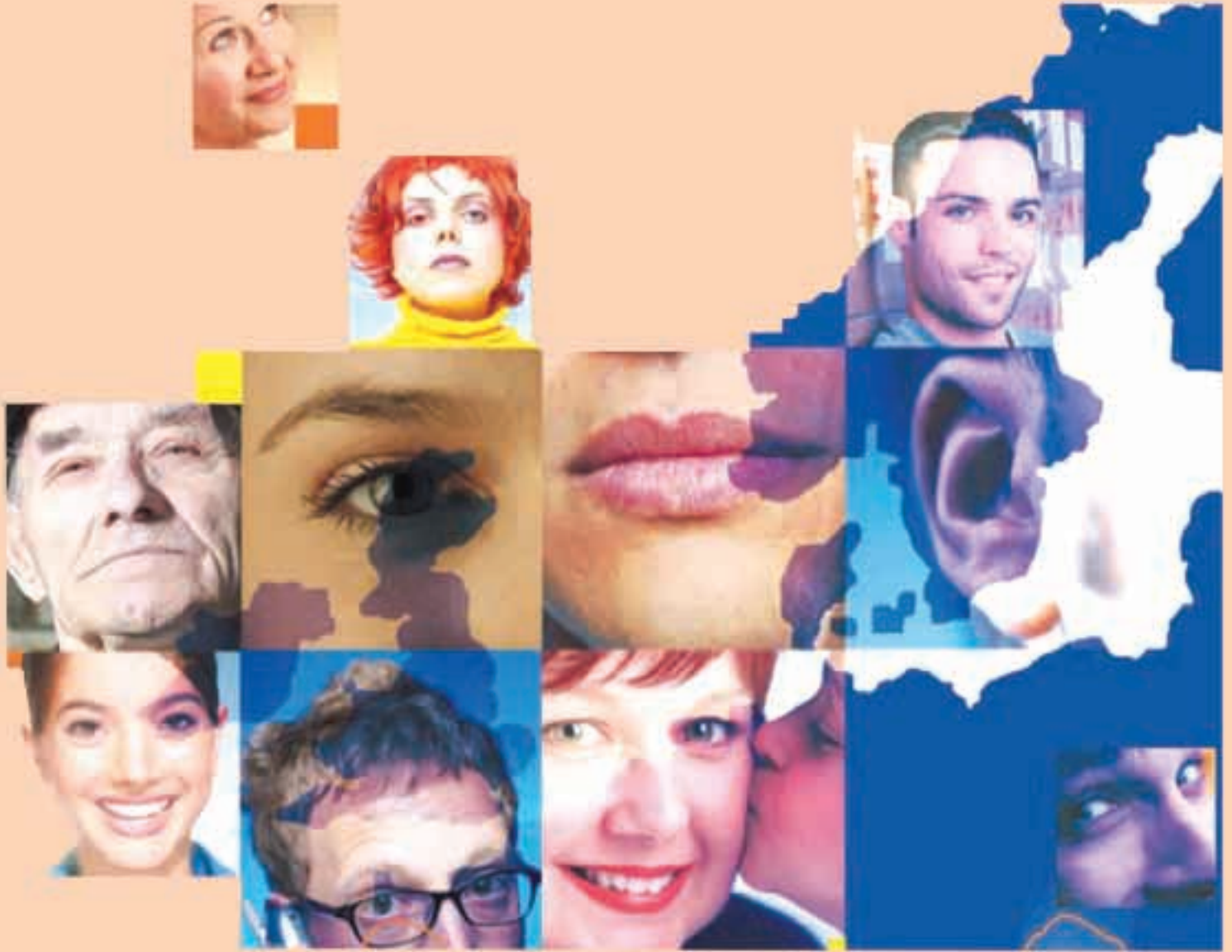


# EU TURKEY Review



A periodical of the Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey Fall 2007 Issue 9



## Civil Society



**Civil Society:**  
the missing link in EU accession talks?



**Enlargement:**  
together we are strong



**Civil Society Dialogue in Turkey:**  
interview with Michael Vögele



**Empowering Civil Society**  
in Turkey



## What is Civil Society?

There is no commonly accepted or legal definition of the term “Civil Society” or “Civil Society Organisation”. Depending on the context both may be used to denote different things. However, a vital feature of both are the non-governmental, non-profit making organisations, networks and voluntary associations. These include: the labour-market players (i.e. trade unions and employers’ federations - also called “social partners”); organisations representing social and economic players, which are not social partners in the strict sense of the term (for instance, consumer organisations); NGOs (non-governmental organisations), which bring people together in a common cause, such as organisations dealing with the environment, human rights, charities, educational and training and community based organisations.



## How is Civil Society involved in the EU decision making?

Civil society is involved in the EU decision making process in several ways. The Commission consults with external parties including civil society organisations when elaborating its policies. Also in the framework of the legislative process, the Commission consults the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) which represents various organisations in Member States. In its consultation policy the Commission applies the principle of openness.

For more information, please visit:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/civil\\_society/apgen\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/civil_society/apgen_en.htm)

Besides the Commission, the EESC as a consultative body at the European Union level, also gives the European Council and the European Parliament the points of view of the people who are most directly affected by EU legislation. Made up of representatives of Europe’s employers’ organisations, trade unions, farmers, consumer groups, professional associations, and more, the EESC, is a non-political organisation and exists to give advice on a wide range of practical matters.



## What is a project and how can we find grant calls for EU funded projects?

A project consists of a sequence of activities aimed at a given goal and undertaken within a defined time frame. All the activities, the time frame and the manner and costs of the project should be clearly laid out, planned and described.

EU financial assistance for NGOs exists at European level through community programmes and at local level specific to Turkey mainly through pre-accession support programmes. The published grant calls for proposals invite institutions to present proposals in line with the specified requirements set out in the terms of references or guidelines. The grant calls are available at the following websites:

- All grant calls for proposals can be found on Europaid website: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/general/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/general/index_en.htm)
- Grant calls for proposals under Turkey’s pre-accession support programmes can be found on Central Finance and Contracts Unit: [www.mfib.gov.tr](http://www.mfib.gov.tr)
- Local grant calls for proposals can be found on Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey website: [www.avrupa.info.tr](http://www.avrupa.info.tr)
- The following link includes calls within the framework of the Civil Society Dialogue Programme in Turkey: [www.avrupa.info.tr/Sivil\\_Toplum\\_Diyalogu/Fon\\_mkanlari.html](http://www.avrupa.info.tr/Sivil_Toplum_Diyalogu/Fon_mkanlari.html)

- European Commission link for information on grants: [http://ec.europa.eu/grants/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/grants/index_en.htm)



## In which community programmes can Turkish NGO’s participate?

Turkey actively participates in the community programmes detailed below. Further information on the programmes can be found through National Contact Points or relevant links given below:

**Culture 2007** has been established for seven years (2007-2013) and aims to enhance the European cultural area.

For further information please visit: <http://ccp.kultur.gov.tr>  
[http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/index_en.html)

**Lifelong Learning Programme** (2007-2013) supports learning opportunities from childhood to old age through the Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig and Jean Monnet Programmes.

For more information, please consult: [www.ua.gov.tr](http://www.ua.gov.tr)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/index_en.html)

**Youth in Action Programme** aims to develop a sense of personal responsibility, initiative, concern for others, civic participation and active involvement at local, national and European level among young people.

For more information, please consult: [www.genclik.gov.tr](http://www.genclik.gov.tr)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/newprog/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/newprog/index_en.html)

**Community Action in the Field of Public Health Programme’s** (2003-2008) general objectives include providing health information, rapid reaction to health threats and health promotion.

For more information please visit: [www.rshm.gov.tr](http://www.rshm.gov.tr)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_programme/programme\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_programme/programme_en.htm)

**The 7th Framework Programme** for research, covering the period 2007 to 2013, is an opportunity for the EU to match its research policy to its ambitions in terms of economic and social policy by consolidating the European Research Area (ERA).

For more information, please consult:  
<http://www.fp7.org.tr> • [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html)

**Please visit following link for all Community Programmes:**  
[http://ec.europa.eu/grants/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/grants/index_en.htm)



## Is there an institution in Turkey that provides support to NGOs?

Civil Society Development Centre (STGM) is a Turkish institution providing support for NGOs in Turkey. Its objectives are mainly helping civil organisations to improve their work, developing a civil society map and database and establishing communication networks among NGOs. The Centre also publicises the activities of civil society organisations and conducts lobbying activities to encourage initiatives in the social sphere. STGM also has a major role in encouraging NGO participation in decision making processes and NGO involvement in international cooperation and networks. They also develop methods to ensure the efficient, fair and principled use of support extended to NGOs. For more information on STGM: [www.stgm.org.tr](http://www.stgm.org.tr)



## How can I find a database of Civil Society institutions in the EU?

The Commission has a database called CONNECS, which is a useful source to reach civil society institutions working at European level.

You can access the database at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/civil\\_society/coneccc/liste\\_index.cfm?CL=en](http://ec.europa.eu/civil_society/coneccc/liste_index.cfm?CL=en)

# Message from the Ambassador



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One of the most vibrant aspects of Turkey is its expanding civil society. There are more than 84,000 registered non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in this young, dynamic country. They have diverse aims and tasks, from meeting the needs of

a neighbourhood or boosting ties between people from the same “hometown,” to youth volunteer activities.

*The many facets of Turkey’s civil society are looked at in this issue of our newsletter: culture, human rights, gender issues, social dialogue.*

*Civil society is also a key factor in bringing the people of Turkey closer to their counterparts living within the borders of the European Union. This is why it forms the focus of this issue of the EU-Turkey Review. This edition highlights the EU supported programme called “Civil Society Dialogue” and the many projects under its umbrella, all of which helps forge a common understanding and create tools to overcome clichés and stereotypes.*

*We also look at how civil society in the EU influences decision-making to ensure that the citizens’ needs are taken into account, and how this process, still in its youth, is starting to make a difference in Turkey too.*

*It is good news that the tide of opinion may be changing regarding enlargement and that the Europeans are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits, and not the mythical disadvantages, offered by its new citizens. The renewed enthusiasm for enlargement is expressed by European Commission Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and reaffirmed by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union.*

*The long, hot summer in Turkey was far from being a time of leisure in terms of EU-Turkey relations. Activities in Ankara, Istanbul and Brussels continued throughout the summer, leading to an even busier autumn. And within the Union, the EU is working hard to develop a new Treaty that will reform its functioning within the context of ever-increasing membership. Additionally, as the autumn unfolds, the “mobility week” reminds us all that changing the car for the bicycle is not only cheaper, but also healthier!*

*I hope this issue of EU-Turkey Review brings useful information on the people-to-people dialogue which is an essential component of the EU-Turkey relationship.*

**Ambassador Marc Pierini**

*Head of Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey*



European Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström attending the meeting of European Citizens' Consultations.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

# the missing link in EU accession talks?

Accession negotiations are inter-governmental, as are all talks between sovereign bodies trying to reach an international agreement. Government representatives from the EU Member States and candidate countries sit around the table to agree on the best terms and conditions for the candidate to join 'the club'. When the club is the EU, the negotiations are really about how soon and how fully the candidate country can implement the EU *acquis* (a body of over 130,000 pages of community legislation) and who is better placed to answer this than the government of the country, which is in charge of legislative initiation and implementation?

If at first sight this process does not seem to require any involvement from the non-governmental sector, the reality of past enlargements has taught the EU differently. In fact, accession preparations require such a wide-reaching range of reforms on the part of the candidate country that it is impossible to succeed without the popular support that close cooperation with civil society can give.

Civil society thus becomes a key stakeholder of the accession process, even if it is not directly involved in the negotiations. Its role ranges from raising awareness of the effects accession has on fellow citizens, to representing interest groups and providing input to the policy-making process.

### Accession to the EU-What's in it for me?

This is a legitimate question that people often ask themselves. In vibrant civil societies - people turn to their representatives with this same question. Whether governmental or non-governmental, these representatives have the duty to respond in good faith and with objective information. Accession is not merely a technical or financial issue, but one that has direct implications on the way people work and live in an enlarged Europe. The role of civil society as a repository of people's concerns and supporter of informed debate is instrumental in bringing about a more rational, less emotional decision in favour or against EU accession.

### Your interest is my interest!

Business interest groups have come a long way in furthering their agenda in the public sphere. The same thing is increasingly hap-

pening outside the business world. This is particularly true for vulnerable groups, such as disabled people, minorities and women, which need empowerment and representation in order to have their voice heard. Here too, civil society can become the ideal spokesperson for these groups when dealing with the public authorities.

### Citizens-friendly policies

Civil society is closer to citizens than governments can be. It enjoys the physical and emotional proximity that makes it often more credible and trustworthy than that of bureaucrats. A professional civil society, able to collect and proceed feed-back from citizens, can input into policy making in order to make sure that reformed policies are meeting people's expectations.

It goes without saying that these are only examples of the benefits that close cooperation between civil society and the public sector can bring to good governance, in general, and management of the accession process, in particular.

Conducive legal, political and social environments as well as a high degree of professionalism on the part of NGOs are conditions '*sine qua non*' for civil society to make an effective contribution to the EU accession process.

If successful, this process will help the EU become not only a Union of States, but also a community of peoples, as its founding fathers wished.

*"It is important to show that the Union is willing to deliver the right policies for its citizens: directly, and by creating an effective and democratic Europe. They are all part of the same effort to get closer to citizens and to serve the common interest."*

**Margot Wallström**, European Commissioner in charge of Institutional relations and Communication, European Parliament Plenary session of 7 June 2007.

# Enlargement: together we are strong

Call it the engine of economic revival or added global weight in world affairs, enlargement remains one of the EU's most powerful policy tools. This is the firm conviction of Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, as expressed in his personal blog.

With 27 Member States and a population of close on 500 million, today's European Union is much stronger and more influential than the EEC 50 years ago when there were only 6 Member States and a population of less than 200 million.



Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn.

*"After several sluggish years, Europe is now experiences a period of clear economic upturn. This year and the next, Europe's economy is growing at a rate that is expected to be faster than in the USA. Unemployment in the eurozone has fallen from over 9 to 7 percent in just two years.... The EU's success stems also from better economic policy-making and gradual, carefully managed enlargement,"* points out Rehn.

Having directed the last enlargement of the European Union with Romania and Bulgaria, Rehn is quick to point out that EU enlargement has brought much needed dynamism to Europe. *"It has strengthened the European economy by enlarging markets, creating new business opportunities and bringing fast-growing economies into the single market,"* he says in his blog and adds: *"Trade between the 'old' and 'new' Member States has quadrupled over the past decade. More new jobs have been created in the old Member States than have been lost due to company relocations. The EU economy has become more competitive globally."*

Thus, no need to fear the Polish plumber, the Romanian computer-programmer or the Bulgarian handyman:

- Countries like Ireland, Sweden and the UK that did not apply labour movement restrictions after May 2004 have experienced high economic growth, a growth in employment and a drop in unemployment.
- In Ireland, where the inflow of workers from the new Member States has been the largest in relative terms, the unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the EU (4.4% last year).
- Sweden and the UK are two of the few EU Member States that have greatly exceeded the 2010 target employment rate of 70%. Employment has also grown in the other Member States.
- The EU of 27 Member States and of 500 million people is the biggest economic area in the world. Its voice carries a lot of weight internationally, for example in global trade talks.

Portugal, which took over the rotating Presidency of the European Union on 1st July this year, agrees with this assessment, as has made it clear that enlargement remains high on the agenda for the next six months. *"The reform of the Union should facilitate the fulfilment of existing commitments on the enlargement process, commitments that must be respected"*, it says in the "Portuguese Presidency Priorities" document which was announced by the country's prime minister in June. *"The benefits of this endeavour are obvious, through its contribution to peace, stability and prosperity in Europe. The EU should develop and consolidate these gains."*

So enthusiasm for an expanding Union seems to be replacing enlargement fatigue, at least for the time being...



## For further reference:

### Olli Rehn: New Economic Dynamism in Europe:

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/rehn/this\\_month/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/rehn/this_month/index_en.htm)

### Priorities of the Portuguese Presidency:

<http://www.eu2007.pt>

<http://www.europa-web.de/europa/03euinf/10counc/portpresidence.htm>

# Citizens' voice in Europe



European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and EESC President Dimitris Dimitriadis.

warded to the EU's decision-making bodies and then published in the EU's Official Journal.

The EESC's voice has, most recently, been heard in the on-going and heated debate over a reform treaty for the EU. For its part, as it did during the European Convention, the EESC has endeavoured to bring more transparency to the current intergovernmental conference (IGC) and to ensure, by organising conferences and other events, that the voice of organised civil society is heard.

## Non-governmental organisations and lobbyists

NGOs and lobby groups, of which there are an estimated 1,000 in Brussels alone, also play an important role in influencing the EU decision-making process. There are hundreds of thousands of NGOs across Europe and in order to maximise their effectiveness, many have organised themselves at European level in umbrella networks.

Six of them currently exist in Brussels, covering everything from human rights (Human Rights and Democracy Network) to women (European Women's Lobby) and social issues (Social Platform). Several fairly structured practices of dialogue between the European institutions and the NGO sector in Brussels have developed over the last 15 years, including:

- the Commission and European Parliament's committee on employment and social affairs, which have bi-annual meetings with the Social Platform;
- the environmental NGOs traditionally have very good working relations with the Commission DG Environment and the Parliament;
- DG Trade has set up a structured and regular 'civil society dialogue' with interested parts of civil society.

One might ask, though, if this input from civil society makes any difference. The answer is a resounding 'yes'. Take, for example, the current debate over a future maritime policy for the EU. A year ago, the Commission launched a wide-ranging 12-month consultation exercise with all stakeholders involved, large and small. It received over 400 responses from organisations ranging from the Committee of the Regions to the smallest NGOs in the most peripheral parts of the EU.

Civil society at a European level is a rather new phenomenon. It was only with the conclusion of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 that more policy areas of direct impact on citizens were shifted to European level, generating the need for greater engagement of civil society. Since then, many NGOs have organised themselves as European networks and are now giving valuable input into the European political process from a citizen's perspective.

Though there is no commonly accepted or legal definition of the term 'civil society organisation', the European Commission believes that everybody must be able to provide the institution with input. Consultations are increasingly part of the Commission's practice and are most effective when they take place before legislation is proposed.

An example of this practice is the 'debate on European citizenship', organised by the **European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)** on 18 September in Brussels.

ECAS director Tony Venables said: *"There are more and more citizens' initiatives, petitions and experiments with direct involvement of citizens in European affairs. We believe European citizenship cannot be only about rights and responsibilities. It should also be about belonging and participation."*

## The Economic and Social Committee

Providing a long-established 'voice' for civil society is the Brussels-based **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**, a consultative body that gives representatives of Europe's socio-occupational interest groups, and others, a formal platform to express their points of view on EU issues. Established in 1957, the EESC's 344 members are drawn from economic and social interest groups in Europe and have a role to play in the Union's decision-making process. Consultation with the EESC by the Commission or Council is mandatory in certain cases while, in others, it is optional.

The Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty extended the range of issues which must be referred to the Committee, in particular new areas such as regional and environmental policy. The EESC may, however, also adopt opinions on its own initiative. On average, the EESC delivers 170 advisory documents and opinions a year, of which about 15% are own-initiatives. All opinions are for-

*"More than ever we are obliged to explore new ways for mainstreaming the regional and local element into community and national politics."*

**Dimitris Dimitriadis, EESC President.**



Paul Nemitz, deputy head of the Commission’s maritime task force, which is currently sifting through the many responses before the Commission publishes a Blue Paper\* in mid-October, said the response highlights the importance of consulting civil society. *“Civil society organisations have a vital role to play in many policy areas. We did not expect to generate such a large response but the fact that so many organisations, NGOs and lobby groups took the trouble to make submissions shows how relevant civil society can be at the EU decision-making level,”* said Nemitz.

### The White Paper on Good Governance

The Commission’s White Paper on ‘Good Governance’ and the ‘Minimum Standards of Consultation’, are other examples of the development of an institutionalised civil dialogue. If the EU reform treaty enters into force, its provisions for participatory democracy will formalise the commitments laid down in these two documents to some extent.

Article 47, in particular, mentions the maintenance of open, transparent and regular dialogue between European institu-

tions and representative associations and civil society.

The White Paper on Good Governance includes several key measures for improving the decision-making process in the EU by, amongst other things, fully involving the agents that play a relevant role in the preparation and implementation of decisions. The paper establishes four main guidelines for renewing governance in the EU, including greater participation and openness and better policies and regulations. Of course, it isn’t just at EU level that determined efforts are being made to fully engage civil society – its cause is also being enthusiastically championed in Member States as well.

**The White Paper on Good Governance:**  
[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001\\_0428en01.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001_0428en01.pdf)

\* The Blue Paper is basically the same as a ‘White Paper’ (see definition below) in that it states the intention of the Commission to pursue action in a certain sector. The colour blue was chosen because of its relevance to the sea.  
 \*\* A White Paper is a definitive statement of the Commission’s intent.



Established in 1957, the EESC has a role to play in the Union’s decision-making process. For more information, visit: [www.eesc.europa.eu](http://www.eesc.europa.eu)



The support given to the civil society creates many opportunities to the local communities, pro

# Civil Society Dialogue in Turkey:

**Civil Society Dialogue is a policy that aims to complement the technical EU accession negotiations. What are the dialogue's main objectives and how does it work?**

The objectives of Civil Society Dialogue are multiple: its main purpose is to generate better mutual understanding between citizens of Turkey and the EU. The dialogue also aims to ensure a stronger awareness of the opportunities and challenges of Turkey's accession to the EU.

The dialogue runs parallel to the formal accession negotiations between governments in Ankara and in Brussels and, supported by a large EU funding programme, is conducted at the citizens' level. It is comprised of exchange programmes, cultural and scientific cooperation, setting up of networks and discussion platforms, organisation of joint events etc. But in the end the purpose is always to open up additional space where citizens from the EU and Turkey can interact on topics of common concern and overcome mutual misperceptions.

The dialogue makes Turkey better known within the EU. It offers EU citizens an opportunity to experience the historical links, traditions and cultural diversity in Turkey. At the same time, Civil Society Dialogue gives Turkish citizens the chance to learn more about the EU, its values, institutions, and policies.

**The latest Eurobarometer shows modest support in Turkey for EU accession, and little support in the EU for Turkey's accession. Do you think a civic 'dialogue' alone will help change this trend?**

Despite the sometimes rocky negotiations of the last year, support for EU membership in Turkey is actually quite stable at over 50%. In the EU overall support for enlargement is also increasing. Of course, it is also true that



Michel Vögele, First Secretary and Head of Section for Financial Cooperation, Institution Building and Civil Society, European Commission Delegation to Turkey

support rates are currently lower than the record levels that we had before the opening of the accession negotiations. However, such fluctuations are quite normal considering the effects of media headlines and the public's tendency to focus on 'high politics'.

I strongly believe it is the role of those in favour of EU enlargement to improve support rates. Both, the EU and Turkey must work even harder to better explain the positive effects and benefits of Turkey's accession in order to ensure that our common policies receive wide public support. For its part, colleagues in the Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey will do their best and the recent improvement in public support is good news that will further motivate us in our efforts.

Civil Society Dialogue is one important element in this endeavour. I am often amazed to see how 'getting to know each other' opens people's eyes and reduces prejudices. It is really a strong force. Being Ger-

man, I find today's Franco-German cooperation a good example – but there are many more examples within the EU. Europe is really more than just governments working together. It will take time to see these micro results spreading to the larger public but I am confident that they will be forthcoming.

**It is believed that this programme was designed exclusively for Turkey, and then enlarged, for political correctness, to other candidate countries. Is this true?**

The European Commission emphasised early on that Civil Society Dialogue has particular importance for Turkey's EU accession process. The state of mutual knowledge is weaker compared with other candidate countries and misperceptions and concerns are more widespread.

However, the Civil Society Dialogue is the outcome of the lessons learnt from previous enlargement rounds. The underlying idea of the dialogue is as valid for Croatia, and perhaps in the future for other countries of the Western Balkans. The objective is to integrate citizens in the EU accession process, to create links, and strengthen solidarity between the societies of EU and candidate countries.

**You have launched a number of calls for proposals under this programme so far. What was the rate of response, how many projects were successful in getting funds and how many of them were successfully implemented?**

Since the launch in 2005, the European Commission and the Turkish government have initiated a variety of activities. In total, four EC-funded Civil Society Dialogue programmes have been implemented, already providing assistance of more than €4.3 million to around 70 civic dialogue projects.

Most of these projects are currently be-



essional organisations, universities and youth organisations. For more information, please visit: [www.avrupa.info.tr](http://www.avrupa.info.tr)

# interview with Michael Vögele

ing implemented. It is really fascinating to see what joint civil society efforts can do. One of my favourite projects for example, entitled “Istanbul by its Children”, was an exhibition of photos taken by about 100 children showing their life in Istanbul. The exhibition was shown in Turkey and five EU Member States. In parallel, the Turkish project leader ‘Ilhan Koman Foundation for Arts and Cultures’ prepared and launched the ‘Europe by its Children’ project, in which photos taken by children in the EU were presented in Istanbul.

As for the success rate, it of course varies from one programme to the next. But as a rule of thumb, we receive about four times more applications than can be selected. What is important is that for all Civil Society Dialogue programmes, collaboration between Turkish and EU organisations is compulsory. There is a lot of interest in many EU member states to work together with Turkish counterparts and visa-versa, which ultimately lies at the heart of this initiative.

## **The 14<sup>th</sup> September was the deadline for the latest set of calls for proposals. What would be your advice to the projects that won, with regard to successful implementation of their contract?**

Yes, to further support the Civil Society Dialogue, we dedicated another €21 million of Turkish 2006 pre-accession assistance to this initiative. With these funds, the Commission will support at least another 100 civic EU-Turkey cooperation projects among youth organisations, universities, municipalities, and professional organisations. The evaluations are now ongoing and, because of the high number of applications received, it will take a few months before the results can be announced.

Implementing an EU grant contract can be at times challenging. From day one, project coordinators should pay attention to the

project and financial reporting duties. Handling EU funds entails responsibilities. However, we have a team of experts in the EC Delegation that gives a lot of support and advice to all our beneficiaries and many NGOs in fact tell us that working with EU funds had a very positive effect on their organisational management. It often also helps to get further funding from other donors.

## **Which EU Member State is most active and how are they involved in the Civil Society Dialogue?**

Many EU Member States have a long tradition of bilateral cooperation. They have a number of exchange programmes, organise conferences and seminars, and assist in boosting their bilateral economic ties. The Commission very much welcomes the intense level of engagement of many EU members. The Civil Society Dialogue complements this with a multilateral dimension that is added to the wide variety of existing activities.

Keeping this in mind, our statistics on the EC-funded projects indicate that the cooperation with Turkish civil society is evenly spread across the EU. Currently, EC funded civic dialogue projects involve partners from 18 EU members. Of course, bigger Member States and neighbouring countries figure higher but the overall geographic distribution demonstrates Turkey’s close links across the whole of Europe and this is exactly what the Commission wants to support.

## **Could you tell potential applicants what the most frequent mistakes that you encounter while evaluating their proposals are?**

My recommendation is to take enough time when designing projects and filling in a project application. It is not an easy exercise to present complex project ideas in a simple and convincing manner in the requested format. However, it is the fairest way available to us

to choose the best among many good ideas.

Apart from paying good attention to administrative requirements, I would also underline the need to closely align the project proposals to the objectives and priorities of the specific call for proposals. Do not forget that these determine the criteria applied by the evaluators during the selection and your application is measured against them. Finally, projects need to be realistic and sustainable.

## **What is the future of the Civil Society Dialogue?**

Civil Society Dialogue will continue to complement the technical accession negotiations. It represents a key element of the European Commission’s accession strategy for Turkey and a significant part of financial cooperation.

In the future, we want to widen the target groups and involve more social groups in the dialogue. A good indication of this is given in the Commission Communication about the Civil Society Dialogue.

Concretely, we currently have cooperation programmes lined up with trade unions and chambers of commerce where activities will start soon. By the way, one important area for me is learning foreign languages, which is key in order to communicate across boundaries. In Turkey, more should be done.

In addition, this summer the EC Delegation, together with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, launched the ‘Civil Society Dialogue - Cultural Bridges programme’, which mainly targets the cultural institutes of EU Member States and their Turkish and European partners. It provides direct grants to those wishing to engage in multi-partner, joint cultural activities with the aim of establishing a permanent dialogue and partnerships between cultural actors in Turkey and the EU. Thereby, the programme will also contribute to the preparations for “Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture.”

# Empowering Civil Society in Turkey

Civil Society in Turkey has witnessed rapid growth in the last ten years, a process accelerated by the prospect of EU accession. While the need for further progress is evident, the recent reform environment has resulted in more vocal and better organised civil society with a higher capability of influencing and shaping policies. Since Turkey's recognition as a candidate country in 1999 and with the opening of the EU accession negotiations in October 2005, civil society involvement in EU-Turkey relations has significantly intensified.

The European Commission's support to civil society in Turkey aims to help Turkey as a candidate country in its preparations for EU membership and contribute to Turkey's full compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria. This support involves not only considerable financial assistance for capacity building of Turkish NGOs, but the European Commission also closely monitors the legal and socio-political environment in which the Turkish NGOs function. The Commission seeks to promote an enabling environment for civil society to become an institutional actor in policy making in Turkey.

## Civil society development

In 1996, the first comprehensive EC support programme for civil society development in Turkey was launched. The programme, which continued until 1999, provided financial support to ad-hoc applications from individual NGOs from an overall budget of €8 million. This was complemented by continued support to individual NGO projects on topics ranging from empowerment of women and youth to consumer protection and cultural integration during the period 1999 and 2002.

Between 2002 and 2005 a second programme on civil society development, with a budget of €3.4 million, led to the establishment of an NGO support team. The programme promoted citizens' initiatives, and contributed to improving the capacity of grassroots NGOs with 21 local initiatives supported all over Turkey as well as training programmes organised in 13 provinces. Further €1.82 million in support were provided to transform the NGO support team into the Civil Society Development Centre, a truly local and permanent structure.

## Civil Society Development Centre has been supporting Turkish NGOs for more than two years

**Project:** Civil Society Development Centre

**Aim:** To enhance the role of civil society in Turkey, through promotion of citizens' initiatives, and strengthening the professional and administrative, dialogue building and networking capacity of Turkish NGOs.

**Start date:** June 2005

**Duration:** 24 months

**Location:** Ankara

**Total budget:** €1.82 million

*"We wanted to have a more 'civil' attitude towards life. We advocated that civil society was in need of a new language as well as a new perspective. What the EU called a 'dialogue', we called a 'chat' and we reminded that other than the issues EU would present us, we have values that we might add to the EU." (Arzu Baykara, Civil Society Development Centre)*

For more information please visit [www.stgm.org.tr](http://www.stgm.org.tr)

## Partnerships between civil society and government are possible!

**Project:** SKIP (Improving cooperation between the NGOs and the public sector and strengthening the NGOs' democratic participation level)

**Aim:** To facilitate and improve cooperation between civil society and the public sector

**Start date:** October 2005

**Duration:** 14 months

**Location:** Ankara

**Total budget:** €2 million

*"SKIP project, proved that Turkey – EU relations is an important instrument as regards carrying out socially useful activities and achieving concrete results. Now, it is in the hands of Turkish citizens to sustain this momentum we reached and establish more open and transparent relations between the two sectors." (Çağrı Çakır, EU General Secretariat, Political Affairs Department)*

For more information please visit [www.skip.org.tr](http://www.skip.org.tr)

Turkey also became eligible for a variety of thematic, community, regional and Turkey-specific pre-accession programmes. A new programme for Strengthening Civil Society in the pre-accession process, with a total budget of €10.5 million was launched in 2006. It supports around 150 civic initiatives on a variety of themes, such as: promotion and protection of women rights, social inclusion of people with disabilities, protection of consumers, strengthening the protection of children's rights, the environment, combating violence against women, and culture.

Complementary to this, a new focus of EU support for civil society has emerged in recent years, which seeks to encourage a more constructive cooperation between civil society and the public sector. Accordingly, a programme aimed at improving cooperation between NGOs and the public sector and strengthening the NGOs' democratic participation level was developed and funded by the EC.

## Civil Society Dialogue

Enlargement leaves nobody indifferent and one of the lessons that can be drawn from previous enlargements is that citizens need to be better informed and prepared. It is necessary to bring citizens from the candidate and EU countries closer to each other and help them learn about each others cultures, political and economic systems. In this way, the opportunities and the challenges of enlargement can be better understood.

Following the *European Commission's Communication on Civil Society Dialogue (CSD)* of June 2005, the Commission and the Turkish government initiated a variety of activities aimed at establishing new networks and strengthening existing collaboration between NGOs, universities, and other civil society actors based in Turkey and the EU. In total, four EC-funded Civil Society Dialogue programmes have been implemented since, providing assistance of around €4.33 million to approximately 70 dialogue projects.

## CSD grants for trade unions, professional organisations, universities, municipalities and youth initiatives

To further support the Civil Society Dialogue, the Turkish government and the EU devoted a further €29.5 million of 2006 pre-accession assistance to this initiative, including a comprehensive *Civil Society Dialogue Grant Scheme Programme*, worth €21.5 million. The programme was launched in April 2007 and will support around 100 civic EU-Turkey cooperation projects among youth organisations, universities, municipalities, and professional organisations. Additional EC support of €8 million has been reserved to enhance the level of cooperation of Turkish trade unions and chambers of commerce with their European counterparts.

## Culture: an integral part of the CSD

Culture is a key component of the Civil Society Dialogue (CSD) and the latest grant schemes for youth initiatives, universities, and municipalities incorporate culture. For instance, in the grant scheme for towns and municipalities (€5 million), tourism and culture is one of the key headings (such as capacity building for developing projects on tourism and culture as well as alternative tourism). In the universities grant scheme (€9.3 million) projects that enhance multiculturalism will be supported and finally, in the Youth Initiatives for Dialogue grant scheme (€2 million), projects that encourage intercultural learning and understanding will be funded.

In addition, the EC Delegation launched in 2006 the CSD Culture in Action Programme (€1.45 million) which has two main components: information and/or culture. The objective is to foster a debate about the EU by enriching it with the European cultural dimension through cultural activities. The programme also aims to increase public awareness and stimulate an informed and objective debate at local, regional and national level about the EU, Civil Society Dialogue, the European integration process and cultures of Europe.

Apart from the CSD grant schemes, in 2006, another programme called, "The Promotion of Cultural Rights in Turkey" was launched with a budget of €2.5 million. The programme aims to support the Turkish Government in implementing legislative reforms in the field of cultural rights. The programme has two components: cultural initiatives and broadcasting in languages and dialects traditionally



A training held by the Civil Society Development Centre at Muğla.

used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives. Projects that foster mutual understanding, knowledge and wider appreciation of the various cultures in Turkey are supported.

## Support for the improvement of human rights and fundamental freedoms

A primary guiding principle of EC support to civil society in Turkey has been to contribute to the democratic reform process in Turkey. Beginning in the early 1990s, the EC has been providing support to civil society activities in Turkey in the

field of democratisation and human rights. Efforts have led to concrete results and been well received, allowing civil society to be more actively involved in the reform process as initiators, watch-dogs or implementers.

Following a Resolution adapted by the European Parliament in 1992 the **European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)**, a global support programme for civil society action, was launched. By the end of 2006 close to €14.5 million had been allocated under the EIDHR for over 100 projects in Turkey. Efforts have centred on issues including prevention of torture and combating impunity, rehabilitation of victims of torture, freedom of expression and independent media, improved access to justice, promotion of good governance, the fight against corruption, combating discrimination against cultural diversity and preserving and fostering respect for cultural diversity.

In 2006, the programme, "Consolidating and Promoting Human Rights and Democracy" was launched to support civic initiatives addressing deficiencies in the protection of human rights and the process of democratisation in Turkey. The programme has a budget of €1.5 million.

## Gender equality, social protection, social inclusion and health

Social partners and NGOs play a key role in the elaboration and implementation of EU legislation in the areas of gender equality, non-discrimination, labour law, health and safety at work. They are also active in designing, implementing and monitoring employment, social inclusion and social protection strategies and policies. The Commission has as a result always paid great attention to developing contacts with social partners and civil society organisations involved in social fields in Turkey.

### Working to remove barriers against freedom of expression...

**Project:** Centre for Freedom of Expression

**Aim:** To promote the right to freedom of expression in Turkey. The project specifically aims at applying pressure for legislative change against violations of freedom of expression and to increase public awareness on the right to freedom of expression.

**Start date:** November 2005

**Duration:** 12 months

**Location:** Istanbul

**Total budget:** €73.400

*"The project which was carried out with the support of EC is still effective. For example, 'Gathering in Istanbul for Freedom of Expression' which started in 1997 has now become a bi-annual international meeting and as far as we know it is the only regular meeting on this issue in the world."* (Şanar Yurdatapan, Centre for Freedom of Expression)

For more information please visit  
[www.antenna-tr.org](http://www.antenna-tr.org)

## EU support to women's organisations in Turkey\*

Gender equality as a human right is an essential component in Turkey's preparations for EU accession. Progress has been made incorporating gender equality into legislation in recent decades, adding considerably to the efforts of women's organisations in Turkey. This is the result of increasing political activism and enthusiasm of the women's movement since the late 1980s, when domestic violence began to be denounced publicly throughout the country.



The 1990s witnessed the flourishing of women's organisations. In 2001, 125 organisations participated in a nationwide campaign leading to a new egalitarian approach to the understanding of 'family' in legislative documents of the Civil Code. A three-year campaign to integrate a gender equality approach to the Penal Code and ensure legislative protection of women's sexual, bodily and reproductive rights was launched in 2002. In parallel, a national "Working Group on the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC) from a Gender Perspective", which later evolved into a national 'TPC Platform' was established. The new TPC was a major step towards gender equality and protection of women's human rights in Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

### "The EU and Turkish women's organisations working together"

Women's organisations increasingly demand to be engaged in the gender equality agenda of the EU. For this purpose a coalition called 'European Women's Lobby (EWL)<sup>2</sup> National Coordination for Turkey' was established with 47 participating women's organisations. The National Coordination, which became a full member to the EWL in October 2004, is managed by an elected Coordination Unit set up by the Association for Supporting and Training Women Candidates (KADER) Ankara Branch, Union of Turkish Women, Women Entrepreneurs Association (KAGIDER), KAMER Foundation and Foundation for Women's Solidarity. This has helped women's organisations improve relations and

knowledge sharing with counterparts in the EU.

The Flying Broom, an Ankara based organisation working towards fostering interaction and communication among women's organisations, has organised workshops on EU and gender equality for female university students together with French and Bulgarian partner NGOs. This has been supported by the EC's "Small Projects Programme: Strengthening Civil Society Dialogue". KAGIDER's work has been supported by the EC's "Women's Way to Europe" project. The Association worked with four other business-women organisations from Bulgaria, Romania, Spain and Belgium to conduct lobbying and exchange activities.

Under almost all civil society programmes, including EIDHR, a number of women's organisations such as AMARGI (Istanbul), Women's Solidarity Foundation (Ankara), Life, Women, Environment, Culture and Entrepreneurship Cooperative (YAKA-KOOP) (Van), KA-MER Foundation (Diyarbakır), Flying Broom (Ankara) and Van Women's Association (Van) were supported by the European Commission (EC) in areas from gender-based violence to increasing women's participation in economic life.

The "NGO Grant Facility 2005" programme includes two sub-programmes (3.9M€) designed to support gender equality focused NGO activities. The first, "Combating Violence against Women" supports the establishment of new local women's organisations/networks/partnerships, services for victims of violence and awareness raising. A roundtable at the Delegation on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2006, with representatives of women's organisations working to combat violence against women defined programme priorities.

The priority areas of the second sub-programme, "Promotion and Protection of Women's Rights" include women's access to employment, monitoring and promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming at local and national policy levels and under-representation of women in political decision-making. The evaluation of applications is ongoing.

### Capacity building

Lack of organisational capacity and resources for networking and lobbying are still a problem for women's organisations in Turkey. Under a 2004 Pre-Accession programme, "Strengthening freedom of Association for further Development of Civil Society", women's organisations have received support for building capacity for advocacy, fundraising, communication and networking. Tailor-made training and other actions responsive to the needs of specific NGO groups will continue under a new programme "Supporting Civil Society Development and Dia-

logue in Turkey." The Civil Society Development Centre<sup>3</sup> co-ordinates these activities.

The EC contributes to promotion of gender equality in Turkey not only through support to women's NGOs but also through collaboration with public institutions dealing with gender issues. The "Promoting Gender Equality (5.8M€)" programme helps increase the capacity of the Directorate General for Women's Status to facilitate the preparation of a national action plan and communication strategy for gender equality. Other activities include formulating and testing in-service training and service delivery models for victims; establishing a database for monitoring incidents of violence against women; and identifying the investment needs of municipalities to establish women's shelters. Under the 2006 Pre-Accession aid programme eight fully equipped shelters for victims of domestic violence are being built.

### 2007 and after

Within the framework of the 2007 pre-accession support to Turkey, €5 million have been earmarked to support the Turkish government to increase and facilitate women's access to municipal, social and judicial services through improving the capacity of women's NGOs and awareness building. The project "Empowerment of Women and Women NGOs in the Least Developed Regions of Turkey" will incorporate a gender sensitive approach into service provision policies of governmental organisations, local administrations and NGOs and improve the organisational and technical capacities of women's NGOs. Local women's organisations will be supported with small grants aimed at building public awareness and the capacity to fight against gender based discrimination and violations of women's human rights.

Although significant progress has been achieved at legislative level, full respect for women's rights in Turkey remains a problem. Gender based violence, under-representation of women in policy-making mechanisms, low participation of women in the labour force, high illiteracy rates and lack of education are still major causes of discriminatory practices. The European Commission will continue offering financial support and cooperation to tackle these issues and welcomes new ideas from women's organisations on how to further improve our assistance.

\*Nalan Özdemir

Sector Manager/ EC Delegation to Turkey

1 For a detailed account of two campaigns see "Turkish Civil and Penal Code Reforms from a Gender perspective: The Success of Two National Campaigns" published by Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways.

2 It is a Europe-wide NGO network bringing together 4000 women's organisations.

3 For more information see [www.stgm.org.tr](http://www.stgm.org.tr)



# Cultural understanding to overcome stereotypes

**T**hough strictly speaking each Member State of the EU has its own cultural policy, more and more initiatives are taken at European level. Culture has not simply been a tool to bring people together, promote creativity and innovation, it also boosts mobility and economy through an ever-enlarging sector.

Given the successive enlargements of the European Union and the increased mobility of its citizens, the Member States' role in allowing culture to flourish has become even more essential. In this spirit, culture has been put at the heart of the EU policies for 2008, which has been declared the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

For Turkey, culture has always been an important part of its relations with the rest

of the world, and in Europe in particular. In addition to the Horizons and Mosaics programmes launched by the EC Delegation in the late 1990s, Turkey has been part of the main community programme, Culture 2000, since 2005. Turkey has also been part of the new Culture Programme between 2007-2013 and two Turkish publication companies have already been awarded funds for their projects. For the last ten years, Turkey-EU cultural cooperation has successfully supported projects ranging from saving lost professions of the country, to searching for musically-talented children in Anatolia in order to form a choir.

An important step was taken in July this year when the *Civil Society Dialogue - Cultural Bridges* initiative was launched by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the EC Delegation to Turkey. This new initiative will boost EU-Turkey cultural cooperation with an injection of €6 million between 2008 and 2010 for multinational activities of the EU cultural institutes and their Turkish partners. It will cover all aspects of contemporary arts - music, performing arts, plastic and visual arts, and literature.

At the launch of this initiative, Ambassador Marc Pierini, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to

Turkey stated: *"Culture is a major factor in erasing adverse perceptions, because it is above or outside politics and touches on our societies' social and human fabric creating positive emotions"*.

## The "European Capital of Culture"

event gives European cities the opportunity to present a cultural programme lasting for about a year, highlighting the richness, diversity and shared characteristics of Europe's cultures. Over the past twenty years, the event has been very successful in terms of media response and the associated cultural and socioeconomic development of the cities concerned.

Together with Pecs and Essen, Istanbul will be one of the three "European Capitals of Culture" for 2010.

[www.istanbul2010.org](http://www.istanbul2010.org)

**Culture 2007:** It provides a budget of €400 million to develop transnational cultural cooperation between operators from the countries of the European Union or third countries participating in the programme. The aim of the 'Culture' programme is to support cultural cooperation actions, European organisations active in the field of culture and the collection and dissemination of information. This new instrument follows on from the Culture 2000 framework programme, which covered the period 2000-2006. It is more complete, more open and more user-friendly. Activities supported by this programme include festivals, master classes, exhibitions, new productions, tours, translations and conferences intended for artists, cultural operators, as well as for a broader audience, in particular young people and those who are socially or economically disadvantaged. Most of the supported projects include a multimedia dimension, in particular via the creation of internet sites and discussion forums.

## For further information:

**Culture on European Commission website:**  
[http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/index_en.html)

**The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Agency Executive Agency (EACEA):**  
<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/index.htm>



## Intergovernmental conference on the Reform Treaty

A new Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) started its proceedings on 23<sup>rd</sup> July under the Portuguese Presidency, with a view to finalising the text of the EU reform treaty by October 2007. The IGC was given a clear mandate at the European Council meeting on 21-22 June, when heads of states and governments of the 27 member countries agreed on the main parameters for a final deal. Over the coming months, the Intergovernmental Conference will work to put the political agreement into a legal form.

It is hoped that agreement on a text can be made by the informal European Council in October 2007 so that the ratification process in all 27 countries can be completed before the European Parliament election in June 2009.

## Streets for people

The sixth edition of the European Mobility Week took place in the EU on 16-22 September under the theme "Streets for people".

Around 1,300 cities participated in urban mobility initiatives during the week. European Mobility Week encourages people to make greater use of environmentally friendly modes of transport such as walking, cycling, public transport and car-sharing. It also promotes long-lasting shifts towards sustainable mobility as participating towns and cities introduce permanent measures, such as new cycle lanes or public transport services.

**European Mobility Week website:**  
[www.mobilityweek-europe.org](http://www.mobilityweek-europe.org)

## Forest fires: 2007 is worst July on record

July was the worst ever month in Europe for forest fires, according to provisional figures released by the European Forest Fire Information System, managed by the European Commission, which produces early warnings of fire risk and damage assessment.

Following warnings of high fire risk at the end of June in countries such as Greece and Cyprus, the second half of July saw a sharp

increase in fires and burnt areas in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece and Italy. Other European countries have also experienced major fires, including Turkey and Albania.

EFFIS sends these forecasts to the Civil Protection and Forest Services of the Member States every day between 1st February and 31st October. The situation in south-west Europe, which had relatively moderate conditions in July, changed dra-

matically in August, particularly in the south of the Iberian Peninsula and the Canary Islands.

EFFIS is a meteorological and satellite based mapping system developed by the European Commission's in-house scientific arm, the Joint Research Centre (JRC). Its purpose is to provide Member States with daily fire risk warnings and subsequent damage assessments.

**EFFIS:** <http://effis.jrc.it/Home>

## Cooperation in the field of youth policy

As millions of young Europeans returned to school in September, the Commission adopted a communication to promote young people's participation in education, employment and society as a whole, looking at how Europe can better coordinate policies related to youth.

There is growing concern that many young people continue to face difficult challenges, hindering their development and ability to succeed. Education systems are not equipping them with the skills needed for a smooth transition into employment. Nearly one in six young people in the EU still leaves school early and the vast majority of the 4.6 million young unemployed do not find a new job within 6 months, despite Member States' reiterated commitment to this target.

**European Commission website:**  
[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/whitepaper/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/whitepaper/index_en.html)



## Chinese toys containing lead withdrawn from EU market

The European Commission confirmed in early August receipt of a notification from the British authority concerning toys produced in China that used a paint pigment containing lead.

The notification lists 83 toys that contain lead. They

were made by a contract manufacturer in China and sold in 11 EU countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom, as well as in Croatia and Switzerland.

The notification was sent

within RAPEX, the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food consumer products that provides a quick exchange of information between Member States and the Commission. It is designed to prevent marketing or use of products that pose a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers.

# EUIC Istanbul at full throttle!

Despite the heat, the European Union Information Centre Istanbul has not ceased its wide range of activities, varying from modern arts to puppet theatre for kids.

## “GET CLOSER” at the Istanbul European Union Information Centre

“Do You Feel The Same?”, “Walk With Me”, “Connection” and “Dance With Me” are titles of four of the sixteen works of art exhibited at the EUIC Istanbul premises on 10–25 July under the title “Get Closer”.

Aslı Deniz Helvacıoğlu’s mixed media art work was the perfect illustration of the topic of intercultural dialogue, which the EUIC opened to the Istanbul public in July.

An accomplished artist, Helvacıoğlu is also a Doctor in EU Law, thus bringing home the idea of a need for closer EU-Turkey relations. For those who missed her exhibition, there will be a second edition hosted this autumn in the EUIC Ankara.

## Children laughing along with Lokum

On 26th June the EUIC Istanbul started its summer activities with the Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation (TEGV) and hosted children aged 7-11 years from



TEGV education units. The EUIC meeting room was at its most lively with children laughing along with Lokum as they learned about Europe.

Each day began with a workshop on Europe, led by Lokum, an EU mascot for children in Turkey. Then the room was prepared for a puppet show where the kids

would join in with the actors and shout out answers to questions on Europe. They laughed hard when Lokum fell from a high mountain in Sweden, or failed to spot the Hungarian girl on the stage. They then cheered when the Maltese Knight entered the stage. Although a lot of fun, the children also get to learn about basic EU values such as solidarity, freedom and equality.

## Summer in the city

*The European Union Information Centre Ankara continues to hold events around topics that touch people’s daily lives – from environment to culture.*

Who says Ankara is totally deserted in summer? Certainly not the newly-opened European Union Information Centre, which has hosted more than three hundred people over the summer through a series of events organised around specific themes and topics.

### It was so hot!

Hot weather, concern for climate change and water shortages have caused Ankara residents to become more aware of environmental concerns. As a result, the conferences around the theme of environment received a lot of interest.

Engin Ural, the secretary-general of the Environment Foundation of Turkey, told an audience of NGOs and the press that Greece may provide a useful model in aligning European Union legislation on the environment. Under a project financed by the European Union, Greek and Turkish environmental experts have



*“It is good... but too expensive” in Italian has led to the word “macaroni.”*



met in four Turkish cities to exchange information that will be published as a book.

More sobering were the words of Gürdoğar Sarıgül, Sector Manager for Environment and Sustainable Development at the European Commission Delegation. Sarıgül said that by 2023 Turkey needs to invest around €70 billion in the environment to catch up with the high environmental standards of the EU.

### From China to Europe

The theme in August was devoted to Culture. Professor Hakan Yılmaz explored the link between “Culture and Identity,” while Professor Ahmet Gürata looked at the challenges and opportunities faced by both European and Turkish cinema.

As some say that culture is experienced via the stomach, Ankara-based gourmet Kaan Küce looked at the meandering journey of pasta, from China to Europe, via...Turkey!

# Municipal police in Gaziantep learn more about Europe

A training session on 'Municipal Policemen in the EU Process' was organised for 84 officers by the Gaziantep EU Information Relay office on 1-2 June for the staff of the city's Metropolitan Municipality Police Directorate.

Professor Can Baydarol, a Team Europe speaker, informed the police about Turkey's EU accession process during a seminar on EU-Turkey relations. There then followed a training session on 'Service Quality and Effective Communication', led by Bahri Aydın, a communications expert, to give the police advice on how to improve service quality as part of the EU harmonisation process. Ömer Yalın, Municipal Police Director of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality stressed that such events were very important to help the police improve quality of service in their jurisdiction.

Speaking about the programme, Gaziantep EU Information Relay Coordinator Burcu Nakiboğlu said "Turkey's harmonisation efforts are also of concern to the municipal police. They need to refresh their knowledge on a variety of issues from food security standards in the European Union to regulations addressing health organisations."



## What happens if Don Quixote meets Nasreddin Hodja

*One of the world's oldest figures continues to challenge us with humour, power and simplicity.*

World-famous French puppeteer, Karine Cheres, took part in the 48<sup>th</sup> Akşehir International Nasreddin Hodja Festival on the 5-19 July, an event organised by the Mersin EU Information Relay. The festival brought together Turkish and European puppet art in an effort to improve cultural ties between artists from different countries.

Activities included courses on puppet making and on handling the puppets as a way to introduce this ancient art to younger people. A show at the end of the course prepared by the students was watched by more than 800 people. The show mixed both Turkish and European puppet characters which even saw Nasreddin Hodja on stage together with Don Quixote!!

Karina Cheres will continue to build upon the success of the event next year by organising similar joint work with students in the community.

## Children clear rubbish from around Van Lake and learn about the environment

To increase environmental awareness in and around the city of Van, the EU Information Relay there gathered more than 200 students from 8 local primary schools to clear rubbish from the area around Van Lake. The event, 'Van Lake Environment Clean-Up' was organised to coincide with World Environment Day on 5<sup>th</sup> June and aimed at creating a greater understanding of our impact on the environment and of EU efforts to raise environmental standards.

The coordinator of Relay, Kerem Oruc, introduced EU environmental policy to the students, teachers and parents before starting work to clear refuse

from the coast of the lake. As one of the pupils at the lake said, "we don't want to see our Lake get polluted and have learnt today how important it is to protect our environment. We're helping to keep our lake beautiful and clean so that others can enjoy this natural beauty."



EU TURKEY

# Review



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### Print

Semih Ofset  
Matbaacılık Yayıncılık  
Ambalaj San. Tic. ve Ltd. Şti.  
Büyükdere Sanayi 1. Cad. No: 74  
İskitler - Ankara TURKEY  
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