



Europe should keep Turkey close

by Luigi Scazzieri

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EU-Turkey relations have deteriorated sharply in recent years. To prevent the relationship from souring further, the bloc should avoid ending accession negotiations and instead re-engage Turkey with fresh talks on an updated customs union and consider offering a new longer-term economic partnership which includes participation in Europe's single market. That's the key recommendation in a new research paper '[Europe should keep Turkey close](#)' by the Centre for European Reform which examines how the EU can improve its relationship with Turkey.

It's in the EU's interest to have good working relations with Turkey, for economic reasons and to help tackle challenges such as migration and terrorism. But Turkey's accession process and plans to reform the EU-Turkey customs union have stalled, and bilateral relationships have become strained, especially with Germany. The erosion of human rights and the rule of law in Turkey are the main culprits, but the lack of a viable agenda to structure relations has also contributed. The re-election of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan suggests Turkey's politics and foreign policy are unlikely to change in the near future. Even maintaining transactional EU-Turkey co-operation could become more difficult if trust erodes further.

To re-engage Turkey, the EU should resume negotiations for an updated customs union to help the country to develop its economy. It should also step-up its efforts to discuss regional foreign policy issues, especially the stabilisation of Syria and Iraq, while being mindful of Ankara's strained relationship with the US and NATO. In the medium-term, the EU should consider a new partnership with Turkey, for as long as membership remains unlikely, which offers participation in the single market for goods, services and capital to regain its power of attraction.

"Turkey's not joining the EU anytime soon - both sides know that and bilateral relations are in a poor state. But the EU should keep Turkey close. A good working relationship is vital for economic and foreign policy reasons, especially to tackle migration and terrorism. The EU should re-engage Turkey with fresh talks on upgrading their customs union. And, to overcome the stalled accession process, it should also look at forging a new ambitious economic partnership that gives Turkey access to Europe's single market" said Luigi Scazzieri, CER research fellow and author of the policy brief.

Note to editors:

For further information on the policy brief and to request an interview with Luigi Scazzieri, please contact Nick Winning in the CER press office on pressoffice@cer.eu or + 44 (0) 20 7233 1199. The Centre for European Reform is a think-tank devoted to making the EU work better and strengthening its role in the world. The CER is pro-European but not uncritical. Follow us on: [@CER_EU](#) and the author on [@LScazzieri](#).