

## THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND TURKEY\*

**Tunç EREM\*\***

Dear Minister,  
Dear Consul Generals,  
Dear Director of the Board of the Istanbul Chamber of Industry and Dear  
Members of ICI,  
Dear University Teachers,  
Dear Members of the Press,  
Dear Guests,

Welcome to this Conference, "The Future of the European Union and Turkey", organized by the European Community Institute of Marmara University. Marmara University highly values research into the European Union and comprises a European Studies Institute, which was the first institution to be established in Turkey dedicated to European Studies. Marmara University continues to support such academic efforts with the goal of contributing to Turkey's membership process with the European Union. Today, I feel great pleasure and honour to be able to contribute to such a meeting where academics from Turkey and various European countries, bureaucrats and experts have gathered to discuss the future of the European Union and its possible effects on Turkey.

The European Union has reevaluated its policies and organisational structure on a frequent basis since its foundation. At the December 2001

\* Opening speech for the international conference entitled "The Future of the European Union and Turkey" organized by the European Community Institute of Marmara University, on the occasion of the Europe Day, 9 May 2002.

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Laeken Summit, the European Union decided to prepare a constitutional Convention to discuss the future structure of the European Union.

This development is also important for Turkey as one of the Candidate Countries since she has been invited to take part in this Convention on the future of the European Union. The Convention, will focus on proposals concerning;

- the new roles of the EU
- the Separation of powers
- the EU decision-making process
- a revision of the EU founding treaties which have become obsolete and complex, the formation of a new constitution
- making the Union more democratic and transparent
- how the institutions and policies of the European Union can contribute to meeting citizens' expectations

Therefore, this Convention is concerned with the future structure of the Union to which Turkey might accede

However, I think that Turkey's contribution to this Convention is insufficient. We should generate our own proposals concerning the future development of Europe. Instead of becoming a part of a pre-determined Europe, Turkey should candidly describe the Europe she would prefer to see. To have a say in the future construction of an organization as a non-member is only possible through active participation in the discussions. Otherwise, Turkey can be nothing more than a passive party. Therefore Turkish institutions, especially the universities and NGOs, face the obligation of contributing substantive ideas.

Discussions in Turkey on the future of the European Union, were started during Mr.İsmail Cem's tenure as foreign minister who is honoring us now by his presence here today. These efforts cannot only be expected from governmental institutions; the participation of civil society representatives in this process is important. In this respect, we are delighted to see civil society actively participating in these discussions.

The enlargement process, in which the membership negotiations of Turkey are also being handled, is also providing a basis for discussions over the future of the European Union. The European Union, which will

comprise 28 member states after the completion of the enlargement process, will inevitably reevaluate its institutional framework and its decision making mechanisms and start a new constitutional process.

The main subject of this Conference, organized by our university to commemorate Europe Day, is not only about the future of the European Union, but also about Turkey's place in the future European Union, without which Europe would be incomplete.

Turkey is at a critical turning point now, in terms of the membership process. I attach great importance to the immediate opening of membership negotiations in order to prevent the pessimistic approach Turkey occasionally adopts to this matter. This year is crucial for Turkish-European Union relations as the time period for the short term priorities stated in the National Program has now expired. Concrete steps need to be taken in 2002 in order to start the negotiations for full-membership.

Hence, we cannot ignore Turkish-European Union relations when discussing the future of the European Union. On the first day of this Conference, Turkish Foreign Minister İsmail Cem will express his opinions about current and future Turkish-European Union relations.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the Istanbul Chamber of Industry, the Turkish Democracy Foundation, the Bremen Institute of Turkish – German Cooperation and all the institutions and establishments which have collaborated with the European Community Institute and contributed to the organization of this conference. I would also like to thank everyone who will chair the panels and to those participants who will present papers.

Finally, I would like to thank the European Community Institute for their skilful organisation of this conference.