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**The Italian Center for Turkish Studies:  
The Meaning of a New Initiative of Scientific  
Cooperation**

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Speakers:

**Dr. Carlo Frappi, ICTS Director**

"ICTS: The Meaning of a New Initiative of Scientific Cooperation"

**Dr. Giovanni Ercolani, ICTS Vice-Director**

"From Defense to Security"

**Prof. Canan Balkir, "9 September" University, Izmir**

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**Dr. Dragos Mateescu, Izmir University of Economics**

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## ICTS: The Meaning of a New Initiative of Scientific Cooperation

*Carlo Frappi*

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Ladies and gentlemen,

thank you for coming tonight at the official presentation of the Italian Center for Turkish Studies.

First of all, let me thank the partners that helped us organizing such event: "Circolo Roma" – with particular reference to Dr. Maria Di Giulio – for hosting us; Embassy of Republic of Turkey in Italy for patrocining the conference and UNISU – Università Telematica delle Scienze Umane "Niccolò Cusano" – for the interest and support of our project. Let me also thank Istituto Alta Formazione-Lionardo, Start Sicurezza and Associazione Giornalismo Investigativo.

Italian Center for Turkish Studies represents a unique think tank network dealing in Italy with complex issues related to Turkish Foreign Policy. A unicity that can be presented both in quantitative and qualitative sense.

First of all in qualitative sense since, notwithstanding the growing international importance of Turkey, Italy still lacks an adequate level of knowledge and attention of the Turkish reality.

Universities have formed only few real specialists until today. Ideological and political biases are still present, fostering superficial analysis of ongoing events. This is somehow a paradox provided that if Turkey is a key player in international arena, it is even more important for Italian foreign policy. An importance, a growing importance, that is evident at political as well as economic level.

The coincidence of Erdogan's visit to Italy shows the extent to which "Italian eyes are on Turkey". Italian eyes are on Turkey both at a political level, since we share common views on the most important issues coming from international life, and at economic level, since Italy is Turkish 3rd commercial partner, showing how Italian economic world is somehow one step beyond the academic one in the understanding of Turkish realities.

ICTS unicity in Italian landscape has not however to be intended just in a quantitative sense, but – and this is crucial – even in a qualitative one. ICTS is a unique think-tank that can rely upon an extended network of Italian, Turkish, and international academicians, analysts, diplomats, and other personalities with a proven record of academic, political and economic activities and knowledge regarding Turkey.

This to say that ICTS is not just a framework, but a trasversal & dynamic structure already actively engaged in the organization of scientific exchange and cooperation with Turkish counter-party, whose activities are hence geared toward academicians, journalists, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers who want to understand Turkey's complex political and social aspects.

On this background, ICTS project wants hence to be understood in the Latin sense: *Projectum*, that's to say "being projected". ICTS wants in fact to project Turkey in Italy, letting Italians discover and understand the once "Queen of the East".

## From Defense to Security

*Giovanni Ercolani*

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If we were to look at the historical events that have followed the fall of Berlin Wall (Nov 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989) we would have expected, talking now in the 2007, a different article from the recently report published on the British weekly "The Economist". Another historical coincidence on this report is that it was published on Nov 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007, exactly 18 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. "In God's name" is the title given to this report, and it start saying "Religion will play a big role in this century's politics".

My question is this one, what happened to this mature man of exactly 18 years old which born exactly Nov 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989? If any historical events, much more the one represented by the end of the Soviet Communism (another human religious construction to replace more pretended divine religious), are accompanied by a creation of something new, i.e. the birth of a human creature with a "new" mind set" - we could conclude that this Post-Cold War Man lost himself and is suffering for the lost of God and his place in the Eden. Henry Kissinger, a realpolitik giant, admits his mistake in not having included "religion", and I would specify "God", in his famous book "Diplomacy (a masterpiece on statesmanship).

Unfortunately the "take off moment" of this reappearance (even with terrible results) on the global stage has been represented by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Terrorist attacks were perpetuated by "mature men" born before or even during the period of the Iranian Revolution (1979), then before the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Why this introduction? Because the importance of the "irrational" has been not taken in consideration for a lot of years as a "motivation" for human behaviours. But it is not only this one, the other reason is that, already before the collapse of the Berlin wall the very concept of "defence" was too much compressed in its military framework. This narrative of "trenches", was very behind the social changes the world was living, and behind the slowly infiltrations of the "globalised process" in our lives.

Threats, or, what is perceived as a threat, have changed their shapes. Since the implosion of the Soviet Union the number of intrastate conflicts have raised, and the main "motivations" or main "incompatibilities" at the base of these conflicts for the majority of the cases has been religion, identity, Glory...the need to scream to the world "I do exist". We cannot avoid to notice these enormous changes and the globalization is operating in a way that we all, in a way or another are connected and interdependent each other.

From this we come to the point that focusing our attention on the "defence" concept, as a box, is a waist of time, but we have to look at the new threats through out, I think, the lens of a critical approach. Barry Buzan,

professor at LSE, defined in the years just after the collapse of the Berlin Wall how the "security" concept is a combination of five aspects:

- Economical;
- Political;
- Military;
- Societal;
- Environmental;

And it is exactly using this prism as a tool in our hands that we should operate. But among the five aspects of the above tool we should pay particular attention to the "societal aspects". Why? Because "security is a social construction". Encapsulated between "globalization" and "identity", societies, nations, groups, and human beings react differently *vis a vis*

- Fear
- Uncertainty
- And Interpretation.

And it is exactly how this process to define what to protect, to define the enemy, and all the process connected to secure us that should be the topic of our analysis. Every society and the world is plenty of these examples. Societies look at their future with the eyes of the past, or more clearly, look at their past to see their future. Thus, this is clearly a remembering process and is a process in itself, is a "becoming". There is "dynamism" in it; there is "force" in it.

Look at the picture of Ataturk in Kayseri in 1928 (*picture 1*), he is writing on the black board using the new alphabet.



Picture 1: Ataturk, Kayseri, 1928

A different statesman probably would have signed his name using the new alphabet, but Mustafa Kemal "no", Ataturk, with a piece of with chalk wrote "SEYAHATIM"...my journey. Let's reflect on the message left by Ataturk to his people: the journey of a nation, of a people from an old alphabet to a new one, from an old mind set to a new one. This is a process, a dynamism, it is in this way that we should read this picture. Societies are not static but dynamic. Societies adapt to the historical periods, of course differently but they adapt themselves. Narratives, discourses, representations, the process of remembering, myths, religions, all of them play a major role in this political kitchen, and much more now that the "War on Terror" has demonstrated its failure to understand this process and its enemy.

ICTS approach to security studies is dynamic by nature, well conscious of how societies changes, and in our analytical job we do not accept political affiliation and we do not accept to be closed inside:

1. hermeneutical circle, provided by manipulated narratives, but we aim to interpret interpretation;
2. geographical limits imposed by the frame of geopolitical borders, but using a critical approach we will pay attention to "regional security complexes" and "nations/society constellations"...so much important as actor in the new wars (diasporas, immigrates, etc)

As Think Tank our policy is to analyse "security" and understand it, in a clinical and impartial fashion, and more, in a dynamic way, because the very processes we analyse are dynamics. In a world that is reproducing dangerous stereotypes, were the fracture between us and the other is going to be reinforced by the use of media and the manipulation of God we have to pay particular attention to this Turkish Region. In an area where an Enlarged EU overlaps with an Enlarged Black Sea region and an Enlarged Middle East, it is here that we have to concentrate our efforts to establish an open, sincere, cooperative dialogue. This is the purpose of this Center, communicate Turkey in Italy, being in Izmir I could say an "AGORA" where Italian and Turkish meet.

Cocluding I would like to quote Mustaka Kemal Ataturk, founder of the Turkish Republic:

*"Mankind is a single body and each nation a part of that body. We must never say 'What does it matter to me if some part of the world is ailing?'. If there is such an illness, we must concern ourselves with it as though we were having that illness".*

And I add, this is our task, we Italian and Turkish, because we are neighbours.

Biz komsuyuz. Thank you.

## Turkish-Italian Relations

*Canan Balkir*

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I would like to start by congratulating the members of the Equilibri and the "Italian Center for Turkish Studies" for initiating the excellent project named "Equilibri Turkey Project" and for organizing this conference.

Even before Italy has become a unified single state Turkish Italian relations were quite intensive. Relations between Italian city states and Turkish principalities in Anatolia can be traced back to 12th century. It is even alleged that the name of our country was introduced to Europe by Italian merchants as "Turchia".

It is striking to observe that Turkish-Italian relations were marked with commercial and cultural links than political conflicts. The commercial links went through bilateral trade agreements throughout the middle ages between Italian city states and Turkish administrators. Needless to say, Venetians and Genoese merchants played a very important part in this process, by settling in various eastern Mediterranean cities including Izmir, known by Italians as Smirne. Still in Anatolia if you ask about an ancient building, if it is older than Ottoman or Seljuk period, people will tell you that it is of Genoese origin. Following the renaissance and throughout the 19th century, numerous Italian artists came to Ottoman cities and contributed to the artistic richness of our country especially in field of architecture, painting and composing.

Alas today, it is striking to observe that to travel from Izmir to Genoa or Venice, one has to go first to Munich and change plane. This shows how things have changed during the centuries. However, Italy is a strong supporter in EU who believes that Turkish Membership would contribute to a strengthening of a "Mediterranean Grouping" in an EU that tends to tilt more towards a central-east European orientation. The geo-strategic importance of Turkey for the realization of the Union's fundamental political interest in creating a secure and prospering neighborhood has been cited many times by Italian politicians. They know that Turkey can play an anchor role in the politically volatile neighborhood and enhance Europe's energy security by developing itself into a regional energy hub.

As an economist what I am more interested is the great economic potential of Turkey as one of the emerging market economies, ready to contribute to EU's economic growth. Turkey is not just another country sitting at the eastern borders of Europe. Turkey is a big country with a blooming economy. In terms of GDP per capita and the weight of agriculture in employment, it resembles the CEECs that have become EU members. However in many aspects, Turkish economy is quite different.

- Turkish economy is more dynamic, with a high-performing modern sector. It is open to cooperation at all levels and this is not only a state policy but people are ready and willing to participate in developing this potential which has been untapped in many aspects.
- Turkey steadily records high economic growth and is among the EU's leading trade and investment partners. Through its customs union agreement, Turkey is for most practical purposes already part of the internal market for goods and has already taken over large parts of the *acquis*. Those who argue that Turkey should be offered a 'special relationship' instead of full membership ignore the fact that this special relationship already exists in the form of a customs union.
- The level of foreign direct investment has reached a new record of € 16 billion in 2006 that is 4.9% of the Turkish GDP, originating mainly in the European Union. This will unlock the vast potential by drawing from the pool of those currently outside the workforce and provide an additional boost to GDP per capita.
- Finally, with an increasing transfer of technology (partially via higher FDI) total factor productivity should accelerate. Turkish average labor productivity (measured by value added per employed person) is close to that of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. This is so despite the fact that gross value added per person employed in agriculture lowers the Turkish average. Productivity in services, construction and, even more so in industry, is high in Turkey, reflecting the degree of modernity and sophistication reached. The productivity is expected to grow much faster compared to not only new but also old members.
- Turkey has also signed free trade agreements with many Mediterranean countries and has already a great circle of countries as trade partners. However, it is somewhat less dependent on trade with the Community than new member countries. Exports to the EU account for 15-16% of Turkey's GDP, compared to over 20% for Poland. Geographical position makes the distribution of Turkey's foreign trade less focused on the EU.
- Demographic dynamism. The workforce in Turkey will continue to grow by more than 1% p.a. for at least another generation, whereas it is declining in most EU countries. This young population is not only important as manpower but also as qualified workforce. Young Turkish population could help overcome some of the problems that will result from the general demographic decline of EU member states.
- There is also a large stock of Turkish citizens who have been firmly established for some time in the EU, and the second and third generation is not guest workers anymore, they are educated young people who are ready to take their place in the governing circles of Europe and would like to support all projects in which Turkey takes part.

Therefore, as evaluated in the Progress Report 2007, concerning economic criteria, Turkey can be regarded as a functioning market economy. It should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term.

We all know that regional cooperation and good neighborly relations remain key to regional stability. Mutual knowledge requires further development of dialogue between the citizens of countries. To achieve this aim, along with the development of civil society dialogue between the countries, the other main measure is the expansion of education cooperation and mobility opportunities for academics and students – through fellowships, internship, research projects, conferences, and others. This exactly defines the goal of the “Italian Center for Turkish Studies”. Through its activities, it will help deepening the understanding of Turkey and the Turkish people in Italy, and Italy and the Italians in Turkey.

Dear Friends, the legacy of Atatürk, that his country’s future lay in the west, is ever present. However, the approach to Turkey does matter. It says a great deal about how our European friends see themselves in terms of economics, culture and of geopolitics. We are fortunate enough to have friends like Italy, who help us to achieve our dream.

## Understanding Turkey

*Dragos Mateescu*

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I want to start by congratulating the members of the "Italian Center for Turkish Studies" for initiating the excellent project and for organising, within this context, this conference. I also thank them warmly for the invitation to speak here, today.

I've come to Turkey, to Izmir more precisely, more than six years ago and have been working for more than five years now at Izmir University of Economics in the Department of International Relations and the EU as an assistant and then as lecturer. This experience inevitably marked my knowledge of the Turks and Turkey more than any other related experience before. Since we are here to give a decisive impulse to Equilibri's "Turkey Project", I presume that a good starting point would be to somehow describe the object of our research.

Of course, questions about the importance of this country have already received significant answers but I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the knowledge about Turkey and its people, particularly as constructed in the West, suffers from a problem often pointed at in our postmodern age: the problem of stability of images in an ever changing world of meanings.

The point that should be made therefore here is that our understanding of Turkey and the Turks must be open to change. The forces of change over the meaning of Turkey are both exo- and endogenous to Turkey. There is nothing special about this country at this point: all countries in the world are inevitably subject to pressures and change. What indeed makes Turkey special in this respect is that it is an extreme case where both exo- and endogenous forces of change tend to collide sometimes with intellectual violence rather than coexist in competition. A particular idea that has become common among Turkish intellectuals is the idea that there are actually many Turkeys: there is a Turkey of Western substance, an Asian Turkey, an Anatolian rural Turkey, a secular Europeanised Turkey of the future and an Islamic Turkey of the past. The fact is that these different meanings of Turkey do not denominate historical stages, as in the case of other countries, but co-exist as to define the Turkey of today. Moreover, these meanings become tools in political debates which, in turn, contribute decisively to redefinitions of Turkey on almost yearly basis. Still, this is not what some would describe as an identity crisis. Rather this is more of a particular gift and curse at the same time: a stubborn and pervasive tendency among Turks towards re-writing their own story as if there is always something wrong with the old one. The special attention they generally give to honouring beginnings in any field of activity is significant here. Every newly established project, in whichever sphere of life one can imagine, is accompanied in the Turkish culture by a significant number of wreaths of flowers celebrating that beginning. It is as if those flowers

symbolise the death of previous projects from the ashes of which the new ones must arise successfully, In\_allah.

No surprise then that Turkey is actually a permanent challenge to theory. More precisely, in the terms suggested above, Turkey tends to reconstruct and redefine itself each time a particular meaning or label is attached to it. Take, for instance, theories surrounding the very founding moment of this country. Many continue nowadays to view Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's regime as a dictatorial one in an age of dictatorships. According to some, the Turkish Republic was established with a strong hand that simply threw the past to the dust bin of history and placed the Turks on the road to modernity. Others, on the contrary, view that moment as a manifestation of the totalitarian fashion so much professed around the world in those times, with the Nazi regime in Germany, the Fascist one in Italy, or the Stalinist terror in USSR as archetypes. In an article I have written in 2006 and published by Turkish Studies, these theories were proved wrong from the very perspective of Emilio Gentile's definitions of totalitarianism. Anything but dictatorship or, even worse, totalitarianism can be associated with the Turkish political system historically. However, this does not mean that the essence of this system, its meaning, is not subject to change. This is eventually a country in which the only political force constantly present from its establishment on the public stage is the Republican Party and nobody could say what would have happened to it, had Atatürk himself not been the very founder of that party.

Classical definitions of secularism, too, as emerged and established in Europe, have been challenged by the reality of Turkish secularism. Thus, secularism is interpreted in practical terms in Turkey as the domination of the state over and protection from religion rather than as the mere separation of religion from the state. Naturally, studies of secularism are inevitably bound to follow this Turkish line, too.

There are, of course, both apparently positive and apparently negative evaluations that can be made in connection with Turkey and its stance in the international arena. However, the most important aspect is that this country is not an inert body in international politics. On the contrary, Turkey has been active in virtually all developments that were of concern to Ankara. Following closely the firm path to modernisation opened by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey is working nowadays hard to meet the EU membership criteria and a majority of Turks believe in the European future of their country. Within this context, the legislative reforms undertaken over the last seven years or so speak of a decisive option made by the Turkish political class in that direction and academics should give more attention to the meaning of this commitment.

Turkey lives currently troubled times but this is not something entirely new. There have been even more troubled times in the recent past. An important aspect that I want to underline here is that the Turkish political system has been able to respond efficiently during most of those times. It was able to pass over political crises, major threats deriving from the fight against terrorist separatism, serious economic crises, blockages over constitutional anachronisms, resurgence of both religious and nationalist fundamentalisms, perceived humiliations in relation to various political statements vis-à-vis its past, present and future. Of these, the Armenian, Cyprus and Kurdish issues

are most notorious. The Turkish political system however was able to react efficiently in all those cases and virtually none of the academic researchers involved in the Turkish phenomenon seemed interested in explaining that efficiency. Critical analyses abound and their value is, of course, unquestionable. The truth is however that many good things could be learned from analyses of the positive aspects of Turkish politics, too.

What is certain is that, on the map of Europe and particularly on the map of EU, Turkey does not appear either as a "neighbour" or as a "partner": Turkey is in line for being part of the political Europe and that should be at the centre of academic scrutiny. Within this context, the role that Turkey would play in a few particular European policy contexts may turn crucial. I am referring here especially to the energy sector, the continental security, the Black Sea Synergy, the Middle East Peace Process and the Neighbourhood Policy.

Here, again, one must mention the old description of Turkey as being situated at the confluence of worlds, a bridge between civilisations. These are not empty words. Turkey is placed geographically so that it is practically from its heart that the two fundamental vectors of Europe's foreign policy originate: the Mediterranean vector and the East European (Newly Independent States) vector. Turkey is the only country that is a neighbour of states from both dimensions and Turkey must be seriously assisted if EU's relations with its neighbours are planned to be a success. Italy, in particular, has long experienced the need for Union's support in its own Mediterranean initiatives.

The picture drawn here has no other purpose but to shed light over the multiple meanings of Turkey in the international arena and especially in the European context. As suggested above, Turkey redefines its meaning with every challenge it faces. The very rhythm of change and development in this part of the world, like in my own native country, Romania, is tremendous. Every year, observers notice that they have to adjust their parameters of evaluation, from the political to the socio-economic sectors. Serious analysis must therefore take into account these changes and, most probably, this may be the opportunity for the academics of international relations to work harder for finally developing a theory of change, too. I would personally be very proud to see one day the "Italian Center for Turkish Studies" being associated with such an important step forward.

Grazie!

## Izmir significance for Turkish-Italian Relations

*Filiz Baskan*

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I would like to first greet and congratulate our Italian guests for their important initiative.

Izmir University of Economics is honoured to participate in the ICTS activities through the coordination role of Dragos Mateescu and my academic support. We hope to develop this collaboration at the institutional level in time and here the support of Izmir Chamber of Commerce is, of course, crucial.

The Italian Center for Turkish Studies inaugurates therefore a tremendous effort: that of deepening the understanding of Turkey in Italy and of supporting Turkey on its European path. Why Izmir then?

Simply because Izmir has been traditionally an important gate of Turkey to the West. Some would say Istanbul has always done a better job in that sense but Izmir has a vocation in this respect. Organising the Mediterranean Games, the University Olympic Games and being a strong candidate for EXPO 2015 speaks little of that vocation. There are other reasons here.

Many mention Izmir as the country's third large city and second port. However, few realise that it is Turkey's biggest port and gate to the Aegean, eastern Mediterranean and the first port for exports. Izmir's free zone is a leading economic area in Turkey and the city's booming population, coupled with an efficient effort towards better integration and educational development could turn Izmir into a Mediterranean jewel with global glamour.

The mosaic of Izmir's population is also a valuable asset. For centuries, Turks have mixed in this city with Jewish, Greek, Armenian, and the so-called Levantines to whom Venice, Genoa and Ragusa mean as many legendary homes, while Izmir has come to mean THE home.

As an academic analyst of Islamic communities and religiously-oriented parties, and of extreme right-wing parties, I have always felt surprise at how Izmir has managed to stay a relatively calm city in times of turmoil. In normal conditions, this would have been the boiling pot where all sorts of extremist movements could find expression in as many conflicting situations.

However, Izmir has always been known as a city of peaceful cohabitation of many different communities. That means we could all learn something from Izmir's history and its experience of social practice. However, academic researchers have not done much to fill in this gap. While admitting that some pertinent studies of this region's potential did reach the public, that is simply not enough and much is left to be done.

Many talk about Turkey in general as an interesting case study but few have dedicated serious time to that study. The ICTS being committed to this direction gives me hope that my own efforts will find expression within the framework of this Centre.

One of Izmir sister cities is the Italian port city of Napoli. The respective protocol was signed in 1990 but it seems that it has been forgotten. Now, the harsh competition with the city of Milano over the candidacy to organising the Universal EXPO 2015 draws again attention. I say that the visit of ICTS representatives must be exploited as to determine a more serious collaboration, particularly in the field of academic cooperation. Without structured analysis, true knowledge is not really possible. And, without true knowledge of the other, true collaboration would be only brief and superficial.

We are talking here also about collaboration between a founding member of the EC/EU and a candidate country. However, Turkey is definitely not any candidate. The Turkish definition of EU and the Italian definition of both the EU and Turkey are both extremely interesting topics. Fundamental political decisions and, therefore, policies are designed on both sides as based on these definitions. The more we learn about them and the better we evaluate them with a serious academic eye, the more efficient outcomes we would all have.

I wish success to ICTS precisely in this direction.

Thank you

### *Notes on contributors*

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**Prof. Canan Balkir** holds BA from Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences of Middle East Technical University, Ankara, and PhD. on development economics at the Aegean University, Faculty of Economics, Izmir. Has been Fulbright scholar at North Carolina State University, Research fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (Brighton, UK) and visiting professor at the University of Exeter (UK) and at Colorado College Dept. of Economics. Senior advisor to the State Minister responsible for economics (1988-91) and Director of the European Community and International Economic Relations Research Centre at Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir (1989-'94), to '94, since 2004 March, chairs the EU Studies Graduate Department, Institute of Social Sciences, Dokuz Eylül University.

**Dr. Dragos Mateescu** holds a BA in Political Science and Theory from the Faculty of Political and Administrative Science at University of Bucharest, Romania. MA in American Studies from "9 September" University, Izmir, Turkey. MA in European Studies from Izmir University of Economics-IEU, Izmir, Turkey. PhD student in International Relations at Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK. Specialising in European Studies in the European Studies Graduate Programme at "9 September" University, Izmir, Turkey. Lecturer

since 2001 in the Department of International Relations and the EU at Izmir University of Economics, Izmir, Turkey. Participated in various international conferences, academic projects and wrote several academic and non-academic articles focusing mainly on the following areas of dichotomy: nationalism and European integration, nation-state and supranational institutionalisation, modern and postmodern political philosophy. Dr. Mateescu is ICTS Izmir representative.

**Prof. Filiz Baskan** received BA in Sociology from Middle East Technical University, MA and Ph.D. from Bilkent University, Department of Political Sciences and Public Administration. Has attended several international conferences and published several articles concerning Islamic communities, religious-oriented parties, Islamic finance, and extreme right-wing parties. Has taught at Bilkent University and worked as faculty member at Faculty of Communications at Baskent University. Currently she is Head of Department of International Relations and European Union at Izmir University of Economics.