Turkey’s Foreign Policy Objectives, speech delivered at Turkey Investor Conference organized by Goldman Sachs, London, November 22, 2011, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled- vision-2023 -turkey\\_s-foreign-policy-objectives -delivered-by- h\\_e -ahmet-davutoglu -minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled- vision-2023 -turkey_s-foreign-policy-objectives -delivered-by- h_e -ahmet-davutoglu -minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa), [Accessed January 10, 2012].

<sup>29</sup> Hausmann, J. (2014) “Turkey as a Donor Country and Potential Partner in Triangular Cooperation,” *Deutsche Institut für Entwicklungspolitik*, Discussion Paper 14/2014.

<sup>30</sup> Ülgen, S. (2011) “From Inspiration to Aspiration: Turkey in the New Middle East,” *Carnegie Europe*, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/turkey\\_mid\\_east.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/turkey_mid_east.pdf); Kirişçi, K. (2011) “Turkey’s “Demonstrative Effect” and the Transformation of the Middle East”, *Insight Turkey* 13 (2): 33-55.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

improvements in the EU-Turkey accession process.<sup>31</sup> This because priorities in development cooperation are so intricately linked to a country's domestic form of governance. Unless the EU and Turkey's domestic modes of governance are more in line, there are only limited opportunities for cooperation, and without a boost in the accession process, coexistence and competition seem more likely scenarios in the near future.

The refugee crisis is arguably the most urgent (time-sensitive) issue on the EU-Turkey agenda, and both players could benefit from cooperation. In 2015 Turkey and the EU held a number of high-level meetings to address this issue. The Action Plan, adopted in October, was further enhanced both during Chancellor Merkel's trip to Istanbul later that month and at the joint EU-Turkey summit on November 29<sup>th</sup>.<sup>32</sup> Turkey has been offered economic aid, a reinvigoration of the accession process and faster visa liberalization. In turn, it has pledged to improve conditions for Syrians and to strengthen border protection. While a slight decrease in new arrivals was already visible in December 2015,<sup>33</sup> a substantial change only occurred after the March 2016 EU-Turkey agreement came into force. In the fall of 2015 and early spring 2016 the number of people arriving to the Greek islands daily via the Mediterranean was in the thousands, however after March 20, 2016, this number decreased to the hundreds and then in May to the tens.<sup>34</sup>

The most controversial part of the agreement has been the "1 for 1" swap, which states that every new person arriving from Turkey to the Greek islands whose right for asylum is not recognized will be send back, and for every person sent back, another person would be relocated from Turkey to the EU, with a 72,000-person cap. From the EU political perspective this was a move to discourage irregular border crossing and perhaps, more importantly, to calm the public debate and buy time until more long-term measures could be established. A number of EU member states' resistance to accepting any asylum-seekers at all, and the rising appeal of far-right parties among European publics have been two crucial factors shaping the decision to arrive at an agreement with Turkey. While the plan has merit from a short-term political perspective, it is very problematic regarding both the rights of asylum-seekers and the feasibility of its implementation.<sup>35</sup> While the

---

<sup>31</sup> Tocci, M. (2014) "Turkey and the European Union: A Journey in the Unknown," *Brookings Institution*, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/11/turkey-european-union-journey-unknown-tocci/turkey-and-the-european-union.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> European Council (29.11.29.11.2015) "Meeting of Heads of State or Government with Turkey," <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/29-eu-turkey-meeting-statement/>, [Accessed December 20, 2015].

<sup>33</sup> The report prepared by the Luxemburg presidency of the EU Council in mid-December 2015 noted a slight decrease in new arrivals from Turkey, from 5-6,000 per day to 4,000 per day, yet it suggests the decrease is not necessarily an outcome of the EU-Turkey Action Plan; Luxemburg Presidency of the EU Council (December 16, 2015) "Presidency Report: Managing Migration Flows," [http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/notes-fond/2015/12/17-migration-flows-management-report-presidency/12\\_17\\_migration-flows-management-report-presidency.pdf](http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/notes-fond/2015/12/17-migration-flows-management-report-presidency/12_17_migration-flows-management-report-presidency.pdf), [Accessed December 17, 2015].

<sup>34</sup> European Commission (4.5.2016) "Implementing the EU-Turkey Agreement: Questions and Answers," [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-16-1664\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-1664_en.htm).

<sup>35</sup> Carrera S. and E. Guild (2016) "EU-Turkey Plan for Handling Refugees is Fraught with Legal and Procedural Challenges," *CEPS Commentary*, <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/eu-turkey-plan-handling-refugees-fraught-legal-and-procedural-challenges>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

European Commission presents the implementation of the agreement as a success, humanitarian organization, Doctors Without Borders, has decided to refuse EU funding, as a sign of opposition to the agreement.<sup>36</sup>

The agreed-upon quota for refugee resettlement from Turkey is still far from fulfilled. As of June 17, 2016, member states have only resettled 711 refugees from Turkey (the agreed-upon number is 18,000 in the first round, which is to be continued with a further 54,000 people) and still have not even pledged enough experts to support the work of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Frontex.<sup>37</sup> (Figures reported by the European Commission on May 10, 2016 indicated that 135 refugees were resettled and 386 were returned from the Greek islands, so the 1 for 1 principle was off to a rather slow start.)<sup>38</sup>

**Table 1: Operational implementation of the EU - Turkey Agreement (Status: June 17, 2016)**

	Reply to EASO call - interpreters	Reply to EASO call - asylum officials	Reply to EASO call - judicial officials	Reply to Frontex call - readmission experts	Reply to Frontex call - escort officers	Resettlement of Syrian refugees from Turkey after 4 April 2016
Czech Republic	10	10	0	0	30	0
Hungary	0	3	0	10	65	0
Poland	0	5	0	5	40	0
Slovakia	0	0	0	10	80	0
<b>EU Total pledged</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>711 refugees resettled</b>
Requested	400	475	30	50	1500	
<b>EU Total deployed</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>Not under way yet</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>N/A</b>

*Source: European Commission, DG Migration and Home Affairs<sup>39</sup>*

<sup>36</sup> European Commission (15.6.2016) “Second Report on the Progress Made in the Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement,” [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160615/2nd\\_commission\\_report\\_on\\_progress\\_made\\_in\\_the\\_implementation\\_of\\_the\\_eu-turkey\\_agreement\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160615/2nd_commission_report_on_progress_made_in_the_implementation_of_the_eu-turkey_agreement_en.pdf);

Doctors Without Borders (17.6.2016) “MSF to no longer take funds from EU Member States and Institutions,” <http://www.msf.org.uk/article/msf-to-no-longer-take-funds-from-eu-member-states-and-institutions>.

<sup>37</sup> European Commission (10.5.2016) Operational Implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_eu-turkey\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_eu-turkey_en.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> May 10, 2016 return and resettlement numbers are currently not available at the European Commission website.

<sup>39</sup> <sup>39</sup> European Commission (20.6.2016) Operational Implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_eu-turkey\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_eu-turkey_en.pdf)

While the March agreement also addresses a general framework for EU-Turkey relations, its thrust is the management of the refugee crisis.<sup>40</sup> The EU did pledge to open the Financial and budgetary provisions chapter (Chapter 33) until the end of June 2016 and to accelerate visa liberalization, but this was far less than what Turkish diplomacy, interested in opening further chapters, including energy and foreign policy, had expected.<sup>41</sup>

In early May 2016 the European Commission recommended that member states and the European Parliament proceed with the approval of visa liberalization provided Turkey fulfills the remaining requisites, yet the member states and MEPs have raised several objections.<sup>42</sup> The recent terrorist attacks in Turkey, as well as restrictions on civil liberties, including speech and academic freedoms, the sudden and forced resignation of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and the divisive rhetoric of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have all contributed to the member states' reluctance to deepen relations with Turkey. Moreover, in Europe's increasingly anxious atmosphere resulting from the refugee crisis and the Charlie Hebdo, Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks, selling visa liberalization to EU publics without Turkey doing its homework is very difficult, even for the biggest supporters of a deepening EU-Turkey cooperation.

A related question, and perhaps the most contested, is how to end the Syrian war. The Turkish government has provided considerable assistance to the Syrian opposition, insisting for several years now that postwar Syria has to be a Syria without Bashar al-Assad. The EU governments have been split on the issue and while the Union has imposed sanctions on the Syrian regime and supported the UN (Geneva) process, it has refrained from making resolute claims on who will be involved in postwar Syria.

Daesh (ISIS) is considered by a number of member states to be a key threat to the region's stability, and to the EU itself, but there are variant approaches on how best to defeat it.<sup>43</sup> Here the crucial point of divergence is the approach of some EU member states to the armed wing of the Kurdish movement in Syria, the Peoples' Protection Units (YPG). The Kurdish fighters gained much sympathy in Western Europe recently. This was most manifestly revealed during the Battle for Kobani (Ayn Al-Arab), a northern Syrian city near the Turkish border, sieged by Daesh in 2015 and then recaptured by Kurdish units, aided by US air strikes. Turkey refused to take an active part in the Battle for Kobani and prevented Kurdish fighters from

---

<sup>40</sup> European Council (18.3.2016) "EU-Turkey Statement," <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement/>.

<sup>41</sup> Emmanoulidis, I. (21.3.2016) "Elements of a Complex but Still Incomplete Puzzle: an Assessment of the EU-Turkey Summit," *European Policy Centre*, [http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub\\_6417\\_post-summit\\_analysis\\_-\\_21\\_march\\_2016.pdf](http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_6417_post-summit_analysis_-_21_march_2016.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> European Commission (4.5.2016) "European Commission Opens Way by June on visa-free Travel for Citizens of Turkey," [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-1622\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1622_en.htm); European Parliament (10.5.2016) "Visa Liberalization for Turkey: EU Criteria Must be Met, Say MEPs," <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20160509IPR26368/Visa-liberalisation-for-Turkey-EU-criteria-must-be-met-say-MEPs>.

<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, Daesh does not feature on the EU's anti-terror list, updated in December 2015, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015D2430&qid=1457362568874&from=EN>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

crossing into Syria, and this was met with the disapproval of a number of US and Western European politicians and media. Turkey however considers the YPG to be a similar threat as Daesh is to regional security, and has repeatedly criticized the EU and US for applying double standards on fighting terrorism. Turkey's perspective on the YPG is closely related to its own conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has, along with the Freedom Falcons of Kurdistan (TAK), claimed responsibility for a number of recent terrorist attacks in Turkey.<sup>44</sup>

Thus Turkey and the EU presently have a number of conflicting perspectives on their joint neighborhood. At the same time, both of them are undergoing a number of similar internal crises, including challenges posed by socio-economic inequalities and the rise of ethno-religious mobilization. The stalemate in their mutual relationship is certainly an important factor hampering a more productive foreign and development policy cooperation in their joint neighborhoods. This gridlock is unlikely to be resolved unless both parties do their homework – for Turkey, this means showing more effort to harmonize with EU *acquis*, and for the EU, this means working towards a credible membership perspective and exercising more attention to the delicate balance between human rights and security. In the opposite case, both actors are likely to use the status quo to advance their domestic and foreign policy leverage – a convenient tactic for four to five-year electoral cycles, but detrimental to both countries (and their neighborhoods) in the long-run.

---

<sup>44</sup> International Crisis Group (2015) “A Sisyphean Task? Resuming Turkey-PKK Peace Talks,” Europe Briefing No 77, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/b077-a-sisyphean-task-resuming-turkey-pkk-peace-talks.aspx>; International Crisis Group (2016) “The Human Cost of the PKK Conflict in Turkey: the Case of Sur,” Europe Briefing No. 80, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/b080-the-human-cost-of-the-pkk-conflict-in-turkey-the-case-of-sur.aspx>.

## 2. Perspectives from the V4

Becoming EU members was a top priority for the V4 countries during their post-1989 transitions, and of no less importance was becoming firmly anchored in the transatlantic alliance via NATO membership and a partnership with the US. The EU accession process provided an important framework both for socio-economic modernization and for anchoring the V4 countries in a bloc through which they could wield their foreign policy interests more efficiently. The V4 countries' relations with Turkey and perspectives for future cooperation are thus best understood if viewed through the lens of the opportunities and limitations provided them via their own membership in the EU. The fact that they have made support for the EU's further enlargement and the deepening of relations with the EU's neighbors (Western Balkans and Eastern Europe)<sup>45</sup> their foreign policy priorities is another important consideration.

A potential upgrade to V4-Turkey regional dialogue can certainly build on the joint interest in the EU project, the transatlantic bond, and all four countries' good bilateral relation track-records. The positive capital accumulated in the past, as well as a shared interest in the future could provide a constructive framework for addressing a number of present-day challenges, including Turkey's further democratization and the V4's need to address their societies' anxieties about the refugee crisis. As the discussions (and hate speech outbursts) in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis revealed, there are way too many aspects of Middle East politics and the EU-Turkey relationship that V4 publics are not familiar with. Given public opinion's prominence in shaping current politics, it is difficult to imagine that the EU-Turkey cooperation could work without a sustained effort to more thoroughly inform, and thus also shape the public debate.

### Political cooperation and the EU-Turkey accession talks

The V4 governments all voted to open the accession talks with Turkey in 2004, and likewise for their partial suspension in 2006. Since then, the V4 diplomacies have supported the talks, as well as the positive agenda introduced by the European Commission in 2012, all refraining from applying any unilateral vetoes on negotiating chapters. Yet, there is not much belief Turkey's accession will happen anytime soon – less than 10% of V4 foreign policy analysts surveyed in a recent poll believe that the EU will admit Turkey in the next 10 years.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, while V4 governments support visa liberalization with Turkey, provided it fulfills the conditions, it does not feature prominently on their agenda. In their June 2016 summit declaration V4 Prime Ministers' "welcome and fully support" the

---

<sup>45</sup> Until the Arab Spring, MENA was of only marginal importance in V4 discussions about sharing their "transition experience".

<sup>46</sup> Association for International Affairs (2015) "Trends of Visegrad Foreign Policy," <http://trendyv4.amo.cz/en/visualizations?group=all&ques=10>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

Commission's recommendation to grant Ukraine visa-free status, but do not mention the same about Turkey, whose visa liberalization is at the top of the EU agenda at the moment.<sup>47</sup>

While a number of conservative parliamentary parties in all four countries have been voicing doubts on the viability of Turkey's EU bid on ethno-religious grounds, perceiving Turkey's culture and religion to be incompatible with "European values," they have not managed to change the course of official policy.<sup>48</sup> High-level dialogues on a bilateral level were launched, and several ministerial meetings took place at the regional V4-Turkey level. For now, however, the practical cooperation potential is underexploited.

There have rarely been any serious diplomatic disputes between the V4 states and Turkey at the bilateral level. Turkish diplomacy expressed disapproval when the Polish and Slovak parliaments passed the Armenian genocide resolutions in the early 2000s, and relations briefly became colder, but after Polish and Slovak diplomacies emphasized that they prefer different ways of supporting Turkish-Armenian reconciliation, the issue slowly withered.

Presently the biggest bilateral problem between Turkey and a V4 state is the recent opening of a YPG/YPJ European representative office in Prague. The YPG (Peoples' Protection Units) are an armed wing of the Syrian PKK affiliate, the Kurdish Democratic Party (PYD), and the YPJ (Women's Protection Units) is a female division. The office was registered in October 2015 under the name *YPG Evropa z.s.* (YPG Europe) as an association promoting "publicly beneficial activities for the protection and support of the interests of the women and men of Kurdistan,"<sup>49</sup> and it officially opened in April 2016. The YPG and YPJ representatives have begun lobbying the Czech parliament for the provision of political and military support, and have gained some MP's sympathies.<sup>50</sup> Prague office's chair, Sheruan Hassan, has appealed to the Czech public and policy-makers referring to, "the same historical experience" of "Czech and Kurdish nations," while arguing that support for the YPG might reduce the flow of refugees to Europe. In their view this might contribute to Daesh's defeat and consequently the curtailment of hostilities in Syria.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Visegrad Group (8.6.2016) "Joint Declaration of the V4 Prime Ministers,"

<http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/joint-declaration-of-the-160609>.

<sup>48</sup> These include the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and the Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS) in Slovakia, the Christian Democratic Party (KDU-CSL) in the Czech Republic, The Kukiz Movement and a number of politicians from the Law and Justice Party (PiS) in Poland. In Hungary, while the ruling party, Fidesz, and its coalition partner, the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), are outspoken about the incompatibility of Islam with European values, they refrain from speaking out against Turkey's EU membership.

<sup>49</sup> Ministerstvo spravedlnosti CR (29.10.2015) Veřejný rejstřík a sbírka listin: YPG Evropa, Úplný výpis ze Spolkového rejstříku, <https://or.justice.cz/ias/ui/rejstrik-firma.vysledky?subjektId=913461&typ=UPLNY>.

<sup>50</sup> Česká televize (29.3.2016) "Syrští Kurdové v Praze: Delegace bojovala o podporu českých politiků," <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1739137-syrsti-kurdove-v-praze-delegace-bojovala-o-podporu-ceskych-politiku>.

<sup>51</sup> Česká televize (16.2.2016) „Kurdové otevřeli v Evropě své zastoupení – jako sídlo si vybrali Prahu,“ <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1693576-kurdove-otevrel-i-v-evrope-sve-zastoupeni-jako-sidlo-si>

Turkish diplomacy, which considers YPG a terrorist organization, has protested the opening of the office. The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that it did “not recognize so-called ‘Syrian Kurdistan’ ... as a subject of international law,” and said it was not in contact with the YPG office in Prague.<sup>52</sup> The ministry argues that since the YPG is not listed on the EU list of terrorist organizations, and because the Prague branch has been registered as an NGO, there is not much it could have done to prevent its establishment. The immediate consequences for high-level diplomatic contacts, including bilateral visits, were negative, but because the situation is still so fresh, it remains to be seen how mutual relations will be impacted. Similar offices have also recently been opened in Berlin and Paris.

Of no smaller concern to Turkish diplomacy has been Islamophobia’s proliferation in the EU, including V4 policy circles. Several high-level V4 representatives have made statements that Turkey perceived with disapproval. Some of the most prominent were the recent remarks by Czech President Miloš Zeman. His questioning of Turkey’s loyalty to NATO and his statement that Turkey should not be allowed to join the EU resonated in the Turkish press,<sup>53</sup> and his rebuffs such as “the Czech Republic is not for everyone,” and his suggestion that, “migrants should fight the IS” have been followed with concern. In Slovakia, Prime Minister Robert Fico has been urging against the creation of a “Muslim community,” and said that “Islam does not belong to Slovakia.”<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, the same PM Fico argued a decade ago that EU membership for Turkey, a country with a predominantly Muslim population, “will be a benefit for the Union as well as Turkey - economically, politically and strategically.”<sup>55</sup> Likewise, Hungary’s PM Viktor Orbán has campaigned for a “Christian Europe,” while supporting Turkey’s EU accession.<sup>56</sup>

There is very little recent data on the V4 publics’ perception of Turkey and the country’s perspective EU membership. In the post-2004 period, V4

---

[vybrali-prahu](http://vybrali-prahu); Prague Monitor (4.4.2016) "Kurdish Militia YPG Opens Office in Prague," <http://www.praguemonitor.com/2016/04/04/kurdish-militia-ypg-opens-office-prague>.

<sup>52</sup> MZV ČR (1.4.2016) "Česká republika neuznává 'YPG Evropa, z.s.' za subjekt mezinárodního práva," [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti\\_a\\_media/tiskove\\_zpravy/x2016\\_04\\_01\\_ceska\\_republika\\_neuznava\\_ypg\\_evropa\\_z\\_s.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti_a_media/tiskove_zpravy/x2016_04_01_ceska_republika_neuznava_ypg_evropa_z_s.html).

<sup>53</sup> Milliyet (10.12.2015) "Çek lider Zeman: Türkiye AB'ye üye yapılmamalı," <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/cek-lider-zeman-turkiye-ab-ye-uye-yapilmamali>; Sabah (10.12.2015) "Çek lider Zeman'dan skandal Türkiye açıklaması," <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2015/12/10/cek-lider-zemandan-skandal-turkiye-aciklamasi>; Radikal (27.12.2015) "Çek Cumhurbaşkanı: Göçmenler IŞİD'le savaşmalı," <http://www.radikal.com.tr/dunya/cek-cumhurbaskani-gocmenler-isidle-savasmali-1495744/>.

<sup>54</sup> TASR (25.5.2016) "Ficov prvý rozhovor: Bojovali sme s mimovládny sektorom, ktorý bol často dotovaný zo zahraničia," <https://dennikn.sk/470467/fico-poskytol-rozhovor-tasr-bojovali-mimovladnym-sektorom-ktory-bol-casto-dotovany-vo-zahranicia/?ref=tit>.

<sup>55</sup> Bilčík, V. (2007) "Slovakia's Priorities in the European Union," in *Yearbook of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic*, Brezání, P. (ed.), Bratislava: Slovak Foreign Policy Association (17-26), <http://www.sfpa.sk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Y2007.pdf> [accessed 15.01.2016].

<sup>56</sup> Orbán, V. (2016) Orbán Viktor évértékelő beszéde, <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-vertekelo-beszede/>; Prime Minister's Office, Hungary (2013) Törökország megszünteti a magyarok vízumkötelezettségét, <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/hirek/torokorszag-megszunteti-a-magyarok-vizumkotelezettseget>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

publics have generally been more supportive of EU enlargement than older member state publics.<sup>57</sup> Yet, the Polish Opinion Research Center (CBOS) found that between 2010 and 2015, antipathy towards Turks increased from 30% to 45%. At the same time, positive attitudes towards them halved to a mere 16%.<sup>58</sup> While we do not have fresh data on how religion plays into the V4 publics' perception of Turkey, it is fair to assume that this might be a factor in public perception, given the abundance of recent news about the governing party's emphasis on religious values combined with the rise of Islamophobia in the V4. Of course other variables, like skepticism in the EU project's viability, may also play into the public opinion data on Turkey and its potential accession. In 2015 Eurobarometer poll asking whether citizens feel attached to the EU, 58% of Hungarians, 58% of Poles, 49% of Slovaks and only 35% of Czechs said yes, compared to 49% EU-28 average.<sup>59</sup>

At the same time, numerous academics, journalists and public intellectuals in the V4 are expressing their concerns with recent reports of Turkey stifling academic freedom. It can hardly be expected that Turkey will be able to win over the hearts and minds of V4 publics unless the country makes a more serious effort to guarantee civic liberties and freedom of expression.<sup>60</sup>

V4 governments have generally refrained from direct criticism of current issues in Turkish politics and have even supported controversial measures. In the wake of the excessive force used to suppress the 2013 Gezi Park protests, the EU was reluctant to open and negotiate the regional policy chapter with Turkey. Hungarian State Secretary Zsolt Németh then expressed his support for then-PM Erdoğan, and his belief that Turkey was a well-functioning democracy, calling the EU's reluctance unacceptable blackmail.<sup>61</sup> Hungarian PM Orbán cited Turkey as an example of contemporary success in his 2014 speech in Băile Tușnad, Romania praising illiberal democracy.<sup>62</sup> While Slovak PM Fico was the only high-level EU politician that attended a conference in Istanbul during the Gezi Park protests, saying, "we know that tough [police] interventions have also taken place in EU member states."<sup>63</sup>

The collaboration at the civil society and educational institutional level is also promising. In Poland and the Czech Republic, Turkish students have

---

<sup>57</sup> [http://maxcap-project.eu/system/files/maxcap\\_wp\\_04\\_0.pdf](http://maxcap-project.eu/system/files/maxcap_wp_04_0.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> CBOS, Zagrożenie terroryzmem po zamachach w Paryżu, December 2015, [http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K\\_177\\_15.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K_177_15.PDF).

<sup>59</sup> European Commission (2015) Standard Eurobarometer 84, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2098>.

<sup>60</sup> At the same time, one has to also consider that Turkey's leadership might not be interested in achieving public opinion change in the EU, including the V4, because it will not be interested in pursuing the membership.

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungary (19.6.2013) *Németh Zsolt: a magyar kormány bízik a torok demokraciában*, <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/kulugyminiszterium/parlamenti-allamtitkarsag/hirek/nemeth-zsolt-a-magyar-kormany-bizik-a-torok-demokraciaban>.

<sup>62</sup> Orbán, V. (2014) Orbán Viktor miniszterelnök teljes beszéde a 25. Bálványosi Szabadegyetem és Diáktábor rendezvényén, <http://mno.hu/tusvanyos/orban-viktor-teljes-beszede-1239645>.

<sup>63</sup> Cokyna, J. (7.6.2016) "Fico sa zastal Erdogana. Polícia je vraj tvrdá aj v krajinách Unie," *SME*, <http://domov.sme.sk/c/6829169/fico-sa-zastal-erdogana-policia-je-vraj-tvrda-aj-v-krajinach-unie.html>.

ranked at the top of total incoming students over the last decade.<sup>64</sup> From 2004 to 2014 almost 12,500 Turks studied at Polish universities as part of the Erasmus exchange, and in the 2013/14 academic year, Turkish students constituted the largest group of Erasmus students at Polish universities (25% of total arrivals).<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, the surge of negative feelings in the wake of the refugee crisis also translated into hostilities towards Turkish students – in 2015 the Turkish Embassy in Warsaw approached the Polish Ombudsman with concerns about the treatment of Turkish students.

### **Foreign and Development Policy in the Common Neighborhoods**

While the V4 states have had more interest in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans for much of the post-2004 period, the situation in MENA and its direct consequences (e.g. the refugee crisis), have generated unprecedented interest among policy makers. From an immediate foreign policy perspective, the conflict in Ukraine and in Syria are dominating agendas, with Ukraine being the less divisive of the two.

While all V4 states have had prior experience with both providing and receiving development assistance, accession into the EU and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) presented new contexts and posed new duties.<sup>66</sup> On the one hand, membership in both institutions requires the provision of assistance to third parties, on the other, EU membership provided the V4 countries with the opportunities to wield their interests through an entity possessing much more leverage than any of them have individually, or even regionally, for that matter. Support for EU enlargement and for neighborhood policies quickly became the V4's top priorities for a couple reasons: Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have the EU's southern and eastern borders, and so their neighbors' stability and prosperity is in their direct interest; and because it has allowed Central and Eastern Europe to highlight its "transition experience," which has served as a way for the region to gain leverage in the EU arena, and switch from policy and know-how takers to policy makers.<sup>67</sup>

Geographically the V4 and Turkey are, to a large extent, interested in different regions, with Turkey providing the majority of its assistance to MENA, and far less to Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans; while the V4 provides the majority of its assistance to Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans (see Table 2). Differences also exist in the sectors and forms of aid

---

<sup>64</sup> Data for the full decade in Slovakia and Hungary were not available, but in these countries educational exchange seems to be promising with Turkey ranking high in the number of incoming students in the last years.

<sup>65</sup> For Czech Republic see, National Agency for European Educational Programs (n.d.) Počet příjezdějících studentů dle země původu v letech 1998/99 – 2012/13, [http://www.naep.cz/index.php?a=view-project-folder&project\\_folder\\_id=60&](http://www.naep.cz/index.php?a=view-project-folder&project_folder_id=60&); Polish Erasmus statistics are available here - – Erasmus, Statystyki, <http://www.erasmus.org.pl/odnosniki-podstawowe/statystyki>

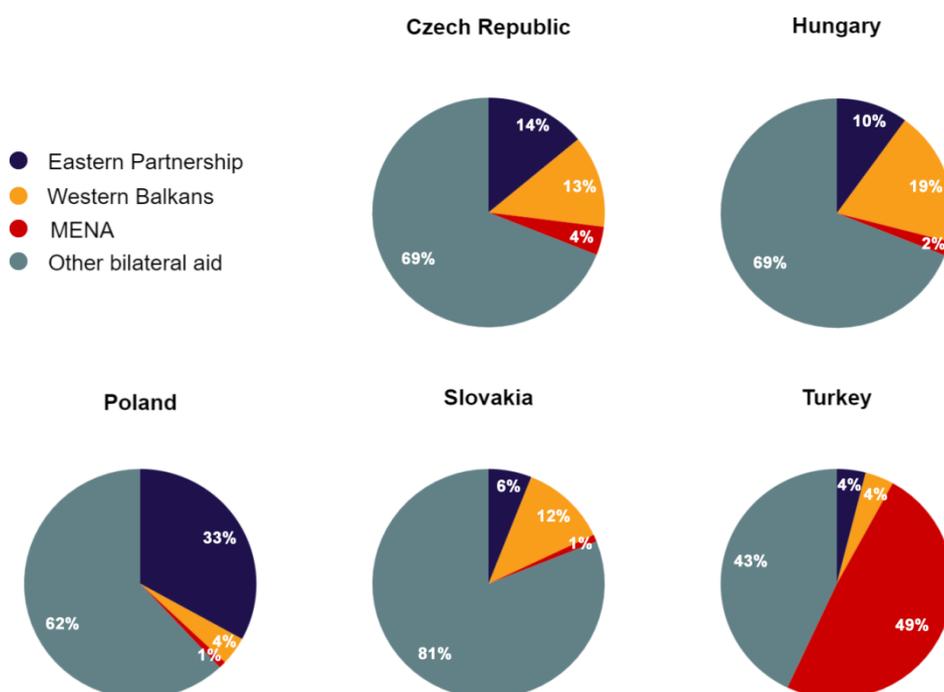
<sup>66</sup> Lightfoot, S. Ed. (2012). "From Aid Recipients to Aid Donors? Development Policies of Central and Eastern European States." *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 13(1): Special Issue.

<sup>67</sup> Najšlová, L. (2011) "Slovakia in the East: Pragmatic Follower, Occasional Leader," *Perspectives* 19(2): 101-122.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

disbursal. While most of the V4's development contributions flow via multilateral fora, Turkey prefers the bilateral track. At the same time, in the V4 case, bilateral and regional (IVF) tools have smaller impact potential than those provided at the EU level – both in terms of policy framework and available resources (see Table 3).

**Table 2: Geographical distribution of the V4 countries and Turkey's bilateral development aid (2004-2014)**

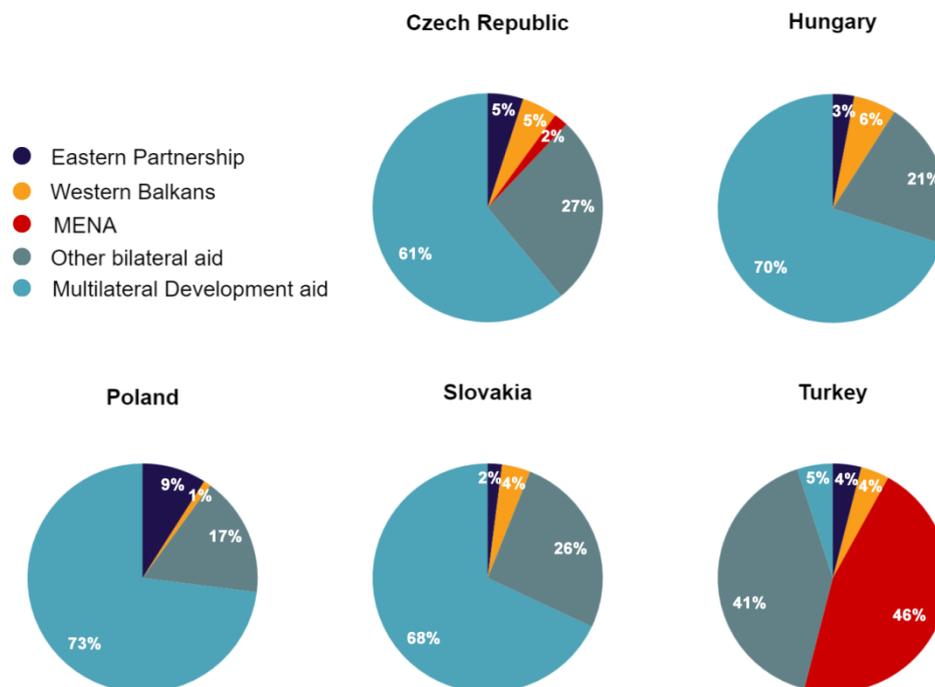


Source: OECD<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Organisation for economic co-operation and development (2016), DAC Statistics. See: <http://goo.gl/tq70Rc>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

**Table 3: Bilateral vs. multilateral development aid of V4 countries and Turkey (2004-2014)**



Source: OECD<sup>69</sup>

At the V4-Turkey level, only very small steps were taken towards development cooperation in the EU neighborhoods. In 2014-2015 the IVF was in contact with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), regarding an initiative by the Turkish Embassy in Bratislava to discuss the possibilities of co-funding selected development projects; in spring 2015, the TIKA asked the IVF to share a pre-selection of the projects it intended to fund in the Western Balkans and expressed interest in possibly co-financing some of them. However, the discussions were discontinued in the run up to Turkey's elections, and at the time of writing, still had not been followed up.<sup>70</sup> It should be noted that interests regarding cooperation in Eastern Europe, where both V4 and Turkey are very active and share some concerns regarding Russia's role in the region, were not expressed. Whether the talks will continue and materialize into a more institutionalized framework – including a memorandum of understanding, joint priority-setting and the pooling of resources, as is the case with other IVF's partners<sup>71</sup> – is questionable for the time being.

<sup>69</sup> Organisation for economic co-operation and development (2016), DAC Statistics. See: <http://goo.gl/Y0I2AI>.

<sup>70</sup> Personal communication with IVF representatives, December 2015 and May/June 2016.

<sup>71</sup> In addition to V4 government contributions, the IVF has received financing from governments and non-state actors in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. See <http://visegradfund.org/about/>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

Bilateral coordination between V4 aid agencies and the TIKA seems logistically difficult at the moment due to budget allocations, and divergent political priorities and geopolitical interests. While the EU seems to be the primary level at which such cooperation can take place, the V4 have not proposed any significant initiatives to shape EU-Turkey development cooperation thus far. Looking at the numbers for aid distribution, most V4 funds go to the multilateral development fora, while Turkey prefers the bilateral track (see Tables 2 & 3). It seems that a much more feasible strategy for neighborhood development policy convergence would be to focus on the harmonization of the EU and Turkey's development frameworks.

### Refugee crisis

Since 2015 the refugee crisis has been a dominant issue shaping both V4 cooperation and how the group perceives opportunities for working with Turkey. The V4 countries' domestic political dynamics regarding the crisis share common patterns. At the regional level the crucial focus has been on strengthening border protections and preserving the Schengen system, with only minor (if any at all) references to the humanitarian dimension of the crisis. Importantly, the V4 seems to be focused on addressing the "root causes" of the conflicts driving the migration, remaining very reluctant to open its doors to asylum-seekers.

The group's position on cooperation with Turkey is hopeful and careful at the same time. The September 2015 statement issued by the V4's foreign ministers emphasizes the importance of strengthening development efforts in the EU neighborhoods, but lacks any explicit reference to Turkey.<sup>72</sup> In their February 2016 statement the V4 prime ministers recognized "Turkey's crucial role" in the migration crisis' mitigation, yet at the same time called for "an alternative back-up plan ... in case the progress in border protection and cooperation with Turkey falls short of expectations."<sup>73</sup> In the very same statement, the V4 PMs failed to explicitly mention their commitments to Turkey's EU accession prospects. The paragraph on enlargement reads as follows: "In the context of the debate on common EU solutions to the migration challenge, the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries reiterate their longstanding support of the EU enlargement process with Macedonia as well as with other Western Balkans countries and of the Schengen area, for those who fulfill the necessary conditions."<sup>74</sup> The most recent V4 summit declaration (June 2016) does not mention Turkey at all.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Joint Communique of the V4 Foreign Ministers on Migration Crisis, September 11, 2015, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/joint-communique-of-v4>.

<sup>73</sup> Visegrad Group Prime Ministers (15.2.2016) "Joint Statement on Migration," <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-on>.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Visegrad Group (8.6.2016) "Joint Declaration of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers," <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/joint-declaration-of-the-160609>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

For a large part of 2015, the V4 states showed considerable unity in opposing the European Commission proposals to redistribute asylum-seekers. The most tangible expression of this opposition was the September 2015 vote held by the Justice and Home Affairs Council to establish a provisional mechanism for the emergency relocation of people in need of international protection.<sup>76</sup> Four EU member states – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia – voted against it, while Poland sided with the majority at the last minute. The vote on the temporary mechanism was supported by article 78 (3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, which enables such a procedure, “in the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterized by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries.”<sup>77</sup> The respective numbers of people to be relocated into each member state have been calculated according to the following criteria: size of population, total GDP, average number of asylum applications over the previous four-year-period and unemployment rate; thus, the smaller and economically weaker states would be obliged to take in less refugees than those larger and more well-off.<sup>78</sup>

**Table 4: Relocation (out of the proposed relocation of 160,000 people from Greece and Italy)\*<sup>79</sup>**

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Proposed key	2,98%	1,79%	5,64%	1,78%
Proposed figures	2691	1294	6182	902
Number of relocated until March 2016	0	0	0	0

Source: European Commission, DG Migration and Home Affairs<sup>80</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Luxembourg Presidency of the European Union (2015) “Extraordinary JHA Council,” <http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/articles-actualite/2015/09/22-conseil-jai-extra/index.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Article 78(3), Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT>.

<sup>78</sup> European Commission (2015) “European Solidarity: A Refugee Relocation System,” [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2\\_eu\\_solidarity\\_a\\_refugee\\_relocation\\_system\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_eu_solidarity_a_refugee_relocation_system_en.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Key: the size of the population (40%) as it reflects the capacity to absorb a certain number of refugees; total GDP (40%) as it reflects the absolute wealth of a country, and is thus indicative for the capacity of an economy to absorb and integrate refugees; average number of spontaneous asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees per 1 million inhabitants over the 2010-2014 period (10%), as it reflects the efforts made by Member States in the recent past; unemployment rate (10%) as an indicator reflecting the capacity to integrate refugees. Source: European Commission (2015) “European Schemes for Relocation and Resettlement,” [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_annex\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_annex_en.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> European Commission (2016) “Relocation and resettlement – State of Play,” [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/20160316/relocation\\_and\\_resettlement\\_-\\_state\\_of\\_play\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/20160316/relocation_and_resettlement_-_state_of_play_en.pdf).

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

**Table 5: Resettlement (out of the single European pledge of 20,000 resettlement places)\*<sup>81</sup>**

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Proposed key	2,63%	1,53%	4,81%	1,60%
Proposed figures	400	0	900	100
Number of resettled until March 15, 2016	52	0	0	0

*Source: European Commission, DG Migration and Home Affairs<sup>82</sup>*

The common aspects of the V4 countries' argumentation against refugee distribution included their emphasis on voluntary contributions (e.g. their objection to "Brussels' quotas") and their view that the plan was not feasible for reasons best summed up by a spokesman of the Hungarian government: "We believe it will be impossible to keep people assigned to, say, Slovakia if they want to go to Germany. How do you keep people in one country if they want to go join their relatives who live in another EU country, or want the more favorable social welfare benefits in that country?"<sup>83</sup> In fact, there are several instruments that could be used to remodel V4s from transit countries to home countries for refugees – including locally-bound aid, residence permits and more sophisticated integration strategies. This however has not yet been prioritized by V4 members.

As suggested earlier in this paper, it is currently pretty clear that what appeared to be a V4 consensus in autumn 2015, has already fallen apart. The Czech Republic has repeatedly said it would support decisions agreed upon at the EU level and abide by the Council's decision, although it voted against the redistribution mechanism (quotas). Slovakia went so far as to file a lawsuit at the European Court of Justice (ECJ) because it considered the quotas "nonsensical and technically impossible."<sup>84</sup> Hungary also filed a lawsuit, asking for the "annulment of the mandatory quota in the case of Hungary," because its public administration system was already "heavily overloaded," due to the "380 thousand migrants," already there.<sup>85</sup> Although

<sup>81</sup> The key is identical to the key applied for relocation in Table 3

<sup>82</sup> European Commission (16.3.2016) "Annex to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, First report on relocation and resettlement," [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160316/first\\_report\\_on\\_relocation\\_and\\_resettlement\\_-\\_annex\\_6\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160316/first_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_-_annex_6_en.pdf).

<sup>83</sup> Traynor, I. and P. Kingsley (22.9.2016) "EU Governments Push Through Divisive Deal to Share 120 000 Refugees," *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/22/eu-governments-divisive-quotas-deal-share-120000-refugees>.

<sup>84</sup> Lopatka, J. (2.12.2015) "Slovakia Files Lawsuit Against EU Quotas to Redistribute Migrants," *Reuters*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-slovakia-idUSKBN0TL11K20151202>.

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Hungary (4.1.2016) "Hungary Expects ECJ Ruling on Mandatory Quotas in the Second Semester," <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-justice/news/hungary-expects-ecj-ruling-on-mandatory-quotas-in-the-second-semester>

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

Hungary is one of the frontier states, it also fought against the potential placement of a “hot-spot” (registration facilities with increased capacity)<sup>86</sup> on its territory and refused to be one of the countries from which asylum-seeker relocations could take place. While the new Polish government declared that it would fulfill the obligations undertaken by its predecessors and accept its share of refugees, at the end of May 2016, Poland had still not accepted a single refugee. Moreover, a key politician of the governing PiS party, Jarosław Kaczyński, began accusing the opposition of constituting a serious threat to Polish security because of its readiness to host refugees in Poland.<sup>87</sup>

The Hungarian government is planning a referendum later in 2016 that will ask the public the following question: “Do you agree that the European Union should have the power to impose the compulsory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens in Hungary without the consent of the National Assembly of Hungary?”<sup>88</sup> The wording of the question is playing the anti-Brussels card.

Leaders in all four countries produced rather controversial rhetoric, including Slovak PM Fico’s proposed plan to accept “100 Syrian Christians,”<sup>89</sup> and Hungary PM Orbán’s proposal to defend “Christian Europe”.<sup>90</sup> In addition, there have been citizen movements around the region expressing disdain towards Islam, while lobbying governments to close their borders, a la “We don’t want Islam in the Czech Republic.” The anti-migration campaigns have had some strange spokesmen, like the head of the Slovak Freedom and Solidarity (sic!) party, whose family emigrated to Germany during the communist era, or Czech MP Tomio Okamura, who being of Czech-Japanese origin, spent part of his life in Japan.

At the same time numerous civic initiatives popped up around the region sending the opposite message. Thousands of Slovak, Czech, Hungarian and Polish volunteers went to the Balkans to provide direct assistance to asylum-seekers; held public collections; wrote newspaper articles; organized public debates and petitioned their governments to show a more humane side of their respective countries and the V4 region, as such.<sup>91</sup>

On the output side, the V4 has yet to participate in the resettlement of Syrians from Turkey thus far – none of the four countries have received a

---

<sup>86</sup> European Commission (2015) “The Hotspot Approach to Managing Exceptional Migratory Flows,” [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2\\_hotspots\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf).

<sup>87</sup> Wielowieyska, D. (7.5.2016) “Prezes Kaczyński straszy: KOD i opozycja przymusowo wepchną wam uchodźców”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,20036144,prezes-kaczynski-straszy-kod-i-opozycja-przymusowo-wepchna.html>

<sup>88</sup> Permanent Representation of Hungary to the European Union (11.5.2016) “Parliament orders referendum,” <http://brusszel.eu.kormany.hu/parliament-orders-referendum>.

<sup>89</sup> Aktuality.sk (21.7.2015) “Slovensko prijme 100 utečencov zo Sýrie, oznámil Fico,“ <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/300361/fico-slovensko-prijme-100-utecencov-zo-syrie/>.

<sup>90</sup> Orbán, V. (2.9.2015) “Wer uberrant wird, kann niemanden aufnehmen. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,“ <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/fluechtlingskrise/viktor-orban-wer-ueberrannt-wird-kann-niemanden-aufnehmen-13782061.html>.

<sup>91</sup> “Petitioning V4 Governments: Stop Embarrassing and Endangering Us!” <https://www.change.org/p/v4-governments-stop-embarrassing-and-endangering-us>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

single Syrian as of June 17, 2016 (see Table 1). They have all, however, agreed to contribute to the EU pledge to provide 3 billion EUR to Turkey (two billion of which is financed directly by the member states) and have also made additional contributions.<sup>92</sup>

From numerous perspectives, the V4's response to the refugee crisis comes as a surprise. There are several living generations who fought hard to gain membership in the Schengen, and who should have life under the Iron Curtain, the travel restrictions imposed upon them, and their emigration to the West fresh in their memories. However, the V4's track record on asylum and migration issues has been mixed over the past decade. On the one hand, all V4 countries have experience with the reception of refugees, including those from culturally and geographically distant regions. On the other hand, during the 2015 crisis many V4 leaders acted and talked as if there was no such prior experience, and the only thing that could be expected of them in regard to third countries was a commitment of resources.<sup>93</sup> At the same time, even in the case of the more compromise-prone governments, such as the Czech one, there is still a tendency to insist that the original V4 approach was "right".<sup>94</sup>

So on this front, the prospects of cooperation with Turkey are rather ambiguous. The V4 seem to be rather clear that they hope the majority of refugees do not cross into the EU but rather stay in the neighborhood. This view is not necessarily shared by Turkey's leadership, and thus the issue of responsibility sharing should certainly feature prominently on the V4-Turkey regional dialogue agenda.

---

<sup>92</sup> Poland is one of six member states, who by May 12 had not finalized their contribution; [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-1728\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1728_en.htm).

<sup>93</sup> For more on the V4's asylum and migration policies in the recent decade, see, Malangone, A. (2015) "Slovak migration policy poisoned by hypocrisy," *V4Revue*, <http://visegradrevue.eu/slovak-migration-policy-poisoned-by-hypocrisy/>; Pavelková, Z. (2015) "Quarrelling over 15 Syrian Children: How Security Definitively Replaced Rights in the Czech debate on asylum," *V4Revue*, <http://visegradrevue.eu/quarreling-over-15-syrian-children-how-security-definitively-replaced-rights-in-the-czech-debate-on-asylum/>; Fajth, V. (2015) "One step forward, two steps back: asylum issues in Hungary," *V4Revue*, <http://visegradrevue.eu/one-step-forward-two-steps-back-asylum-issues-in-hungary/>; Seges-Frelak (2015) "Refugees in Poland: the Sound of Silence?" *V4Revue*, <http://visegradrevue.eu/refugees-in-poland-the-sound-of-silence/>.

<sup>94</sup> Euobserver (8.6.2016) "Czech Minister: Our Migration Policy is Now Mainstream," <https://euobserver.com/migration/133735>.

## Energy

Energy diversification is another joint interest for the V4 countries, especially in the wake of the recurring political crises with the Russian Federation, a key supplier of the region's oil and gas.<sup>95</sup> Energy security, in terms of building interconnectors and promoting greater solidarity, has also been a priority for the V4 countries at the EU level. Since 2006 Turkey, an important energy hub, has held observer status in the Energy Community, and an EU-Turkey energy dialogue was launched in March 2015, both parties explicitly mentioning the Southern Gas Corridor as a priority, while committing to the development of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline, which will bring Caspian gas to the EU via Greece.<sup>96</sup> Energy cooperation was also a dominant theme of the May 2015 meeting between the V4 and Turkey's foreign ministers in Antalya, with diversification being a key word used by Central European diplomacy.<sup>97</sup> While there are divergent approaches in what diversification might look like – with Hungary more interested in the diversification of routes<sup>98</sup> and Poland in the diversification of sources – there is a V4 consensus that Turkey's energy chapter in the accession process should be opened rather soon.

There are currently several competing options for the transportation of gas from the Caspian to the EU: Eastring (proposed by Eustream), which would be routed via Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia; Tesla (proposed by Gazprom), which would enter Hungary via Macedonia and Serbia; and AGRI, bringing Caspian gas via Azerbaijan, Georgia and Romania. The European Commission recently put all of them on the List of Projects of Common Interest (PIC) – those projects that would make the most crucial contributions towards the completion of a common energy market – making them eligible for several forms of assistance, including regulatory and financial.<sup>99</sup> The Slovak and Czech governments have already prioritized Eastring, and this route also got backing from the Vice President of the European Commission, Maroš Šefčovič, who highlighted Eastring's added value in the possibility of a north-south reverse flow.<sup>100</sup> The outcome will of course depend on further developments in Russia-Turkey relations; for the

---

<sup>95</sup> European Commission (18.11.2015) "National Factsheets on the State of the Energy Union," [http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/publications/national-factsheets-state-energy-union\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/publications/national-factsheets-state-energy-union_en).

<sup>96</sup> European Commission (16.3.2015) "EU-Turkey High Level Energy Dialogue and Strategic Energy Cooperation," [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/arias-canete/announcements/eu-turkey-high-level-energy-dialogue-and-strategic-energy-cooperation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/arias-canete/announcements/eu-turkey-high-level-energy-dialogue-and-strategic-energy-cooperation_en).

<sup>97</sup> Visegrad Group (12.5.2015) "V4 and Turkey: Shared Interest in Regular Dialogue," <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/v4-and-turkey-shared>.

<sup>98</sup> Racz, A. (2015) "From Pragmatism to Bear Hug: Hungary's Russia Policy on the Eve of Ukraine Crisis," *V4Revue*, <http://visegradrevue.eu/from-pragmatism-to-bear-hug-hungarys-russia-policy-on-the-eve-of-the-ukraine-crisis/>.

<sup>99</sup> European Commission (n.d.) "Projects of Common Interest," <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/infrastructure/projects-common-interest>.

<sup>100</sup> Stuchlík, J. (2015) "Plynovod Eastring má šanci na úspěch, získal unijní podporu," *e15.cz*, <http://zpravy.e15.cz/byznys/prumysl-a-energetika/plynovod-eastring-ma-sanci-na-uspech-ziskal-unijni-podporu-1247563>, [accessed 15.01.2016].

time being, both Turk Stream, a project that was supposed to replace South Stream, and Tesla seem to be shelved.

Turkey's energy demand has been rapidly growing in recent years, thus the country's interest in interconnecting infrastructure with its neighbors has also been motivated by rising domestic consumption. Energy policy is one of the realms where Turkey's schism between EU alignment and its independent profile focus are the loudest.<sup>101</sup> Presently, of particular concern, are the steps Turkey has taken to increase coal production capacity. While this will certainly decrease dependence on foreign oil and gas, the strategy is costly from both environmental and health perspectives; investment into renewables would align more with EU energy strategy, while also benefitting sustainable development in Turkey, itself.<sup>102</sup> Yet several EU members, prominently Poland, are very reluctant to cut coal extraction despite proven hazards,<sup>103</sup> thus "greening" the EU/V4-Turkey energy collaboration might be a challenge.

Overall, all V4 states have pledged to contribute to the completion of the EU Energy Union. From this perspective, the crucial framework for V4-Turkey relations in the energy field remains the EU. An important step towards strengthening cooperation would certainly be the V4 countries' more active lobbying efforts in support of opening the energy chapter in EU-Turkey accession talks.

## Trade

Turkey ranks among the V4 state's top 20 trade partners (see Table 6), yet the EU framework remains vital for growth in bilateral exchanges. The V4 countries are a part of the EU common market and the Schengen system, and have to abide by their rules and standards. Turkey and the EU have a customs union, yet business flows have been hampered by visa restrictions. At the bilateral level, trade seems to be the buzzword for working with Turkey in all four countries, something that is part of the broader phenomenon of diplomacy's "economization"; the vast majority of publicly available information on bilateral relations with Turkey focuses on economic exchange. The volume of economic exchange has been steadily growing, with the Polish market (given the size) particularly drawing Turkish companies' interests.

---

<sup>101</sup> Evin, A., K. Kirisci, R. Linden, T. Straubhaar, N. Tocci, J. Tolay and J. Walker (2010) "Getting to Zero: Turkey, Its Neighbors and the West," *The Transatlantic Academy*, <http://www.transatlanticacademy.org/publications/getting-zero-turkey-its-neighbors-and-west>.

<sup>102</sup> Acar, S., L. Kitson and R. Bridle (2015) "Subsidies to Coal and Renewable Energy in Turkey," *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, [http://www.iisd.org/gsi/sites/default/files/ffsandrens\\_turkey\\_coal\\_eng.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/gsi/sites/default/files/ffsandrens_turkey_coal_eng.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> Berardi, L. (2016) "Coal in Poland: black gold or deadly master?" *V4Revue*, <http://visegradrevue.eu/coal-in-poland-black-gold-or-deadly-master/>.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

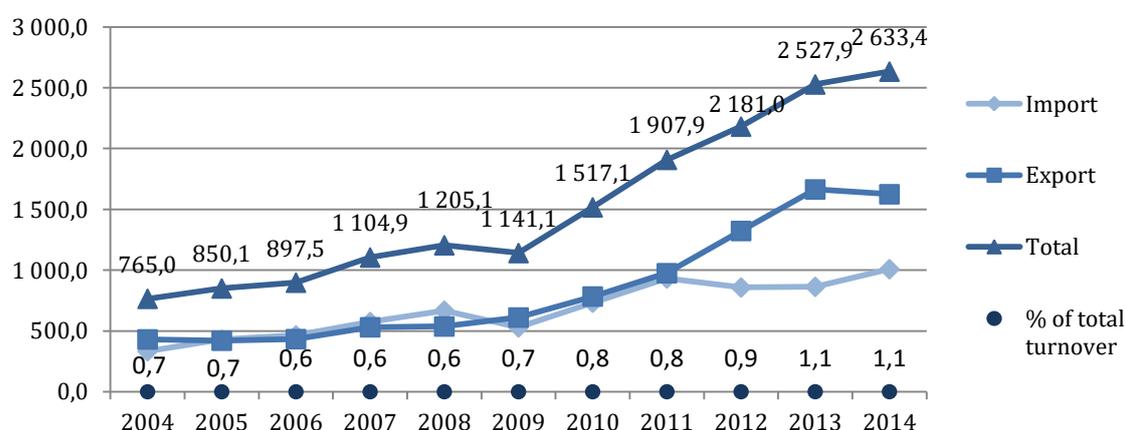
**Table 6: Turkey as a trading partner of the V4 countries (in 2014)**

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Trade volume (in thousand EUR)	2633,4	2107,3	4352,7	1249,4
Import	1008,5	519,7	2016,7	461,4
Export	1624,9	1587,5	2336,0	788,0
Rank of Turkey	20	17	19	20
% of total turnover	1,1%	1,3%	1,3%	1,0%

Source: Czech Statistical Office, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, Central Statistical Office of Poland

For the Czech Republic, Turkey is now the third most important non-EU market. The government's 2012-2020 Export Strategy put Turkey on its list of 12 priority countries, and over the past decade, turnover with Turkey has tripled.<sup>104</sup> Commodity trade has focused on energy facilities, machinery and transport equipment, manufactured goods, and food and live animals, with a total turnover of 16.7 billion EUR (See Table 7). Between 2004-2013 Turkey's foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Czech Republic has reached over 30 million EUR, mostly in the tourism sector. Czech investment in Turkey during the same period went mainly to the energy industry, power-plant construction, equipment, production and distribution of electricity, totaling almost 800 million EUR.<sup>105</sup>

**Table 7: Trade volume and turnover between Czech Republic and Turkey (2004-2014, in million EUR)**



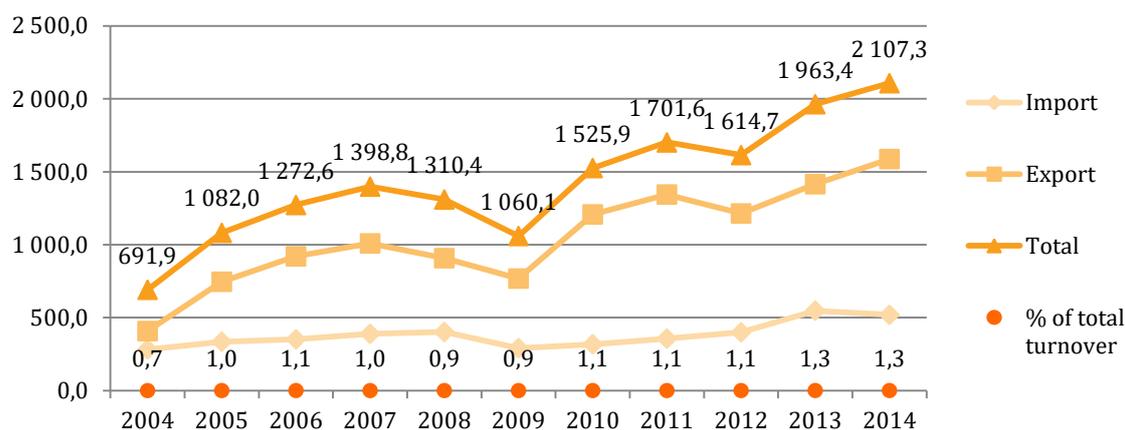
Source: Czech Statistical Office

<sup>104</sup> Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic (2012) "Export Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2012-2020 Period," <http://www.mpo.cz/dokument103015.html>.

<sup>105</sup> Czech National Bank (2015) "Přímé zahraniční investice," [https://www.cnb.cz/cs/statistika/platby\\_bilance\\_stat/publikace\\_pb/pzi/](https://www.cnb.cz/cs/statistika/platby_bilance_stat/publikace_pb/pzi/); Businessinfo.cz (2015) "Souhrnná teritoriální informace: Turecko," <http://www.businessinfo.cz/cs/zahranicni-obchod-eu/teritorialni-informace-zeme/turecko.html>.

Hungary's Fidesz government made it a priority to strengthen economic ties with Ankara, identifying Turkey as a potentially important export market for Hungarian companies.<sup>106</sup> To increase economic cooperation in recent years, the Hungarian-Turkish Joint Economic Committee was established in 2012,<sup>107</sup> the Hungarian National Trade House was opened, and the Istanbul bureau of Export-Import Bank was established.<sup>108</sup> Since the intensification of relations began, trade turnover has increased, and in 2014 Turkey was Hungary's 17<sup>th</sup> most important trading partner overall, and the fifth most important among non-EU countries (see Table 8). However, investments have not picked up yet. The Turkish side deems the Hungarian market too small,<sup>109</sup> and there is an impression that Hungarian companies lack the dynamism and strength needed to succeed in the Turkish market.<sup>110</sup>

**Table 8: Trade volume and turnover between Hungary and Turkey (2004-2014, in million EUR)**



Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office

Trade also plays a prominent role in Slovakia-Turkey relations, and over the last decade the volume has increased six-fold, reaching a peak in 2013 (the turnover was 1,378,8 million EUR, see Table 9).<sup>111</sup> Slovak companies are interested in the Turkish market and hope to benefit from its size, but Turkish companies find the Slovak market less attractive, because the state only offers limited foreign investment incentives, so small and medium-sized

<sup>106</sup> Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Hungary (2011) "Külgazdasági stratégia. Szakmai Vitairat," p.23,

[http://www.pestmegye.hu/images/2014/agazati\\_strategiak/Kulgzadasagi\\_Strategia\\_2011.pdf](http://www.pestmegye.hu/images/2014/agazati_strategiak/Kulgzadasagi_Strategia_2011.pdf).

<sup>107</sup> Prime Ministry of the Republic of Hungary (2012) "Szjártó Péter nyolc gazdasági vegyes bizottság élén," <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/hirek/szjarto-peter-nyolc-gazdasagi-vegyes-bizottsag-elen>.

<sup>108</sup> Hungarian Export Import Bank (2015) "EXIM's Second Foreign Representative Office Opens in Istanbul," <http://exim.hu/en/2015/11/az-exim-masodik-kulfoldi-kepviseleti-irodaja-megkezdi-mukodeset-isztambulban/>.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with a Turkish diplomat, January 2016, Budapest.

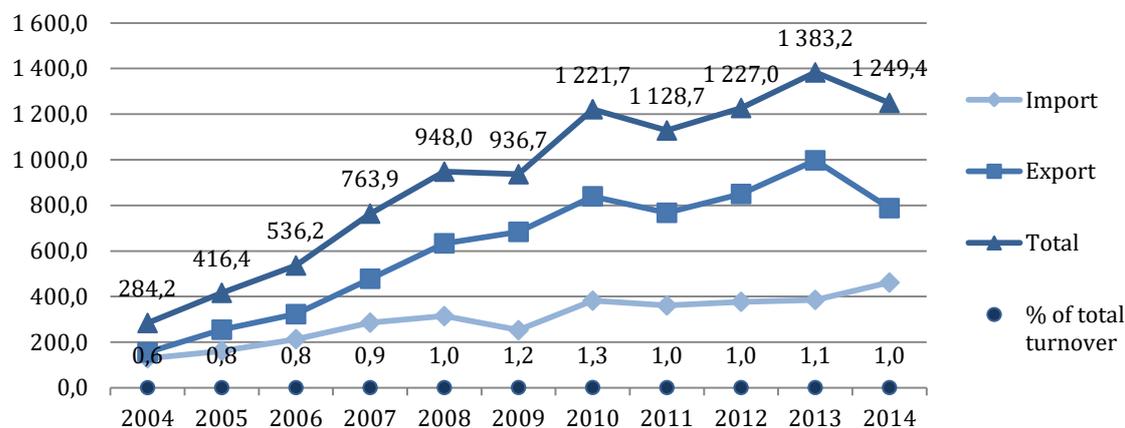
<sup>110</sup> Interview with an MFA official, January 2016, Budapest.

<sup>111</sup> Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (2015) "Ekonomická informácia o teritóriu: Turecko," <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/11860/Turecko+-ekonomick%C3%A9+inform%C3%A1cie+o+terit%C3%B3riu+Nov2015.pdf>, [accessed 15.01.2016].

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

investors are more likely to opt for countries with a more welcoming incentive scheme.

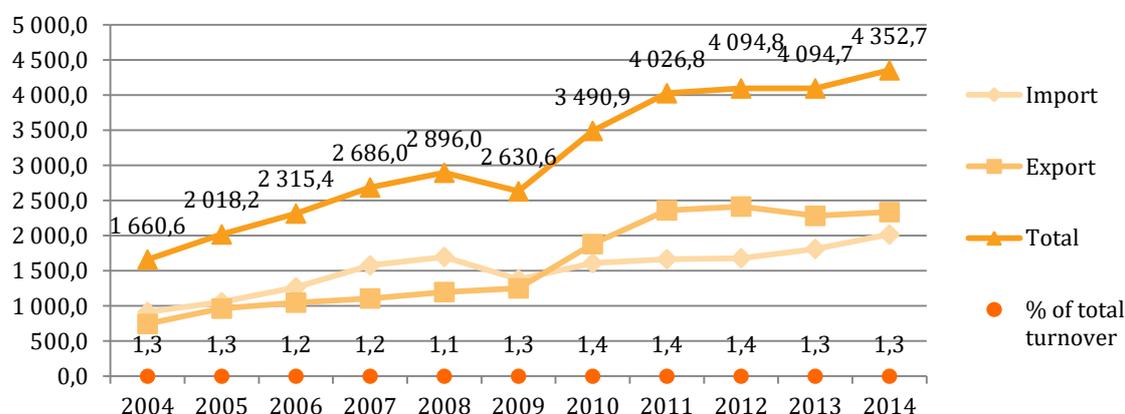
**Table 9: Trade volume and turnover between Slovakia and Turkey (2004-2014, in million EUR)**



Source: Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic

In Poland, the trend in growth is similar, albeit for obvious reasons (market size), the numbers are more relevant. Polish-Turkish trade turnover surpassed five billion EUR in 2015 for the first time. Outside of the EU, only China, Russia and the US are more important trade partners to Poland;<sup>112</sup> Turkey ranks third, along with India, on a list of non-EU, single market destinations for Polish investment abroad (over 230 million EUR).<sup>113</sup>

**Table 10: Trade volume and turnover between Poland and Turkey (2004-2014, in million EUR)**



Source: Central Statistical Office of Poland

<sup>112</sup> In contrast to the Eurostat and statistical offices of many EU member states, including France and Germany, the Polish Statistical Office does not treat Turkey as a European country, but as an Asian one. On the other hand, the National Bank of Poland recognizes Turkey as a European state.

<sup>113</sup> Polish National Bank (2014), „Inwestycje bezpośrednie-polskie”, <http://www.nbp.pl/home.aspx?f=/publikacje/pib/pib.html>

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

The Turkish construction sector is a key engine of Turkey's economy, and Poland comes in second, after Romania, for the number of Turkish construction contracts undertaken in the EU. The importance of Poland for Turkey's construction sector increased considerably in 2015, when Gülermak, a Turkish company working in cooperation with Polish and Italian partners, completed the construction of a second metro line in Warsaw, Poland's largest urban investment in modern history. A further increase in economic cooperation between Poland and Turkey seems highly likely due to the fact that both countries officially perceive the other as a strategic partner. In 2009, the Turkish Ministry of the Economy placed Poland in the group of 15 priority markets for 2010-2011.<sup>114</sup> Poland certainly cannot expect such treatment from China or India. Conversely, Poland has recognized Turkey as one its seven prospective non-European markets since 2012.<sup>115</sup>

Turkey is also a popular tourist destination for V4 citizens, with Poles (also given the population size) ranking 16<sup>th</sup> out of all foreign nationals visiting Turkey and the 9<sup>th</sup> out of EU nationals.<sup>116</sup> The recent terrorist attacks in Ankara and Istanbul will more than likely cause a substantial decrease in the number of tourists visiting Turkey.<sup>117</sup>

While the volume of trade has been growing over the last few years, the 2015 refugee crisis has presented complications in visa accessibility. Another frequent concern of the business community, especially in the smaller "V3 states," are the limited incentives and public resources invested in these countries' introduction into the Turkish market. Business ties with Central Europe have potential, partially due to the perceived saturation of Western European markets, yet there is room for improvement.<sup>118</sup> However, terrorist attacks in major Turkish cities, as well as the challenges to the rule of law in the country, are cited as problematic issues by V4 entrepreneurs.

At the same time, V4 countries have supported the talks on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a deal Turkey hopes to take part in, and although its signing might not be realistic in the near future, more

---

<sup>114</sup>Ministry of the Economy of the Republic of Turkey (2016) "2016-17 Hedef ve Öncelikli Ülkeler," [http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr/portal/faces/home/ihracat/pazaraGiris/hedef-ve-öncelikli-ülkeler?\\_afLoop=1967971377076595&\\_afWindowMode=0&\\_afWindowId=12wb35yl8v\\_677#!%40%40%3F\\_afWindowId%3D12wb35yl8v\\_677%26\\_afLoop%3D1967971377076595%26\\_afWindowMode%3D0%26\\_adf.ctrl-state%3D12wb35yl8v\\_731](http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr/portal/faces/home/ihracat/pazaraGiris/hedef-ve-öncelikli-ülkeler?_afLoop=1967971377076595&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=12wb35yl8v_677#!%40%40%3F_afWindowId%3D12wb35yl8v_677%26_afLoop%3D1967971377076595%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D12wb35yl8v_731).

<sup>115</sup>Bankier.pl (2013), "Dwa kolejne kraje na liście perspektywicznych kierunków eksportowych", <http://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Dwa-kolejne-kraje-na-liscie-perspektywicznych-kierunkow-eksportowych-3007332.html>

<sup>116</sup>Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey (n.d.) "Sınır Giriş-Çıkış İstatistikleri," <http://yigm.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,9854/sinir-giris-cikis-istatistikleri.html>.

<sup>117</sup> In the first months of 2016 the number of Poles visiting Turkey dropped by almost 30% compared to the previous year.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with lawyer representing Turkish businessmen, Prague, January 2016. Interview with Turkish businessmen, Prague, January 2016; Interview with representative of TUSOK in May 2016.

## Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?

explicit V4 support for Turkey's inclusion in the process would definitely strengthen the mutual bond.<sup>119</sup>

Most of the challenges limiting the trade ties can be addressed at the EU-Turkey level. The visa regime arguably limits the potential of the Customs Union. The time constraints and uncertainty (e.g. the need to obtain a visa to improve flexibility in communications and meetings with business partners) and the additional costs (e.g. related to handling visa applications via intermediary companies) have played a role in Turkish entrepreneurs' perception of trade with the EU.<sup>120</sup> Thus, steps taken towards visa liberalization, as well as more cooperation in the political (democratization) and security (counter-terrorism) arena might be the most important measures to strengthen business ties, including tourism.

---

<sup>119</sup> Kirisci, K. (2013) "Turkey and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership: Boosting the Model Partnership with the United States," *Brookings Institution*, Washington DC, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/09/turkey-transatlantic-trade-investment-partnership-kirisci/turkey-and-the-transatlantic-trade-and-investment-partnership.pdf>; Hurriyet Daily News (2016) "Turkey Must Be a Part of Transatlantic Trade Deal: EU Minister," <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-must-be-a-part-of-transatlantic-trade-deal-eu-minister-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=95169&NewsCatID=345>.

<sup>120</sup> World Bank (2014) "Evaluation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union," Report No. 85830-TR, <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/turkey/tr-eu-customs-union-eng.pdf>.

## Conclusions

This report has shown that it is in the best interests of all parties concerned that a potential upgrade in V4-Turkey dialogue should focus on strengthening the EU-Turkey bond. Substantial resolutions to the issues of major importance cannot be achieved while bypassing the EU. In terms of energy security, Turkey's membership in the Energy Union would be a game-changer. In trade and economic cooperation, all five countries have to abide by the EU's common market regulations and the EU-Turkey Customs Union. Deepening the Customs Union, bringing Turkey in on the TTIP talks and achieving EU-Turkey visa liberalization, can bear more fruit than any bilateral measures will. Finally, when looking at development and neighborhood cooperation, it is clear that the amount of aid provided by V4 countries is relatively small, and they are much more important as EU policy-influencers.

Currently the refugee crisis belongs to the most pressing issues. While Turkey has opened its doors to some three million Syrians, the V4 countries have been very reluctant to physically allow refugees into their territories, and have not yet invested enough resources to combat the ethno-religious rhetoric that has been mobilized in the region. Closer consultations with Turkey about the refugees' situations, and both the state and civil society's coping strategies, can improve the V4's understanding of the phenomenon, thus facilitating a more constructive cooperation that might enable all parties to tackle the refugee crisis with dignity and efficiency at the same time.

Of no smaller importance is addressing the security situation in Turkey and more cooperation in fighting terrorism is essential.

Importantly, the V4 governments have been supportive of further EU enlargement and the inclusion of Turkey in that process, none having applied unilateral vetoes in the country's accession talks. The V4's own recent EU accessions and the institutional memories that came with it – including the tangible positives that membership brought to their societies, and a greater awareness of the occasional “othering,” and paternalistic approach of the more established democracies in Western Europe – allow the V4 a better understanding of Turkey's position.

The V4's recent experience with democratic state-building and democratic backsliding in the post-89 era can also benefit Turkey, by assisting it in the struggle to find a balance between security and civic freedoms. Here it is essential that a dialogue takes place at both the governmental and non-governmental level – including universities, NGOs, think-tanks and the media.

**EU Frontiers - Policy Paper No. 13**

**June 2016**

**Lucia Najšlová**

**with Adam Balcer, Rebecca Murray and Zsuzsanna Végh**

**Should We Upgrade the V4-Turkey Dialogue?**

**Published:**

**Center for European Neighborhood Studies  
Central European University**

**Contact:**

**Nádor utca 9, Budapest, H-1052, Hungary**

**Tel.: + 36 1 237-3000 ext. 2391**

**[cens@ceu.edu](mailto:cens@ceu.edu)**

