

Forthcoming Challenge: Position and Function Contemplated for Istanbul in the EU System.

The planning process of Istanbul should be addressed in reference to EU's spatial development policies and strategies and goals, tools and programs developed for regional development. Such an approach is based on two basic reasons. First, on the matter of remedying inter-regional inequality which is expected to be decisive in the candidacy processes and negotiation stages that Turkey will develop with EU. It is necessary to define the contribution that Istanbul should give and develop programs in this line. Second, even though Turkey is not an EU member, Istanbul alone has characteristics that could affect Europe's spatial working and development. In summary, Istanbul's association with EU is strategic, and essential not only for Istanbul's but also for Europe's sustainable socio-spatial development.

European Spatial Development Perspective: 2007-2013

Istanbul should attempt to acquire an effective position in the Post-Enlargement Spatial Development Perspective being prepared for Europe after 2007. During the preparations on this document which is expected to take shape particularly under the Presidency of Germany, the State Planning Office and the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement are expected to be involved in the process.

Although it is in preparatory stage and not finalized, it is certain that the EU's spatial perspective after 2007 will aim post-enlargement socio-economic integration in Continental Europe. On the other hand, it is inevitable that Europe should define growth and production centers in order to compete with the American and Japanese economies as well as the constantly growing Chinese economy. This situation will soon gradually drive EU away from social policies such as equitable distribution of welfare and removal of development differences into looking for growth options at the expense of tolerable inequalities. Further, if the need for expanding EU's market takes into consideration Russia and Ukraine, the political field in which Turkey could maneuver may expand.

EU has brought, by enlarging towards the East, a historical opportunity to the doors of Turkey, an opportunity as important as membership for Turkey. Turkey and this Istanbul may increase interaction with Europe by policies to be developed with the Eastern Northern European countries and be in a position to play a decisive role in the Eastern Policy of EU which needs to enlarge and grow.

It is necessary that the relations to be established by Istanbul with the EU geography should be handled and formulated in a manner least affected by debates regarding Turkey's EU membership or EU's structural distress. AXIS projections may be utilized to find out optimization between existing dynamics, opportunities and risks of EU and Turkey.

AXIS 1: Cooperation Network with Mediterranean Countries

AXIS 1 aims to re-acquire Istanbul's historical role in the Mediterranean Basin and enable Istanbul to lead in the structuring of new relations that Europe develops with the Middle East and North African countries.

Istanbul can develop regional cooperation and transnational joint programs by instigating the following initiatives.

- **Develop joint programs in maritime trade, transport and tourism sector,**
- **Define and disseminate a perspective of common coast and environmental management,**
- **Prepare Mediterranean Sustainable Development Framework Program intending to preserve and develop natural resources and cultural heritage,**
- **Implement Mediterranean Information Network between universities and research institutions for education, technology and research-development activities,**
- **Form 'Solution partnerships' between the civil society representatives for socio-spatial and economic problems specific to the Mediterranean,**
- **Prepare an integrated Mediterranean Art Policy and Action Plan intending to support activities.**

A joint planning approach could be developed between the Mediterranean countries for these defined goals and in the short run dialog may be developed between the consulates, commercial and economic missions located in Istanbul. In the mid to long term, joint studies can be made by the State Planning Office, EU General Secretariat in Turkey and the EU Commission to prepare the Mediterranean Countries Cooperation Network and Regional

Development Program. The whole approach could also be linked to the Barcelona Process and Euro-Med Cooperation.

AXIS 2: North-Southeast Axis

While it is possible that the relations that Istanbul will develop with the Mediterranean countries provide symbolic and long term structural gains, the initiatives to be developed with Eastern European and Scandinavian countries under AXIS 2 are functional, economic and may bear fruits in the short to mid term. However, since Istanbul's effectiveness in the Mediterranean basin is of strategic importance, it should not be ignored that AXIS 2 will contribute to strengthening this projection.

EU's enlargement towards the east offers opportunities of solution to structural economic problems for both EU and Turkey. EU's stable economic growth and production is only possible by strong integration of new member states to the economic structure of Central Europe and joint exploitation of new opportunities. This offers the opportunity to utilize AXIS 2 as a policy area for Turkey and Istanbul.

The Atlantic, the markets of Europe and Asia get such functionally close for the first time that historical thesis of

Turkey as a bridge between the east and the west has now greater validity.

Istanbul's openings are important for Turkey to seize the said opportunity. The projections that could be developed for the policies and strategic goals to be followed may be listed as follows:

- **AXIS 2 may be contemplated as alternative decentralization spaces for the industrial organizations of Istanbul. For this purpose, such organizations as Chambers of Industry and Commerce, TOBB and TUSIAD which are the primary representatives of the sector should generate an Istanbul Industrial Strategic Action Plan and give the said approach a manageable character. This is already happening, to certain extent, with Turkish firms investing in Eastern European countries.**
- **Industrial groups based in Istanbul should define innovative investment programs under AXIS 2 in order to develop partnerships with European producers and industrialists taking an interest in the EU enlargement area.**
- **Development of relations between the Northern and Eastern European countries with the Black Sea, Central Asia and Middle East countries will be possible by Istanbul's implementation of *horizon diplomacy* in this geography and further activation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, which is based in Istanbul.**
- **The fact that AXIS 2 is on the energy corridors offers positional advantages to the countries of the region.**

AXIS 3: Baltic-Black Sea Axis

In order that Istanbul derives benefits from the cooperation it will develop with the Mediterranean and Eastern European countries, it will be useful to define new structures outside its geography and develop policies to bring into agenda if relevant countries. Focus should be particularly on Ukraine and Belarus and it should be expected EU will activate commercial, production and economic forces of Istanbul in steering the programs that EU develops with these countries. The strategic purposes to achieve may be defined as follows:

- Prepare institutional structuring, financial modeling and operation programs in energy supply and infrastructure development,**
- Prepare customs and trade agreements that will serve to transfer the heavy transport volume through Istanbul to the coasts of the North Sea in order to reduce the volume of passage through the Bosphorus.**

The AXIS 3 factor is important in that it will contribute towards Istanbul's gaining a more active position in the platforms developed with the Mediterranean (AXIS 1) and the Eastern European countries (AXIS 2). It is deemed useful to include the projections regarding the potential of AXIS 3, to the mid-term regional development perspective of Istanbul in order to get a

lead in formation of the EU's future perspective and develop alternatives in a continental geography.