



The EU and Turkey after the elections: The start of a new chapter?

by Luigi Scazzieri, 29 March 2023

Turkey's presidential and parliamentary elections, scheduled for May 14th, will determine whether President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan remains in power and will profoundly influence the relationship between the EU and Turkey, which has deteriorated sharply over the past decade.

In this CER [policy brief](#), Luigi Scazzieri traces the roots of discord between the EU and Turkey and assesses the prospects for the relationship after the elections, offering recommendations for how the EU should navigate its complex relation with Turkey – one of the Union's largest and most strategically important neighbours, a NATO member and a candidate for EU membership.

If Erdoğan remains in power, relations could become even more turbulent. Europe and Turkey would still have to work together on common challenges, but any co-operation would be highly transactional. Tensions would continue unless Erdoğan improved democratic freedoms in Turkey and avoided confrontation with EU members-states. The EU would face tough choices if there was evidence of widespread electoral manipulation, or if Erdoğan lost the election but did not allow an orderly transition of power.

An opposition victory would lead to substantial changes in Turkey's domestic and foreign policies, and in its relations with the EU. The opposition wants to change the constitution to a parliamentary system, restore judicial independence and improve relations with the US and the EU – policies that would greatly improve relations. Still, an opposition government would face challenges in fully implementing this agenda, and disagreements with the EU on issues like relations with Cyprus and Russia would probably persist.

Scazzieri argues that an opposition victory in the elections would offer a big opportunity to relaunch the EU-Turkey relationship: the EU should intensify dialogue across all policy areas and seek to stabilise the new government by helping it navigate economic difficulties. In the medium term, the EU's ambition should be to negotiate an upgrade to the EU-Turkey customs union.

Luigi Scazzieri, author of the policy brief said: *"Whatever the outcome of the elections is, Turkey and Europe will remain neighbours and have shared challenges to address. But the results of the election will define the balance between co-operation and confrontation for years to come."*

Note for editors:

For further information on the new research and to request an interview with Luigi Scazzieri [@LScazzieri](https://twitter.com/LScazzieri) please contact Octavia Hughes in the CER press office on pressoffice@cer.eu or +44 (0) 20 7233 1199.

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