

From Transactional Cooperation to Strategic Integration

What options for a more strategic EU–Türkiye framework?

12 October 2026

Draft Programme

Amid geopolitical fragmentation, shifting supply chains, and mounting security pressures, EU–Türkiye relations are increasingly central to Europe’s economic security and strategic interests. Türkiye plays a key role in trade, industrial supply chains, energy transit, and regional security.

Despite this interdependence, relations remain at risk of remaining locked in a cycle of short-term, transactional cooperation without strategic convergence. Key mechanisms—notably the Customs Union and accession framework—are outdated or politically stalled, widening the gap between functional interdependence and governance capacity and affecting EU competitiveness, resilience, and external policy coherence. Democratic backsliding and erosion of the rule of law in Türkiye also continue to undermine political trust and impede deeper institutional cooperation.

This Round Table will consider how EU–Türkiye relations can move beyond transactionalism towards a more structured, forward-looking framework and identify practical pathways forward.

08h30 Registration and Welcome Coffee

09h00 Welcome

09h05 Opening Remarks

Almut Möller, Director for European and Global Affairs & Head of the Europe in the World Programme, EPC

Jan-Gert Koopman, Director-General, Neighbourhood & Enlargement Negotiations
DG ENEST

HE Yaprak Balkan, Head of the Turkish Delegation to the EU

Sir Peter Westmacott, Former UK Ambassador to Türkiye

09h45 Session 1: Trade, industrial policy, and Customs Union reform or alternatives

Will assess whether EU–Türkiye trade relations are approaching a structural turning point in a rapidly changing industrial and geopolitical environment. With outdated Customs Union rules increasingly constraining rather than enabling integration (and efforts to modernise having so far failed for mainly political reasons), and the current exclusion of key areas such as services, digital trade, including data governance and emerging AI-driven digital industries, and public procurement, is it time to consider alternatives and if so, what could this look like? It will also address ongoing discussions between the EU and Türkiye linked to the EU’s evolving industrial policy agenda, including the emerging “Made

in Europe” approach to public procurement, including preferences embedded in initiatives such as the Net Zero Industry Act. These developments raise questions about how future procurement rules and industrial incentives may affect Türkiye’s integration into EU value chains, and whether they could act as a catalyst for effective Customs Union modernisation (or a new type of agreement) or reinforce existing structural limits.

Kick-Off inputs

Dilek Aydin, Head of EU Representation, TUSIAD

Sofia Bournou, International Relations, Business Europe

Antoine Colombani, Head of Unit for Türkiye, Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST)

Mehmet Tan, Director, Türkiye Exporters Assembly (TIM)

Giacomo Ferri, Policy Officer – Trade, Industrial and Energy Policy, Euratex

Moderator: Amanda Paul, Senior Policy Analyst and Head of Türkiye Programme, European Policy Centre (EPC)

Guiding questions:

- What are the main barriers preventing meaningful modernisation of the EU–Türkiye Customs Union today? How can they be overcome?
- How can both sides ensure that new EU industrial policies strengthen rather than fragment Türkiye’s integration into EU value chains, and what would be a concrete pathway forward?
- What would a realistic “next-generation” EU–Türkiye trade framework look like if full Customs Union modernisation remains politically blocked?

11h00 Session 2: Energy, critical raw materials, and industrial decarbonisation

This panel will explore Türkiye’s role as a strategic role in EU energy security, connectivity policy, and the green transition, particularly in the context of diversification efforts and infrastructure integration. It will also examine its significance in critical raw material supply chains and how this interacts with the EU’s emerging industrial decarbonisation framework, including the Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator Act and CBAM. The discussion will focus on whether the convergence of energy, connectivity, industrial policy, and the green transition can support deeper integration with Türkiye—or whether competing policy logics are generating new forms of strategic fragmentation.

Kick-off Inputs

Antoine Colombani, Head of Unit for Türkiye, DG ENEST

Caner Can, Adviser, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Türkiye

Kadri Tastan, Political Analyst and Economist, GMF

Sule Kilic, Head of Energy Eurasia, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Alasdair Warren, Chief Executive Officer, WE SODA

Moderator: John Clarke, Ex-Director International Affairs at the European Commission and Head of the EU Delegation to the WTO, Senior Counsel at FIPRA

Guiding questions:

- What kinds of agreements could make Türkiye a more integrated partner in EU energy security and the green transition?
- How can the EU and Türkiye align CBAM and industrial decarbonisation rules with Türkiye's role in critical supply chains?
- Which policy compromises could ensure energy, connectivity, and industrial agendas strengthen rather than fragment EU–Türkiye cooperation?

12h00 Coffee Break

12h15 Session 3: Security, Defence, and geopolitical cooperation

This session assesses Türkiye's role in European and Euro-Atlantic security. Trust, predictability, and policy coherence continue to constrain deeper defence cooperation, particularly on industrial cooperation and procurement. As the EU expands joint procurement and capability frameworks, including SAFE, Türkiye remains largely excluded and has therefore pursued bilateral and NATO-centred cooperation. The panel will consider whether Europe's rearmament could integrate Türkiye into European defence industrial ecosystems and whether existing frameworks can turn ad hoc alignment into strategic convergence.

Guiding Questions

- What practical steps could rebuild trust and predictability to enable deeper EU–Türkiye defence industrial cooperation?
- How can Türkiye be meaningfully included in emerging EU defence initiatives (like SAFE and joint procurement mechanisms) without undermining EU integration goals?
- Could Europe's rearmament create a structured pathway for Türkiye's integration into EU defence industrial ecosystems, rather than relying on ad hoc bilateral cooperation?

Kick-Off Inputs

Dr. Demir Murat Seyrek, Academic Fellow, European Policy Centre (EPC) and Adjunct Professor, Brussels School of Governance (VUB)

Luigi Scazzieri, Senior Policy Analyst, EUISS

Gabriel Munuera Vinals, Head of Division, EEAS

Moderator: *Ayşe Yurekli, EU Representative, KAGIDER and Enlargement Candidate Member, EESC*

13h30 Closing Comments

Wrap-up and lunch