

Sweden and Turkey - partnering for the future

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The global financial crisis, the effects of which are still very present in parts of Europe, has clearly demonstrated the need for global cooperation and solutions. The crisis has understandably turned the energy of the EU's leaders inwards. However, the true recipe for growth and stability for Europe lies in strengthening the motivation for enlargement.

Sweden is one of the leading advocates for Turkey's EU membership, which has the potential to revitalize our economies and boost prosperity in Turkey and EU members alike. Sweden, one of the most successful EU economies, is increasingly pointed out as a model for a dynamic, inclusive society. A key factor of success is women's participation in the labor market. Women's employment in Sweden has over the years increased to 70 percent, compared to 74 percent for men. This has greatly contributed to Sweden's strong economic and financial development. The increasing role and participation of women in Turkey's economic and democratic development in recent years also shows that our countries share the same perception and vision.

From a Swedish perspective, the dynamism and potential of the Turkish economy is obvious. Turkish GDP growth reached 9 % in 2010 and 8 % in 2011, making it one of the fastest growing markets in both the OECD and the G-20. Turkey, with a well-educated, young population and a more liberal business climate than ever before, is not only a unique production platform and large emerging market.

It is also the ideal stepping stone for many Swedish and European companies reaching out to the broader region. European companies can reach a market of 1.5 billion people with a three-hour flight from Turkey.

The interdependence between Turkey and the EU countries is increasing. More than 75 percent of foreign direct investments in Turkey come from the EU, which also supplies more than half of the foreign companies present in Turkey. Vital technology transfer is ongoing. Turkey is a neighboring country to 70 percent of the world's energy resources, which makes it a strategically important transit country for European energy needs. In the region, the step from energy to the vital issue of peace and security is not far. Also, Turkey's "soft power" as a forerunner of democratization, free trade and a liberalized economy in the Arab Spring, makes its role indispensable.

Both our countries are deeply committed to international development cooperation and humanitarian aid, not least in Africa. By sharing best practices and through increased cooperation and coordination we can save more lives, alleviate more suffering and contribute more to reducing the scourge of poverty around the world. We both strongly believe in

economic development and inclusive growth, and there is much our countries and the EU can do to promote this.

This is why we need to proceed towards the final goal - full EU membership. As a complement to the established framework of full membership negotiations, the Positive Agenda would help gaining new momentum in the accession negotiations. Hopefully, when more favorable political conditions prevail, formal membership negotiations can be concluded. Meanwhile, Sweden and Turkey will work as partners to ensure continued momentum in Turkey-EU integration.