Turkey & Europe
An Example:
Alessandro
Missir di Lusignano
TURKEY and EUROPE - AN EXAMPLE:
ALESSANDRO MISSIR di LUSIGNANO

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Special thanks to Dr. Bahadır Kalebaci for the English version
(International Coordinator and EU Representative of TUSIAD;
Member of Executive Board of TUSIAD-International)
To Alessandro, my beloved brother

To my parents, for their immense courage and unwavering faith

To Amedeo, Giustina, Filiberto and Tommaso
So that you may preciously treasure in your hearts and so that you also may transmit, throughout your lifetimes, the infinite and multiple values of your father and mother: two exceptional Beings.

Your sister Letizia
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Turkey & Europe: An Example
«Ölür ise ten ölüür, canlar ölesi değil»

Poem by Yunus Emre, (13th century)
“If something dies, it is only flesh / souls don’t”. 
I had the fortune to meet Alessandro in Istanbul, in a friend’s bookshop where his father, Livio Missir de Lusignan, was presenting his book “Vie Latine de l’Empire Ottoman”. I had already exchanged a few letters with his father and met him briefly in Brussels, as we shared the same hopes and concerns for Turkey’s prospects in Europe. It was different with Alessandro. He had read most of my books that had been translated into French and spoke of them not only with enthusiasm but also great understanding. We decided to continue our dialogue elsewhere, in Paris or Brussels, but fate decided otherwise. His tragic death shattered me. One day, we shall know more clearly the extent to which the loss of this friend who did so much for Turkey’s entry into the EU is a real catastrophe. I am happy to have met him and how sad to have lost him so quickly. But the memory of this brief instant in the Mavikum bookshop in Istanbul lives on, and I tell myself that Alessandro has not definitively left us.
Cosmopolitanism is hard to define. If the idea is elusive and changeable, the reality is easy to recognise when we meet it. The Missir family, multilingual Catholics from Izmir, working in the past as dragomans for European powers, is an example of practical cosmopolitanism. Born in Izmir, married to a Belgian, for many years an official of the European Parliament and European Commission, speaking six languages (Latin, Greek, Italian, French, English and Turkish), Livio Amedeo Missir has been as cosmopolitan in his career as in his background. He has specialised in European relations with Greece and Turkey and in the history of the Latin Catholics of the Ottoman Empire. Like Metternich, and many other statesmen, he considers Turkey an essential part of the European system.

Alessandro Missir his son was also both European and Mediterranean. Like his father he went to universities in different countries and spoke many languages: Italian, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, English, Turkish and Polish. He too worked for the European Commission, both in Brussels and abroad, and specialised in frontier regions and the accession of Turkey. His murder in 2006 with his wife, in Rabat, is an act symbolising those forces of greed and xenophobia against which he had fought all his life.

Individuals die. The cosmopolitanism represented by Livio and Alessandro Missir has never been so necessary.
Distinguished Reader,

The European Union (EU) is the exceptional result of the culmination of a dynamic process. The EU has transformed Europe into a union of freedom, stability, development and peace through a success story after long decades of wars and internal struggles; an environment that has never been seen before in the history of the European continent.

Turkey has a long history of engagement with international institutions. It joined the Council of Europe in 1949 and has been a member of NATO since 1952. It was a founding member of OECD in 1960. The political relationship between the EU and Turkey dates back to 1963, when Turkey became the second country to sign an association agreement with the then European Economic Community (EEC). This included a commitment to eventual Turkish membership. Nonetheless, almost 45 years on Turkey has yet to become an EU Member State, and there are suggestions from some quarters that it should not do so.

Last year, we left behind the 45th year of Turkey-EU relations. Meanwhile in 2007, the EU celebrated its 50th birthday since the signature of the Treaty of Rome. It is clear that, none of the current Member States have established such a long-standing relation with Europe. As an EU candidate country since 1999 and a negotiating accession country since 2005, Turkey engaged in a process of extensive legal and administrative reform with a view to harmonization with the EU Acquis and fulfillment of membership criteria. In addition to its political and strategic significance, its thriving economy led to Turkey’s participation among the leading G-20 and its placement as the 6th largest European economy. Economic and commercial links have always occupied an important place in Turkey’s orientation towards Europe. Turkish and European businessmen acknowledged decades ago where their interests were. They have been moving in that direction despite all the ups and downs in the political relations, and with a determination that should inspire everyone.

Turkey continues to be a vital player and strategic partner in Europe at the dawn of the 21st century. Turkey’s contribution to Europe and European integration will lead to fruition with its membership to the EU. In the words of the British foreign secretary David Miliband, “Turkey will be the second fastest growing economy in the world by 2017... It balances secularism and religious identity. It is on a reform path that is not just about Istanbul and Ankara”.

Prof. Dr. Halûk Kabaalioğlu
President, Economic Development Foundation
Dean, Faculty of Law, Yeditepe University
The EU will most probably show the determination and vision to seize the historic opportunity to integrate Turkey as a member of the EU. Until now, Turkey’s relations with and accession to the EU proceeded on the basis of decisions and efforts of Turkey and member state governments, civil and governmental organizations, and, last but not least, EU institutions. In this regard, we should not forget about the efforts and contributions of special people who worked wholeheartedly for the improvement of those relations.

As the Economic Development Foundation, a specialized non-profit making organization whose history is almost as old as the history of Turkey-EU relations itself, we take high pleasure in paying tribute to Alessandro Missir di Lusignano and his lifelong contribution on Turkey’s path to Europe.

This book is an opportunity for us to pay homage to those who played a significant role in Turkey-EU relations; to those who had vision, the will, the daring, the courage and virtue to move ahead of their era and open new roads.

Among those Alessandro Missir di Lusignano had a critical role to play. He was among the individuals who have contributed as much to Brussels’-present day knowledge on Turkey as to the progress of Turkey’s relations with the EU. Since joining the European Commission, Alessandro Missir di Lusignano played an important part in the process of opening EU membership negotiations with Turkey, and all the important steps in between. His tireless and creative knowledge contributed a lot in paving the way to bringing Turkey closer to the EU and the EU closer to Turkey.

Within the confines of this book, are gathered memories of a variety of people whose lives had the chance to intersect with Alessandro Missir di Lusignano’s life path. The interviews shed light on his work for Turkey-EU relations, his achievements and his contribution to the present day knowledge about Turkey in Europe.
After Alessandro’s loss...

It is extremely hard to find the appropriate words to describe a beloved friend best to those reading these very lines while engaged in deep thoughts as to how to accept his sudden loss at such a young age and where to put this tragic “piece” in the “puzzle of life”. I had always thought to myself that I would be the first to congratulate him the day he would be appointed as the Representative of EU to Turkey.

Above all, he was one of those few special people, who fully deserved to be recognized as a dear friend and to be entitled to the best of things in life. Furthermore, he was a man of great elegance and virtue, something that could be only transmitted over the generations. To be able to grasp his love for Turkey, you should have been present in that little Office of his at the Commission, where we sat and talked for hours.

Regardless of which meeting I had attended, I would always drop by his Office, which was always slightly open, and peek inside to see if he was available and if he was alone, I would knock on the door. Most of the time, he would be occupied with editing his reports in light of the recent news flowing.

I firmly believed that he would rise to the top in the Commission and one day assume a critical position and hold the power to influence the course of Turkey-EU relations.

Not only he knew Turkey, but he also felt it inside. He was a shining star, who had the thorough knowledge and the deep understanding to process and evaluate the intense information flow. Yet, unfortunately, he is long gone.
in from Turkey. He spoke Turkish with a slight accent and he would always turn to me and start a conversation by saying “Haluk, it is easy to cope with the people here, however I really don’t understand those in Turkey who try to sabotage things”. I still vividly remember the long and lively talks we held and the comprehensive analysis he would offer over a cup of coffee.

I firmly believed that he would rise to the top in the Commission and one day assume a critical position and hold the power to influence the course of Turkey-EU relations. Not only he knew Turkey, but he also felt it inside. He was a shining star, who had the thorough knowledge and the deep understanding to process and evaluate the intense information flow. Yet, unfortunately, he is long gone.

We will miss him a lot...
He had a dream and we will strive to make it happen.
Rest in peace my Beloved Friend...
Alessandro Missir di Lusignano, in life’s relative brevity, gave us a great example of the significance of quality, positive energy and eloquence. He was blessed with a great amount of friends most of whom attended the funeral ceremony at the Sablon Church in Brussels.

Alessandro was a friend. He was an Italian. A pious person, a strong European and an effective Commission expert and executive. At the same time, he was one of Brussels’ honorary Turcologists. He belonged to a group which knows Turkey thoroughly, has a true sympathy and feels excitement and pleasure with the progress of Turkey’s EU accession. This is a nameless, almost metaphorical group. Its existence is felt by observations and despite its tangible inexistence it has the power to be consequential on the EU-Turkey relations. Those “Turkey connoisseurs” have been there for years. They have made a great contribution to Turkey’s EU process in a positive and rational way.

During the time in which Istanbul-born Emil Noel served as Secretary General of the European Commission between 1967 and 1987 and organised this institution as the EU’s executive branch, there was a great generation of men involved in the task of putting Turkey into the orbit of membership: Gian Paolo Papa, Charles Caporale, Livio Missir, Piero Pettovich and also the younger Alain Servantie. As one of Brussels’ most experienced French journalists said, “In the seventies, they showed us how significant Turkey is for Europe. Now, it’s our duty.” Regarding Turkey’s EU accession, some thanks to their Turkish spouses, some through their family inheritances, some with amity bonds and some with only their personal or professional tendencies, there are very special and also pioneer support groups in Brussels.

Like his Izmir-originated father, Livio Missir, Alessandro had a bright career in the Commission. Up to his service in Morocco, he worked in the Turkey Team in Brussels. He had been the expert who evaluated Turkey’s consistence to Copenhagen political criteria. In the Commission reports, he
analysed Turkey’s democratic issues in an objective perspective, without avoiding any criticism. At the same time, he was always filled with happiness with the progress and he knew the country was destined to be in the European Union. He always put his soul into the Turkish language, Turkey’s history, culture and especially to Izmir.

In 1987, a severe crisis occurred for Turkey’s EU relations. European Council excluded Turkey while qualifying Central and Eastern Europe for full membership. Afterwards, a series of ups and downs took place. Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate for full membership in 1999. In 2004, EU Commission confirmed that Turkey was sufficiently meeting the Copenhagen criteria. Eventually in 2005, negotiations were started. That was a crucial period for both parties since missing the historical opportunity was
easily possible because of several external and internal factors. The objective information, rational analysis and constructive approach had become vital ingredients for progress. The challenge was not merely a matter of technical or diplomatic decision. The extension of EU’s economic, political, social and ecological sphere of influence and power to Turkey was at stake.

In such a formidable and historical period, Alessandro’s mission in the European Commission devoted to political aspects, was a great chance for the future of both Turkey and EU.

A Turkey which would be in compliance with the democratic, legal and economic requirements of EU membership would bring Europe the critical size that it needs to better meet the challenges of the 21st century. In such a formidable and historical period, Alessandro’s mission in the European Commission devoted to political aspects, was a great chance for the future of both Turkey and EU.

During the ceremony of commemoration for Alessandro at the Commission, Commissioner in charge of Enlargement, Olli Rehn, emphasized this aspect of his character: “I recall a visit to Turkey in which we stayed in Ankara, Kayseri and Istanbul. There, we had chance to comprehend Alessandro’s vast knowledge and ingenuity about Turkish history and culture which was beneficial for us. Especially during Ramadan, our evening meal with the
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül in Kayseri was an experience never to be forgotten. This period was also a very important, personal satisfaction for Alessandro. For the common goal of Turkey, he had worked extremely hard. He will be truly missed.”

One day in Brussels, a talk with Alessandro that started out as business, turned as usual into a friendly exchange of views. While discussing Turkey-EU relations, customs union and the accession partnership document, we found ourselves talking about Atatürk, Ottomans, Byzantium, Antiquity and the Mediterranean. At one point, the subject of the conversation led to the multicultural society and cities of Ottomans and eventually to Izmir. This important trade and multicultural life center and Aegean’s most charming city of the 19th century is still a vibrant place as Turkey’s third largest metropolis.

I then showed a rare book about Izmir to Alessandro. In the book were found ancient engravings and maps of the city. When he started examining the book with curiosity, I told him he could have it as a gift. His reaction was so alive that he made me feel like Santa Claus. His eyes were shining as a young boy who received a gift which he had been expecting for a long time. The historical perspective, multicultural message and the European vision that the book represented were reflected in the interest of an expert in sincerity and humanism.

As Alessandro is being blessed with eternity, those aspects and true sincerity of him will always remain alive in our hearts. We will always honor his memory and he will be greatly missed.
A view of Alsancak Pier and Punta from the arc of Belle Vue:
The Swastika at Kordon.
Courtesy of İzmir Chamber of Commerce
Photo taken from “History Written on Glass”, İzmir Chamber of
Commerce Glass Plate Negative Collection, İzmir, 2007.
Note from the Co-Editor

Melih Özsöz
Researcher, Economic Development Foundation

Destiny isn’t as simple as it seems

People believe in destiny, somehow they feel that all their good actions produce reactions. They do good things and hope that a better destiny will be awaiting them because of their good deeds. However fortune also has a critical role to play; it gives a unique insight into the destiny in different shapes, like unexpected encounters.

I sincerely consider it my good fortune that I met Letizia, one summer day in 2007, in a café at Châtelain, Brussels. I was together with a Turkish friend (Mirhan Köroğlu, who also knew Alessandro), and had the opportunity to enjoy a couple of glasses of wine and excitement of talking in Turkish, after several months of no Turkish “friendly chat”. Then suddenly, I noticed two eyes, much affected by our conversation, staring to us and willing to interrupt. Starting there, everything began to take shape. I met a young woman who likes to return to memories of her childhood like a stranger who longs to go back to her own country. She is delighted to tell stories of her past times in Izmir, more specifically in Buca, Lord Byron’s village, like a poet who takes pleasure in reciting his/her best poem. Couple of hours full of old memories of Izmir and few words in Turkish, passed like the shadows of the trees on the grass.

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Still, in these hours Letizia and I, discovered we have so much in common apart from, me only knowing Alessandro and Letizia being her sister. First and foremost we were from the same city in Turkey; Izmir. A couple of phone calls with my mother, Nafize Özsöz and several relatives in Izmir, proved how these two “strangers” were sharing a common history of their parents. Starting from the discovery that my mother’s grandfather, Selim Üstdal, was Letizia’s father hairdresser back in 1930s in Buca; the night ended full of joy, surprise and curiosity for the upcoming days; as well as new ideas, like a tribute book dedicated to Alessandro Missir di Lusignano.
I also consider it my good fortune that with this book, I had the great chance to better know Alessandro’s tireless and creative knowledge and efforts on Turkey and Europe; his career that left an impressive trace on Turkey-EU relations. As a young Turkish professional who is willing to pursue a career on Turkey-EU relations, I consider myself lucky to be a part of this project, at early stages of my career.

While editing this book, I had the privilege to get to know Alessandro better with whom I had spent only a couple of hours in his lifetime. For some Alessandro was an intelligent, hardworking and skillful diplomat; for others he was a polite, honest man as well as a firm believer. But above all he was a loving husband and a caring father. I wholeheartedly hope that this book will perpetuate the memories of Alessandro and Ariane.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the development of this book, especially to Prof. Dr. Haluk Kabaalioglu, Prof. Dr. Lerzan Özkale, Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, and M. Haluk Nuray for their immense support. I also would like to extend my thanks to my dear colleague Zeynep Özler for her continual encouragement and assistance. Furthermore, I would like to thank all the persons who contributed to this book with their memories of Alessandro. I am also greatly indebted to Myra Ajans, especially Damla Özlüer and Gülderen Rençber Erbaş for bringing out this book in record time and in an attractive format.

In addition, I would like to express my special thanks to my family whose history unexpectedly turned out to be the inspiration for this book. Finally, I would like to give a special thanks to Missir family and Letizia, for their excellent work, patience, joy and friendship.

Melih Özsöz
Strange coincidences in life have always fascinated me, so much so that—it came a moment, a few years ago, when I scoured various specialist bookshops in Belgium and elsewhere in order to satisfy my curiosity on the matter. Why, at certain crucial moments of our lives, do we meet certain specific people who play a decisive role in the evolution of our personal existence? Is it to help us follow the path that God or divine providence has reserved for us? Is it sometimes to put us back on the track that we have perhaps forgotten or consciously avoided, for some inexplicable reason? Thus I began to learn, day by day, to interpret and identify as precisely as possible, the messages that life wanted to give me. When we begin to analyse them, I can assure you there is nothing more disconcerting. Everything takes on a crucial meaning and everything that has a purpose finds its rightful place...

This is why I feel it is essential here to speak about the origin of this book dedicated to my dear brother Alessandro, out of an obligation to remember and in order to pay tribute to him. For it is in fact the result of a quite extraordinary synchronicity* which took place in Brussels, one summer day in 2007. Whilst sitting at a terrace in the Châtelain district with a very dear friend (who

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* We are sometimes confronted with a coincidence of a mysterious nature, which leaves us with a strange, indefinable feeling. It is a sort of wink from fate that the psychoanalyst Carl Jung called “synchronicity”. We then say that the coincidence is charged with meaning, or that it is significant...
also knew Alessandro very well), to my great joy and astonishment, I heard alongside me two young people speaking animatedly in my cherished Turkish language. Surprised, curious and amused, I immediately began speaking to them and the evening ended after several long hours of laughter and discussions. At the end of this astounding encounter, we exchanged business cards and on reading mine, Melih Özsöz looked at me with a profound, serious expression. “Would you happen to be the sister of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano?” he asked. Stunned, I nodded in a silence that lasted an eternity...

I then learned that he was a researcher at the Economic Development Foundation’s Brussels Representation (a prestigious NGO) but not only that... I also learned at that time that he was from the village of Buca, not far from Izmir in Turkey, the same village as my father, who was born there, and where I have had the great fortune to spend all my summers since my infancy, surrounded by my brothers, my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and lifelong friends, intellectuals shaped by the Mediterranean...

Each of us returned home deeply moved by this unfortuitous encounter...

Early the next day, Melih Özsöz called to tell me what had immediately sprung to his mind following this wonderful “synchronicity”... “In a few days, we shall be holding the first conference organised by the Economic Development Foundation in Brussels. I thought we could dedicate it to your brother Alessandro...The President, Prof. Dr. Halûk Kabaalioğlu is also enthusiastic. But also, we would like to publish a book in memory and honour of him, because he meant so much to Turkey. He played an exceptional, historic role for our country. We want to pay tribute to him...” Attentive to life’s signals and moved by such a coincidence, it was of course impossible for me not to interpret and consider this as a gift from life to give me the strength and courage to undertake my first steps along this path... I immediately decided without further reflection that I would be the author...

For the 70th birthday of my father, Livio Missir di Lusignano, my brother Alessandro gave us the immense surprise of publishing a LIBER AMICORUM, which compiled tributes from around the world of friends who had the fortune and pleasure to cross our father’s path, in one way or another... In the foreword to the book, he himself wrote the following: “Paul Morand said that all lives are like letters posted anonymously. We have always wondered how many postmarks there were on our father’s life...” Following the tragedy of which he and his wife Ariane were the victims in September 2006 in Rabat, and which was witnessed by their four young children, it is now our turn to ask... How many postmarks were there on Alessandro’s young life, unjustly and brutally cut short on the eve of his 40th birthday?

Heir to the paternal tradition, it is impossible not to cite the numerous interests for which he shared an ardent passion: the philosophy of State, the permanence of the notion, of Empire, the relation between throne and Altar.
An enormous heritage had been handed down to him over the years spent with his father, (who is a historian of the Ottoman Empire, the Latin Nation of the East, European official, writer and specialist in minorities law, Empire-State relations and Islam, speaker and linguist). Living in close, daily contact with him, who could be better placed than he, within the European Union, to accomplish with remarkable brilliance (from 2001 until June 2006) the function of Political Advisor in the Enlargement Directorate General’s team responsible for Turkey?

It is unanimously agreed and the tributes from the sixty or so individuals and colleagues (in Brussels, Turkey and throughout the world) who encountered his lively, penetrating gaze, share the same intensity. Alessandro Missir di Lusignano unquestionably marked all the people he met, through his unique, rich, rounded and multifaceted personality. Through his work which he accomplished daily with passion, enthusiasm and a desire for perfection, he played a leading role in the process towards Turkey’s membership of the European Union. As some important people in this context said, “he was one of those men who have left their mark on the great adventure of European construction, alongside Emile Noël, André Zipcy, Piero Pettovich and Renato Batti, born in Istanbul or Alexandria. Alessandro Missir di Lusignano also deserves more than one book about him in this respect... Alessandro, ISKENDER! He is the one who, like Alexander the Great, tried to untie not the Gordian knot but that of Turkey’s relations with the European Union.”

Also “Without his remarkable degree of knowledge and understanding of Turkish issues, Turkey would have achieved such positive progress over recent years, in relation to the Copenhagen political criteria,” was what the Turkish press had to say at the time of the tragic event. “His vast knowledge of the country was based on in-depth research into Turkish society and history. In meetings, he could be relied on to enlighten the dullest of debates with original and witty reflections. Furthermore, his knowledge of the Turkish language was a formidable asset. He was a friend to Turkey. He contributed to a better understanding of Turkey’s history in Europe and of the Turks themselves. Born into an old Latin family that has lived in Turkey for generations, he had an enormous knowledge of the country with which he developed strong emotional ties. But this never prevented him from maintaining a clear-sighted vision and remarkable objectivity in a situation which was sometimes extremely complex.”

Of course, it is difficult to sum up the personality of Alessandro Missir solely from interviews conducted among colleagues who worked with him for only a few years... This book sets out instead to touch briefly on certain aspects of the person, rather like pieces of an intensely colourful mosaic. For he was indeed intense in all aspects of his life, and remarkably successful considering his age.
During the interviews, these adjectives were mentioned countless times in an attempt to define what would best describe him. “He was a highly enthusiastic man, a passionate visionary, who believed in God, with a gift for equity, moral values, great humanity, elegance, kindness, open to otherness, to other people and religions, who had a tremendous curiosity and was extremely cultured, intellectually refined, committed to everything he did, melancholic also...and above all, very rounded, as he had achieved a rare degree of maturity for his young age…”

For at the age of just 39, he reconciled perfectly his professional life and all the major demands in relation to his wife and their four young children. Alongside this also, he managed to nurture his insatiable thirst for literature and other intellectual activities: from geopolitics to the opera, from eastern civilisations to the history of religions, from medieval poetry to Italian Baroque music and even painting across all the centuries, not forgetting the films of Visconti and the famous Greek film director, Théo Angelopoulos...The list is endless...

Hoping that these few, brief fragments of his life will maintain the memory of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano intact. Hoping also that Turkey continue its long march towards Europe.
Following in his Father’s Footsteps
A Longstanding Family Heritage

Biography of Livio Missir di Lusignano

As an Italian of the Ottoman Empire Livio Missir di Lusignano likes to think of and to refer to himself as the last of the Ottomans.

Born in Izmir where his father’s house can still be found (in Buca, Lord Byron’s village), his life and career have been just like one or another of his ancestors who, in an imperial context, marked the history of relations between Europe and Asia Minor.

Whereas before and up to 29th May 1453, Giovanni Longo Giustiniani fought alongside the last Basileus Constantine XI Palaiologos (1403-1453), during and after this date other members of the Giustiniani family from Scio (“the wealthiest family in Christendom”), Livio Missir de Lusignan’s direct
ancestors, negotiated agreements with Mehmet II (1432-1481), thereby enabling the Italians and Roman Catholics in the Ottoman Empire to continue to live in Turkey to this day, without having to renounce their age-old identity.

After graduating in law from the University of Ankara, receiving his doctorate in law from the University of Rome, and working as a researcher at Utrecht, Yale and the Sorbonne, Livio Missir di Lusignano’s professional career began in the Secretariat of the European Parliament in Luxembourg and Strasbourg. Here, his knowledge of Turkish language and history, modern-day Turkey and Greece and continental Europe made him the first and the last of the “dragomans” of the European Economic Community.

Appointed later to the European Commission in Brussels, he was the first to witness the application of association agreements between Europe on the one side and Greece and Turkey on the other, whilst observing the slow, problematic evolution of relations between Europe and the former Yugoslavia.

In the 1980s, Livio Missir di Lusignano was among those within the Secretariat General of the European Commission who helped prepare and gradually implement European cultural policy. A great communicator, during the years leading up to his retirement, he also contributed to the development of the European Union information policy.

Alongside his professional activity, Livio Missir di Lusignano has lectured at the universities of Florence and Brussels, was a visiting professor in Minneapolis (USA) and continues even now to be a regular guest speaker at a wide range of international cultural events.

As a writer and lawyer, his reflections accumulated over more than fifty years of reading and practical experience have notably covered relations between Religion and the State; the State and the Nation, the Nation and the Empire, the Empire and Peoples, Peoples and Europe, Europe and Civilisations.

These reflections have resulted in the publication of a considerable number of papers and articles that have been published in journals and reviews in several countries and languages.


**Biography of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano**

Alessandro was born in 1967 into a distinguished Italian family established in Turkey whose ancestry can be traced back to Guy de Lusignan, King of Jerusalem. He obtained a first degree in Law awarded jointly by the University of Leuven and the University of Florence and subsequently a Master’s degree in European Affairs from the Collegio Europeo di Parma, followed by a second Master’s degree in International Relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. A talented linguist, he spoke French, English, Dutch, Spanish, German and Turkish. He joined the services of the European Commission in 1993, initially in the Directorate - General for Financial Control.

In 1997 he was posted to the Delegation of the European Commission in Warsaw, as Head of the Political Section. Alessandro flourished in the lively cultural and political environment of pre-accession Poland. With his wife, he rapidly established numerous contacts – and many lasting friendships – in Polish society, in the expatriate community and within the diplomatic corps. Taking a broad approach to his professional responsibilities, he immersed himself in subjects ranging from the history of the Polish borderlands (“Kresy”) to the complexities of Polish-Jewish reconciliation and the evolution of Church-State relations in post-transition Poland. He was an active promoter of the Warsaw Chamber Opera, and soon added Polish to the list of languages he spoke fluently. More discreetly, he took under his wing a small orphanage for blind children, providing not only financial support but also visiting the children regularly.

In 2001 he returned to Brussels as political desk officer in the Turkey Team of DG Enlargement. Here Alessandro made a significant contribution to the development of relations between the EU and Turkey during that critical period. The decision in October 2005 to open accession negotiations with Turkey hinged on the assessment as to whether and when Turkey could be considered to have met the ‘Copenhagen political criteria’ (the basic EU principles of democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms). In these areas Alessandro acquired a remarkable level of knowledge and understanding that was widely respected by colleagues in the Commission, the Council, the European Parliament, but equally by his Turkish counterparts. He was frequently invited to participate in public and academic debates about Turkey’s European perspective. This rich knowledge was based on very wide research about Turkish society and its history. During fact-finding
missions to Turkey, occasionally to the more remote regions, his knowledge of Turkish was an invaluable asset. A devout Catholic, Alessandro also sought insight into the secular nature of the Turkish state, as well as principles and practice of Islam, which helped not only to understand facets of Turkish society but also to counter many western prejudices in this regard.

However, Alessandro is remembered by the colleagues with whom he worked not primarily for his technical attributes or his erudition, but rather for his human qualities: for his team spirit, his humour, his kindness to colleagues and the sincerity of his friendship. In meetings he could be relied upon to lighten the dullest discussion with an original or witty reflection. Above all, he was admired for successfully combining his dedication to a very demanding job with his absolute devotion to his wife and their four young children.

In September 2006, Alessandro took up the post of Counsellor at the Delegation of the European Commission in Rabat. This promising new chapter was brutally closed when, on September 18th, Alessandro and Ariane were murdered. Alessandro would have loved to be with us here today. He would have actively taken part in the discussions sharing with us his vast knowledge in EU-Turkey relations.
Tributes

Here are tributes and remembrances from a small portion of those whose life path converged with Alessandro and Ariane in the course of their lifetime.

Mensur Akgün, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of IR at Istanbul Kültür University. Also a columnist at the daily newspaper Referans and Director of the Foreign Policy Program at TESEV, Amb. Dr. Nihat Akgöl, Amb. of the Republic of Turkey in Caracas, Venezuela; Former Permanent Representative of Turkey to the EU, Yaprap Alp, First Secretary, Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Turkey to the EU, Francesco De Angelis, Former Director Aidco, Fabrizio Barbaso, Former Director General for Enlargement 2003-2006, Marie-Christine and Sylvain Berger, Political Adviser, Permanent Representation of France to NATO, Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief, CNNTurk, Amb. Volkan Bozkur, Secretary General, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, Alexis Brouhns, Honorary Ambassador of Belgium, Former EU Special Envoy in the Balkans, Odile Dage, Former Auditor of the European Commission, Amb. Martin Dawson, Deputy Head of Unit – DG Enlargement, Amb. Oğuz Demiralp, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey in Bern, Switzerland, Bruno Dethomas, Head of the European Commission Delegation in Rabat, Stefano Dotto, Administrator, Kosovo Unit – DG Enlargement, Özden Engin, Assistant to the Political Counsellor, European Commission Delegation to Turkey in Ankara, Śtymbil Eren, Press Officer – European Commission Delegation in Ankara and Sema Kılıçer, Human Rights Officer at the European Commission Delegation in Turkey, Sami Faltas, Executive Director of the Centre for European Security Studies – the Netherlands, Jean-Christophe Filori, Head of Unit, Turkey – DG Enlargement, Lino Francescon, DG RELEX Directorate General for External Relations, Training Coordinator for the members of Commission Delegation in non-member countries, Aristoteles Gavritiades, Policy Officer – DG Justice, Liberty and Security – Citizenship and Fundamental Rights Unit, Paolo Girardelli, Assist. Prof. at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of History – Bogazici University, Istanbul, Zeşnep Göğüş, Journalist, Writer, Founding President of TR-PLUS Centre For Turkey in Europe; Founder of Euractiv Turkey, Tuğr Gümüştekin, Chairwoman of the Istanbul Centre of Brussels, Martin Harvey, Political Affairs Manager, DG Enlargement, Mahir İlgaz, Researcher, Economic Development Foundation, Prof. Dr. Haluk Kabaalioglu, President, Economic Development Foundation; Dean, Faculty of Law, Yeditepe University, Cem Kahyaoglu, Director of Political Affairs, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, Dr. Bahadır Kalağası, International Coordinator and EU Representative of TUSIAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association); Member of the Executive Board of TUSIAD-International, Şebnem Karamuca, Chairperson, Eurohorizons Consulting – Istanbul, Michael Leigh, DG Enlargement, formerly director responsible for Turkey, Wenceslas de Lobkowicz, DG Enlargement – Civil Society Dialogue, Gaspare Augusto Manos, Artist, Adriaan van der Meer, Adviser, DG RELEX, Former Head of Unit for Turkey and Head of European Commission Delegation in Cyprus, Pierre Mirel, Director – responsible for Turkey at the European Commission (2005-2006), Currently Director, DG Enlargement, (Also took part in Alessandro Missir di Lusignano’s mission to Hakkâri), André de Munter, Acting Head of the Brussels Information Office of the European Parliament, Luigi Narbone, Former political adviser in the Delegation of the EC in Ankara, Former Deputy Head of Unit – DG Relex; Now: Head of Delegation to Saudi Arabia, H. Kaan Nazlı, Director of Emerging Markets, Medley Global Advisors – Istanbul, Emre Öktem, Professeur agrégé of international law in the Faculty of Law – Galata Saray University, John O’Rourke, Head of Unit – DG Relex, Ash Özöredi, Business development manager at Moneytrans and former consultant at AB Consultancy & Investment Services, Owen Parker, Seconded national expert 2003-2006 in the Unit for Turkey, Father Piretto, Collaborator of “Presence” monthly French language magazine, Istanbul, Etienne de Poncins, French Ambassador to Bulgaria, Olli Rehn, Commissioner for Enlargement, European Commission, Manuela Riccio, Assistant to the Deputy Director General – DG Enlargement, Hacer Sapan, Sales assistant at DB Schenker, Marseille, Riccardo Serri, Desk Officer, Turkey Team – DG Enlargement, Kader Sevinc, Former MEP Advisor at the European Parliament, currently head of CHP Representation to the EU, Brussels, Amb. Aýşe Sezgin, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Murat Sungur, General Secretory of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation in Istanbul (KEIB), Ercımente Tezcan, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Galatasaray University – Istanbul, Sylvia Tiryaki, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Istanbul Kultur University, Marquis Olivier de Trazegnies, Historian, Writer, Füsun Türkmen, Associate Professor, Doctor of Political Sciences, Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at Galatasaray University, Sinan Ülgen, Chairman of the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) – Istanbul, Myriam Verger, Head of Cabinet of Olli Rehn, European Commission, Günter Verheugen, Vice-President of the European Commission, Yeter Yaman, Information Officer for Turkey & Azerbaijan, Coordinator for Central Asia, NATO Public Diplomacy Division – Brussels, Selim Yenal, Deputy Secretary General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Yılmaz, Professor at Bogazici University, Department of Political Science and International Relations – Istanbul
When I think of Alessandro, I think of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar... Why, dear readers, you will ask? For several reasons... First of all because, even if we met in a professional context, we became friends. I had a closeness of soul with him. We spoke about Turkey, of course, and of its challenge in the context of European Union membership, but we spoke also about other fascinating subjects, of life also and sometimes literature. We were fascinated by existential questions. It was during one of these many conversations that I learned of Alessandro’s interest for the great Turkish novelist, Tanpınar. Even if it is true that in Turkey, everyone knew him, for he is one of our country’s great contemporary authors, few people have heard of him elsewhere. But Alessandro had read and appreciated his various novels. This demonstrated how highly cultivated he was. Why does the novel *Huzur* (*Serenity*, 1949) spring to mind when I think of Alessandro? Firstly, because he embodied this notion of serenity of soul. He had a tranquil strength within him which animated his daily life. Also because in this novel, Tanpınar describes a certain existential fracture via four characters (İhsan, the uncle, Mümtaz, the nephew and assistant at the faculty of literature; Nuran and Suat, the two young

*Who is Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar? (1901-1962)*

He is one of the leading 20th century Turkish authors. A poet, story writer, novelist and essayist, this fine connoisseur of French literature was also a professor of Turkish literature at the University of Istanbul. Between 1920 and 1962, he developed a unique œuvre nurtured by classical poetry and music that created an intellectual link between the East and the West. His vast bibliography includes anthologies and novels (Ref: *Five Cities*, 1946; *Summer Rain*, 1955; *The Time Regulation Institute*, 1961), etc.
“In this historic building overlooking the Bosphorus, Sepetçiler Kasrı, Alessandro had several very important meetings in which I also took part. Upstairs, a restaurant with a unique view of the skyline delighted Alessandro”.
Mensur Akgün
women who are rivals for the love of Mümtaz) whose amorous, friendly and intellectual exchanges cover the entire issue of ancient Turkey, still marked by the refinement of the Ottoman culture, confronting its future... The strength of this novel also arises from its respect of the units of place and time: a single day in 1939, just before the Second World War in the city of Istanbul, whose various architectural aspects symbolise various states of mind. Alessandro was of course greatly interested in the history of Turkey and Ottoman culture as a whole. I’m sure that he found in Tanpinar’s novel, *Huzur*, material to satisfy his curiosity and appetite for knowledge of this issue...

Tanpinar describes a certain existential fracture via four characters... Why does the novel *Huzur* (Serenity, 1949) spring to mind when I think of Alessandro? Firstly, because he embodied this notion of serenity of soul. He had a tranquil strength within him which animated his daily life. I’m sure that he found in Tanpinar’s novel, *Huzur*, material to satisfy his curiosity and appetite for knowledge of this issue...
Turkey–Europe Foundation: An important project, to which Alessandro Missir contributed

Amb. Dr. Nihat Akyol
Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey in Caracas, Venezuela; Former Permanent Representative of Turkey to the European Union

It is of great importance for me to contribute to this book, which will be published in commemoration of Alessandro, one of the brightest people of the European Commission and the beloved son of the Missir family, whom they were rightfully proud of. I would almost miss this opportunity, because I found his sister Letizia’s mail, in which she was informing me about the book being prepared, in the inbox of the Foreign Ministry’s mail account, which I don’t generally use.

I lived in Brussels for many years because of my education and job. In the initial years of that period, Alessandro’s father Livio Missir became my friend. We were talking about issues related to Turkey’s state of belonging to Europe and we were holding conversations about history and culture. When I was appointed as the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Turkey to the European Union in 1997, I got to know his son Alessandro, a very polite and young civil servant who was always ready to help and with whom you could talk about anything and everything regarding cultural matters.

Turkey–EU relations made a leap following the Helsinki Summit in 1999. Full membership process restarted. In those times, there were not so many people who thought that the momentum gained should not be missed.

H.E Ambassador Dr. Nihat Akyol has a PhD in International Law from Nancy University (France-1974). He has spent most of his diplomatic career in Brussels and in various key positions related to Turkey-EU relations. He had the opportunity to work in 1972 with Emile Noel, Secretary General of the Commission of the European Economic Community. Amb. Dr. Akyol was Director-General of EU relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1995-1997) and Permanent Representative of Republic of Turkey to the EU (1997-2002). Amb. Dr. Akyol is the Founder of the “European-Turkish Foundation”, a Brussels-based NGO, launched in 2002, aiming to promote relations between Turkey and the EU. Before being appointed in 2007 as the Ambassador of Turkey in Caracas, Venezuela he worked as adviser to the President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB).
Alessandro was thinking that a historic opportunity had arisen and that opportunity had to be exploited as rapidly as possible in opposition to many of his colleagues. My assistants left with very good impressions from every meeting they held with him.

After Turkey’s official candidacy was granted, preparations to open the negotiations became more intense. We were elaborating on the idea of a non-governmental organization bringing together active and dynamic organisations and persons representing civil society. We did not have to wait for long for the support of the Commission, when we shared our opinion. Turkey - Europe Foundation was established on 17th December 2001. As Mr. Verheugen, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement of that period, was delivering his speech about their support for that project, Alessandro was enjoying the speech, which he had written himself, with a big smile on his face.

I remember Alessandro replying very patiently to the questions posed by those MEPs in opposition. He was approaching to every question with great wisdom despite his young age. He was always a sincere and loyal advocator of the new policy of the Union, which stands for full membership of Turkey.

I will remember him both as a representer of an understanding which considers principles like *pacta sunt servanda* and respect for agreements as the basic principles of the EU and as the precious son of a family friend.
Alessandro: a philosopher...

Yaprak Alp  
First Secretary, Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Turkey to the EU

I worked with Alessandro for several years and was thus able to appreciate the strength of his exceptional personality. There were frequent meetings at the European Commission or the Parliament that confronted the two sides with major difficulties of comprehension and dialogue. Alessandro saved us every time and steered the most complex of situations out of deadlock. I remember one meeting where tensions were running particularly high, despite efforts on both sides, where no one understood anyone else. Alessandro took the floor, calmly on behalf of the Commission and addressed the members present: “Sir, let me explain Turkey to you...” Of course, he defended the European Union’s interests, but he explained the country so well in all of its complexity that, with the wave of a magic wand, everything became clear. After he had spoken, there was always a long silence. The assembly looked at one another and another moment of silence filled the room again.

You have to be a philosopher in order to understand Turkey... Alessandro was also a philosopher.

Finally, we Turks also regarded him in a romantic light, for through his origins he represented the symbol of a bygone world: that of the Ottoman Empire and Oriental Latins. The Missir family, Alessandro and his father Livio, have given much to Turkey. I hope that Alessandro’s children will continue in this vein... There is an old Turkish saying that I would like to dedicate to him here, for it was meant for him: “Allah özene bezene yaratmış”, which means: “God created him with great, great care.” You were very lucky to have had a brother like Alessandro.

He explained the country so well in all of its complexity that, with the wave of a magic wand, everything became clear. After he had spoken, there was always a long silence. The assembly looked at one another and another moment of silence filled the room again.
Memories of Alessandro - A Testimonial

Francesco de Angelis Former Director Aidco

Lunchtime at the end of the first morning of the Conference on Organized Crime, at Amalfi, where Alessandro and I had been invited to speak as representatives of the European Commission. We were all sitting at our tables, except for him. Typical, I thought, dear old A. must have fallen under the charms of some old stone of the glorious Naval Republic. And yet he knew how strict I was about punctuality, especially with important guests. As minutes went by, my anger slowly subsided into concern. An hour later, in fact, when he turned up, A. was totally upset and I had to invite him to calm down before telling us what had happened. It had to do with a much loved family heirloom, an old suitcase (about which I had teased him once, only to provoke his offended reaction). Well, the precious suitcase had been blown up!

That Conference was attended by important magistrates from various countries, including Italy, who fought financial crime and were therefore obvious targets. Gherardo Colombo was one of them. A. had forgotten his suitcase full of documents ready for distribution in the meeting room. Suspicious both of the contents and the owner of the suitcase, the security guards had exploded it. When A. came back for his suitcase before lunch he only found its scattered bits – it was not easy to console our hero!

Many such colourful incidents punctuated the four years during which A. was my assistant. Alessandro was a man endowed with an unusually vast culture. In his own words, he owed it from childhood mainly to his father, who in Brussels and wherever they went always walked with him to places of historical and cultural interest. How come then A., himself a young spirited horse with ambitious dreams, had entered Finance Control? Maybe the answer is to be found in the immediate and spontaneous rapport between us, later enhanced by mutual regard.

However, that experience did not do him any harm. Since his task often involved criticism of our colleagues' initiatives, I had made it clear to Alessandro that he should always support his remarks with extremely solid points, which meant him giving account for everything, including commas and full stops. That was imperative, if I were to sign any of his notes. For Alessandro, with his high-flying ideas, that was a nearly impossible discipline, but in the end his mind had mastered the concept, so much so that when we met our greeting was "punto e virgola".

Alessandro was also a brilliant speaker, capable of improvising a speech on difficult subjects that were new to him. Together we travelled across Europe
and met magistrates, lawyers, civil servants, academics, ministers, in order to promote one belief: the necessity, if we want to protect the finances of Europe, of a European judicial framework, with a code of common criminal laws and the creation of a European public prosecutor. Alessandro would be happy to learn that our efforts, taken over by the colleagues of OLAF, culminate in the Treaty of Lisbon!

The Parma Seminar on the legal protection of the financial interests of the European Union: in front of the best known criminal law specialists in Europe, Alessandro gave a highly appreciated contribution. When the Seminar was over, Alessandro stepped down to escort Mrs. Diemut Theato, Doctor 'honoris causa' from the University of Urbino and President of the Control Committee on the European Parliament Budget through the streets of the city. In fact, the President had to buy a present for her first newborn grand-daughter. Alessandro was a patient assistant in the purchase of a pair of tiny shoes, concluded after visiting about ten shops! When they happily return to the hotel, Alessandro was exhausted.

Helpful kindness was typical of him. His inborn enthusiasm never failed. After dinner, during the same Seminar, he invited the strongest participants to a stroll through the streets of Parma. Umbrella in one hand, although the evening was lovely, he was an accomplished guide to the history and the art treasures of that enchanting town, giving translations in the languages of all the people present!

Again, at the conference organized jointly with the Polish High Court, Alessandro devised an unforgettable night tour of Krakow to see all the wonderful sights of the city.

European criminal law fascinated Alessandro because it was a challenge. He became a real expert, capable of subtle discussions with academics famous throughout Europe. I was surprised, sometimes, at the way he kept his own ground, even if now and then he had to turn to St Augustin for a quotation...

As the time when we worked together was coming to an end and he had announced his decision to go to the States, our conversations somehow turned to the subject of religion. His Christian faith was incredibly firm, maybe because in Alessandro logical thinking in the manner of Descartes combined with an extraordinary feeling for the transcendental. As a staunch secularist, I had argued that the values of existence resided in our 'humanity', which was the result of historical developments over thousands of years and not of a revealed truth.

After leaving our Unit, Alessandro went to Boston in order to improve his understanding of international affairs. He was not supported by the Commission despite our efforts. I strongly advised him not to come back to Finance Control, because his calling lay elsewhere. He would be more useful by far to the Commission in one of the “political” Directorates General.
Alessandro and I met again on various occasions, after he came back. He was quite happy in his new post, but he felt a lack of energetic initiative and courage all around, whereas he himself was ready for new challenges. On the personal level, when we worked together he used to tell me about his emotions and his disappointments, he quoted passages by great writers about the failings of the human body. Then came Arianna, his great love for her and the imaginative methods to win her heart (the Arc du Cinquantenaire, etc ...). Their wedding was not only a social event, but also a moment of intense and unforgettable emotion. And then the children, the roof of their house collapsing... we heard all these colourful stories at the previews in the family Gallery at the Sablon.

We learnt about the absurd tragedy via an e-mail. Unbelievable! Then the ghastly reality hit us! Then at least three nights of nightmares and bewilderment...

The funeral service in Church was tragic and intense: the heroic father, though torn by grief, was able to make a speech. Alessandro must have been proud of him.

You will remain in our memories and in our hearts and you will live in heaven and... in the history of humankind.

*Text translated from Italian to English by Mr. Peter Burnett.*
Our closest connection was through our shared belief in God

Fabrizio Barbaso  Former Director General for Enlargement 2003-2006

I met Alessandro in 2003 when I took up my function as Director General for Enlargement. We worked together closely on Turkey. The first thing that springs to mind when I think of him is his lively expression, the finesse of his reasoning and his vast general knowledge. We were on the same wavelength, but our closest connection was through our shared belief in God. I was able to experience this faith during the election of Pope Ratzinger. It was very moving. We were in my office where I had switched on the television to follow the event. He knew Ankara well and Istanbul even better, where I followed him through the streets and alleys, listening to his perfect descriptions of such and such a district, the vestiges of the past, the nostalgia of certain abandoned places. One of Alessandro’s favourite walks was along the Bosphorus. He could walk for miles with his penetrating gaze fixed on Asia. He brought us his highly personal point of view and method of approaching the issue of Turkey’s membership of the European Union and contributed considerably to the debate. I would like to say here to his children: follow in the footsteps of your remarkable father through your enthusiasm, passion and intellectual honesty. Always follow your vocation in life.
Detail of a mosaic in Kariye Museum (Saint-Sauveur in Chora).
An extraordinary couple

Sylvain Berger Political Adviser, Permanent Representation of France to NATO and his wife Marie-Christine.

We have been friends with Ariane and Alessandro since Poland; like them and others (Jo and Dagmar Indekeu, Etienne and Caroline de Poncins, not to mention Nicola Todaro Marescotti), we lived in this country (from 1995 to 1999), which we loved as much as them. We were neighbours in Wilanow, South of Warsaw.

We then had the great pleasure of meeting up with them again in Brussels, when we arrived there in 2004.

Marie-Christine: I have strong memories of Ariane and Alessandro’s house in Wilanow, even after so many years. The large, modern painting by Yves de Fierlant and a photograph of Ariane on her wedding day.

The large canvas also illuminated their sitting room in Krainem, its original, sober and refined elegance was at the same time the image of Ariane and Alessandro. With Ariane, I shared the hobby of picture-framing, which she learned from me in Warsaw. She had put this leisure activity aside since then, but on the dining room wall, I was delighted to see pictures that she had framed at the time, which illustrated the certainty of her artistic tastes.

The photograph of Ariane on her wedding day is a close-up of her face, she is turning round to look at the photographer who is behind her. An antique tiara is holding her veil in her hair, she was a princess. We saw this photograph again in Krainem, and then... at Notre Dame du Sablon. We shall never forget Ariane’s kindness and calmness, but above all her beauty and grace. The last time we saw her was on 23rd July 2006, when she came with Alessandro and the twins to visit our house in avenue Houzeau, near the Observatory. We left our keys with them the day before our departure on holiday and their own removals, just in case. When she left, our son told us he noticed how beautiful she was. It is not customary for a 17 year-old boy to make such a remark to his parents. But Ariane’s beauty was exceptional.

I will always remember Alessandro’s great intellectual curiosity and incomparable erudition. During a dinner at the home of our friend Nicola Todaro Marescotti, the people sitting next to me and I were trying to remember the name of the author of the “Lion des Flandres”. Everyone “dried up” and we all turned inevitably to Alessandro. He took just a few seconds to find the name of Henri Conscience, during which time we remained incredulous, holding our breath: could it be that he didn’t know? The answer came, of course Alessandro knew, and everything returned to normal!
Sylvain: I built up excellent working relations with Alessandro; as a French diplomat in Poland, I followed Polish foreign policy at the embassy, including certain preparations for the country’s entry into the EU, its major dossier at the European delegation. Above all, we shared an enjoyment of animated political discussions, curious or old books, often sharing the same preferences, such that one day in Brussels, discovering that we were both bidding against each other for similar books on E-bay, we arranged how not to work against each other’s interests! At that time, he loved books by Paul Morand and the anecdotes about the Princess Bibesco; we exchanged our pseudonyms: I have unfortunately forgotten his exact name, but it was a reference to the Byzantine Empire.

He came to dinner at our house at the end of July. We discussed more serious subjects alone. We spoke about life and death, predestination and fate, conscience and God.

I saw him again at the end of August, on the steps of our house. Returning from the countryside, he had come to return our keys one Sunday evening, happy to be leaving for new horizons.

We were happy to have been able to meet and love this marvellous couple. We remember their elegance, kindness and faithful friendship... They live on in our memories: their shadows and their smiles, Alessandro’s reasoning, exclamations and witty comments.

They were of course at our first dinner, when we arrived in Brussels in autumn 2004. We were also invited to what was probably one of their last dinners in Brussels, on 23rd June, that last summer. That evening, we stayed longer than usual. Even if we were going to see one another again during the summer, we knew intuitively that we had to say everything we had to say, for it was the moment to say goodbye... We didn’t know how true this was to be. We did meet up again on other, shorter occasions; Ariane twisted her ankle and we stayed with her, talking about their departure for their posting, which they had been so looking forward to; they were happy, with their habitual, exquisite grace, even if they seemed to be having difficulty coping with all the immediate practical difficulties that arise at such times.

Their tragic death marked a turning point in our lives. There was a before and an afterwards. First there was the anxiety confronted with this irruption of chaos: what is the meaning of the absurdity of their deaths? For a long time, we would have so dearly preferred to find a meaning in it. How could such barbarism collide with their world of refined civilisation, bookshelves filled with books, silver framed family photographs, adorable, polite children who come and say good evening to visitors in their dressing gowns, before going up to bed?

For months, not a day went by when we did not think of or talk about them.

Then came the time of calm. A sense of fatality, albeit odious to accept; it was fate, albeit the most unjust.
Yet we have still not found any meaning to what happened to them, although there is finally at least a message. To paraphrase Mallarmé, “we others (...) now know that we are mortal.” The moments shared with those whom we loved take on a new value.

When they left, Ariane and Alessandro gave us another gift which we would never have imagined. We did not know their families and perhaps would never have known them, except through the affection which they demonstrated when they spoke of them. We met them. We hoped to be able to help them but we were the ones who received so much from these meetings. At the funeral, where the parents, brothers and sisters spoke, each in their own manner, but always deeply moving, we were impressed by their courage and generosity of spirit.

Retrospectively, we understand better what made up the qualities of Alessandro and Ariane, where these strong, original convictions came from, this simple manner of welcoming and celebrating others.

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We are happy to see that their children are growing up as well as possible after such a tragedy: they also display an astonishing strength, which they must draw from their families, who surround them and take charge of them, just as Alessandro’s sister had promised so vibrantly and touchingly at the funeral.

Such are the traces that they have left in the hearts of friends which the random nature of diplomatic life led them to meet.

A few weeks after the event, Sylvain returned emotional and shaken from his ritual Sunday morning antiques hunt. He had found THE book by Paul Morand which was missing from Alessandro’s collection and which he had been looking for before his departure for Morocco. Sylvain bought it for Alessandro’s children, and gave it to their grandfather, Livio. It is an anecdote, but it is symbolic... barbarism will never destroy the collections of old books, the love of beauty, the cherished objects that fathers hand down one day to their sons, and friends continue to live on in the hearts of those who knew them.
Alessandro, on the footsteps of his father

Mehmet Ali Birand Editor-in-Chief, CNNTurk

The first time I met Alessandro was at the Librairie de Rome in Brussels, which no longer exists today. He was buying books with his father, whom I have known for 40 years and first met in 1971 at the time when Turkey was not a part of the European debate. At that time, he represented “Mr. Europe”. He introduced me to Alessandro saying: “I’d like to introduce you to my son. He is the one who is going to take up the torch now in relation to Turkey and the European debate. He is now going to continue the work that I began many years ago.” I smiled, because I could immediately see the mark of Mr. Livio Missir in Alessandro’s personality. Alessandro was an “Effendi”, a true gentleman. In the performance of his duties, he managed to speak to both parties without offending anyone, which greatly facilitated dialogue. Through his unparalleled charisma, he managed to initiate important reflections on Turkey in the European Commission. These reflections broached difficult subjects and were initially misjudged. His dream was to one day see and experience Turkey’s membership of the European Union. He was a great defender of Turkey. We miss him very much.

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Alessandro was a Pasha!

Amb. Volkan Bozkıır Secretary General, Secretariat General for EU Affairs

I always called Alessandro “Alessandro Pasha”! Why? Because in his behaviour, he was a Pasha! This title comes from Ottoman times when there were a great number of “aristocratic” titles to define certain people who had specific functions. He represented everything which this title meant: a refined personality, noble bearing filled with values. Pasha or Effendi. He was an Effendi par excellence.

Pasha or pacha, formerly bashaw, (Turkish: paşa) was a high rank in the Ottoman Empire political system, typically granted to governors and generals. As an honorary title, “Pasha” in one of its various ranks is equivalent to the British title of “Lord”.

Etymologists variously derive the word pasha from the from the Turkish başğa (Big Brother) [1] (in some dialects pash), “head lord”, “tribal chief” etc. (more likely for an officer). Old Turkish had no fixed distinction between /b/ and /p/. As first used in Western Europe, the title appeared in writing with the initial “b”. The English forms bashaw, bassaw, bucha etc., general in the 16th and 17th centuries, derive through the medieval Latin and Italian word bassa.

Role in the Ottoman political system

The Ottoman Sultan of Turkey and (by delegation) the viceroyal Khedive of Egypt had the right to bestow the title of Pasha. The title appears, originally, to have applied exclusively to military commanders, but subsequently it could distinguish any high official, and also unofficial persons whom the court desired to honour.

It was also part of the official style of the Kapudan Pasha (Great Admiral of the entire Ottoman fleet).

Pashas ranked above Beys and Aghas, but below Khedives and Viziers.

Three grades of Pasha existed, distinguished by the number of yak- or horse-tails (three, two and one respectively; a symbol of Turco-Mongol tradition) or peacock tails, which the bearers were entitled to display on their standard as a symbol of military authority when on campaign. Only the Sultan himself was entitled to four tails, as sovereign commander in chief.

Honourific

In usage, the title followed the given name. Although the word serves as a non-hereditary title, English speakers have commonly used the word pasha as if it formed part of a personal name, as for instance in Ibrahim Pasha or Emin Pasha, similar to the practice of referring to a British Peer as Lord X, since in both cases it substitutes for a more precise rank title.

The sons of a Pasha were styled Pashazada or Pasha-zade, which means just that.

In modern Egyptian and (to a lesser extent) Levantine Arabic, it is used as an honourific closer to “Sir” than “Lord,” especially by older people.

Ref: wikipedia, July 2008.
I always called Alessandro “Alessandro Pasha”! Why? Because in his behaviour, he was a Pasha!

Effendi

Effendi or Efendi (from Turkish Efendi) is a Turkish title meaning a lord or master. It is a title of respect or courtesy, equivalent to the English Sir, in Turkey and some other Eastern countries. It follows the personal name, when it is used, and is generally given to members of the learned professions, and to government officials who have no higher rank, such as Bey or Pasha. It may also indicate a definite office, as Hekim Efendi, chief physician to the sultan. The possessive form efendim (my master) is used by servants and in formal intercourse.

In the Ottoman era, the most common title affixed to a personal name after that of agha was efendi. Such a title would have indicated an “educated gentleman”, hence by implication a graduate of a secular state school (rüüdiye), even though at least some if not most of these efendis had once been religious students, or even religious teachers.

According to the 1911 Encyclopædia Britannica the word is a corruption of the Greek aphentes (afendis in Modern Greek “lord” or “master”). Though it may instead have been derived from the Old Turkic apandi, a title of nobility, since it appears in Old Uyghur.

Ref: wikipedia, July 2008.
It was Turkey that enabled me to meet, know and appreciate Alessandro. Turkey and above all its tumultuous relations with the European Union, left no diplomat indifferent and certainly not Alessandro who, in 2001, became Head of the Political Unit for Turkey within the DG for Enlargement.

Alessandro had an almost genetic knowledge of Turkey. He knew it not only through the issues, of which he had a remarkably thorough knowledge, but also through his numerous visits on the ground and above all his long family history, inseparably bound up with this region of the world. Alessandro’s Turkey was essentially European, even if he was the first to acknowledge the immensity of reform work that remained to be accomplished by the Turkish authorities. He had a vision which, like all ambitious perspectives, was based on an in-depth historical knowledge. This vision never clouded his impartial analysis of all the difficulties confronting Turkey’s candidature. But with all of his characteristic elegance, he preferred to point out the reasons for hope rather than straying into an impasse.

In an extremely politicised debate too often caricaturised by prejudice, Alessandro avoided easy options and formulated balanced judgments that took full account of the complexity of situations.

Whilst regional destabilisation continued to the East of Turkey (from Afghanistan to Iran and from Iraq to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), the dynamic for the democratic transformation of Turkey in line with European standards remains just as relevant for both the European anchorage of this country and for regional security: Enlightened, balanced approaches, like those of Alessandro, are therefore still required.
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Like all men with such strongly anchored intimate convictions, he could freely discuss his opinions to bring about mutual respect, which is central to true diplomacy.

In Alessandro, I discovered a man who managed his numerous qualities with discretion and good humour. He was a strong believer in God, a genuine European and polyglot, a highly tolerant, literary individual. Like all men with such strongly anchored intimate convictions, he could freely discuss his opinions to bring about mutual respect, which is central to true diplomacy.

He had a vision which, like all ambitious perspectives, was based on an in-depth historical knowledge. In Alessandro, I discovered a man who managed his numerous qualities with discretion and good humour. He was a strong believer in God, a genuine European and polyglot, a highly tolerant, literary individual.
Alexandre, your name suited you so well, like Alexander the Great, the image of a man who draws his strength from distant countries and whose strength of soul and character shape a sadly tragic destiny.

Like Alexander the Great, you were a cultivated man, whose spirit leads us naturally to Alexandria and its sublime library...

Alexandre, you loved culture and more precisely you loved old books and maps.

You understood this so well and you created your own history, rather like the path of an aesthetic adventurer, travelling across one of his maps to the farthest reaches of Europe, the near and middle East, with his beliefs...

It was a passion that fitted so well with who you were.
Old books, the captivating smell of old parchment, the strength of intellectual and moral faculties expressed through the written word.
Retranscribed power of sentiments, of economic, political and cultural impulses.
Books, objects which express fantasies and realities equally well.
The realities of a world, one facet of whose history can be cruel and perverse...
History which repeats itself through its political, economic and religious wars.
History, which remains for ever like your story...
You understood this so well and you created your own history, rather like the path of an aesthetic adventurer, travelling across one of his maps to the farthest reaches of Europe, the near and middle East, with his beliefs...
Alexandre, each of us follows our impenetrable destiny...
And so I ask:
-Do we choose our destinies? Perhaps not...
-Can we influence our destinies? Perhaps...
-Should we revolt against our destinies? Yes, if they are unjust...

Like Alexander the Great, you were a cultivated man, whose spirit leads us naturally to Alexandria and its sublime library...
I met Alessandro in 2002 when I was Deputy Head of Cabinet to the Vice-President of the European Commission, Gunter Verheugen. I was immediately captivated by his personality, his natural charm and charisma. I remember in particular a journey we made together to Ankara with various leading figures from European and Turkish diplomatic world. At the end of a very important meeting, I overheard, unintentionally, an informal conversation between two individuals. I don’t remember the details of the conversation as such, just a few brief statements which, in spite of myself, still resound in my head: “Alessandro is like a walking encyclopaedia and there is nothing he doesn’t know about Turkey, our country. From the Ottoman Empire to the present day, each time I speak to him, I learn bits of history that I haven’t heard before or that I never even imagined... It’s so impressive!”
Only some months with him but in my heart always

Martin Dawnson  Deputy Head of Unit – DG Enlargement

I worked for several years at the Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey, in Ankara and met Alessandro in this context. In fact, I only met him a few times, as he arrived in the Unit for Turkey when I was about to leave the Delegation. In this short time, he taught me a lot about Turkey and often emphasised that Europe and Turkey had a shared history, and how we should be allies with Turkey, as this country is strategically important for Europe. Whereas most colleagues working in the unit had technical knowledge, he explained the country to us as a whole. I always keep a photograph of him in my briefcase, which Sema Kılıçer from the Delegation in Ankara gave to me at the time of the tragedy. It is a photograph of him on mission in Hakkari.

I always keep a photograph of him in my briefcase, which Sema Kılıçer from the Delegation in Ankara gave to me at the time of the tragedy.
He was an irreplaceable interlocutor in the Europe-Turkey debate. It is an enormous loss for us, as he knew very well that with Turkey as a member, Europe would be in a stronger position to face the challenges of globalisation. I remember a long conversation with him about the writer Yaşar Kemal whom we often spoke of. He even knew Yaşar Kemal!
It is an enormous loss for us, as he knew very well that with Turkey as a member, Europe would be in a stronger position to face the challenges of globalisation. He was also committed to making Europe understand that it should accept values of universal scope, rather than those limited to certain countries. Few people are aware of this... I bow to his memory with great respect and friendship.

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Yaşar Kemal

Yaşar Kemal was born in 1923 in the village of Hemite, to which his parents had moved from Eastern Turkey. As a child he began improvising songs and imitating the itinerant singers of Anatolia, and it was in order to be able to remember them that he decided to learn to read and write. He was unable to continue his studies beyond the first two years of secondary school. He then had several jobs, as a factory worker, farm labourer, clerk in a gas company and reporter, etc. Suspected of subversive activities, he was arrested in 1950. Although he was acquitted, the police continued to persecute him. He then moved to Istanbul, adopted his current pseudonym and became a journalist for Cumhuriyet. In 1952, he published a collection of novellas and then in 1955, Ince Mèmed, which was an immediate success and has since been translated into several languages. Yaşar Kemal was a member of the Central Committee of the Labour Party in Turkey, which was dissolved in 1971. He was awarded the Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger (Best Foreign Book Prize) in 1978 in Paris for The Undying Grass, and the Prix Mondial Cino Del Duca (World Cino Del Duca Prize) in 1982 for his entire oeuvre.

(Biography in “Tu écraseras le serpent” [To Crush the Serpent]. Gallimard Editions. 1982.)
When I arrived in Warsaw in early September 1999, after having been posted in the immensity of Brazil, I was fortunate to find a few gems in the team, which was even more effective as it was bolstered by the superb objective of reunifying the European continent. Alessandro was one of these gems. Not that it was unanimously acknowledged. A constantly alert curiosity and a certain form of arrogance of knowledge could be irritating. I thus spent several weeks striving to pacify the tensions that existed in the office. He was, I think, grateful to me for this.

John O’Rourke, my number two in Poland, and Alessandro – who are inseparable in my memory of that time – quickly formed a sort of special guard, responsible for bringing me up to speed on this central European world of which I knew little, having only visited it on rare occasions over the thirty years of my professional life that have spanned every continent, starting in Laos in 1970.

In Warsaw, Alessandro was responsible for what is called in our jargon the “third pillar”, i.e. the still poorly communitarised issues of Justice and Internal Affairs. In this capacity, he supervised Poland’s adoption of the Schengen Treaty acquis and development cooperation. This enabled the Union’s various border posts to be equipped with cutting edge technological equipment on its future external boundary with the Ukraine, Belarus and even Russia, owing to its desperate exclave of Kaliningrad, albeit Kant’s birthplace.

I understood very quickly what fascinated Alessandro in this captivating activity, which was soon to infect me also thanks to him. It was the battle, in this long troubled region, of history and geography. It was the contradictions between the frontiers inherited from Yalta and mental maps. It was the mythologies created principally by the Union of Lublin, which in 1565 sealed the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth over a space of nearly one million square kilometres, from the Baltic almost to the Black Sea. It was this crossroads of languages, religions and races between Lvov, far more Polish than it is Ukrainian, and Krakow. Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Germans, Armenians, Jews, Poles and Tatars coexisted in these lands where cupolas, bell towers and
sometimes minarets stood alongside one another; Przemysl and Lviv bear witness to this.

Alessandro was also filled with admiration for the great poet Adam Mickiewicz, who was born in Lithuania and spent his childhood in Vilnius, before moving to Lviv. He was exiled to Odessa, and wrote his great nationalist and romantic epic Pan Tadeusz in Paris. He died in Constantinople during the 19th century, when Poland was to vanish from the map of Europe.

And as Alessandro took a particular interest in religion and the history of religions, he pointed out that Poland had been determined to belong to the West ever since Mieszko, to ward off Czech ambitions, chose to marry the Christian daughter of the Duke of Bohemia and to be baptised in Regensburg in 966.

Was it not Catholicism that served to bind national unity after the partition in 1795 until the Treaty of Versailles?

How then, can we fail to understand this “collective consciousness” which underpinned the glory of a Poland in the vanguard of the West, how Jean Sobieski III defeated the Turks at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, or how Solidarnosc shook the Soviet Empire with the help of the Pope in 1980?

Alessandro also often emphasised the role of memory in Polish foreign policy: (“reference to memory has reached an unprecedented importance under Foreign Minister Geremek. He never misses an opportunity to stress the importance of memory as the basic actor of national identity and cohesion”), but also of the impact of mental maps “The weight of this historical awareness is directly connected to the self-perception of a national identity that goes well beyond its current borders inherited from the Yalta order and forcefully imposed upon the Polish nation by third parties. (1)

“This perhaps explains the peculiar role of mental maps featuring the country with its historical borders reaching out to Smolensk, Kiev and almost Odessa. Examples of these mental maps are the “Dziedzictwo Polski” and “Sladami Trylogii” (…). Interestingly, these maps are widely distributed among schools and available in every bookshop.”) (2)

Being responsible for borders, Alessandro therefore attached particular importance to the weight of culture and historic heritage, turning his attention to a memorandum published in 1999 by a group of Polish intellectuals on the negotiation process for joining the EU: “People need historic awareness for a full sense of their own identity,” they wrote. “Even a difficult past replete with conflicts and harm is something real, something to which one can refer. Only Barbarians prefer a historical vacuum.” They went on to say, “The Polish cultural tradition reminds us how strongly and genuinely our country is linked with the lands currently beyond our eastern border.” (3)

Through his insistence – for when he was convinced about something, Alessandro didn’t work by half measures – and through the visits he organised

(1 and 2) Speech by Alessandro at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Birmingham, on “Poland’s Ostpolitik and EU accession”, on 15th March 2000.
(3) Cited from the same speech.
for me to the various checkpoints, Alessandro was absolutely determined to convince me – and through me, the Commission also – that we had to anticipate Warsaw’s difficulties in accepting the Schengen rules. He also foresaw the need to develop a European policy in relation to the Ukraine so that our new border would not appear to sever Poland from these eastern territories, as well as to support this country in its determination to promote the emergence of independent, sovereign states between itself and Russia.

Poland of course accepted the Schengen acquis and imposed the requirement for visas for Ukrainians, not without regret. But the thousands of young people who flocked to Kiev at the end of November 2004 to support the Orange Revolution, as well as the introduction of a European Neighbourhood Policy, just a few months before the eight Central European countries joined the EU, not to mention the debate initiated in recent weeks by Warsaw on the Union’s Eastern Policy, bear witness to Alessandro’s perspicacity.

This apprenticeship, which Alessandro experienced a few years earlier than myself and which he shared with me, would be continued during the late evening in the charming little town house in Ujazdowskie Alley, where the Delegation was then housed, or sometimes over lunch in one of the nearby restaurants – one of which was called the Ambassador and had a real Cold War air about it. We would often be joined by John O’Rourke. In these impassioned conversations – for Alessandro was never a lukewarm person – I listened more than I spoke, especially when my two colleagues discussed theology, a subject with which I was far less familiar.

They also placed their appreciation of religion, like that of politics, at the service of enlargement, by striving to win over the prelates of a Church who feared the effects of integration on the traditional role of the family, the permissive society and secularisation in general. It has to be said that Father Rydzyk’s radio Maryja, listened to each day by over ten percent of the Polish population, did considerable damage through its anti-European (not hesitating to speak of a new partition), and even anti-Semitic messages.

The support in 2000 for a conference organised by Monseigneur Tadeusz Pieronek, rector of the Academy of Theology in Krakow, on “The role of the Catholic Church in the European integration process”, meetings with Msgr. Josef Zycinski, the Archbishop of Lublin, who was open to European integration and an eminent specialist on orthodoxy and the Ukraine, and above all the organisation of the transfer of the Polish episcopal conference to Brussels, resulted in the Catholic Church’s support for adhesion. This was a considerable asset.

How happy Alessandro must have been when Cardinal Glemp, the deeply conservative Primate of Poland, speaking to anti-European Catholics, described “withdrawal into oneself” as “anti-evangelical”.

Ever in search of meaning, Alessandro set about brilliantly (John, his Polish was in a class of its own) learning the language, whilst during the weekends he foraged through Domus, the bookshop in the old town near the Rynek, or on Sundays in the Kolo – Warsaw’s flea market – in search of the texts, prints and old maps he loved so much. Also being in this Slav part of the world, he bought icons that were being sold for next to nothing by apparatchiks in need of foreign currency, and particularly appreciated the smaller representations of the Blessed Virgin on postcard-sized pieces of wood, which he often had close at hand.

We shared Domus and the Kolo where the young family – the twins had not yet been born – sometimes delighted in finding a small piece of Biedermeier furniture. We also shared the Kameralna Opera, a marvellous chamber opera which had found refuge in a former Lutheran temple – seating scarcely five hundred people, but where there was an exceptional rapport between the house and the stage.

Always concerned with culture, Alessandro had decided to support this final vestige of communism and its charismatic, scholarly director Stefan Sutkowski, whose repertoire would make operas around the world turn green with jealousy, in its determination to fittingly celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of opera, an eminently European art.

As a result of this cooperation, I have kept a magical recording of Euridice by Jacopo Peri, the first opera ever performed.

Alessandro was also filled with admiration for the great poet Adam Mickiewicz, who was born in Lithuania and spent his childhood in Vilnius, before moving to Lviv. He was exiled to Odessa, and wrote his great nationalist and romantic epic Pan Tadeusz in Paris. He died in Constantinople (Istanbul) during the 19th century, when Poland was to vanish from the map of Europe.

When Alessandro returned to Brussels, I took over this marvellous cooperation that he had initiated. And I was greatly saddened by the absence of Alessandro and Ariane on 9th May (the Festival of Europe) in Warsaw, when Stefan Sutkowski opened his theatre to us with a charming performance of “Schauspieldirektor” as a leaving gift.

As we were separated by a generation, and because my wife Isabelle and I have numerous social obligations, we saw little of one another outside the office, where we worked long hours. But Ariane, whose sister had looked after our sons when they were small in the Belgian Ardennes near Spa, was radiant
on 9th May alongside us, and at the handful of social events we sometimes organised with the “youngsters” in the delightful and aptly named Ulica Romantyczna park.

Ever-skilled in passing the baton, several years later Alessandro also looked after our son Laurent, then a young political sciences student and a trainee in the Turkish Directorate. With the complicity of his director Pierre Mirel and although he was not directly responsible for him, Alessandro took him under his wing, enabling him to attend meetings in the Commission as well as at the Council and the Parliament. Laurent, who found the Commission rather bureaucratic, told me, “Thank goodness for Alessandro.” In other words, he was not a bureaucrat.

These connections and shared tastes made us want to begin a new adventure together in another environment, the Mediterranean at the heart of the Missir de Lusignan family history. When he learned of my appointment in Rabat, on 1st July 2005 Alessandro sent me one of his e-mails which I have kept, because its style was the man himself:

“I learned today the good news for Morocco. Dare I cite Morand’s legendary phrase of congratulations: a thousand hollyhocks, a thousand loukoums!

Following in the footsteps of Lyautey is certainly one way of continuing the longest dream in the history of humanity, to unite the West and the East!

Personally, after four years as a Janissary of the inner sanctum, I would be delighted to turn myself into a Spahi alongside you for another wild cavalcade! This is at least my dearest wish, as expressed in the 2006 rotation, where Rabat featured on the top of my list.

Hoping to see you soon,

Alessandro”

I was pleased that Ariane and Alessandro had requested to join us in Rabat. Perhaps I should not have been.
A bridge spreading peace and understanding

Stefano Dotto Administrator, Kosovo Unit

I had been in the Turkey Unit for two years, and he arrived from Poland, as political desk officer. From the very first moment, we communicated and understood each other well, and it was not just because we spoke the same language.

The fulfilment of Copenhagen political criteria was the pre-requisite to start actual negotiation. Alessandro was in charge of the political issues. Therefore he contributed to formulating the Commission’s assessment in that regard. The matter was sensitive, and Turkey could neither receive a full score, nor be rejected. Therefore, the Commission recommendation has been that accession negotiations could begin, since Turkey “sufficiently” fulfilled these criteria. This qualification was a “premiere” in the EU enlargement.

He had a clear vision of the geo-strategic implications of Turkish accession, and the consequences of alternative scenarios on Turkey itself. He knew Turkish politics, Turkish society, and managed to explain it within the Commission, to the Member States and the Members of the European Parliament. His efforts certainly contributed to building the consensus that actually allowed negotiations to start. Therefore, Alessandro certainly contributed to establishing the necessary conditions for negotiations.

A man who was building peace and understanding, the most peaceful person whom I had ever met, was killed by blind and unexplained violence.

I would like to describe not an anecdote, but more of a climate.

Alessandro’s and my background had a number of similarities, but still, we managed not to agree on almost anything. We had different political ideas, different approaches to deep beliefs, as well as to the work and to Turkey. His arguments were always interesting, stimulating, rich and cultivated. We had long discussions, where we ultimately agreed to disagree. Still, we kept a deep respect for each other and I felt good after these discussions. Not convinced, but certainly a bit richer.

Alessandro was passionate about his work and about Turkey. He had a deep, personal knowledge and understanding of the country and its people. He was building bridges, spreading peace and understanding. A great connoisseur
of Turkey with undisputed commitment, he could also be critical and fair. His contribution to the constructive criticisms must have been listened to in Turkey and must have contributed to modernising the country at that time.

I will never forget how we worked together. At one point, around the time when the decision to start accession negotiations was taken, the Turkey team held the record for Parliamentarian and citizens’ questions, and demands for briefings. The work load was heavy, deadlines tight, and the outcome had to be of high quality, on sensitive matters. Alessandro covered all political aspects, I provided the input for all economy related issues. We worked as a solid, effective team, without a glitch, in full complementarity. And this lasted till the day he left for Morocco.

He knew Turkish politics, Turkish society, and managed to explain it within the Commission, to the Member States and the Members of the European Parliament. His efforts certainly contributed to building the consensus that actually allowed negotiations to start.

When he was offered the job in Rabat, I was happy for him. We discussed it several times. It seemed such a great opportunity to everyone. But he had doubts. Something in the back of his mind was not convinced.

Just before leaving, he told me, “This is a goodbye, not a farewell. We shall meet again.” I do not remember what I replied, but we really hoped, both of us, to have a chance to work together. Unfortunately, the last time we met was in his office, in the Charlemagne building. We had not even exchanged an email since he took his assignment in Rabat.

A man who was building peace and understanding, the most peaceful person whom I had ever met, was killed by blind and unexplained violence.
I remember Alessandro Missir di Lusignano as being first of all very perfectionist, a hard worker.

He worked very hard on Turkey-related issues.

As a person he was always very kind and noble. I also remember him speaking very good Turkish.

I am sure it was a pleasure for him to work for Turkey and also visit Turkey from time to time.

He loved to taste/buy “simit” - from the man in front of the building - every time he came to the Delegation (ring-shaped pastry covered in sesame seeds).

After 18 years in the Delegation, I sometimes forget names but I will always remember Alessandro Missir di Lusignano as a privileged colleague.
Alessandro: an angel from another world lent to us by heaven for a short time...

Sümbül Eren: 
Alessandro truly symbolised what it means to be an Ottoman! What is hidden behind this word? So many things... elegance, refinement of mind, highly eclectic behaviour and a nobility of soul. In short, this appellation refers to a whole way of being and living that has now disappeared. In the Ottoman Empire, there was so much refinement and culture. Alessandro was a cosmopolitan par excellence and symbolised so well the synthesis between East and West.

Sümbül Eren Press Officer – Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey
Alessandro truly symbolised what it means to be an Ottoman!

What is hidden behind this word? So many things… elegance, refinement of mind, highly eclectic behaviour and a nobility of soul. In short, this appellation refers to a whole way of being and living that has now disappeared.

Sümbül Eren:
I also remember one day in Ankara, he was on mission to visit us for a few days and I had bought a simit one morning for breakfast. I was greedily enjoying it when I met Alessandro by chance on the way to the office. Immediately and spontaneously, I offered him my simit so that he could take a piece. And suddenly, he responded enthusiastically: ah, a Gevrek, it’s been a long time since I had a Gevrek. How delicious! It is my personal answer to Proust’s madeleine… In fact, a Gevrek is the same thing as a Simit, but it is a word that comes from the Ottoman Empire. It is still used in Izmir, but I wasn’t aware of that. Alessandro then taught me the origin and etymology of the word. I was also very surprised when I found out how young he was, as he appeared so mature, he had already done so many things by the age of just 39: a professional career, a superb marriage and four young children. I remember him as someone who worked for the rapprochement of cultures and religions. He was also a very refined, elegant man in all the aspects of his life, as well as a fine gourmet. He was a gastronome and adored trying a wide variety of mezzes, lots of fish and various dishes. He passionately tasted the dishes presented to him and then commented on the taste, the spices and how they were prepared. He was equally a big diplomat, gifted with a strong, original, all-round, creative personality. In fact, he really appeared to have come from another world, another time, as if heaven had “lent” him to us for a short time. When I think back about him, I tell myself that he was not part of this world. He was like an angel who visited the Earth to pass on his values to us and teach us the essential things of life before he left…He loved art, music, painting, poetry, sculpture, literature, etc. He had a far-ranging curiosity and an insatiable appetite for knowledge. It’s a rare thing.
Mecidiye Camii, Ortaköy, Istanbul
**Sema Kılıçer:**

We miss him. We shall miss him for ever. I shall always remember his last words to us: he was very sad and nostalgic when he left the Turkey Desk at the European Commission, as he identified strongly with his work. He had even thought of writing a book about his experience during these years. He was highly constructive for our country. Before his departure, he said to me: “Don’t worry, I haven’t said my last word, I shall return to work on this issue, I’ve not said my last word…” He was not of this world... Few people today still convey all these values to which he was profoundly attached: the family, friendship, humanity, respect for others, modesty, etc.
Turkey & Europe: An Example

Yeni Cami, Eminönü, Istanbul
Our programme on civil-military relations in Turkey is quite a sensitive endeavour because of the special role of the military in Turkish politics. We are able to carry it forward thanks to the help of the Netherlands government, the cooperation and advice of our Turkish colleagues, and the encouragement of the European Commission. At the Directorate-General for Enlargement, Alessandro was our first point of contact. He soon also became our friend.

We also shared a wish that the obstacles standing in the way of Turkish accession would eventually be overcome, and that wonderful and complicated country would one day fulfil its European destiny.

After the long train ride from Groningen to Brussels, it was good to sit down with Alessandro for an exchange of ideas on what was going on in Turkey, as well as some light-hearted conversation. Eurosceptics talk of the faceless bureaucrats in Brussels. Well, Alessandro had a face, a heart and an amazing mind. We shared a love of language and languages.

It was only after several meetings that I discovered he spoke Dutch, when during lunch he trotted out the Dutch word for endives. He went on to explain that the name for the vegetable is different in Belgium and France. Alessandro is also the only bureaucrat I have ever heard quoting Jürgen Habermas. He did it in German, of course.

Alessandro allowed us to look into the work of the Directorate General Enlargement and sought our opinion on several matters. Thanks to him, a few of our sentences ended up in the European Commission’s yearly reports on Turkey’s progress toward accession. We also shared a wish that the obstacles standing in the way of Turkish accession would eventually be overcome, and that wonderful and complicated country would one day fulfil its European destiny. We grumbled together about European politicians who pander to anti-immigration sentiments rather than explaining to the voters that Europe needs Turkey, and Turkey needs Europe.
After the shocking murder of Alessandro and his wife, we found out that our respect, admiration and affection for Alessandro was shared by many across Europe and the Middle East.

At our last meeting, I told him one of my daughters was moving to Rome, and he promised to put me in touch with some people who might be able to help her. Shortly afterwards, he left Brussels for Rabat. After the shocking murder of Alessandro and his wife, we found out that our respect, admiration and affection for Alessandro was shared by many across Europe and the Middle East.

After the long train ride from Groningen to Brussels, it was good to sit down with Alessandro for an exchange of ideas on what was going on in Turkey, as well as some light-hearted conversation. Eurosceptics talk of the faceless bureaucrats in Brussels. Well, Alessandro had a face, a heart and an amazing mind. We shared a love of language and languages. Eurosceptics talk of the faceless bureaucrats in Brussels. Well, Alessandro had a face, a heart and an amazing mind. We shared a love of language and languages.
Alessandro Missir: A man of faith and discipline

Jean Christophe Filori  Head of Turkey Unit – DG Enlargement

What was this man’s secret? This, I believe, was the question that gnawed at every person who knew Alessandro. Here was someone who spent his days producing briefings, notes and defensive points at an industrial pace; he returned home every evening at 7 o’clock at the latest, probably exhausted; he cared for his family, his children, their worries and their joys; then, his batteries recharged by his home, he would plunge again with delight into some treatise on Ottoman poetry, a novel by Orhan Pamuk or an essay by the late lamented Stéphane Yerasimos – all of which he would reconstruct for you, of course, almost in its entirety the following day... Did his days really only contain 24 hours? This was just one of the mysteries that surround Alessandro Missir...

He always invited us to be humble. He quickly taught us, for example, that the Turkish world is an infinite space and before entering it, the layman was firmly requested to put aside his prejudices, pedantry and clichés. Whereas in others such an immense culture was reduced to a confused accumulation of information, he turned it into an instrument at the service of his instinct. In this way he understood the primordial role of psychology and affect in the complex relations between Turkey and Europe. How a gesture or a word could produce as many results as long negotiations... This is called a sense of politics, an erudite and somewhat hackneyed expression nowadays which means, quite simply, common sense.

This encyclopaedic knowledge went hand in hand with his humour. Many others, carried away by their own verbal diarrhoea, fall into the trap of vanity and become unbearable bores. He on the other hand used it subtly, making it a subject of irony, laughing at our dazed expressions as he explained to us in great detail some obscure administrative practice of the Sultan’s court, whilst offering his knowledge with pleasure and generosity to the auditorium. Generosity: this virtue was clearly his hallmark. The sincere, uncalculated enthusiasm with which he shook my hand the very first time we met in Warsaw, where he was posted, epitomised this. He scrutinised me, a simple underling on mission, with his mischievous eyes and made acquaintance unceremoniously, with empathy. It has to be said that you could not remain impassive for long either to his charm or his witticisms. You should have seen him in Kayseri, in the heart of Anatolia, in October 2005, where the Turkish
minister of foreign affairs had invited his guests from Brussels to an iftar dinner, to break the fast during Ramadan. All of the city’s dignitaries were present, in an atmosphere that was rather strait-laced and weighed down by protocol. It took just a few minutes for us to hear peals of laughter rising from one corner of the immense room, where Alessandro table happened to be. Our friend recited proverbs and courtesies in perfect Turkish and even Ottoman, making his dinner companions choke with laughter. And suddenly, as if warmed by this surge of cheerfulness, the ice melted and we heard the immense, mounting hubbub of men finally released from their uncomfortableness. They lowered their guard and could devote themselves, with no other restraint than that commanded by respect, to the simple pleasure of a meal and to the happiness of friendship.

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I met Alessandro in the mid-1990s, at a Seminar organised by the European Commission for Junior Diplomats from the Member States.

Alessandro was taking part in his capacity as a Commission official. During this seminar, I immediately noticed Alessandro’s great qualities. During this training course, there were ex-cathedra presentations and working sub-groups. Alessandro made the right impression through his brilliant wit. During his talks, you noticed his great knowledge of the subjects, his intelligence, his sociability and his ease in talking with everyone and managing to immediately establish high quality, trusting relations. All the participants at the time highlighted all these qualities and admired his great enthusiasm and joviality. He was applauded by everyone for his natural charisma.

Since then, we remained friends and we have met at various events. I have followed his career which took him to Poland and then after four years, returning to the headquarters of the DG for Enlargement to work on the Turkey desk, before witnessing his enthusiasm for his new post in Morocco.

On returning from the Delegation in Poland, we frequently met at the Charlemagne canteen. These very enjoyable meals were intensified during the election of the Pope. During this time, several of us joined together around the lunch table with Alessandro, listening attentively to his predictions on the election of the new Pope. Alessandro indeed had very precise information and in the end his forecast turned out to be quite correct, as the Pope whom he himself had wanted was elected: Benedict XVI.

I shall always cherish a strong memory of this exceptional and extraordinary friend. He was a brilliant person who knew how to bring everyone in his entourage along with him through his enthusiasm, and by inspiring them with his happiness and joie de vivre.
We have come a long way from the clichés that Turkey is not European, Asiatic and Islamist. Alessandro understood the essential point: Turkey, this great country in its Ottoman past, took over from Byzantium, from the Eastern Roman Empire and whilst continuing the tradition it also invented a new culture. We are far removed from nationalism and any fanaticism. Let us remain open to otherness, to Turks, whilst respecting and developing our own traditions. Alessandro taught us this openness, and that’s what we most need now in our relations with Turkey, which we have to treat with respect. We have to learn that we should not only ask Turkey to change to move closer to Europe but that we also have a lot to learn from this great country.

A short passage, which sums up my feelings about Alessandro is the following:

“A place inhabited by the phantoms of lost people, phantoms that own property, receive salaries and are married. A place, like most in fact, where the dead are said to speak louder than the living; where only the dead are allowed to speak and where the living should bow down, listen attentively and obey their commands.”

(Extract from the best book on Greco-Turkish relations that I have read: Yannis Papadakis, Echoes From the Dead Zone – Across the Cyprus Divide, Tauris, 2005, p. : XIII.)
Ever since I can remember, the thought of death has always preoccupied my thoughts. Not a day goes by without the presence of this close friend, whose memory makes me alternate between despair and the love of life. Such is my character. I muddle along like this in order to live, to pass this expanse of time between two unknown voids, mysteries with perhaps no mystery.

I am perhaps not fortunate to have an unshakeable faith. Doubt is my surest companion. This doubt leaves me open to all eventualities, that of another life or of nothingness.

When I think of the essential things that give me an appetite for life, I would place a love of books before anything else and here, Alessandro reappears before me larger than life.

When I think of the essential things that give me an appetite for life, I would place a love of books before anything else and here, Alessandro reappears before me larger than life.

A few years ago, on one of those rare sunny afternoons in the Brussels winter, when the colours of the North tug at our heartstrings and transport us into this mixture of melancholy and wild joy that I love equally, me, child of the Mediterranean with its soul from the North. I was walking alone to my favourite bookshop – Tropismes – and was happy at the prospect of my encounter with the world of paper that had always given me so much pleasure in the most gracious and generous possible way. Alessandro was already there and I saw him in the basement, where philosophy rubs shoulders with theology and psychoanalysis. He was happy and I understood immediately, it was a profound pleasure, a joy almost of satiety that only booklovers can understand.

I spoke to him quietly and if I remember correctly he replied that he was looking for something on medieval philosophy. I myself bought a heavy volume and he bought a small paperback on the subject that interested him. With his quick humour and without jealousy, he said to me that I could still permit myself a fat volume (at the time, my second child had not been born), whereas with four children, he was limited to small paperbacks and had to be careful.

Only non-booklovers are unable to understand that all this money spent on books which in the end, we often do not like or read, is the best spent money in the world. Agreeing on this conclusion, we walked together a short distance back to our work.
Today, I understand how on that sunny, winter afternoon with Alessandro we learned a great truism. Books are rather like friendly, amorous encounters. Very few remain, in love there is often a single one which is called marriage, but you have to know a lot of things to be able to appreciate the rare pearl.

I left Alessandro somewhere on the rue de la Loi and I saw him walk off to his office with his little paperback on medieval philosophy in his hand. I am certain that he read it all, consistent with the man of faith and discipline that he was. I perhaps read a small section of my large volume, the title of which I can no longer recall.

Alessandro is one of the stones that have contributed for some time to my inner construction and whose solidity is perhaps related to this small volume and this light on a Brussels winter afternoon.
I knew Alessandro through his writings. I never met him in person. And yet... he inspired me and continues to do so when I remember what I have read of him, his vision for Turkey in relation to Europe and for Europe in relation to Turkey. He represented par excellence the dialogue between civilisations, the dialogue between Europe and Islam, the dialogue between Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. He was an exceptional person from an exceptional family. He remains present in my daily life of intellectual reflections and I deeply regret never having met him. He accomplished a considerable task in bringing the East and West closer together.
Appointment of Alessandro Missir at Turkey desk was very exciting for someone like me, who strongly believes in social legacy. What made my heart pound stronger was the fact that I had gotten know this Eurocrat’s father as a journalist. Needless to say, sons are not expected to be identical copies of their fathers. Nevertheless, the power of the values and principles which transmit from father to son can not be neglected. In order to understand the Son better, I will tell you somethings about the Father.

The title of the French book was “Europe before Europe”. The drawings of mosque and the lengthy name of the author had immediately attracted my attention: Livio Missir Reggio Mamachi de Lusignan. Hence, I became very curious about this man, who compiled memories of the Belgians travelling to Izmir in the 19th century.

From the introductory note in the book, which I bought from the bookshop located in the entrance of the European Commission building, I learnt that Livio Missir had roots in the Ottoman Empire, who was translated into Turkish as “Levantiane” which stood for Latin East correctly. Missir was an Italian citizen, who was born in Izmir and who had assumed prominent posts at the Common Market since 1961.

When I met Livio in his bureau in Brussels, I immediately asked him what he meant by “Europe before Europe”, which was the title of his book.
He replied:
- The Ottoman Empire resembles Europe, the Europe we are aiming for today. In other words, a state, which has not lived through and experienced the nationalism of the French Revolution. The Ottoman Empire is exemplary for me. It is of course unthinkable to found an empire today and also the nation states are dead. Our reference point has always been the French Revolution. The revolution turned everyone into French who used to reside in the territory of France. What happened as a result? The other states followed suit. This process produced devastating results. What led to first and second world wars is extreme nationalism.

Missir, who spoke fluent Turkish, also mentioned the “European nation”:
“Not everyone would accept this, since people fear a new world war might break out of the European nationalism. Yet, we are facing big states. What power do our nation states have in opposition to the USA or Russia? That is why we are in the making of Europe. Yet, how are we supposed to succeed in constructing Europe without the European nation? That is the whole issue. Everyone is intimidated by the word nation, it brings nationalism into people’s minds. What is nation? It is formed by people who are bound by a joint cause. That is all there is to nation.”

- Do you know what they told me? We are amazed that the Ottomans have such a deep civilization. However they were confused about Atatürk; the role of Atatürk is not clear enough. Then I asked them; what happened in 1920? Treaty of Sèvres. A big empire was portioned. What about the Muslim Ottomans? They were left with a small portion of land. What did Atatürk say to that? “I don’t accept this. I will establish the New Turkish nation inspired by the French Revolution”. This is what makes Atatürk a great man. Of course for the Turks... Before that everyone considered themselves as Ottoman. The name of the state was Ottoman and every citizen was subjects of the Sultan. The same applied in France before the Revolution as well. After the French Revolution everyone became citizen. What date was that for the Turks? When Atatürk said “there are no more Ottomans, everyone is Turkish” in 1923... actually it also has a history; Article 7 of Teşkilat-i Esasiye of 1876 read as: “Regardless of religion and ethnicity, those who reside in the Ottoman territory and are subject to its rule are Ottoman” Atatürk abolished the Ottoman and replaced it with Turkish. Such is Ataturk’s wisdom. We owe it all to Ataturk. If it was not him, today there would be no Turkish, let alone Turkey.

Livio Missir defends the Europeanness of Eastern Mediterranean and says that the Turks were European as a state even after Atatürk:
- Aren’t those who call the Ottoman Empire “the sick man of Europe”? You know what is the problem? The point is to remind them about the past. Reminding Europeans the role of Turks. Please, please ... this is also the main point of our interview.
Missir got very excited when he said these. He was pounding on the desk while he talked.

-Who is talking about the Turks to the Europeans? I wish that some more books were published like Kenize Mourad’s book. Translation of provincial novels will simply not do. You should speak out, you should shout. You should show the multi-faceted civilization of the Turks to everyone. Aren’t the Turks descendents of Anatolian civilizations? They should not answer the question “Here to Ephesus” as “What is Ephesus?” or “Here, the Romans” as “Who are they? Strangers”; “No...No...”. As put by Suat Sinanoğlu, Turks are heirs to ancient Romans as well as ancient Greeks. You can prove this linkage also by blood ties since no one knows how many marriages happened through the course of about one thousand years.

Everyone knows that Orhan Ghazi had married a Greek girl.


Alessandro Missir was the son of this invaluable person; and his approach to issues about Europe and Turkey was doubtlessly modelled upon this heritage.

*Alessandro Missir was the son of this invaluable person; and his approach to issues about Europe and Turkey was doubtlessly modelled upon this heritage.*
The İzmir Port, from Pasaport to the direction of Customs.
Courtesy of İzmir Chamber of Commerce
Photo taken from “History Written on Glass”, İzmir Chamber of Commerce. Glass Plate Negative Collection, İzmir, 2007
I met Alessandro 6 years ago in Luxembourg. We enjoyed talking about Turkey for hours. He was very sad when he heard statements filled with prejudice about our country. It made him nostalgic and sometimes even angry. You are no doubt aware that Turkey is a complex country and Alessandro not only contributed to a better understanding of it in Europe, but also among Turks themselves, in terms of its past and its history... He had an excellent understanding of the entire issue and he communicated it with passion and clarity. I remember one meeting at the Parliament in particular which I attended, where someone took the floor and strongly criticised Turkey. I can’t remember exactly who it was. I had to speak just afterwards and Alessandro knew it. He sent me a note during this meeting in which he told me to make such and such a point in such and such a manner in order to counter the person who had criticised the country so much. I subsequently spoke and did as Alessandro had told me. There you are. This illustrates the genius which he had in managing the issues for which he was responsible. He knew exactly when and how to speak to both sides, so as not to hurt either party and to reach constructive solutions. He was a constructive personality par excellence. He was an excellent diplomat in the way he spoke on behalf of Turkey to the rest of the world. He enlightened a meeting when he spoke, through his charisma and vision of the world: he was a visionary. When he took the floor, everyone was quiet and at the end, each time there was a long silence which meant something like: “thank you for these more than interesting reflections...”

Turkey is a complex country and Alessandro not only contributed to a better understanding of it in Europe, but also among Turks themselves, in terms of its past and its history...
This lasted a little while longer, people looked at one another and we could feel that something significant had happened. He was also highly concerned with religious diversity in Turkey, which fascinated him. What always impressed me also was his objectiveness, in spite of the passion and emotion which motivated him in his work. People admired his erudition on the issue and respected him. He had an extensive knowledge of the Ottoman language, for one day, he began speaking Turkish and I can assure you, I had never heard this word used in that way. I had only read it in books. With an impeccable accent, he began talking to me about the Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti. He even knew that! In fact, this was the Union and Progress Party which was to lead to the creation of Atatürk’s Republic. I was impressed! The Istanbul Centre of Brussels has decided to set a date on which he will be honoured each year, when we shall organise a particular event in memory of him. It is the least we can do given what he has achieved for our country.

He was an excellent diplomat in the way he spoke on behalf of Turkey to the rest of the world. He enlightened a meeting when he spoke, through his charisma and vision of the world: he was a visionary.
An eminent diplomat

Martin Harvey  Political Affairs Manager – DG Enlargement

I first met Alessandro in 2001, when he joined DG Enlargement’s Turkey Unit as political desk officer. At that time I was working on Cyprus’s accession negotiations and related political issues, so we needed to coordinate our work carefully. In 2002, I also joined the Turkey Unit (as deputy and later acting team leader) and for the next four years we were very close colleagues.

Alessandro’s principal role was to contribute to the assessment of Turkey’s compliance with the so-called ‘Copenhagen political criteria’, which Turkey had to meet in order for accession negotiations to begin, as well as monitoring other aspects of the Turkish political scene. This implied following closely and reporting on Turkey’s compliance with democratic principles, the rule of law and basic human rights, including freedoms of expression and association. His work also involved research on other complex issues such as secular and religious pressures in Turkish society, civil-military relations, Kurdish issues, the Armenian question, and so on. These questions were discussed regularly and in depth with our Turkish counterparts, within the Commission, in Council working groups with representatives of Member States, with the European Parliament, and with non-governmental organisations.

The depth of Alessandro’s knowledge and analysis well exceeded the normal standard associated with his post. Consequently, in meetings he could often support his arguments with relevant and lively examples, thereby enriching the debate. This reflected his commitment and devotion to being political desk officer for Turkey, which on occasion he characterised as his ‘ideal job’. His considerable investment of effort into learning the Turkish language also showed this commitment.

In particular I remember our missions together to regions of Turkey less frequented by Commission staff or the international community (e.g. Diyarbakir, Mardin), where we would meet representatives of regional and local authorities, employers and trades unions, NGOs. While our dialogue with representatives of the national authorities was always structured and well prepared, the course of such discussions was much less predictable. In such situations Alessandro, through the breadth of his knowledge and sound judgment, could be relied upon to put unexpected issues in context and to make a relevant assessment.

He certainly contributed to the enhanced understanding of Turkish society in the Commission and other European institutions. His knowledge and insight
greatly facilitated his and his colleagues’ dialogue with Turkish interlocutors from different backgrounds. It is fair to say that he made a significant contribution to ‘civil society dialogue’ even before this term became a keyword in the EU enlargement debate.

My memory of Alessandro is naturally formed to an important degree by our close working relationship during four years. But during this period, I also got to know, respect and admire his personality. As relatively close neighbours we often shared the journey to our respective homes in the evening and exchanged views on a very wide range of subjects, including family life, politics, religion, sport, and so on. So I remember him not only as an excellent European official but also as a caring husband and father, a man with very broad interests and knowledge, sincerely held religious views but fully respectful of differing views held by others.

He certainly contributed to the enhanced understanding of Turkish society in the Commission and other European institutions. His knowledge and insight greatly facilitated his and his colleagues’ dialogue with Turkish interlocutors from different backgrounds. It is fair to say that he made a significant contribution to ‘civil society dialogue’ even before this term became a keyword in the EU enlargement debate.
The Opening of Accession Negotiations: 17 December 2004

Mahir Ilgaz, Researcher, Economic Development Foundation

I remember visiting Alessandro Missir di Lusignano right after the decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey on 17 December 2004. He greeted us very warmly and we had a very relaxed, informal meeting, where the main issue discussed was of course the EU’s decision to begin negotiations for Turkey’s membership. I remember Mr. Missir di Lusignano recounting a small snippet from a conversation he had had with his father following the decision. Apparently, his father remarked: “We have finally managed to pay our debt to Turkey.” I am not normally a person moved by nationalistic sentiments but that remark, along with the late Mr. Missir di Lusignano’s delivery of it (he was visibly moved) gave me goose-flesh. I think it moved me because it displayed such a degree of loyalty that, when compared with my own feelings about the subject, I found lacking in myself.

I remember Mr. Missir di Lusignano recounting a small snippet from a conversation he had had with his father following the decision. Apparently, his father remarked: “We have finally managed to pay our debt to Turkey.” I am not normally a person moved by nationalistic sentiments but that remark, along with the late Mr. Missir di Lusignano’s delivery of it gave me goose-flesh.
Message from Prof. Dr. Halûk Kabaalioğlu, President of Economic Development Foundation and Dean of Faculty of Law at Yeditepe University regarding the loss of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano published at Yeditepe University website (http://www.yeditepe.edu.tr) and Yeditepe University Faculty of Law website (http://law.yeditepe.edu.tr) on 20th September 2006:

Alessandro and Livio Missir di Lusignano visited Yeditepe University Faculty of Law last April (2006) for a series of lectures to the students of European Union Law class.

Mr. Livio Missir di Lusignano wanted to return to his native country, Turkey, and show to his sons and close relatives his hometown Izmir and later Istanbul. As a lawyer he also wished to have the opportunity to talk to his fellow countrymen, the law students about his experience in the European Commission for almost four decades.

When such a proposal was made, Yeditepe University extended an invitation to both Lusignano’s to give a seminar and conference on the European Institutions and Turkey-EU relations.
Last spring, both Alessandro and Livio Missir di Lusignano visited Yeditepe Law Faculty and lectured to law students. Their relatives were also present in the lecture.

Livio graduated from the Faculties of Law at Ankara and Rome Universities, later joined the European Commission in 1958 under the Italian citizens’ quota.

After more than 35 years Livio retired but his son Alessandro joined the European Commission and due to his expertise on Turkey he was assigned to the “Turkey Desk” in the Enlargement Directorate General. Alessandro was involved in the preparation of Progress Reports, Accession Negotiations, screening, etc.

Whereas Livio spoke in fluent and excellent Turkish, Alessandro was still taking Turkish courses so partially spoke in English. Livio’s impeccable Turkish with a lot of impressive Ottoman terminology was a big surprise to the Turkish law students as they were not expecting a lecture in Turkish language.

Livio Missir di Lusignano was enjoying himself immensely with his excellent recital of Turkish language, comparing from time to time terminology used in earlier period with today’s usage. Alessandro was also happy as he said Livio always dreamt to have a chance to work at a Turkish University. Livio’s relatives and friends were also in the audience.

After his father, Alessandro spoke about the latest developments in Turkey-EU relations and discussed the screening process. Later both Lusignanos answered the questions put forward by the students.
Alessandro also spoke to DABU Group at Doğuş Holding who are working on Turkey-EU relations and the EU accession process.

Earlier this year, 2006, Alessandro was appointed to the EU Representation in Morocco. Unfortunately, according to news reports Alessandro and his wife were stabbed to death by an intruder in their residence in Rabat. The four children safely locked themselves in one room and they are expected to be returned to Belgium.

We are deeply shocked and sorrowed with the terrible news coming from Morocco.

Yeditepe University extends its deep sympathy and condolences to the family of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano and especially to his father Livio.

Not only the European Commission lost one of its most able and dedicated representatives, but Turkey also lost a good friend and a good European who understood Turkey much better than many others in Brussels and who sincerely believed in Turkey’s accession to the European Union...

We share the deep sorrow of the di Lusignano family of Izmir.
During his visit to Yeditepe University, April 2006
From left to right: Livio Missir, Prof. Dr. Halûk Kabaaloğlu, Alessandro and Guy Icard, our French cousin.
An unparalleled speaker. Here, at Yeditepe University
He was often invited to talk and enlighten public opinion on the issues involved in Turkey's adhesion to the European Union.

Here, at Yeditepe University.
Alessandro Missir di Lusignano, Guy Icard, Livio Missir di Lusignano and Mario Levi, famous novelist visiting Bedrettin Dalan, Founder and President of the Board of Trustees of Yeditepe University (former Mayor of Istanbul (1984-1989)) at Yeditepe University, April 2006.
Photo of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey taken at the entrance of Yeditepe University.
Message from Michael Leigh to Prof. Dr. Halûk Kabaalioğlu regarding the loss of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano

It is with great sadness that I must inform you that Alessandro Missir di Lusignano and his wife, Ariane Lagasse de Locht, died at their home in Rabat on Sunday night, after what appears to have been an attack by burglars. I held a minute’s silence with the Turkey team last night. We are all profoundly shocked by this appalling news and our thoughts are with Alessandro’s four children and family. Commissioner Benita Ferrero Waldner issued a statement last night. Commissioner Olli Rehn has sent this personal message to all staff:

“Dear colleagues, dear friends,

I would like to convey to you my feelings of great sadness and loss following the news of the tragic death of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano and his wife, Ariane Lagasse de Locht. Alessandro was not only an excellent Commissioner official in every respect. He was also a friend inspired by passion, enthusiasm and an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, which earned him the nickname “the walking encyclopaedia”. He was able to present a detailed analysis of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, immediately followed by a quotation from a Byzantine poet. He was immensely cultured, and his learning was complemented by a gentleness and sense of humour that gave inspiration and soul to our common project.

I remember well our joint mission to Turkey. We visited Ankara, Kayseri and Istanbul, where we could all truly appreciate and enjoy Alessandro’s deep knowledge of Turkish history and his wit. The Iftar dinner in Kayseri with Foreign Minister Gul was an unforgettable experience. It was, for Alessandro, also a matter of personal satisfaction, knowing how hard he had worked for our common goal. We will all miss him immensely.

Let me express my most sincere condolences to his family, his friends and his colleagues.”

Olli Rehn

For my part, Alessandro was one of the most outstanding officials of his generation. We worked together for several years on the Turkey Desk. A brilliant professional, he approached his work with passion and energy, showing a ceaseless intellectual curiosity.

Just a few weeks ago, many of us packed into the meeting room downstairs to wish him well in his new post. I was sad to lose him from our small family, but delighted for him to make this next step in his very promising career. It is almost impossible to believe that he is no longer with us.

Our thoughts are with his four children and with his family and that of his wife. We will open a book of condolences that will be available in my secretariat for any of you, who may wish to add a personal message for his family.”

Michael Leigh
On 11th July 2007, Economic Development Foundation dedicated its first “Window to Turkey” conference organized in cooperation with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB)* to the memory of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano. This was the invitation of the conference.

Mr. M. Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu
the President of
THE UNION OF CHAMBERS AND
COMMODITY EXCHANGES OF TURKEY

cordially invites you to

WINDOW TO TURKEY

first meeting of a series of conferences on “understanding Turkey better”.

This first meeting is dedicated to
the respectful memory of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano
our dear colleague devoted to Turkey’s European integration.

11 JULY 2007, 6:30 pm
Venue: Bibliothèque Solvay

PROGRAME

18:15 - 18:45  Registration
18:45 - 19:00  Welcome and opening speech by Mr. M. Rifat HİSARCİKLIÖĞLU  
President, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey
19:00 - 19:15 Remembrance speech by Letizia MISSIR DI LUSIGNANO
19:15 - 21:00 WINDOW TO TURKEY

Chairman: Prof. Dr. Haluk KABAALİÖĞLU
President, Economic Development Foundation
Dean, Faculty of Law, Yeditepe University
“Understanding the recent developments; the political and social realities of Turkey”

Prof. Dr. Ersin KALAYCIIOĞLU
Rector, Isik University, Istanbul TURKEY

Tayyibe GÜLEK
Former Minister of State, Former Member of the Turkish National Assembly

Prof. Dr. Feroz AHMAD
Yeditepe University, Istanbul TURKEY

21:00 - 22:00 Buffet Dinner

* The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), which is the largest NGO in Turkey, covering 365 Chambers and Commodity Exchanges. TOBB represents the country’s 1.3 million companies and acts as the most effective professional organization with a network of members reaching into all scale of businesses from different sectors, great to small in all regions in Turkey.
“Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

You will forgive me, for I do not want to talk about Turkey. It was my brother’s job, my brother’s life. And no one can replace the passion and enthusiasm that he always exuded when talking about this Country of constant debate.

I want briefly to talk about Alessandro because this first meeting is dedicated to the respectful memory of my beloved brother.

I had never thought that a moment would come like this when I would remember Alessandro. You cannot imagine how painful this exercise is for me.

Today, we are all here as Turkey’s friend. Exactly like Alessandro was too. As a dynamic diplomat involved in Turkey’s EU Accession negotiations, my brother always tried to show how important Turkey and Europe are to each other. Alessandro knew that Turkey leaves nobody indifferent.

Our last family trip to Turkey took place during the Easter Holidays 2006. My brother was so happy for us to be able to discover and rediscover again the beautiful city of Istanbul. He organized for us a meticulous visit of the old and new Istanbul. For him, only few cities in Europe reflected so many centuries of shared history and identity. During those magical days, Alessandro mentioned to me that Istanbul has a particularly significant position in the history of the civilised world, which is very much alive and flourishing in the present day too, as a great political, intellectual and artistic centre.

Alessandro, may your spirit rise high.

So many live and so many die. This is our destiny, but there are those who like you, my brother, leave something behind, and you are such a man, my brother.

You will always be present in our life.”

Letizia Missir di Lusignano

While Letizia Missir di Lusignano delivers her remembrance speech during “Window to Turkey” conference, 11 July 2007, Brussels.
"Window to Turkey" conference, 11 July 2007, Brussels.
M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, President of Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Letizia Missir di Lusignano on her right her mother Anne and her father, Livio. In the “Window to Turkey” conference, 11 July 2007.
M. Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, President of Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey and Prof. Dr. Halûk Kabaalioğlu, President of Economic Development Foundation delivering their speeches in “Window to Turkey” conference, 11 July 2007, Brussels.

Prof. Dr. Halûk Kabaalioğlu, President of Economic Development Foundation in “Window to Turkey” conference on his right Prof. Dr. Feroz Ahmad and his left Tayyibe Gülek and Prof. Dr. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu.
Fragments of the visit to İstanbul organised by my brother and mentioned in my introductory text about him.

1. Amedeo Missir
2. Guy Icard (our French cousin also born in Buca)
3. Ariane Missir
4. Alessandro Missir
5. Stefano Missir
6. Laetitia Missir
7. Mrs. Nejat Sümer
8. Anne Missir
9. Livio Missir
10. Melekşah Aslan
A short distance from Sirkeci Station
Amedeo and Stefano Missir di Lusignano
Amedeo, Giustina and Livio Missir di Lusignano
A "Fayton" in Büyük Ada
On the way to Büyük Ada.
Alessandro Missir di Lusignano

Turkey & Europe: An Example
Whenever he had the opportunity, Alessandro took the “vapur” to Eminönü to cross the Bosphorus. Here he is in great discussion with his father, Livio on the left, Stefano Missir.
Turkish baths in Istanbul.
This moment will remain engraved in my heart forever.
If only I had known that I would never experience such a moment again...
We were so happy
Here, in Büyük Ada, April 2006
The whole family except the twins Filiberto and Tommaso.
Turkey & Europe - An Example
Alessandro with his parents, his sister Letizia, his brother and two children, Amedeo and Giustina at the Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, April 2006
Alessandro was very familiar with Istanbul and its most secret districts... here the family (April 2006) in Sultanahmet.

Photo by Ariane Missir di Lusignano
At the Patriarchate with Dimitri Meliton, Metropolitan Bishop in April 2006. Alessandro worked to encourage dialogue between peoples, cultures and religions.
I worked with Alessandro for several years. We had a professional relationship, but notably in Strasbourg, we had opportunities outside our meetings and professional context to discuss more personal subjects. When Alessandro spoke to me of Turkey, he couldn’t hide how much he was moved, even if he had wanted to. He was deeply attached to his roots. I sometimes glimpsed a certain nostalgia for his childhood spent near Izmir, in his grandparents’ home. Professionally, he “magnetised” the people he worked with, without exception. Everyone called him “Mr. Turkey” and we laughed about it... He was proud of it. The thing which always fascinated me about him was how young he was for his level of knowledge. I know that the intellectual complicity with his father – a historian of the Ottoman Empire and a writer, etc. – had something to do with this and he often spoke to me about him with respect and admiration. He knew Turkey better than the Turks themselves, and everyone knew it. He was quick to remind them that Turkey was the cradle of Europe. He adored Istanbul also and was always trying to find out more about it and discover unusual, secret, little known places... One day, he asked me to give him directions to certain places to visit. As I explained, I immediately noticed his intelligent look, a smile in the corner of his mouth... “You are making fun of me,” he immediately replied. “...You know that I know these places, don’t tell me about banal places, please. Astonish me. Surprise me. Tell me about other magical places in the city.”
When I learned the terrible news, I couldn’t help thinking: it’s not possible that this could happen to Alessandro, who loved life so much, who was so attached to his family, his children and his work... He gave the impression of being a person who was going to live a long time.

*He knew Turkey better than the Turks themselves, and everyone knew it. He was quick to remind them that Turkey was the cradle of Europe.*

*Letizia Missir together with Cem Kahyaoğlu during her visit in Ankara June 2008.*

*The Tower of Galata, Istanbul
Photograph copyright Caner Kasapoğlu*
I met Alessandro when he took up the post of Political Administrator on the Turkey Desk, in 2001. I remember that scarcely had I made his acquaintance, we developed a strong complicity, a complicity which was to last seven years... Was this because I spoke Italian and that amused Alessandro, who started to talk to me in his native tongue to which he was so attached? Was it because of his warm personality, open to others and curious to meet people who played a particular role in Turkey’s adhesion process? Who knows...? But very soon, we became friends, great friends. When he came to Istanbul on mission, we tried to spend a few evenings together admiring the Bosphorus and speaking of Turkey’s future. And when I came to Brussels, he never failed to invite me to his favourite places so that I could discover the city and its secrets. How
many times did he repeat to me with enthusiasm and passion: “There is an extremely psychological relationship between Europe and Turkey. We have to speak to Turks with strong images. Otherwise a spiral of misunderstanding begins (...). Turkey reacts like a fallen empire, at the origin of the creation of the eighteen States, but it has renounced all territorial ambitions.” Alessandro was a passionate and highly committed person working on the Turkey Desk. He could reveal his concern and sadness when the mutual misunderstanding...
between the two parties resulted in deadlock, but he always retained a tremendous objectiveness and a remarkable impartiality on the issue. Above all, he drew the attention of his interlocutors to the fact that if public opinion was in part hostile to Turkey’s membership, it would also have to understand that Turkey could also turn its back on Europe...

When I met Alessandro, I was the Secretary General of the Economic Development Foundation and alongside this, I had created “The European Movement for Turkey” in order to promote events which would enable Europe to get to know the complex country better. In this context, I had the idea of inviting the great singer Sezen Aksu to Brussels in 2004. Alessandro helped me greatly in organising the event. It wouldn’t have been possible without him... I wanted to ask Sezen Aksu because she also sang with a group that highlights the country’s multi-cultural diversity: there were Armenian, Greek and Jewish songs... The concert was a success and I remember a very poignant moment, when Sezen Aksu began to sing the famous Izmir’in Kavakları. I was sitting just in front of Alessandro. I turned round as if by intuition and I saw the tears...
falling down his cheeks... He was very moved by this song and explained the reason why at the end of the concert. “I spent my childhood in Izmir, more precisely in Buca where my father was born. It was wonderful. We spent months surrounded by my parents, grandparent and cousins. I am often nostalgic about this period when everything was gentleness, perfumes, joy and all kinds of intellectual discussions. You can understand why I am so attached to Turkey. It flows in my veins... One day, I will write my memoirs of my childhood.” Alessandro was a charming and very sensitive, nostalgic and melancholic person, as we can be in the East. When I heard that he was leaving for Rabat, I almost wrote to the European Commission to tell them to prevent him from going, to tell them: you are going to lose a great friend of Turkey, and it is a great loss for us also. Alessandro will remain present in my heart through all of these memories and I shall never forget him.

_Alessandro was a charming and very sensitive, nostalgic and melancholic person, as we can be in the East._
Konak Square and Clock Tower, İzmir.
Courtesy of İzmir Chamber of Commerce
Photo taken from “History Written on Glass”, İzmir Chamber of Commerce Glass Plate Negative Collection, İzmir, 2007.
Alessandro was one of the most brilliant officials of his generation. We worked together for several years in the Turkey team. He was brilliant, gifted with a great intellectual curiosity and a very dry sense of humour. What always struck me about him was the strength of his commitment to Turkey, whilst remaining objective and critical. Furthermore, he had an immense culture, but remained humble towards others; he never showed off and it was all to his credit. The high echelons of the European Union greatly respected and admired him. I remember his subtlety on a particular occasion. When I left the team, I organised a farewell dinner at my home to thank and salute my friends and colleagues. Very few people knew of my passion for tango and the fact that I danced regularly, on a professional basis. But Alessandro knew because he loved tango also, the dancing and music of Astor Piazzolla. At the end of the dinner, I was handed a card which everyone had signed, by way of thanks and as a shared souvenir. What was the picture on the card? It was of dancers, whose movement suggested famous tango steps. I immediately looked around for Alessandro. He was watching me and our eyes met. I understood at that moment, that he had been behind the choice of this farewell card. I remain profoundly moved and touched by it...
"I immediately looked around for Alessandro. He was watching me. Our eyes met. I understood at that moment, that he had been behind the choice of this farewell card."
Alessandro Missir di Lusignano

Turkey & Europe - An Example

A man of faith and conviction

Wenceslas de Lobkowicz DG Enlargement - Civil Society Dialogue

Alessandro was above all a European and a man of Faith: faith in his religious convictions, which inspired him so profoundly, and a conviction in the European cause to which, like his father before him, he devoted his professional life. He placed his intelligence and capacity to work at the service of the Commission, convinced that this Institution remains, like a Gothic cathedral, the keystone of the European edifice.

Supported by a family tradition, he had learned that Europe had existed before the institutions. The contribution of Christianity, from monarchism organised around the rule of Saint Benedict, one of the Patron Saints of Europe, to that of the cathedrals which have shaped the memory and identity of both believers and atheist Europeans, served as a reference for him. It spurred his conviction that the end of the 20th century required an effort in terms of economic and political integration, which nationalisms and totalitarianisms had attempted to undermine. His broad university studies enabled him to better understand our collective heritage and the need to find a common ground in our essential values, so as to avoid the excesses which have caused bloodshed on our continent over the centuries. His knowledge of history was a major asset in the various functions he occupied in the Commission.

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I met Alessandro when he was working at our delegation in Warsaw. How symbolic this assignment was in a country which was then only a candidate to the Union. He had understood that following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the way forward for Europe was to be found in openness to these new democracies, aspiring to re-establish their destinies that had been refused to them in an artificially divided Europe. This required both solidarity with those who had not been able to take part in the post-war economic expansion and a
lesson for the western Europeans, who had grown up in the subconscious belief
that the iron curtain was unmoveable. His knowledge of History had shown
him that the worst frontiers were those which remained in people’s minds.

Such conviction found fertile ground to flourish in Poland, a country with a
strong national identity and above all which was united by a Roman Catholic
faith that no one could ignore after the election of Pope John-Paul II. This was
a crucial factor to show that the Slav world was indeed Europe’s “second lung”,
without which our continent could not breathe properly.

His “Polish phase” turned Alessandro into an expert in this delicate
negotiation, the diplomatic dimension of which was but the visible part of a
society that had to transform at great speed in order to align itself with our

His knowledge of History had shown him that the worst
frontiers were those which remained in people’s minds.

European principles. His didactic approach was appreciated by his Polish
interlocutors and his colleagues from Brussels alike. His analyses were a
precious contribution to the development of an effective communication
strategy, to convey the true meaning of the 2004 objective: the “reunification”
of our continent.

We met up once again when Alessandro returned to Brussels. We met by
chance on numerous occasions or through our professional obligations. They
confirmed my initial impressions of his European commitment, based on an
unshakeable religious conviction. From all these occasions, I remember in
particular a meeting with the representatives of the episcopates of the future
member states. They had come to Brussels under the leadership of Cardinal
Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna, to present the “Central European
Catholic Day” project. The event was to take place in Mariazell, the Marian
sanctuary in Austria, attended by Catholics from across Central Europe,
including the Balkans. Some of us, on a voluntary basis of course, took part in
this unusual “brain-storming” session. As happens in our institutions also, the
problem soon arose of a “lingua franca” that could be understood by everyone.
Should it be a Slav or Germanic language which many of us knew? When
Alessandro spoke, he naturally used Italian, based on the principle that all the
members of the episcopate of the Roman Catholic Church would have at least a
basic understanding of this language. His words were the only ones which did
not have to be translated in order to be understood. Beyond a shared message
which united us all, he was able to communicate it directly.

We gradually discovered many other similarities we shared. Aside from our
values and common commitment, the most extraordinary was probably the
last thing we realised: we were both fathers of twin boys. The coincidence drew
us into numerous unexpected conversations, on the wealth of this experience and the difficulties and joys of a simultaneous but different upbringing. This destiny brought us closer. With equal emotion and in an impressive silence we listened to Monsignor Dupuy, the Papal Nuncio to the European Communities, who addressed each of Alessandro and Ariane’s four children at their parents’ funeral, telling them how this testimony should be an example to them throughout their lifetimes. The silence of this congregation spoke volumes not only of the emotion which gripped us all, but also the tribute that we wanted to pay to this colleague and man of Faith and conviction. This is the memory we shall hold in our hearts, so that he will not be forgotten by all those who loved and appreciated him.
May Alessandro’s vision of Europe come true?

Gaspare Augusto Manos Artist

We have lost a brilliant mind, the political scene has lost a future world leader, the 21st Century has lost a thinker and alas, one more root of our cherished long European history. May your wisdom and thirst for knowledge inspire us. May the vision of Europe we so many times discussed come true.

Alessandro, you have been the brilliant brother I should have had, at times mentor, confessor, professor and always a transparent lucid faithful friend. I suspect I am one of many people you have changed with your faith, ethic, positive mental attitude, wit and clarity.

You have succeeded in planting a seed that will grow into a forest.
I worked together with Alessandro in my capacity as Deputy Head of Unit of the Turkey team of the Directorate General for External Relations of the European Commission in Brussels. We worked together during the period 2000-2002 and we met each other almost every working day. In fact, the day started with a common meeting where Alessandro and I would discuss the latest developments in Turkey, the daily work schedule and other organizational matters.

Alessandro played an important role together with all other team members in defining the Pre-Accession Strategy for Turkey. This was our main task after the Conclusions of the European Council in Helsinki of December 1999 in which Turkey was destined to become a member of the European Union. An important feature of the Pre-Accession Strategy was the drafting of a Regular Progress Report towards Turkey’s accession to the European Union. Alessandro was the coordinator for preparing the various drafts of the Report but also provided substantive input himself. This was not an easy task because we knew that the Turkish side would read the Report line by line and where possible try to criticize the European Commission. We were therefore engaged in solid fact-finding, trying to confirm and reconfirm the various facts, often based on contradictory information. We therefore had to use our best professional judgment. We worked together day in, day out, sometimes late into the evening.

Alessandro was an erudite man with a deep knowledge of the history and culture of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. He could place various political developments in their proper historical context. His knowledge was based not only on a thorough study of the region but was also strongly linked to his family background.

The negotiations did not start during the time that I worked together with Alessandro. However, he provided the necessary insight to us about the situation and developments in Turkey, which from time to time were extremely complex. We analyzed various legal texts in depth to help us understand the legislation of particular relevance to the situation of basic human rights in Turkey. Alessandro was very helpful in not only providing the various legal
documents, but also in contributing to the analysis. I remember, in particular, the long discussions we had about the position of the minorities in Turkey and the historical background of the legislation existing at that time in Turkey – going back to the creation of the modern Turkish state.

Alessandro was a man of many talents. I will never forget when he met my wife, who is of Polish origin, at a cocktail party and to her astonishment he greeted her in perfect Polish. We also often greeted each other in the morning in Polish – which he had learnt during his stay in Warsaw.

Alessandro was an erudite man with a deep knowledge of the history and culture of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. He could place various political developments in their proper historical context. His knowledge was based not only on a thorough study of the region but was also strongly linked to his family background.

He was a hard working and committed colleague with enormous enthusiasm for his work and a good sense of humor. I would have found my work much more difficult without his valuable input.

*He was a hard working and committed colleague with enormous enthusiasm for his work and a good sense of humor. I would have found my work much more difficult without his valuable input.*
I searched for a long time for someone who could give me a clear, in-depth explanation of Turkish matters. When I met Alessandro, I needed to look no further. He was an expert in the field and had that powerful intelligence of being able to explain any current political position by relating it to the past and the history of the country.

My first journey with him was to Istanbul. When we arrived at the airport, a bus was waiting to take us to the centre. After a few kilometres Alessandro, speaking in impeccable Turkish, asked the driver to change his route! He wanted him instead to take the road that runs alongside the Bosphorus rather than the new motorway, which was faster but oh how uninspiring to his aesthete’s soul. Just a few minutes later therefore, we found ourselves facing the Bosphorus, our eyes riveted to a uniquely beautiful horizon... There, at that moment, Alessandro began recounting with exceptional theatricality the Capture of Istanbul! It was extraordinary. We almost had the impression that he had lived through the event. Our last mission was to Hakkâri, a few months before his departure for Morocco. There again, we spent memorable evenings, thanks to him, during which he never failed to cite such and such an author or some detailed historical references to enlighten the most complex debates. It was fascinating. He loved Pierre Loti and often referred to him when we were passing through Istanbul. He had an art of citing some phrase or other by authors from the last century to describe the past of the districts we were crossing. Istanbul then revealed its secrets and thousand year old magic even more intensely. He was an atypical person who will remain in everyone’s hearts.

He had an art of citing some phrase or other by authors from the last century to describe the past of the districts we were crossing. Istanbul then revealed its secrets and thousand year old magic even more intensely. He was an atypical person who will remain in everyone’s hearts.
• **Hakkâri** is a town lying at an altitude of 4,000 metres above sea level in the very South of Turkey, between the Iranian and Iraqi borders. Doğanlı is a village in the province of Hakkari.

• **The town of Van** (4 hours away from Hakkâri) is the capital of the most south eastern region of Anatolia. It lies at an altitude of 1700 metres. The eponymous lake (Van Gölü) is known to the local inhabitants as “Van Deniz” or the sea of Van... This immense lake was formed following an eruption of the volcano Nemrut Dağı, which blocked the natural flow of water. The water is very salty here, so much so that no fish can live in it, except for a species of whitebait (and even then, only in the fresh water of one of the estuaries of its affluents) which was a real luxury product during the times when trading took place with Asia, along the Silk Road...

• **Akdamar Island** is in Lake Van and is reached by motorboat (they leave when they are full). People go there to admire the Church of the Holy Cross (Akdamar Kilisesi), a beautiful Armenian building that dates from the 10th century. Originally, there was also a palace and a monastery, but only the church remains today. The magnificent place of worship abounds with architectural details; the exterior walls are notably covered with sculptures depicting biblical scenes. The interior walls are painted and are in more or less good condition. Beautiful carved gravestones surround the church. If you look carefully, you can even find a few tortoises wandering nonchalantly along the paths.

Ref: wikipedia, July 2008.

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**Alessandro Missir di Lusignano’s last mission in Hakkâri***

26th-29th June 2006

accompanied by Amb. Pierre Mirel, H.J Kretschmer, Mesdames Sema Kılıçer and Yeşim Boyalar

Owing to the precious collaboration of Sema Kılıçer (Political Officer responsible for Human Rights in the European Union Delegation in Ankara) whom I met during my visits to collect as much information as possible for this book, I have the opportunity to reveal to you the photographs relating to this mission which were taken by my brother... Sema Kılıçer joined the mission but had to return to Ankara unexpectedly. She left her camera with Alessandro so that he could continue to record this mission in pictures.

Here is the result... between Hakkâri, Doğanlı, Van and Akdamar Island... Alessandro’s keen eye focuses on precise places and once again we see his curiosity for spirituality, history and transcendence...
Near Lake Van
Alessandro with Pierre Mirel
Pierre Mirel and Alessandro Missir di Lusignano in search of Malazgirt, on the Lake Van.
The Church of Akdamar, Van
On the way to Hakkâri

Doğunlu
Sitting next to Pierre Mirel
In the hills above Hakkâri
Dinner in Hakkâri with a local lawyer
There is in Greece a magical place called Meteora, meaning in Greek “hanging from heaven”. It is a place of gigantic rocks which have for centuries been crowned by monasteries. It seems impossible that anyone walking, lost in thought, especially in silence and darkness by night, amidst the shadow play of these enormous rocks and under innumerable bright stars, should not become aware of his own evanescence and enthralled by the infinite immensity above and beyond. 

It was inspired by impressions experienced at Meteora that I set out to speak to Alessandro through the Turkish music so dear to him. The lovingly chosen songs contained in the double album which you now hold in your hands, reflect many feelings and contain many deep messages. With these songs “suspended from heaven”, between earth and paradise, I have written Alessandro’s name suspended like an acrostic formed of precious stones. I am convinced that these songs and pieces of instrumental music which speak of Turkey, Greece, Istanbul, Izmir and Italy, all of them so dear to the Missir family, will bring the listener close to the brightest stars.

Dear Alessandro, it is not by chance that the last word of the last song is “sen”: “you”! Despite your painful absence, you are still among us, an immense “You”. You will always live on in our hearts and minds. I am truly proud to present you this selection of songs full of tenderness which I’ve made in the hope of rendering the silence less unbearable, by imagining a space beneath the stars in which your absence would merge into silence.
Dear friends, I sincerely hope that, as you move along the musical pathways which I want to share with you, you too will be touched by these pieces, especially by “Söyleyin yıldızlar” (Tell me, O Stars), and that there will be times when you’ll feel in touch with Alessandro.

I am infinitely grateful to Laetitia, Alessandro’s courageous sister, who wanted me to make my small contribution to her wonderful work through the universal language of music, for the unfailing confidence she has at all times shown me...

* Original text translated from Turkish to French by Ariane Willems. French-English translation: Peter Burnett.
A detail of the “coupole” of Saints Peter and Paul, Galata Church in Istanbul.
Ud solo – oriental lute solo (Coşkun Sabah, album: “Bir gün gelecek / Hayatımın kadınısın”) – Akbaş Müzik

Ayrılık da sevadandır (Gülay, album: “Dalgalar”) – Seyhan Müzik

Lale devri (Sibel Can, album: “Özledin mi ?”) – Emre Grafson Müzik

Es deli rüzgâr (Nilüfer, album: “Ne masal ne rüya”) – Yaşar Kekeva Plakçılık

Sensizlik haram bana (Ufuk Yıldırım, album: “Mucize naameler”) – Saatçı Müzik Film Yapım (“Rec by Saatchi”)

Seni kimler aldı (Sezen Aksu, album: “Gülümse”) – Coşkun Plak ve Kasetçilik

Al beni de yanna (Nükhet Duru, album: “Bir nefes gibiler”) – Raks Müzik

Nerdesin ? (Zülfü Livaneli, album: “Hayata dair”) – Doğan Müzik Dağıtım – İDA Müzik

Daha (Candan Erçetin, album: “Hazırım”) – Topkapı Müzik & Video

Rüyalarda buluşuruz (Muazzez Ersoy, album: “Seni seviyorum”) – Avrupa Müzik

Orada kimse var mı ? (Yavuz Bingöl/Valentina, album: “Unutulur her şey”) – Seyhan Müzik

Seni kimse var mı ? (Yavuz Bingöl/Valentina, album: “Unutulur her şey”) – Seyhan Müzik

Kanun taksimi – kanun solo (9th piece from the album: “Ud-kanun-kemençe-ney taksimleri – çeşitli makamlardan 1”) – Göksoy Plakçılık Ses Görüntü Hizmetleri


İbadetim (Erol Evgin, album: “İbadetim”) – EMI

Söyleyin yıldızlar (Muazzez Ersoy, album: “Nostalji 1”) – Raks Müzik / Levent Müzik Yapım / Neše Müzik

Sarı gelin (Özlem Özdid, album: “Yürü be Haydar”) – Duygu Müzik

İzmir’ in kavakları (Candan Erçetin, album: “Aman doktor”) – Doğan Music Company

Rüzzgâr güllüm (İntizar, album: “Gecebe”) – FerDİFON Plakçılık ve Kasetçilik

Kemençe taksimi – lementche solo (Melihat Gülses, 16th piece from the album: “İstanbul’dan Atina’ya türküler”) – ODEON Grubu Müzik Yapımcılık

Dertler benim olsun (Orhan Gencebay, album: “Sizin seçtiklerinizi, 68’den... 83’e ilk 15 yıl”) – Kervan Plakçılık

İlk göz ağrısı (Nilüfer, album: “Karar verdim”) – Seyhan Müzik


Leylim Ley (Güngör Bayrak, album: “The best of Turkey”) – Atoll Music - Paris

Uzayıp giden tren yolları (Nurdan Torun, album: “Ilk album”) – Columbia / Sony Türkiye

Sen olsaydın (Ebru Gündeş, album: “Ben daha büyümedim”) – Marş Müzik Yapım / Raks Müzik

İstanbul’u dinliyorum (Yavuz Bingöl, album: “Biz”) – Seyhan Müzik

Gidiyor mus bu şehirden (Sezen Aksu / Haris Aleksi, album: “Deliveren”) – Post Müzik

NEYLEYİM (Linet, album: “Linet”) – Destan Müzik Üretim

Aykın çiçek (Sibel Can, album: “Aksam sefası”) – Emre Grafson Müzik

Niye Allahım (Ayşe Mine, album: “Yalancı / Ağla gönül”) – Kral Müzik / Prestij Müzik

O sensin (Sezen Aksu, album: “Düğün ve Cenaze”) – Raks Müzik Yapım

Aşkın renkleri (İncesar, album: “İstanbul’a dair”) – Kalkan Müzik Yapım

İstanbul efendisi (İncesar, album: “İstanbul’a dair”) – Kalkan Müzik Yapım

Yaz bitti (İncesar, album: “İstanbul’a dair”) – Kalkan Müzik Yapım

Valide Sultan (Callisto Guatelli Paşa, Eske ve yeni milli havalar ve popüler oryantal şarkılar, 1. kitap, album: “Boğaziçi Mehtapları’nda Sultan portreleri”) – Kalkan Müzik Yapım

Münire Sultan (Callisto Guatelli Paşa, Eske ve yeni milli havalar ve popüler oryantal şarkılar, 2. kitap, album: “Boğaziçi Mehtapları’nda Sultan portreleri”) – Kalkan Müzik Yapım
Aya Sofya Museum
Photograph copyright Giada Ripa di Meana
A Çay in Diyarbakır...

Luigi Narbone  Former political adviser in the Delegation of the EC in Ankara; Former deputy Head of Unit-DG RELEX; Now: Head of Delegation to Saudi Arabia

I knew Alessandro through my political functions in the Delegation of the European Commission in Ankara. It was a highly rewarding experience. He was an exceptional person, profoundly human and endearing. I remember a journey we made together to Diyarbakir. At sunset, we went out for a walk in the city. We walked for a long time in search of the some vestiges that could reveal the presence of various religions, churches, mosques, synagogues, etc. At one point, we began speaking to the inhabitants, and sat down to drink tea, “çay”, with them, in the last rays of sunlight. We both spoke Turkish. Suddenly, an inhabitant asked me where we came from. One of the children said to me: “You sound like you’re Turkish!” I looked at Alessandro. He seemed almost pained at not having been taken for Turkish, he who is descended from an old Oriental Latin family, whereas I am Italian, and have nothing to do with Turkey... Alessandro was a “rounded individual” who managed to combine expertise with passion and emotion in his approach to the most restrictive diplomatic circumstances.

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I met Alessandro via e-mail in 2002. I was at the time working for Eurasia Group, a New York-based political risk advisory firm. My chief responsibility was covering Turkish politics, economics, social and security issues, and I was editor-in-chief for a regular publication named “Turkey Weekly”. Alessandro had somehow heard about me and the publication and contacted me to be added to the distribution list. I then got in touch with him periodically during tumultuous times of Turkey-EU discussions and he was always happy to get back to me with balanced and committed answers. Starting in 2004, I started visiting Brussels regularly and got several chances to meet Alessandro in person. He was always very generous with his time, even at times of his being extremely busy, and had valuable insights.

I remember him to tell me “Bucalıyım” (“I am from Buca”) when I asked him what his connection was to Turkey. Buca is a neighbourhood in Izmir, which is also my hometown. I invited him various times to arrange a time so that we could both meet in Izmir and I could show him around. It never happened unfortunately.

Alessandro’s role was very constructive with regards to the Turkey-EU process. He was strict in making sure that Turkey did put effort in meeting EU standards, particularly in his area of political and democratic requirements. He was also very fair in making sure to separate spin and facts in his own analysis and work, and never allowed domestic political issues stemming from particular EU countries get in his way. My impression was that an overwhelming part of his time in 2002 and 2004 (and probably before, although I had gained the opportunity to meet him in 2002) was spent in communicating to Turkey that it was its and its citizens’ interest to meet EU standards in democracy. He has then struggled to make sure that Turkey was treated as an equal candidate as a number of EU states attempted to shift goalposts and (arguably successfully) to virtually freeze the accession process.

My understanding was that the decision to ask Turkey to establish customs union relations with Cyprus after 2004, when the country joined and Turkey received approval to start accession negotiations, as a de facto, middle-of-the-road solution. This way Turkey would avoid establishing diplomatic relations
Once upon a time Buca: 1930s.

Courtesy of İzmir Chamber of Commerce

Photo taken from “History Written on Glass”, İzmir Chamber of Commerce Glass Plate Negative Collection, İzmir, 2007.
with Cyprus while treating it as an equal EU member state. Unfortunately this has not worked. Turkey saw it as a maximalist demand and put itself to a corner by first accepting and then rejecting to implement the step. Cyprus, on the other hand, asked for more but stopped at times when it felt Turkey’s accession process was threatened, something that is fitting Cypriot interests in the big picture. However, the failure of the French referendum on the European constitution put things in a deadlock as France married itself to such a pro-Cyprus position that further demands were no longer a choice by the Cypriot government but something it had to stick to in order to maintain domestic political support.

**Alessandro had the best traits of what you would consider a “European man.” He was a true gentleman, very strict when it came to make sure that European standards were met. But he was also very keen to listen to the other, hoping to do everything in close dialogue.**

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My second anecdote is the first time I met him in person. It was right before the Copenhagen Summit in December 2004. His phones kept ringing incessantly; it was always the Greek Cypriots who were calling!

My third anecdote is when he told me he was going to leave his position at DG Enlargement. He seemed to feel bad about leaving the position that he spent so much time and energy. But I heard afterwards that he was looking forward to his job in Morocco. I was very happy for him because it all sounded like a gift to him after years of very hard work.

Alessandro had the best traits of what you would consider a “European man.” He was a true gentleman, very strict when it came to make sure that European standards were met. But he was also very keen to listen to the other, hoping to do everything in close dialogue. His way of dealing with everything with dialogue, his type of men is why our generation (I turned 30 this year so was younger than Alessandro) was so lucky to live in peace and dialogue. I was certain that had he lived longer, he would be a very positive contributor to develop a relationship between the EU and Morocco.
I remember him looking at his watch (or the clock on the wall to be more polite to his guests) incessantly because he always had things to do, people to see, work to accomplish. He was a truly hard-working public servant. I wish people in Turkey continue to acknowledge how lucky they were to have him on their side.

*I wish people in Turkey continue to acknowledge how lucky they were to have him on their side.*
“If something dies, it is only flesh/souls don’t”(*)

Dr. Emre Öktem Professor agrégé of International Law in Faculty of Law, Galatasaray University

There is a certain category of friends whom we rarely encounter, but who are particularly dear to us. Each time we meet them, we have the impression of having been with them only yesterday and are certain we shall see them again tomorrow, no matter how much time passes between our meetings. We take up our conversation from where we left off the previous time, and we stop at a given moment, to continue it on the next occasion. To reach this level of friendship, the two people probably have to share a certain similarity in their philosophy of life, in their fields of interest and even passions. I would say that I had such a friendship with Alessandro, which ended in a manner that was as premature as it was atrocious.

Well before I met Alessandro, I had already had the honour of meeting his father, if I can put it that way, by correspondence. I knew him through his legal and historical writings, whose scientific precision and elegant style are cruelly lacking in other papers these days. Furthermore, his old high school friend, Giovanni Scognamillo, had lent me his delicious Appunti familiari, a fairytale description of the Izmir of his childhood. One day, to my great surprise and joy, I received a letter from Livio Missir in which he commented on my article about inter-religious dialogue in Turkey. Thus began a correspondence which was to last for many years. Having learned that I was working in the field of international law and more specifically on human rights, Livio Missir pointed me in the direction of his son.

I met Alessandro every time he visited Istanbul in an official or officious capacity. I discovered that he had the innate qualities of a diplomat without the defects one acquires through the vicissitudes of the career... He was born in Izmir, but left Turkey at an early age. His impeccable Turkish indicated that this language was still spoken in the Missir household. We liked to joke in a sabir, a mixture of Turkish, French and Italian. We shared many passions,

(*) Poem by Yunus Emre, (13th century).
especially history, international law and Ottoman history. I can picture him still at the table in the Cumhuriyet tavern, in front of the meze dishes that he missed so much in Brussels. He had to go back to his hotel to prepare some official procedures, and I had to return home to mark exam papers. But neither of us had any intention of leaving the Cumhuriyet on this sunny, springtime afternoon in Istanbul. It was infinitely more enjoyable to talk about the Venetian colonies in the Mediterranean, the Byzantine nobility which had become an integral part of the Ottoman administration, good booksellers who will still find you the complete edition of the collection of treatises by the Baron de Testa, the best coastal resorts in the Aegean, the restaurant where we would dine on his next visit...

I can picture him still at the table in the Cumhuriyet tavern, in front of the meze dishes that he missed so much in Brussels.

His behaviour was always marked by sincerity, goodwill, a constructive, optimistic approach and above all, a natural grace. He never alluded to his noble origins, but almost hid them. Yet his nobility of spirit was apparent from his slightest gestures.

Our friendship had a religious, or rather, inter-religious dimension. We often spoke of religious matters, convinced of the ethical obligation to construct a sincere dialogue, in order to bring about and maintain peace between believers of different religions. Alessandro was a fervent Catholic. I do not know the extent to which I am fervent, but in any case I belong to the Muslim religion. We were curious to better understand the other’s religion and joyful to discover that there were more similarities which united us than divergences which separated us. It was not about deepening our theological knowledge, but understanding each other’s experience. I was for my part filled with wonder by the sincere and simple manner of practising one’s faith in an old, Catholic family. I hope I gave him a few insights into my own religious experience. For certain people, taking part in such a dialogue belies a weakness of faith. I think that quite the reverse, the refusal of such dialogue is the sign of a fanaticism that merely papers over the cracks of one’s uncertainties.

At this time, I no longer have any reason to withhold the fact that during his career in the European institutions, Alessandro followed a clearly pro-Turkish line of conduct. In some way, he made himself the spokesperson for Turkey, even though he had no practical interest in so doing. Alessandro was perfectly aware of the magnificent synthesis of culture which he had been born into. I believe that he was simply driven by a feeling of recognition. Alessandro wanted to pay tribute to this colourful, rich culture. He had inherited an entire Aegean, Mediterranean and Turkish patrimony from his native town, added to his profoundly Latin roots.
Beyond his noble birth, this marvellous heritage gave him a cultural nobility.

He never disguised his sympathies for Turkey. His appointment in Morocco could be explained, so I am told, by his experience of living in a Muslim environment. In my view, he should have been sent to Ankara. In this climate of hostility towards Turkey that is increasingly gaining ground in Europe, I am inclined to interpret his assignment in Morocco as a sort of exile.

I began by citing a poet and I shall conclude with a philosopher. As Tolstoy said, “Where reason ends, prayer begins.”

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Close to Yeni Cami in Eminönü, Istanbul.
I met Alessandro immediately upon my arrival at the Delegation of the European Commission in Warsaw, in January 1999. We soon realised we had several mutual friends, in particular through my wife’s Polish relations. Alessandro seemed to know everyone in Warsaw!

One of these people was Cecilia Czartoryska, a quite elderly lady who ran a small orphanage for blind children in Saska Kepa. To this day I do not know how Alessandro had come into contact with her. Entirely devoted to the children for whom she was responsible, overworked and in poor health, she had very little contact even with her close family. As soon as I arrived, Alessandro recruited me in his project to get her a car which would enable her to take some of the orphans to a school adapted to their needs: a project which he successfully accomplished with an unsuspected tenacity.

Later I discovered that his tenacity drew its source from his spiritual life. Furthermore, one of the reasons why Alessandro loved Poland and felt so at home there was because of the fervent, traditional Catholicism he found there. Cosmopolitan and tolerant, Alessandro nevertheless did not hide his convictions. On the contrary, he displayed them with his unique arrogance. He told me amusedly that on the day when Pope Benedict XVI was elected (when we had both returned to Brussels), he had invited himself into his director general’s office, where one of the few television in our building was to be found, in order to follow the events. When Benedict XVI came out on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, both of them kneeled to receive the papal blessing – to the astonishment of the director general’s secretary, who was showing visitors into his office at that very moment.

He was very fond of the Tridentine Mass, emphasising that this liturgy helped him to identify with Christ’s sacrifice. I can not help but associate this attitude with the way in which he died.
Both humble and determined

Aslı Özçeri  
Business development manager at Moneytrans and former consultant at AB Consultancy & Investment Services

I had various contacts with Alessandro, mainly by telephone, but also at meetings organised in the Turkey Unit, DG Enlargement. We did not see each other outside these meetings but the image I remember from these various contacts with him are that he was highly professional with a keen intelligence, both humble and determined. I held him in great respect and he represented for me one of the best European officials I had met in the European Commission. Furthermore, his in-depth and objective knowledge of Turkey was invaluable for our pro-European circles, which are working towards Turkey's entry into the European Union.

The news of his death was a terrible shock. I sincerely hope that book will contribute to keeping alive our memories of the Man he was.

His in-depth and objective knowledge of Turkey was invaluable for our pro-European circles, which are working towards Turkey’s entry into the European Union.
He was a visionary

Owen Parker  Seconded national expert 2003–2006 in the Turkey Unit

I worked with Alessandro in the Commission from 2003-2006 and I learned a great deal from him. He was a hard working, energetic, highly effective and diligent colleague; an extraordinary and formidable intellect; an impressive orator; and an extremely generous and caring person. I was fortunate enough to see each of these aspects of Alessandro during the time that I knew him.

Although I worked with Alessandro during the whole period that I was in the Commission, we worked together most closely in the 2005-2006 period on the 2005 Progress Report and the 2006 Accession Partnership. Although I was a junior colleague, Alessandro always valued my input and ideas and I was extremely grateful for the respect that he always showed towards me.

I recall my first visit to Istanbul during this period, when I was fortunate enough to be in Alessandro’s company. He asked the taxi driver to take a detour from the airport to our hotel so that he might show me something of the city. His knowledge of the city was incredibly detailed and his enthusiasm for Turkey and especially Istanbul was highly contagious. I certainly could not have had a better guide than Alessandro!

Also Alessandro was the author of many important speeches uttered by Commissioners for Enlargement, Verheugen and Rehn and Presidents Prodi and Barroso during some historical and defining moments in EU-Turkey relations. He was a respected advisor to senior colleagues within the Commission on all issues related to Turkey. He also spoke and wrote widely on the question of Turkey’s accession in various settings, ranging from parliamentary committees to policy conferences and academic journals.

A strong advocate of Turkey, he was also a strong advocate of a truly democratic Turkey, respectful of human rights and the rule of law. In that sense, he was proof that an important friend to Turkey is also sometimes an important critic.

If not for his untimely passing, I have little doubt that he would have gone on to occupy the highest possible posts within the Commission. He could have equally pursued a highly successful political or academic career.

Also, Alessandro was always quick to refute easy categorisations of Turkey as ‘the other’ and rejected any ideas which deferred to a ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis, wherever these might come from.

Within the Commission I believe that he did much to persuade senior colleagues that Turkey was on the right path. And within Turkey he did much
to reassure the establishment that the EU’s doors were open to Turkey. His impressive knowledge of Turkish history and culture, as well as his own family history, meant that he was always able to defend his political views in a robust and extremely convincing manner.

Alessandro advocated dialogue not only between the EU and Turkey, but also between the kaleidoscope of identities that exist within modern Turkey. He was particularly tireless in his promotion of a dialogue between religious and cultural minorities and the government and state.

Occasionally he would privately express his exasperation with elements in the so-called ‘deep-state’ in Turkey; their resistance to the reform process and the ethno-nationalism and associated paranoia that they frequently expounded. Alessandro’s vision was of an open, pluralistic and tolerant Turkey.

A strong advocate of Turkey, he was also a strong advocate of a truly democratic Turkey, respectful of human rights and the rule of law. In that sense, he was proof that an important friend to Turkey is also sometimes an important critic.
The Tower of Galata, Istanbul.
Photograph copyright Caner Kasapoğlu
Alessandro, a highly sensitive individual

Father Piretto Collaborator of “Présence” monthly French language magazine, Istanbul

I met Alessandro in Istanbul, in 2004, at an Episcopal conference that had been organised there. He took a keen interest in the minorities living in Turkey. I remember him as a highly sensitive individual, listening to others with presence and empathy, which is increasingly rare in our current society. He was tactful and refined. He had a passion for the Oriental churches. I also remember the love with which he spoke of his four children. I would like to tell them, through this book dedicated to him, to be proud of their father and to have faith, to keep faith always, in spite of the difficulties that confront them in their lives. The ways of the Lord are impenetrable... Alessandro, your father, and your mother, have given you an extraordinary example of how to live. You should know that “life is in God’s hands and he alone knows what is good for us.” God will never abandon you and from on high, your father is watching over you attentively. You should trust in what we call “the Communion of Saints”, that is to say, your father and mother are here, living, very much present and close to you. They are encouraging you even if you can not hear them, for God is the God of the living and not of the dead. Take the example of their lives, in which Faith was of particular importance.” Life is not easy for anyone. It

I also remember the love with which he spoke of his four children. I would like to tell them, through this book dedicated to him, to be proud of their father and to have faith, to keep faith always, in spite of the difficulties that confront them in their lives. The ways of the Lord are impenetrable...
involves sacrifices, honesty, devotion and service. Alessandro, for example, undertook his work not in as a careerist but by being of service to others as much as he could. I would also add here that Turkey is the second Holy Land after Palestine. We must not forget this. The house of the Blessed Virgin is in Turkey, in Ephesus. Saint Paul, Saint Peter, Saint John and Saint Philip were all born there. Do not forget that Turkey is your land and you have very deep roots there. Never forget that the Blessed Virgin is your mother also, ever present for us, in difficult moments of our lives. She will always show you the path to follow. Never fear, God is the way of hope.

*Do not forget that Turkey is your land and you have very deep roots there.*
Alessandro: A new approach

Etienne de Poncins French Ambassador to Bulgaria

My wife Caroline and I met Alessandro and Ariane during our time in Poland: we arrived in January 1999 directly from Brussels and left Warsaw, bound once more for Brussels, in spring 2002. We then met up with them again in Brussels, as Alessandro and Ariane also returned in 2002. We returned to France in spring 2005 and our meetings became rather less frequent, even though we remained in regular contact by e-mail.

In Warsaw, Alessandro was responsible for matters of justice and internal affairs (JAI, in the European technocratic language of Brussels) and I had the function of chief adviser to the French Embassy (number 2).

Our two families soon became friends. We saw one another frequently in a professional capacity and in the numerous diplomatic receptions, or at the French-language Mass on Sundays.

Alessandro was not a banal person; he was jovial and very charming. He had a perfect command of several European languages and it was always a pleasure to see him switching effortlessly from French to English or Italian. He also spoke good Polish. He was highly enthusiastic and ever an optimist. This enthusiasm and dynamism was focused of course primarily on the country in which we were living at the time, Poland, and the adhesion process that was in full swing.

You should know that Alessandro was a fierce defender of Turkey’s membership, whereas I myself had always been particularly reserved, not to say hostile about it.

I remember several dinners at their home in their charming house with its refined and typically Belgian atmosphere, or at our flat in Francuska Street (“French” Street). We often discussed Turkey. You should know that Alessandro was a fierce defender of Turkey’s membership, whereas I myself had always been particularly reserved, not to say hostile about it. Neither have I changed my opinion since then. Our discussions resembled verbal jousting contests, sometimes heated but always friendly. They continued at regular intervals like a match interrupted by nightfall without either side managing to convince the other. But was this our aim anyway?

The debate on Turkey’s membership is one of the most heated and animated between sincere parties working towards European construction, which clearly
Aya Sofya Museum, Istanbul
Photo by Giada Ripa di Meana
we both were. This results particularly from the fact that on both sides, the arguments are valid, convincing and fair. This is what forms the entire crux of this debate, but also its inextricable nature.

In short, those who advocate adhesion highlight the stabilising role of Turkey, its commitment to NATO and its march towards democracy. Those who oppose it emphasise the geographically Asiatic nature of the country, its own civilisation and the destabilisation of the European project which would result from its entry.

To this quite classical debate, Alessandro brought a new approach. For it is not so much the Turkey of today which he had in mind, but that of the 19th century. He endlessly described the cosmopolitan, tolerant Constantinople of the 18th and 19th centuries where, according to him, Turks of course but also Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Jews, Romanians and Bulgarians cohabited without difficulty. It was the Ottoman Empire which fascinated him through the iridescence of its languages and wealth of its heterogeneous cultures and religions. He could talk about it better than anyone and I have to admit that he opened my eyes to this little-known historic reality. His family origins were largely responsible for this knowledge, but you could sense that it had been nurtured by an in-depth culture and broad reading. In his view, allowing Turkey to enter would be effective recognition of this reality and would enable Turkey to strengthen its European roots.

It had already occurred to me of course that he embellished the reality of the Ottoman Empire. But he was always so convincing and enthusiastic (in order to live in a country today, Bulgaria, which has been subjected to five centuries of the Ottoman yoke, I am well placed to point out that the reality was not always how he described it so passionately). Nevertheless there was something highly original in his presentation of the advantages of Turkey’s candidature which was supported by a rare knowledge of the history of this country and its place in the European alliance.

I remember one lunch in Brussels at the “Pain Quotidien” on the Place des Sablons in spring 2002. The weather was superb and we were in the garden. We had spoken about one thing and another, Turkey of course, but also the problems that he and Ariane had encountered when moving into their new...
I also remember a dinner at their home in winter around an open fire and another at the Cornets’ house near Rue Lepoutre.

Finally, I remember an anecdote about Ariane this time. The Missirs had come round to our home (rue Edmond Picard, 35). There were twelve people. It was summer and the weather was warm. Ariane was sitting more or less in front of me. Suddenly she jumped up and cried out: “Could one of your children be underneath the table? I can feel something strange.” It was our very young basset fauve puppy, Ulysse, who had made his way under the table and was conscientiously licking her feet through her sandals!

Of course, their tragic fate shattered us to the very depths of our beings. It was a terrible shock to imagine them, so trusting, open and welcoming, confronted brutally in the sinister darkness of a Moroccan night with brutal and abject cruelty. We have often prayed and think often of them. Their memory will remain intact throughout our lifetimes. Alessandro and Ariane will always accompany us in life, even if they are no longer of this world.

At night in the darkness, I sometimes hear Alessandro’s voice again pleading tirelessly for the cosmopolitan, welcoming Istanbul that he loved so much and which he described with conviction and passion. He was my friend and will remain so.

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Homage to Alessandro Missir di Lusignano and his wife Ariane née Lagasse de Locht

Olli Rehn Commissioner for Enlargement, European Commission

Speech by Olli Rehn Commissioner for Enlargement, at the ceremony of the inauguration of his meeting room, in European Commission.

I was determined to be with you here today to celebrate the memory of Alessandro and his wife Ariane, and to bear witness, on behalf of the European Commission, of the unforgettable mark he left within our institution.

This plaque is intended to be its symbolic representation, but in reality it is very little, compared with the emptiness his absence has created amongst us all.

Alessandro left his mark on all the areas in which he worked and more than this, on all the people whom he frequented.

He was an excellent official, whose professionalism was acknowledged by everyone, Alessandro was a rounded personality. He was a rare individual, whose erudition rivalled his kindness, brilliance and simplicity, modesty and passion.

Entrance to the inauguration room, “Salle Alessandro Missir di Lusignano” in the European Commission, Charlemagne Building.
He succeeded in achieving a rare alchemy of being both extremely cultured and brilliant, whilst remaining friendly and accessible at all times.

He was a person whose moral values were reflected simply, naturally and directly through his daily activities.

He was someone for whom the values of tolerance and generosity were not empty words.

My memories of Alessandro are of course related above all to his activities as political administrator in the DG Enlargement team responsible for Turkey.

I was impressed immediately by the extent of his knowledge and the acuity of his analysis of this country, with which he had deep, longstanding family connections.

I was determined to be with you here today to celebrate the memory of Alessandro and his wife Ariane, and to bear witness, on behalf of the European Commission, of the unforgettable mark he left within our institution.

There was no attitude or reaction in our Turkish interlocutors, which in his view did not have a strategic, historic or cultural justification.

But the most remarkable thing about him was his enthusiasm, dynamism and the conviction he inspired constantly in our common goal, the process for Turkey’s entry into the European Union. Listening to his presentation, even our regular reports, which are standardised to say the least, adopted the style of political documentaries!

I will never forget how, in Kayseri in October 2005, in the middle of Ramadan and just after the opening of adhesion negotiations, he astounded the audience with witty comments spoken in an impeccable Turkish.

Alessandro was in my view the ideal person for the job of political administrator for Turkey. I have always thought that the unification of eastern and western civilisations, which underlies our approach to Turkey, was the very image of his personal convictions.

He was an excellent official, whose professionalism was acknowledged by everyone, Alessandro was a rounded personality. He was a rare individual, whose erudition rivalled his kindness, brilliance and simplicity, modesty and passion.
A committed Catholic, Alessandro strove all the more to understand and explain the secular nature of the Turkish State, as well as the principles and practices of Islam. Through his understanding the multiple facets of Turkish society, he regularly countered the many prejudices of the west.

Yet I have to say that he was equally at ease in his previous functions as head of the political section in the delegation in Warsaw, where he left a similarly profound impression.

He immersed himself in the society and culture of the country, to the extent that such varied subjects as the history of Polish border regions and the Polish-Jewish reconciliation held no secrets for him.

What more can one say about a colleague and friend whose intellectual curiosity, that immense thirst for knowledge and understanding, and whose profound humanism led him to learn and speak fluently the language of the countries in which he lived, even temporarily?

For everyone who had the opportunity, it was a real blessing to have known him.

My thoughts go also to his wife, Ariane, with whom he formed a loving, dynamic couple, and to their families.

May their inspiration continue to nurture those who occupy this room.
Response by Livio Missir di Lusignano to Olli Rehn at the inauguration of the room dedicated to Alessandro. 18/09/2007.

Who will ever be able to put into words the distress of a father and mother whose children die suddenly, victims of the most painful form of humanism, and whose four surviving grandchildren are confronted from one day to the next with the greatest challenge of human nature: the simultaneous and perhaps inexplicable demise of their adored parents?

Who will make up for a solitude, already so naturally rife in the world at this, the beginning of the third millennium after Christ; a solitude which is increasing with the age of the four fragile victims?

Today, through a public ceremony and an act of great symbolic value, by affixing a plaque and inaugurating a room named after one of its officials and his wife, the Commission is paying homage to two people who were martyrs in a foreign country, and who sacrificed their lives in the most tragic way.

We would like to thank the European Commission for its gesture.

During his visit of condolence to our home, one or the other of the two directors general – Eneko Landaburu or Michael Leigh – mentioned the possibility of creating a Foundation. Under the Commission’s auspices, such a foundation would also contribute, but in an even more tangible and mediatised manner, to keeping the memory of this sacrifice alive, by associating it with the European ideal. Yet above all, it would be aimed at research into means of communication which will help bring about a faster rapprochement between the European states and the progressive consolidation of their Union, through a better mutual understanding of their peoples and nations. Could such a Foundation eventually be established in the coming years, if not months ahead?

What a mystery it is that two young lives should be lost in bloodshed, in the context of a twofold family tradition. Over several centuries, this tradition has aimed not a confrontation but the rapprochement of civilisations and reached the highest point of its trajectory in one of the two Belgian signatures appended in 1957 to the preparatory treaties for the European Union.

In the presence of Mr. Olli Rehn, the Commissioner responsible for the enlargement of the Union, it is not necessary to point out here the contribution of his own country – Finland – to reflection on certain aspects of this European tradition, described in Mika WALTARI’s famous book on Istanbul (“The Lovers from Byzantium”). As proven by such authors as Steven Runciman or in spite of a few reservations also by Orhan Pamuk, I shall never stop questioning this issue.

All that remains for us now is to hope that the Commission will continue to bear tangible witness to its concern for the future of the four young children, for whom nothing can replace the death of an exemplary father and mother.

Livio Missir di Lusignano
I’m always happy when I remember you, Alessandro, so very Italian in your brown sports jacket and trousers, with that elegant watch – a family heirloom – on your sun-tanned wrist. And your fingers, on which the golden wedding band stood out. The symbol, the commitment of a lifetime. I’m happy, remembering our chats in the corridor, our comments on the elections with Riccardo and Stefano, your hearty laughter, your gesticulations. You’re often before my eyes, I see you moving as though you were here.

I admired the sacred fire of your dedication, I was sad whenever I saw such great enthusiasm disappointed. *Ad augusta per angusta* (*), you’d say to me. That’s just how it was for you, my dear Alessandro. Your passage in this world was brief but never uncertain. *Stat crux dum orbis volvitur*: that was the fulcrum of your thinking. I have no other words, words lie broken.

You enriched the arid earth, which became fertile humus all around you; and soon your four “mustard seeds, which must grow” will cover it with leaves and flowers and the birds of the air will nest there among those branches.

With sincere affection,

(*) only coping with difficulties, you reach splendid results.
Our childhood memories in Buca

Hacer Sapan  Sales Assistant at DB Schenker, Marseille

One of my best childhood memories are associated with a quite specific time: my summer holidays spent in Buca with the grandchildren of Mrs. Missir, Antoinette (I called her “Madame Nene”) and more precisely with Mr. Livio Missir’s children: Alessandro, Stefano and Letizia. I formed the strongest ties with them. Everyone was on holiday and I spent unforgettable times with them.

One of our favourite games was to play jacks, and then playing cards and counting in Turkish, as they adored learning as much as they could in Turkish. Occasionally, we visited my district together in the higher part of Buca, in the hills, where we went horse-riding, all together.

In spite of the language barrier between us, our close friendship was stronger and always won the day. In this way, we spent several summers together playing numerous games, talking, laughing and discussing all kinds of things in their garden planted with orange, lemon and all kinds of perfumed trees.

Later, Mrs. Missir began teaching me French. I was very happy, because I knew that the following summer, it would be easier for me to communicate with my friends.
As the years passed, I got to know the Missir family better, their way of living and teaching, their appetite for reading, literature, history, archaeology and culture. All of this attracted me to them like a magnet, making me want to learn as much and as quickly as possible every day.

At mealtimes we discussed philosophy, poetry and history...

Of all of them, there was one person who stood out through his attitude and above all his passion to teach and help in spite of his young age: it was Alessandro. He habitually taught us things and corrected my language mistakes, serenely and patiently with a clear, calm language.

He adored classical music and he never missed an opportunity to make us listen to it on every possible occasion. It was through him that I discovered classical music.

This time in my life will remain etched in my memory forever and I am happy to have had the fortune to know Alessandro within the Missir family. Alessandro was someone very simple, in the sense that it was possible to communicate with him and he wouldn’t make the slightest cultural or religious distinction. He was also very human. He was an unforgettable friend who will remain in my heart and thoughts forever.

Alessandro was someone very simple, in the sense that it was possible to communicate with him and he wouldn’t make the slightest cultural or religious distinction. He was also very human. He was an unforgettable friend who will remain in my heart and thoughts forever.
Mr. and Mrs. Remo Missir di Lusignano
Grandparents of Alessandro. At their Golden Wedding anniversary party in Buca, 1980.
We were two people with widely different personalities... He had a great faith, was traditional and a traditionalist, I was more of an agnostic who does not have this visceral attachment to traditions as he often loved to point out... What always struck me about Alessandro was his great respect for differences in the beliefs and thoughts of others, his open spiritedness, his openness to others and his thirst to learn from others. I only worked with him for a year, but he will always be present in my heart, as he gave me a vision of the world that was uniquely his, exceptional. He also opened my mind to very diverse subjects, as he was interested in so many things at once: literature, philosophy, music, opera, the history of religions, painting, etc. He was an idealist, a

Riccardo Serri Desk Officer, Turkey Unit – DG Enlargement

On mission in Istanbul in a restaurant, with a view over the Golden Horn. At the back, on the right: Riccardo Serri.
passionate person. His great enthusiasm made him an exceptional official, for he could move mountains through his unfailing dynamism, to such an extent that he managed to transmit his enthusiasm to others. His great culture, notably on the history of Turkey, impressed more than one person. He was intimidating... through his in-depth knowledge in this context and through his command of the Turkish language. But alongside this man, another man was hidden... which we discovered gradually like a Pandora’s Box. He was a man full of humour, irony, witty, who adored imitating actors, friends and colleagues...
Sunset over the Golden Horn a unique sight in the world.
colleagues… I saw him on several occasions launching into incredibly realistic impersonations… We laughed a lot together. And then there was the man full of humanity, an excellent, very shrewd observer of situations and the people around him. I only had the chance to go on mission with him once, to Istanbul… to my great regret. I know that he knew Istanbul like the palm of his hand. He adored walking for hours on the Golden Horn or observing it from the famous Pierre Loti district, where he would stroll if his agenda so permitted. He was also highly familiar with the writer’s works and recited poems and verses to us. I also know he liked to walk in the Galata district. It was here, just in front of the Galata tower, that he liked to seek refuge… On the top floor of the Hotel Anemon. He went to work there sometimes for the whole afternoon, dazzled by the breathtaking view over the Bosphorus.

Fragments from a letter written by
Pierre Loti to his sister:

Translation of an extract from Aziyadé, Coll. Pourpre, 1940. (ch. VII-p.83)

“...who will give back to me my life in the East, my free life in the open air, my long aimless meanderings and the hubbub of Istanbul?

To leave in the morning from Atmeidan and arrive at night in Eyoub; to do the round of the mosques, prayer beads in hand (tespih) ; to stop at all the cafedjis, türbes, mausoleums, baths and squares; to drink Turkish coffee from microscopic blue cups with copper stems; to sit in the sun and drowse gently in the smoke from a hookah; to chat with dervishes or passers-by; to be a part of this picture filled with movement and light...”

Pierre Loti and his servant Şükrü
Copyright, 1998, Unlem Basım Yayincilik
Hand with famous “tespîh“.

Tespîh (Turkish) is a string of prayer beads, probably of Persian origin, which is traditionally used by Muslims to keep track of counting in tespîh.
It was here that Alessandro liked to seek refuge.

R. Serri
I could have first met Alessandro in Brussels while I was working as MEP advisor at the European Parliament, or in Istanbul in one of those conferences on EU-Turkey relations. But destiny wanted us to meet first at the historic Ankara Palace, a place associated with the founding years of the Turkish Republic. It was an official dinner in the period right after the EU-Turkey membership talks had started, following a quite tumultuous phase in relations between Brussels and Ankara. Everybody was joyful, optimistic and focusing already on the next steps of the integration process. Alessandro also looked very happy and proud. He was in fact right to be, having contributed greatly to this achievement. He was also, by his family background and intellectual depth very much concentrated on the historical meaning of what was happening in the history of the 21st century. I do not remember how it happened, whether it was because we were also in a historic location, or tired of the political and technical content of the day’s meetings, but we very quickly found ourselves talking about the Aegean region, mythology, his family’s Izmir and my childhood Foça (Phocaea, an ancient settlement in the Izmir region). When we met on other occasions, Alessandro learned about my hobby of poetry. I was never able to keep my promise to send him some of my verses.

Thanks to dear Laetitia, I can at least dedicate some of them to Alessandro, whose friendship will always be part of my life.

“I can at least dedicate some of my verses to Alessandro, whose friendship will always be a part of my life. “– Where?
Where cliffs of my soul fall into your voice
Rusty and abandoned.”

Kader Sevinç
Former MEP Advisor at the European Parliament, currently head of CHP Representation to the EU, Brussels

Some of my poems to Alessandro
**Vine and Syllable**  
(Draft translation, original aside)

I
-Where?
Where cliffs of my soul fall into your voice.
Rusty and abandoned.

II
We are spit out such as syllables
to the barren valley...
Rains grope branch roads by letters,
Seagulls by echoes.
While you inflame your wet hanky with words
Van Gogh’s yellows rise on my dayless windows

III
Not much time remains, few sand left.
My face leafs out
a dumb and deaf salutation is floating.
Grapevines are blue today.

IV
I have not forgotten.
- what’s that?
That where cliffs of my soul fall into your voice,
the moonlight falls drizzly as rain
as marguerites age.

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**Asma ve Hece**

I
- Nerede?
Uçurumlarının sesine döküldüğü yerde.
Eskimiş, terkedilmiş.

II
Hece hece tükürürler bizi
Çorak vadide...
Yağmurlar mektuplarla yoklar ara sokakları,
martılar yankılarla
tutuştururken sözcüklerle
ıslak mendilini
günsüz penceremde Van Gogh sanları

III
Zaman yok, kumlar azaldı.
Yapraklanıyor yüzüm,
dilsiz ve sağır bir merhaba uzuyor.
Asmalar üzgün bugün.

IV
Unutmadım.
- Neyi?
Uçurumlarının sesine döküldüğü yerde,
aışıçığının çişil çişil yağdığını,
papatyalar eskidikçe.

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*A view of the bay from the Lift Tower.*

*Courtesy of İzmir Chamber of Commerce*

*Photo taken from “History Written on Glass”, İzmir Chamber of Commerce Glass Plate Negative Collection, İzmir, 2007.*
I met Alessandro in 2002 when I assumed my functions as Head of Department in the Directorate General for EU Affairs at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During all these years we had excellent professional relations with Alessandro and used to see him at many meetings with the European Commission.

I could always feel that he had a deep sympathy for and understanding of Turkey, which most probably led him to share his ideas and views during certain evaluations about Turkey at the Commission.

Alessandro was a very knowledgeable man. During the working lunches at these meetings, we always used to find time to talk about cultural and literary developments in Turkey. I was always pleasantly surprised to see how many friends he had among the intellectual circles in Turkey. I should also mention my admiration for his most eloquent command of so many languages.

I remember one day talking with him in Brussels about the Mediterranean and what it means to be a Mediterranean person. During our conversation I told him that the Fishermen of Halicarnassus (Cevat Şakir Kabaağaç) called the

Cevat Şakir Kabaağaç

Cevat Şakir Kabaağaç (17 April 1890, Crete - 13 October 1973, İzmir)
Also known as “The Fisherman of Halicarnassus”; “Halikarnas Balıkçısı” in Turkish, Cevat Sakir was a Turkish writer of novels, short-stories and essays, as well as being a keen ethnographer and travelogue.

He is deeply associated with Bodrum where he started to live as of 1927 by reason of a sentence of three-year’ exile and, fallen under the spell of the town. After serving the last part of his time in Istanbul, he returned and settled down in Bodrum where he lived for 25 years, whence his pen-name in reference to Halicarnassus, name of the city in antiquity. He is largely credited for bringing the formerly sleepy fishing and sponge-diving town of Bodrum, as well as the entire shoreline of the Blue Cruise, to the attention of the Turkish intelligentsia and the reading public first, and by extension, for paving the way towards the formation of international tourist attraction the region became.

Cevat Şakir had a deep impact on the evolution of intellectual ideas in Turkey during the 20th century. An erudite and colorful person, he remains a figure of reference.

Ref: wikipedia, July 2008.
I remember one day talking with him in Brussels about the Mediterranean and what it means to be a Mediterranean person. During our conversation I told him that the Fishermen of Halicarnassus (Cevat Şakir Kabaağaç) called the Mediterranean the sixth continent, so distinct is the way of life and thinking there. I recall him saying that he felt privileged in that respect to also have cultural references from that world. Once, while waiting at the airport in Ankara for the arrival of Commissioner Verhaugen (Alessandro had arrived few days earlier), he mentioned some distant relatives in Izmir whom he was intending to visit during his summer vacation. I could clearly see the joy in his face to be able to spend a few days in Turkey with his family.

His tragic loss has deeply touched all his numerous friends in Turkey. We shall always remember him as a very noble man and treasure his memory.

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Amb. Ayşe Sezgin
Alessandro: An EU delegate who tried to clarify misunderstandings

Murat Sungar  General Secretary of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation in Istanbul

I met Alessandro as the Secretary General of the European Affairs, I generally accompanied the Turkish Foreign Minister during his trips to Brussels for official discussions with the European Commission. I first met Alessandro as a member of the EU team which conducted the negotiations. During my time, Commissioner Günter Verheugen.

He always supported Turkey’s accession. He was very helpful to our delegation. My staff remembers him as an EU delegate who tried to clarify misunderstandings.

He used to give the impression that he defended Turkish viewpoints in EU’s internal discussions. On various occasions he used to advice us on the possible reactions of the EU. I remember an anecdote:

When I first met him I did not know how well he spoke Turkish. During that meeting I was saying something to one of my colleagues when Alessandro, with his wonderful Turkish, intervened and said that he understood Turkish. By stopping me at that moment he saved me from an embarrassing situation.

Because he was familiar with the Turkish culture, he was able to understand and perhaps explain Turkish positions to his own superiors.

When I first met him I did not know how well he spoke Turkish. During that meeting I was saying something to one of my colleagues when Alessandro, with his wonderful Turkish, intervened and said that he understood Turkish. By stopping me at that moment he saved me from an embarrassing situation.
There has been hardly a word of this in the press, but—as my title makes clear—I want now to say a few words about a deplorable loss for Turkey. Alessandro Missir di Lusignano, a true friend of Turkey, and his wife, Ariane Lagasse de Locht, have been murdered by a burglar in their house in Rabat.

Missir, who had been in the European Commission since 1991, worked for years in the department dealing with Turkey, where he was responsible for political criteria. Haluk Payashoğlu, a journalist working for the Bursa Hakimiyet, even reported some two years ago that the Commission was thinking of making Missir its Representative in Ankara, but that never happened.

Missir, who was 39 years old and had 4 children, came from a Levantine family settled in Izmir. His father was the brother-in-law of Jak Galiko, chairman of the board of the Union of Leather Exporters of the Aegean region. He was—if I may say so—following in his father’s footsteps, since the latter served for many years in the European Commission. Haluk Payashoğlu tells us that the family never broke its ties with Turkey and still owns a house at Buca.

All Turkey had occasion to see Alessandro Missir on the NTV channel, and to hear his impeccable Turkish. It is also well known that it was he who won over Günter Verheugen, the Commissioner responsible for the enlargement of the European Union. He had just been posted to Morocco, a choice for which he opted in the hope of broadening his horizons.

He put in a great deal of work for Turkey. It is said that he was among those who introduced into the Commission’s Recommendation of 6 October 2004 the words: “...the Commission considers that Turkey sufficiently fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria.”

The writer of these lines first came to know Alessandro Missir through an article which he had published in the “Journal des Tribunaux-Droit Européen” published in Brussels. When, later on, he learned that Missir was a friend of Turkey, he respected him all the more.

I want to take this opportunity to say that there are still friends of Turkey in Europe today, as there always have been and always will be.

Rest in peace, Missir! You will be greatly missed in Turkey!
A very fine combination of a great intellect, inborn diplomatic skills and a good sense of humour

Sylvia Tiryaki Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Istanbul Kültür University

I think you have heard this anecdote couple of times but I believe it is a very nice one “portraying” Alessandro’s personality – the very fine combination of a great intellect, inborn diplomatic skills and a good sense of humour. It was the first time I met him when with my colleague Mensur Akgün we went to the EU Commission to talk to him about Cyprus issue. Mensur knew him rather well before and he said he got an appointment for us. So we went there on time, or even a bit earlier and registered ourselves at the reception desk – and we were waiting for Alessandro. He knew about us, they called him. If I remember it correctly, we were waiting for about 15 minutes before he came. After greetings and introducing me, Mensur apparently couldn’t resist to point at Alessandro letting us waiting down there. Mensur said:” Alessandro, you are late. We have been waiting here for … 15 minutes.” Alessandro without hesitating for even a second replied: “Dear professor, I have been late for 15 minutes but you are late for the whole week.” And indeed, we were late for the whole week. Mensur mixed up the dates and we came to our Brussels meeting one Thursday later (somehow I think it was Thursday). However, Alessandro despite of being busy accepted this without saying anything else but this joking remark.

A perfect archetype of a noble man. The way he walked, talked, his clothes he wore in the meetings were the essentials that created what he was – a noble man.
Although unfortunately there hadn’t been many opportunities since that time to meet – we have met altogether only four or five times – the impression that has stayed imprinted in my mind is the one of he was a perfect archetype of a noble man. The way he walked, talked, his clothes (I remember a fleur/scarf with a blue cashmere pattern) he wore in the meetings were the essentials that created what he was – a noble man.

After the tragic event I talked to people in Turkey who knew him – horror, sorrow and insult would be three words that would characterize emotions the horrible assail triggered here. Alessandro was a part of Turkey for the Turkish people and with him a part of Turkey died...

After the tragic event I talked to people in Turkey who knew him – horror, sorrow and insult would be three words that would characterize emotions the horrible assail triggered here. Alessandro was a part of Turkey for the Turkish people and with him a part of Turkey died...

Sylvia Tiryaki
Giustina and Tommaso

Alessandro and Ariane Missir di Lusignano at Rabat. Last picture of them
In memoriam Alessandro and Ariane Missir Mamachi de Lusignan(*)
18th September 2006

Marquis Olivier de Trazegnies Historian, Writer

There are certain radiant personalities who appear to be so happy with life that one contemplates them with anxiety. Alessandro and Ariane Missir belonged to these masterpieces of humanity whose harmony is somehow frightening: for talent, intelligence and charisma are precious gifts that threaten the weight of the world. Salvador Dali perfectly described the anxiety inspired by a beautiful object placed on the edge of a table. It carries in it the vertigo of the fall. Looking back, we shudder to think that such an exceptional couple could have existed. Alessandro was the personification of kindness, culture and enthusiasm. Ariane represented everything that generous femininity can offer to those around her. Such beautiful phrases, which are generally reserved for funerary eulogies, circulated spontaneously in their lifetimes without provoking a stronger reaction than general approval.

Born in 1967, Alessandro Missir Mamachi de Lusignan belonged to an old Levantine family which had lived in the Ottoman Empire for several centuries.

The penetrating intelligence with which he dealt with Turkey’s candidature to the European Union for five years was nurtured by a highly specialised knowledge of Levantine society and the quite distinctive functioning of a secular political system about which most westerners understand nothing.

Many of its members held the function of dragoman of Sardinia and Italy (interpreters to the Sublime Porte and thus privileged negotiators). On the female side, they were related to the Lusignans of Cyprus, an illustrious family from Poitou, several members of which (Guy, Amalric, Hugh and Henry II) had also become Kings of Jerusalem. After the island was captured in 1571, the family emigrated to Chios, reigned over by the Giustinianis, from whom the Missirs also descend, and then to Smyrna, a Greco-Latin and Ottoman city which was home to many Catholic lineages. In the 18th century, Father Thomas-Marie Mamachi de Lusignan was famous for his writings and was
buried at the Church of Saint Mary on Minerva in Rome. His tombstone can still be found there today. Alongside this, his brother the Knight Vincent obtained the recognition of his nobility from Louis XV, who liked to call him “my cousin”.

After studying law at the Catholic University of Leuven, the University of Florence, the Collegio Europeo di Parma and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, where each time he built up his knowledge of Europe, Alessandro could express himself fluently in French, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, German and Turkish. Following a long mission in Poland, he also added this country’s language to the list. It is true he didn’t know Sanskrit or Kinyarwanda... If we add to this basic training an encyclopaedic knowledge of history, particularly that of the Ottoman Empire in which he had his roots and in which his father Livio still excels, we can say that few diplomats had a culture so suited to international negotiation. The penetrating intelligence with which he dealt with Turkey’s candidature to the European Union for five years was nurtured by a highly specialised knowledge of Levantine society and the quite distinctive functioning of a secular political system about which most westerners understand nothing. His profound commitment to Catholicism, far from being detrimental to his role as a “bridge builder” enabled him to understand Islam from the inside, and with a sympathy that four centuries of peaceful cohabitation had been able to reinforce.

Four children appeared to consecrate a future life which only remained to flourish in the shadow of a promising career. As the saying goes, happiness always resembles an Epinal scene.

He was both an unparalleled technician of international law and a great humanist who, in spite of his young age, was an approachable man in whom his colleagues unanimously praised his kindness and humour. He had married the charming Ariane Lagasse de Locht, the great-niece of one of the founding fathers of Europe, Count Snoy et d’Oppuers. Through her d’Oultremont and Lalaing ancestors, she anchored the family in the oldest Belgian aristocracy. Four children appeared to consecrate a future life which only remained to flourish in the shadow of a promising career. As the saying goes, happiness always resembles an Epinal scene.

When he was appointed to Rabat in September 2006 as an advisor to the Delegation of the European Commission, Alessandro dreamed of a new field of activity which was, after all, the territory of the former Roman Empire. Europe as it now stands was forged in the North, but it’s fundamental
ideology dates back to 476 AD and the nostalgia of a unique civilisation which shaped the entire Middle Ages. The Mediterranean still remains a centre of communication between the past and the future worlds. On 18th September, alas! So many hopes were brutally ended. In circumstances which remain unclear, Alessandro and Ariane were assassinated in an atrocious manner in the presence of their children. Are their names reminiscent of the painful episode of the crusades, when Islam nevertheless ended up being triumphant? We know that two centuries of conquest (or re-conquest…) by the West in Frankish Syria are often assimilated to the traumatism caused by colonisation in the 19th century. It nevertheless remains that by savagely killing the young couple, the murderer(s) eliminated a symbol of peaceful cohabitation between our two worlds, as though mutual understanding and respect were harbingers of other perils. Italy, Belgium and the European Community lost a person who, had he lived, would have become a historic figure.

One year later, the memory of Alessandro and Ariane is stronger than ever amongst all those who knew this wonderful couple. May they nurture from beyond the grave the indispensable dialogue between civilisations!

The memory of Alessandro and Ariane is stronger than ever amongst all those who knew this wonderful couple. May they nurture from beyond the grave the indispensable dialogue between civilisations!
I had the leisure to meet Alessandro Missir, on two occasions. The first time was in 2000 in Istanbul, during the opening ceremony of the first “European Days at Galatasaray”, organised by the European Documentation and Research Centre at our university. As a representative of the European Commission, he gave a memorable, remarkable speech in favour of Turkey joining the Union. I remember clearly that he stood out from the rest of the speakers owing to his profound knowledge of the two sides and his great abilities as an orator, which he illustrated through the finesse of his humour and such southern, human warmth! The second time was a few years later in Brussels (2003, if I remember correctly) during my visit to the NATO headquarters, as part of a group of Turkish academics. It was the time when Turkey was “battling” in order to obtain the decision to open negotiations and, knowing that our minds were all focused more on the Commission rather than NATO, he very kindly came to the NATO headquarters himself to have an informal meeting with us. He explained to us patiently and at length what was happening there and I realised at that moment how he was committed body and soul in this effort to help Turkey. I even thought that he must have been “antagonising” quite a few people within the Union through his attitude and the courage of his ideas. We had before us far more than a senior European official. He was a true ally and friend, who was also highly objective and realistic in his advice to Turkey. And so likeable on top of it all! So cheerful! So kind!

That, unfortunately, was the last time I met him. I always thought that he symbolised the conciliation of civilisations and that his illustrious, historic family ties had predestined him for this task. I felt his tragic loss as though it were a personal loss, even though I had only known him in a professional context and thus very little. Alessandro Missir will remain a unique figure in the long history of Turkey-European Union relations.
I met Alessandro’s father first, as our parents were friends. My own father talked to me a lot about the Missir family, this old Oriental Latin family, who had lived in Turkey for centuries. He spoke highly to me of the broad culture of Livio, Alessandro’s father, and the illustrious heritage of a lineage which was gradually disappearing. One day I had the fortune to meet Alessandro in person, thanks to my work which takes me to Brussels from time to time. I have to say that I wasn’t at all disappointed when I met him. It’s true! Alessandro was what is known as an Ottoman! In all senses of the word... He exuded the Ottoman Empire through his upbringing, his words, his culture, his look, his tact and his values. The mixture of East and West at the same time made him fascinating to everyone; he was one of a kind. He marvellously combined these two family allegiances. Neither did he ever miss an opportunity to remind you of what he was most committed to: the possible and necessary coexistence of the eastern and western civilisations, which we had to bear in mind during negotiations in order to try and bring about harmonisation.
For nearly two years, I worked alongside Alessandro Missir di Lusignano on a daily basis. As the assistant to Mr Barbaso who was responsible for Turkey at the time, I met him every day. There was a good relationship between these two men, made up of connivance and above all of historical and religious sensitiveness. Everyone knew that Alessandro was highly cultured and intellectually refined, that he had an extensive knowledge of Turkey and its history. This was also the reason why we consulted him, above all, whenever the need arose, on any doubt or problem in this context. He was our reference point. It was very rare that he didn’t appear in my office, often informally, to say hello or give me his impressions on whatever event related to Turkey, to which he was profoundly attached. He shared his comments with me, confided his doubts and spoke about various news items that had pleased him. In short, Alessandro had an extraordinary personality. He was an exceptional individual, unique and totally remarkable. This is the person I appreciated above all. You know, there are thousands of officials, but he stood out from the rest. Very few people manage to reconcile so many qualities at once. He was brilliant and gifted with great intelligence, he was also extremely cultivated. During his conversations, he often cited phrases in Latin, historical anecdotes and even original references. We wondered where he could have found them... I remember one day when we were in a quite important, serious meeting. That day, I was wearing a skirt and high black boots. They were in fashion. Alessandro approached me and out of the blue, began reciting from start to finish the famous song by Serge Gainsbourg, BB Initials: To the top of her thighs, she wears boots that are like a chalice to her beauty... I was stunned and amused at the same time... he recited all the words to me, from start to finish, and we spent the rest of the afternoon talking about Serge Gainsbourg. That was Alessandro. He had this genius for passing from
one subject to the next at the speed of lightning and with such incredible
amusement and curiosity which made his eyes sparkle. He was funny, original
and anti-conformist. I also remember one day when I saw him looking intently
at a necklace in the shape of the coat of arms of the Duchy of Savoie which I
was wearing, that I had received from my in-laws. It didn’t take long for him
to recount in detail an anecdote about the Savoie family... It was absolutely
incredible! Or the amazing time when, having learned that Mr. Barbaso was
from Turin, he began telling him all about the history of Piedmont. He was a
walking encyclopaedia...

And then there was the day when Pope Benedict XVI was enthroned. It had
been three days and he had been enthusiastically waiting to see the smoke and
finally be able to celebrate his election. Being a total atheist, I laughed and
was amused by the fact and told him about all my doubts on the question. He
was never judgmental and often, religion was the focus of our conversations.
He had great respect for others’ beliefs and atheism, he respected me in his
convictions. On the day when the Pope was enthroned, I will never forget
the moment when he arrived like a shooting star in Mr. Barbaso office where
the television was switched on, to enable us to follow the event second by
second. I can still see him kneeling with great respect, a tear rolling down his
cheek... such was the emotion that had touched him to the heart. I shall always
remember this image of him...

One night I was
Hanging around
In an English pub
In the heart of London
Flicking through Pauwels’
Mon-Ster Amour
A vision came to me
In the soda water

Whilst the imperator
medallions
made of bronze and gold
shine at her waist
Platinum engraves
In a cold circle
The mark of slaves
On each of her fingers

To the top of her thighs
She wears boots
That are like a chalice
To her beauty
She wears nothing
More than a little
Essence of Guerlain
In her hair

With every movement
We hear
The little silver bells
On her wrists
Shaking her bells
She moves forward
And speaks the word:

Almeria
When I think of him, the following words come to me spontaneously: kindness, humanity, empathy, openness to others, respect for others, unshakable faith, humour, culture, and distance from things. Far more intelligent than the average, he also had an intelligence to deal with situations and people.

With his lively expression and its hint of a smile even in spite of the seriousness of certain conversations, he knew how to take the necessary distance for each situation and maintain a certain healthy cynicism in order to deal as fairly as possible with whatever event. When I think of him, the following words come to me spontaneously: kindness, humanity, empathy, openness to others, respect for others, unshakable faith, humour, culture, and distance from things. Far more intelligent than the average, he also had an intelligence to deal with situations and people. As a Christian, I think he personally embodied the values of his religion in his attitude and daily life. He illuminated others.

When I learned of the terrible drama and remembered his faith, I could not help myself from thinking and saying to him: “Alessandro, I hope you were right”. Through his personality, Alessandro profoundly marked me. He was someone who remains present through his spirit. He is someone you never forget and who will remain with me until I die.

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He reminds me what was a Dragoman

Günter Verheugen Vice-President of the European Commission, Commissioner for Industry and Enterprise

I met Alessandro in my previous function in the European Commission as Commissioner in charge of Enlargement. Alessandro was a key member of the Unit dealing with our relations with Turkey.

Alessandro played a pivotal role in the development of our relations with Turkey. My key political objective had been to bring our relations with Turkey into a new more forward looking and progressive framework namely the accession process which relied on the establishment of mutual trust, respect and confidence. Alessandro was an essential part of my team and a key cog in the machinery which allowed us to successfully move our relations with Turkey into this new era.

Alessandro was an essential part of my team and a key cog in the machinery which allowed us to successfully move our relations with Turkey into this new era.

He was charged with a particularly challenging task namely following the overall political situation in Turkey with a special focus on the question as to whether Turkey met the so-called Copenhagen criteria which are a pre-requisite for the beginning of negotiations I relied a great deal on Alessandro’s in-depth knowledge of Turkey, the Turkish people and their political culture and traditions. I was able to benefit from the reams of information which Alessandro gathered though his own contacts and could always be sure that the information he received would be analysed with impartiality and fairness but also with a critical eye. His work was thus pivotal in underpinning the historic decision we reached in 2004 notably to bring accession negotiations with Turkey.

How did I discover him? I got a briefing file to prepare a visit to Turkey and one part of it was so outstanding in language and substance that I wanted to know who the author was. I was told that it was Alessandro.
In a certain way I could say that I discovered Alessandro. He did not belong to the most senior officials, in fact he was a desk officer, and therefore it was unusual that I very often asked him for his personal advice without caring about the hierarchy. How did I discover him? I got a briefing file to prepare a visit to Turkey and one part of it was so outstanding in language and substance that I wanted to know who the author was. I was told that it was Alessandro.

One very clear and fond memory I have of Alessandro is his recollection of his family’s history and their own links with Turkey and the people of Turkey. He once described his own role as being that of a “Dragoman”. The term Dragoman was historically the official title of a person who would function as an interpreter, translator. But particularly in the Ottoman Empire, the role was much more and had a strong diplomatic side to it with many Dragomans performing key tasks in crucial Ottoman politics. I think this was a description that suited Alessandro particularly well. He was for me in many ways a bridge builder. Somebody on whose intellectual capacity and analytical skills I could always rely; fair and impartial in his judgement, and an incredible gatherer of information and insights. These are attributes I would attach to Alessandro. This was in no small part due to his ability to listen and inspire confidence in all those with whom he came into contact. Rare talents in this modern world.

*He once described his own role as being that of a “Dragoman”. The term Dragoman was historically the official title of a person who would function as an interpreter, translator. But particularly in the Ottoman Empire, the role was much more and had a strong diplomatic side to it with many Dragomans performing key tasks in crucial Ottoman politics.*
A “güzел insan!”

Yeter Yaman  Information Officer for Turkey & Azerbaijan, Coordinator for Central Asia, NATO Public Diplomacy Division

I met Alessandro in 2001 when I was working as a diplomat at the Turkish Delegation to the EU. But it was more within my functions at NATO that I had the occasion to meet him and work with him more closely: as Information Officer for Turkey since 2002, I organize visits to NATO for specific groups from Turkey and especially for academics and university students. On such occasions, I also try to organize an EU program given the importance of Turkey-EU relations. I approached Alessandro in that framework and in the end, we became not only good colleagues but also friends. Not surprising with such a nice person like Alessandro. How can one be indifferent to his kindness, humanity and charm?

Alessandro was in a delicate situation because he had to represent his institution. At the same time, he was a great expert and a friend of Turkey so he was aware that if many things could be criticized on the Turkish side, on the EU side there were clear injustices, discriminations and double standards as raised by the Turkish academics, students and others during his briefings. While being frank and critical about Turkish policies when necessary, he was never discouraging. Just the contrary, he was always constructive and confident in the mutual interests of both sides with Turkey’s accession to the EU.

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While being frank and critical about Turkish policies when necessary, he was never discouraging. Just the contrary, he was always constructive and confident in the mutual interests of both sides with Turkey’s accession to the EU.
I have one anecdote to share: once, there was no conference room available for my group at the Commission and despite his very busy agenda, he did not hesitate to come to NATO, wasting at least one more hour in the traffic! Only a person fully committed and believing in what he does can behave like this. Sometimes, when commenting on Turkey-EU relations, he was equally critical to some ambivalent EU policies and prejudices about Turkey and Turkish society but he always said: “OK! You are right on this. But please don’t quote me if you want me to continue to address other Turkish groups in the future!’

Alessandro was a ‘güzel insan’. We use this word in Turkish for people having a high moral value and a big heart. He was an exemplary person with his huge heart full of humanity, as well as his outstanding work and commitment. We had mutual respect, appreciation and friendship for one another. So the last time I spoke to him, it was to invite him and his family at our place so that we could meet with our families. But destiny decided otherwise and unfortunately I could neither introduce my husband Francois and our little Kenan, nor have the pleasure to meet his beloved ones. I was in the office when I heard the tragedy through my Italian assistant who told me, “Look! isn’t your friend Alessandro?” I looked at the newspaper with horror and lost myself for some time. During days, I tried to understand what had happened, saying to myself, “No it can’t be him! It is too unfair, not him, not such a person who always worked for the best of everyone and approached everyone with an exemplary humanity and respect...” I did not know anyone in his family, so I sent the mail below to the Commission. I still can’t pass before the Commission without tears or a strong thought for him.

“He was an exemplary person for all with his huge heart, humanity, integrity and a great friend believing in friendship, dialogue and peace between peoples from different cultures. His loss cannot be described but he will always live in our hearts.”

Alessandro was a ‘güzel insan’. We use this word in Turkish for people having a high moral value and a big heart.
I do not remember exactly when I precisely met Alessandro, but I must have met him in the late 1990’s in Brussels when I was posted to our delegation to the EU. Actually I had met his father before. I met Alessandro with regard to EU matters as he was dealing with Turkey. I was in Brussels from 1994 to 1999 and when I came back to Ankara I still dealt with the EU, so I always had the opportunity to see him regularly.

Alessandro always had a positive role with regard to the process. He was committed to Turkey’s accession and had a keen interest in everything. He would enjoy very much travelling to Turkey. Whenever we got together we would talk about recent developments and I was always fascinated by his deep knowledge on Turkey.

I remember his love for Istanbul...

Whenever we had the opportunity we would talk about Istanbul, as he was very fond of the city. As I am a native of that city we would discuss the best places to live. I knew he liked very much Büyük Ada, one of the Princess Islands in the Marmara Sea. We always talked about going there one day and having lunch...

His contribution was to provide a deep understanding of the country. This was very important as many people in the European Commission did not have a good knowledge of Turkey, were ill-informed, disinterested or biased. So we were very lucky to have Alessandro as a person to present accurate information about Turkey.
Below I have pasted two poems from Cavafy, (1) “Epitaph of Antiochos, King of Kommagene” and (2) “Returning from Greece”, which I believe capture the Mediterranean roots and mood of Alessandro quite well.

1. **Epitaph of Antiochos, King of Kommagene**(*)

After the funeral of the scholarly Antiochos, King of Kommagene, whose life had been restrained and gentle, his sister, deeply afflicted, wanted an epitaph for him.

So, on the advice of Syrian courtiers, the Ephesian sophist Kallistratos (who often resided in the small state of Kommagene and was a welcome and frequent guest at the royal house) wrote an epitaph and sent it to the old lady.

Alexandrine in the broadest sense of the term, Cavafy has not usurped his title of poet of crepuscular civilisations. An attentive, committed traveller on the roads of history, he communicates to the reader a sort of Odyssean nostalgia for a world that remains inaccessible. In his work, political reflection in the highest sense of the term and artistic creation are intimately connected. A lucid, cruel observer, who knew how to raise particular cases to the dignity of symbols, as well as being gifted with a premonitory sense that pierced the veil of our chronological order, Cavafy was not complacent when it came to the power games played by sovereigns or, through the mechanism of the *pax romana*, those below them. Through the magic of his art and his extreme sensitivity, he brought to life those who made Greece, one by one at the summits of grandeur and in the depths of humiliation, what it was and is, i.e. a polyvalent universe whose complexity is beyond compare. “Hellenocentrism” is not however the most appropriate term to define the poet’s attitude to the human phenomenon. Passionate about the “varied game of scholarly assimilations”, he enlarged his visual field to the entire universe. It is no coincidence therefore that his oeuvre is placed under the sign of Alexandria, which is still in mourning for its Library that burned down. Cavafy was throughout his lifetime marked by this melting pot where, over the centuries, extraordinarily varied currents of thought mingled, combined with the flow of migrations. It was therefore essential, at a time when the multidisciplinary method has definitively gained acceptance in the context of human sciences, that research should be conducted on the work, taking a political science perspective.

“People of Kommagini, let the glory of Antiochos, the noble king, be celebrated as it deserves.
He was a provident ruler of the country.
He was just, wise, courageous.
In addition he was that best of all things, Hellenic- mankind has no quality more precious: everything beyond that belongs to the gods.”

I have pasted two poems from Cavafy; (1) “Epitaph of Antiochos, King of Kommagini” and (2) “Returning from Greece”, which I believe capture the Mediterranean roots and mood of Alessandro quite well.

2. Returning From Greece(*)

Well, we’re nearly there, Hermippos.
Day after tomorrow, it seems – that’s what the captain said.
At least we’re sailing our seas,
the waters of our own countries - Cyprus, Syria, Egypt - waters we know and love.
Why so silent? Ask your heart:
didn’t you too feel happier
the further we got from Greece?
What’s the point of fooling ourselves?

It’s time we admitted the truth:
we’re Greeks also - what else are we?- but with Asiatic tastes and feelings, tastes and feelings sometimes alien to Hellenism.

That wouldn’t be properly Greek, would it?
It’s time we admitted the truth:
we’re Greeks also - what else are we?- but with Asiatic tastes and feelings, tastes and feelings sometimes alien to Hellenism.
It isn’t correct, Hermippos, for us philosophers to be like some of our petty kings (remember how we laughed at them when they used to come to our lectures?) who through their showy Hellenified exteriors (Macedonian exteriors, naturally) let a bit of Arabia peep out now and then, a bit of Media they can’t keep back.
And to what laughable lengths the fools went trying to cover it up!
No, that’s not at all correct for us.
For Greeks like us that kind of pettiness won’t do.
We simply can’t be ashamed
of the Syrian and Egyptian blood in our veins; we should really honour it, delight in it.

Hellenocentrism is not however the most appropriate term to define the poet’s attitude to the human phenomenon. Cavafy was throughout his lifetime marked by this melting pot where, over the centuries, extraordinarily varied currents of thought mingled, combined with the flow of migrations.
“A Touch of Spice”

In the farewell message sent by Alessandro to his colleagues in July 2006 before his departure to Rabat, we discovered his love for the film “A Touch of Spice” and its reference in the message.
Here is the farewell message sent by Alessandro Missir to his colleagues, before his departure for Rabat...

From: MISSIR DI LUSIGNANO Alessandro (ELARG)
Sent: Tuesday, July 25, 2006 12:47 PM
Subject: Bye Bye

On my last day in the Turkey Team, I would like to thank all of you for the great support given over all these years.

I enjoyed very much working with all of you on this fascinating file of EU-Turkey relations.

Needless to say, I feel terribly sad to leave a job which has become a part of myself.

It was an unforgettable experience which I will always remember with endless joy and nostalgia, like a touch of spice....

From the Bosphorus to Hercules’ pillars, I am also thrilled by my new challenge in Morocco which I hope will be as stimulating as what I have lived through with you since 2001.

Hope to meet you again in the future,

Alessandro
Deported during the Turkish-Greek conflict in the 1960s, Fanis, a Greek professor of astrophysics returns to Istanbul, his childhood home, for his grandfather’s funeral. Rediscovering the roots of his heritage, he remembers how to cook with spices thanks to the lessons from his grandfather, who was full of culinary wisdom and who taught him that in the kitchen as in life, you have to add a pinch of salt to enhance the flavour.

Perhaps quite simply, Fanis had forgotten to add a touch of spice into his own life... Will he be tempted to stay in this beautiful, refined eastern city, where old loves take on a new meaning?

As we can read on the following pages, in the article written by Livio Missir – Feasts Celebrated by the “Frenks” of Izmir – which describes the mezzes and other aromatic delights that the Missir family used to enjoy every summer in the family home in Buca, we can understand why Alessandro was particularly moved by this exceptionally well-made film... It was as if he rediscovered the flavours from his childhood... which he remembers with such nostalgia. And we understand why he referred to this film in his farewell message to his colleagues at the European Commission...
Feasts Celebrated by the “Frenks” of Izmir (as “A Touch of Spice”)


What a strange coincidence! As the “Frenks of Izmir” are preparing to celebrate, in sadness, the second centenary of the martyrdom of André Chénier, their compatriot and fellow citizen through his mother, Elisabeth Santi Lomaca, who was also born in Istanbul and, like the poet, baptised in the Dominican Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Galata, the organisers of the 32nd Belgian Orientalists’ Day have invited us to speak about Feasts in the Orient. Feasts ancient or modern, Christian or non-Christian, solitary or convivial, momentary or prolonged, private or public, religious or civil, commemorative or occasional, written or depicted, real or imaginary, partial or total...

Among Frenks—be they Roman Catholics from the outset or Latinised over the centuries—feasts are local celebrations that cover all the aforementioned categories, simultaneously or successively, from the ancient to the modern and from the real to the imaginary.

Do we live in perpetual festivity here? In spite of Antonin Artaud’s infinite sufferings—prolonged by the regrettable but perhaps understandable court cases (the next hearing will be on 6th June 1994 in Paris)—and the heavy burden of responsibility on a Prime Minister, especially at this time of discussions on a future European Stability Pact and the election of the new European Parliament, in whom not only of a majority of French people, but also and above all a majority of Europeans have placed their trust?

The feasts of the Frenks in Izmir are eternal because they are forever being renewed, under the same forms, from one generation to the next. At the same time they are complete, as they spring from a certain view of life, “i zoi” in Modern Greek, in which human life is the central preoccupation on a daily basis. In this way, everything appears to be subordinate to life, the opposite (not to say the contrary) of which—i.e. death—appears (as if by analogy to the so-called ‘equal and opposite’ rule) sicut hora tristis et amara valde, like a sad and profoundly bitter hour, a bitterness whose true measure is sounded by the words of the gospels.

Already—whatever the malevolent interpretation of sociologists—the absence of delimitation between what the modern world of work calls “work” on the one hand and “holidays” on the other, is in itself a subconscious exaltation of life. It bears witness to an absolutely essential balance (independently of any legal constraint) required for the proper development of both the body and the mind. For we have not had to wait for the appreciations of new philosophies to tell us that
the body and the mind can never be isolated into separate and independent compartments.

The absence of a second formal delimitation (between peace and war) contributed to the feast, if we can permit such an absurdity. For although we were constantly on the alert, even in our homes since “even walls have ears”, we knew that—in accordance with the law of Islam—a non-Muslim will never be given the burden of responsibility (the Muslims would say “honour” and “privilege”) of taking up arms either to defend Muslim territory or to conquer new lands in the name of Islam. The non-Muslim may often have benefited from what is known as “dual citizenship”. His Ottoman nationality (if he has lived for more than ten years in Ottoman territory and has benefited from a sort of “naturalisation” which is known as aman or “granting of mercy”) may be combined with his other foreign nationality, granted (or obtained ab immemorabili) thanks to the generosity of a Christian European sovereign and recognized by the Ottoman sultan.

Is it not a conscious or subconscious festivity to know that we were living where we have belonged, inhabitants of our own ancestral land, we have our own Christian languages (generally European such as French, Italian or English, or assimilated languages such as Modern Greek or Armenian). We have our own school, church, hospital, press and ways of living, thinking, eating, behaving and making love. And we know Turkish.

Is it not festive to live in this openness to the world through a mutual and daily enrichment, which is at the same time respectful (as far as possible) of the other’s identity, as a result of frequenting the neighbouring urban districts and the commercial necessities of life? This convergence took place in spite of “nations” (ratione loci and ratione sanguinis) or millets, being possibly grouped into separate urban districts, as their populations were connected, at a state level, to several distinct “nations” that made up the Empire.

Such was the miracle of the empire which was destroyed, at the end of the XIX th century, in favour of the ideas of the French Revolution. The last vestiges and living witnesses of this empire are described by Ivo Andrich in his The Bridge on the Drina, or can be experienced in the poems by the Anglo-Ottoman Greek Constantin Cafavy, or by the Italo-Franco-Egyptian Giuseppe Ungaretti, or in the paintings by the Italo-Greco-Franco-Ottoman, but in any case a Frenk of Turkey, Giorgio de Chirico.

Are feasts not about love, which is reserved solely for the members of the nation who extend it to women who, both within the home and throughout history, contributed preponderantly to the perpetuation of memories, be they to celebrate the sad memories of one who fell during the Crusades or the heroism of Giovanni Longo Giustinian, who did not wait for the Finnish author Mika Waltari (and his novel Johannes Anghelos or The Dark Angel) to receive the recognition owed to him over the centuries?

Are feasts not about love, in spite of their exceptions, associated with the weakness of the flesh, which push you towards the encounter with the other in the ambiguous confines of a harem or in the weekly solitude of a commercial centre, on the eve of the loading of a ship or unloading of a barge?

What are feasts if not exchanges, or the (legal and financial) possibility of mutual gifts and visits, which necessarily take place under precise circumstances and places (the so-called reception rooms found in all Frenkish homes, irrespective of one’s social position)? Here the families who have known one another and have been related for centuries meet amongst themselves or with others who have been
Picture taken from the book:
The Food Culture of the Ottoman Palace Edited by the Republic of Turkey-Ministry of Culture, Istanbul 2001.
ennobled (or have lost their status), saying that we are (or are not) “calling on” one another.

Are feasts this mobility or aesthetic pleasure, attracted by the colour or designs on a carpet, or the arrangement of sofas which invite you, in an alternation of cushions and china, to cross the thresholds and stairways that open into expanses of greenery dominated by terebinths? Here, in the shade of the trees, during the spring and summer months—and even in the mildest and most sweetly perfumed autumns in the world—we wait for five o’clock tea (çay in Turkish and tsaï in Greek).

Or two or three hours later, Oriental anisette raki (or raki) is drunk as an aperitif, caressing it by name (through its diminutive rakaki or tspiraki) and naturally with the lips, for it is only savoured slowly, sip by sip, and alternated with the ever-present, ever necessary mezes. These range from the large or small, green or black olives, to the bite-sized portions of fish roe called tarama (more white than pink), via the three ritual types of cheese. First the compact, yellow kaskaval (kaser in Turkish and in Greek kasseri), then the snowy white teneke (an ancestor of a feta) and finally the off-white tulum with a thousand holes, freshly removed from the goatskin in which it is kept. All are presented on little pieces of immaculately white bread, which the mistress of the house, or the servants, has religiously prepared for their dependable confluence of guests?

Is it finished? We can not speak of Mezes without mentioning the extract of aubergine, red tomatoes and gold bourékakia (the Greek diminutive of the Turkish beurek-börek), triangular pieces of flaky pastry served hot, filled with fromage frais and sautéed in virgin olive oil. Or they might be served cold, filled with chopped spinach and covered with a tender layer of egg yolk that the local baker has glazed in his wood-fired oven, following the recipe described in the Ottoman cookery book compiled by the sister of Clareta Petacci (Mussolini’s last girlfriend) whose family shared in the life and customs of the Frenks of Istanbul during several decades of the XIX th century...

Gastronomy, meats, vegetables and soups, desserts and drinks; in short, the table of Frenks of Turkey, is an essential part of the feasts which Antonin Artaud immortalised both through his life (spent partially in Paris, but with Niko, his Greek restaurateur) and in his writing. Our food is also the envy of the Orthodox Greeks themselves (at least because of its size), when in reply to our Latin and western superiority complexes, they speak of the showiness, as well as the exaggerations of quantity and perhaps even the wastefulness of what they call “the tables of the Francs”. (To Frangone ta trapezia, where to Frangone is a popular genitive plural whose tone has lost the ni sound and the Frangon has been joined with the phonetic epsilon).

What have I not described to the late lamented Paule Thévenin—Antonin Artaud’s last friend—amongst all the dishes from the cuisine of Izmir, the never-ending dream of every Izmirli, in their homeland or from the diaspora:

From the soups:
- made with egg, steeped in lemon juice, and rice enriched with sea bream juices (psarosoupa me avgholémono in Byzantine terminology, terbiyeli in Turkish);
- with trakhana (from the Turco-Persian tarhana), or powdered semolina, seasoned with sun-dried tomato extract, bathed in a delicate consommé;
- or quite simply trapezoidal segments of pasta which grandmothers should have kneaded themselves before drying it slightly on a sieve before transforming it – with a fast, repeated movement of her right hand, leaning on her
left elbow – into trapezoidal segments that are tossed into the consommé...

to the meats (beef or lamb and occasionally wild boar, as pork is not generally found in the shops) minced and served preferably in a wide variety of geometric shapes (from little round meatballs coated in tomato sauce served with pilaf rice, cooked according to recipes that perhaps date back to the dawn of Anatolian or Asian history, to the larger, white meatballs, studded with rice and enriched by an egg and lemon sauce, not to mention the elongated garlic meatballs, simply fried in oil or cooked in wine, the soutzoukakia (little soudjouks or sausages) from Izmir, or coated in breadcrumbs, dipped in egg and fried in oil, or meatballs with aubergine extract and onion purée, accompanied by fried potatoes, hand cut and lightly browned in the smoking family frying pan before being quickly served to guests).

Dare I mention the infinite cortège of fresh, boiled and Italian style vegetables, from courgettes to artichokes via various sorts of beans (served in tomato sauce or oil, vinegar or oil and lemon juice), the so-called börülce, çali or ayse kadin ‘Turkish’ or ‘Frankish’ beans (tourkofasoula or fragofasoula depending on the Greek terminology used at the time); the panoply of dried pulses such as the different coloured lentils (black, brown or red), little white beans with black eyes, or fatter white beans, or if you prefer red ones, like mullet (barbounia, after which they are named), chick peas, etc., etc.

Not forgetting the vine leaves whose filling depends on whether it is Lent (rice only, if we respect the Holy Church’s rules on penitence, or rice and meat if they are served at other times). The same rules apply to the thousands of ways of preparing rice, with or without tomato, with or without parsley, with or without peas, always presented before the main meal in Frenkish houses, or after the meal in Muslim houses...

Might we say however that the feast is the cake or patisserie, depending on the time of year, made for the two main Christian feasts (Christmas and Easter), both of which have their own typical cakes? The finikia, whose name evokes—God knows why—Phoenicia, little oval-shaped cakes made of flour and sesame oil dough served in honey sprinkled with crushed walnuts are essential for Christmas. The Saint Basil biscuits (Vasiliopites) are for New Year’s Day whilst tsourékia, Easter biscuits come in a variety of shapes, notably in the form of a bird. The most popular shape though is the lozenge printed, using a wooden mould that is handed down from generation to generation, with the Byzantine bicephalous eagle, surmounted by the Cross.

There are many others besides, made with almonds, walnuts, honey, various kinds of flaky pastry which take pride of place on dining tables at Easter and Christmas, preceded on the evening of the final day, known in Greek and in Spanish as the “Good Night” (i kali vradhia or Noche buena), by all kinds of dried fruits, from figs and raisins to carobs, or large black prunes known as Damascene prunes (ta Dhamaskina)...

After all this, we can understand a Salesian Father who, after spending several years in Izmir, thought (or believed) he saw among the Frenks of this city those whom Saint Paul rightly condemned for having raised their stomachs to divine dignity: Quorum Deus venter est....

But with all due respect to this saintly priest, if feasts—that begin at the table (and end elsewhere)—are still celebrated today according to precise calendars, at the coast (where we move in the summer, far away from the heat of Izmir, whose temperatures this year have already climbed, in May 1994, to 31 degrees in the shade), they are (or were) punctuated by
religious ceremonies. These celebrations take place in the church—although their traditions have been sadly broken by Vatican II, which was (or whose application or interpretation have been) the greatest affront to civilisation since the Crucifixion of the Lord—and include baptisms and confirmations, marriages and funerals, commemorative masses or first, second and third requiem masses, depending not on the financial means of the individual, but the wishes and determination to more or less highlight the gesture of acknowledgement and love of the beneficiary. The church is also where everyone meets every Sunday, before being invited to take an aperitif with one family or another. Not to mention the novenas, the most important of which is to Saint Polycarpus (moved by one month following the so-called scientific calculations of Vatican II), in which Greek alternates with Latin and where the final commemoration of the Saint’s martyrdom coincided with the 26th January and the joyful observation of having one more hour of daylight compared with the dark winter evenings...

All of this takes place in a blaze of golds and porphyries, enveloped in clouds of perfumed incense and to the sound of hymns praising the glory of the civitas princeps Asiae, the city of Izmir, a princess among the cities of Asia.

At this point I have a doubt. Of whom have I been speaking? A group, whom I call the Frenk nation in its Izmirli manifestation, or simply a local community, or an elite (the elite or aristocracy of the Ottoman Frenk millet) or a family? The reader will decide, and give me the benefit of a doubt which I have acknowledged.

Furthermore, I observe with some remorse that I have only mentioned a minimal part of the feast (of one or several feasts) in this paper. I have not spoken of ad hoc feasts resulting from occasional meetings between the Frenks of Izmir and “Frenks of Europe” visiting with commercial and especially the military fleets stranded in Izmir. Nor have I mentioned the dances and carnivals described towards the end of the 18th century by a certain Choderos de Laclos, the theatres in Izmir with their plays and operas. I might also have evoked the consular, dragoman, governorial and Episcopal receptions immortalised by certain artists, along with the more specifically political feasts in honour of Ottoman, Ottomanised or foreign sovereigns, of which Gaston Deschamps left us a marvellous example in the annual feast in honour of the Giustiniani dynasty in Chios (a family which moved to Izmir after the 1822 Massacres, immortalised by Delacroix), etc.

I have not even analysed the Greco-Byzantine term skoli, used by the Frenks in Izmir to refer to the feast (whilst the Greeks in Istanbul, and now Athens, use the word eorti, borrowed from the Turkish yortu, the Turkish equivalent of “Christian feast”), from which the term skolazo derives, i.e. “I stop working”, as though the feast (unlike my assertion at the beginning) consisted of “stopping work”...

Nor have I analysed the (inevitably) multicultural components of Frenkish Latin feasts and their characteristics (including gastronomy), as if this feast merged with the others (Muslim, Greek, Armenian or Jewish), even though it had and still has its own identity. For there is a Frenkish way of preparing (we say, perhaps like others, “improving”, ennobling or in any case lightening), certain foods, a particular way of dressing and of approaching the mystery and the symbol of the feast, of which the evolution and triteness or generalisation of the world’s morals has now dispossessed us, I believe, by trying to tip us all into the caldron of levelling anonymity at the end of the 20th century!

But isn’t it a feast for us all—albeit internalised now—to recognise in one of the
last prime ministers of a major European state not the revival but the maintenance of a certain way of life, language, way of dressing, food trends? Should we not celebrate a conciliatory approach to the resolution of problems, an open appreciation of old Ottoman elites, heirs to the history of ottoman millets of an old tricontinental Ottoman Empire?

Probably, the feast is the nation. The feast is humanity.
Here are three recipes for the Turkish specialities that Alessandro was particularly fond of… He would often go to the historic restaurant Tarihi Cumhuriyet Meyhanesi (www.tarihicumhuriyetmeyhanesi.com) in Beyoğlu, to enjoy them when he had the time...
1. Stuffed Vine Leaves with Olive Oil or "DOLMA"

**Ingredients**

- Vine leaves
- Filling
- Carrot
- Lemon, Olive Oil

Boil the water with lemon and salt. Dip the leaves into this water. Place the filling on the leaves and roll up into parcels. Place the firmer leaves at the bottom of the saucepan. Pack the rolls on top tightly. Add a few slices of lemon and carrot. Cover the rolls with leaves. Add 1 glass of water, lemon juice, salt, olive oil and cook over a low heat. When the leaves are cooked, allow to cool. If pickled vine leaves are used, dip them only in hot water without salt.

(from the book Sultan’s Table of the Turkish Cuisine – published by Aksit Kültür ve Turizm Yayincilik –Copyright: idem 2005.)
2. “Börek” with Spinach

Ingredients
Filo pastry,
Eggs 8
Milk ½ glass
Butter 100 gr
Spinach 1 kg

Take 8 sheets of filo. Grease the tray. Lay one sheet of filo on the tray, making sure the edges overlap the edges. Beat 8 eggs in a bowl. Add milk and butter. Brush with egg mixture. Place another sheet of filo and continue with four layers. In a pan, fry the chopped spinach with onions. Spread the fried spinach on the layers of filo. Continue with layers of filo and egg mixture. On the top layer of filo pour over the remaining milk. Fold the edges of the filo pastry inside. To avoid burning, cook over low heat rotating the tray. Brown the top in the oven. Turn upside down to brown the bottom. You can replace spinach either with ground meat, cheese or chicken.
3. Baklava

Ingredients
Flour 1kg
Egg 7
Lemon
Sugar, Salt
Ground walnuts
Pistachios, Margarine
Butter

First, prepare the syrup. Dissolve half the sugar in water. Add lemon juice. When it boils, remove the froth and leave to cool. For the dough, use 1 kg flour, 7 eggs and half a lemon. Heap the flour on a flat clean surface. Break the eggs into the middle. Add lemon juice. In a separate pan, boil water with salt. Pour this water over the dough. Knead well. Divide into three balls. Cover with a clean, damp cloth and let it rest for 5-10 minutes. Knead again and let it rest another 5-10 minutes. Knead each ball into long rolls and cut into 18 pieces. Sprinkle plenty of flour on each piece and flatten it. Place the flattened pieces on top of each other and roll out until the dough is very thin. Place on a tray. Spread with ground walnuts and pistachios. Repeat the process with the other two balls of dough, folding the edges into the tray. Baste with melted margarine and butter. Cut into small pieces and cook over stove. Then, place in the oven and bake until the crust is golden and crispy. Take out of the oven and pour over the syrup. Serve cold the next day.

The history of baklava is no well-documented; it has been claimed by many ethnic groups, the best evidence is that it is of Central Asian Turkish origin, with its current form being developed in the imperial kitchens of the Topkapı Palace. In Turkey, Gaziantep is famous for its baklava and regarded there as its native city, though it only appears to have been introduced to Gaziantep from Damascus in 1871.
Some Publications of Alessandro

Here is a collection of publications by Alessandro on various issues mainly on Turkey-EU relations.


Paul Morand and the East (conference on Paul Morand the Writer.) University of Lille, 3rd-17th June 2002

Reflections on Europe and the Turks: a history of reciprocal perceptions NATO Defence College, Rome, 7th July 2003

Poland’s Ostpolitik and EU Accession

Speech by Alessandro Missir di Lusignano University of Birmingham, Center for Russian and East European Studies, Jean Monnet Lecture, Wednesday, 15 March 2000 by Alessandro Missir di Lusignano*, European Commission Delegation in Poland

(The views expressed in this paper do not reflect the official position of the European Commission. The speech is delivered in a personal capacity)

Executive summary

Since the country joined NATO on March 12, 1999, Poland has never been as secure as in this early XXI century. Yet, next to Euro-Atlantic integration, the development of an active Eastern policy is a key feature of post-cold war Polish foreign policy. Recent developments suggest that Poland is willing to play a more ambitious role with respect to its Eastern neighbors. Given the country’s historical record and geopolitical context, question arises whether the development of this Ostpolitik can be dissociated from Poland’s long-term strategic interests at regional and European level.

Meant to be an instrument to secure long-term independence and sovereignty in one of Europe’s most sensitive geographical area, the Polish Ostpolitik is part of a larger Geopolitical design: an attempt to contribute to reorganization of an area stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Fostering independence and sovereignty of the States located between Poland and Russia is for Poland the best guarantee of security. As Geremek puts it 1 “if geography cannot be changed, geopolitics can”. Poland’s unmistakable support for Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations is to be seen in the context.

And yet, EU accession puts Poland before a dilemma: as a result of enlargement, Poland is shortly to become EU external eastern border. The introduction of a visa regime, tougher border control requirements coupled to a lack of EU clear position on Ukraine’s vocation to join the EU is problematic for Poland.

Anything that amounts to divide Poland from its neighbors, in particular Ukraine, tends to be perceived very negatively. Finding itself on the frontline, Poland fears that the new EU external border will correspond to a new political-

1 Transitions geopolitiques sur le continent europeen, mutations dans l’isthme mer baltique-mer noire, Michel Foucher (ed.), Fondation pour les etudes de defense, 1998
2 Bronislaw Geremek, “Poland and the East Central Europe : the Case of New Geopolitics”, Lecture to the East Central European Center of the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, New York, September 1999
military cleavage. Pursuing its national interest requires instead to be surrounded by friendly neighbors (the comparison with reunified Germany is rich of insights). What Poland is seeking is to avoid being on the frontline, bordering an area associated with geopolitical uncertainty. This also explains why Poland is so keen in pushing the EU external border further East (Ukrainian border with Russia).

How the Polish Ostpolitik interacts with the prospect of EU integration is what this paper intend to discuss following three basic questions: what are the objectives pursued by the Polish Ostpolitik, how far does this interact with the EU integration and lastly how far are the goals pursued by Poland consistent with the Eastern policy of an enlarged EU.

The setting of Polish Ostpolitik

Polish Ostpolitik is not in a vacuum

When discussing the type of relationship of a country like Poland with its neighbors, it is important not to lose sight of the historical perspective. All the more so if one considers that none of Poland’s present-day neighbors existed barely 10 years ago. For this reason, the policy that governs relations with Eastern States, to be referred to as Ostpolitik, is not in a vacuum. Few other areas in Europe have been so much crisscrossed by moving borders. The swinging of Poland’s national borders from the East to the West as a result of Yalta has deprived the country from an important part of its historical legacy as the Polish mindset considers that the country’s cultural, historical, and national center of gravity is located outside of the current Polish borders (see below).

If there is to be a direct link between national identity and foreign policy, this is particularly true for a country like Poland which shows a strong sense of historical awareness that permeates the entire population, from the elites circles down to the average citizen. The development of a Polish Ostpolitik cannot be disconnected from the country’s cultural as well as historical legacy.

According to Ilya Prizel, “the emotional, albeit irrational sense of nation and national identity plays a vital role in forming a society’s perception of its environment and its extremely important, if not driving force behind the formation of its foreign policy because national identity helps to define the parameters of what a polity considers its national interests at home and abroad”.

Conceptual framework of Kultura

Poland’s perception of its Eastern neighbor has been a matter of discussion among the Polish diaspora during the Communism. Much of the conceptual framework of the Polish Ostpolitik has been shaped by the debates published by the emigré review “Kultura” (edited by Jerzy Giedroyc in Paris since the fifties). During several decades, two schools of thought opposed each other on the very question of what role for Poland’s East once the country would recover full independence by getting rid of communism.

While the realistic school believed that keeping good relations with Russia ought to be the ultimate goal of Polish foreign policy, even at the cost of countries located in between, the Promethean school takes the opposite view: in

order to secure long term independence and sovereignty, the best way to forestall Russian influence over Central and Eastern Europe is to foster the closest possible links between Poland and its Eastern neighbors including Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine (BLU concept). This could be best achieved by means of strategic partnership going as far as a confederation (an idea that is rooted in the Pilsudski interwar Foreign policy). Ironically, the challenge of today’s Ostpolitik is to find a balance between these two opinions.

The role of memory in Polish Foreign Policy

Another important aspect is the role of memory in the current shape of Polish foreign policy. Reference to memory has reached an unprecedented importance under Foreign Minister Geremek. He never misses an opportunity to stress the importance of memory as the basic actor of national identity and cohesion. A polity’s national identity is very much a result of how of interprets its history-beliefs and perceptions that accumulate over time and constitute a society “collective memory”\(^6\).

In that sense, it can be argued that the consensus surrounding the existence of a Polish Eastern policy refers to as “identification theory”, a psychological bond that motivates an entire population to support certain external policies.

Interestingly, Poland’s history is always referred to in relation to its past glories, its “golden age” : a country which has been a key actor of the Balance of powers in the West, a multicultural, multiethnic as well as multi confessional Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita) stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea, a premier in Central and Eastern European Statehood (see map 1).

The impact of mental maps

The weight of this historical awareness is directly connected to the self-perception of a national identity that goes well beyond its current borders inherited from the Yalta order and forcefully imposed upon the Polish nation by third parties. This perhaps explains the peculiar role of Mental Maps featuring the country with its historical borders reaching out to Smolensk, Kiev and almost Odessa. Examples of these mental maps are the “Dziedzictwo Polski – Poland’s heritage” and Sladami Trylogii. Both maps display the geo history of Poland, suggesting very clearly that many of the country’s most significant historical events, cities (symbolic cities as Lwow\(^7\) and Vilno), heroes as well as national myths are located in the former Eastern territories\(^8\). Interestingly, these maps are widely distributed among schools and available in every bookshop.

The mythology of borderlands

The myth of Kresy, the ancient borderlands of Poland is yet another very important factor to be borne in mind when discussing the Polish Ostpolitik. As explained at some length by the French historian Daniel Beauvois\(^9\), this mythology deeply rooted in the most significant and even sacred monument of national culture (Mickiewicz, Milosz) generates a sense of profound nostalgia that shapes the perception about anything relating to former territories associated with glories, wealth and great historical signification.

6 Ibid.
7 Geremek goes as far as talking about a magic city for the Polish mindset, L’Historien et le Politique, Entretiens avec Juan Antonio Vidal, Noir et Blanc, 1999
8 A. Crutgen, Mythologie polonaise, Editions Complexe, Bruxelles 1999
The weight of culture and historical legacy

The importance of this cultural legacy as a major factor of social cohesion has been illustrated in the last couple of years by the massive success of movies like “With the Sword and With the Fire” of the Sienkiewicz trilogy, the “Pan Tadeusz” based on Mickiewicz novel, the celebration of the International Year Mickiewicz. These are as many examples of cultural and literary masterpieces core to the Polish national identity. Not surprisingly, all of these have a direct link with the territories lying East of the current Polish borders.

Little wonder that a recently published Memorandum on Poland and the European integration published by a group of leading Polish intellectuals (including a former foreign minister) makes so much room to concepts related to history and national identity rather than to the ongoing process of negotiation.

Where one could have expected comments about the current state of affairs in the EU enlargement context, the memorandum places a strong emphasis instead on concepts as the historical awareness, on national identity as well as on the role of borderlands. On the latter, it says explicitly: “The history of former Polish borderlands (kresy) did not began with the offensive of the Rd Army in 1945. People need historic awareness for a full sense of their own identity. Even a difficult past replete with conflicts and harm is something real, something to which one can refer to. Only barbarians prefer a historical vacuum”. And somewhat further “The Polish cultural tradition reminds us how strongly and genuinely our country is linked with the lands currently beyond our Eastern border”.

“In the historic Commonwealth of nations, a great political, philosophical and artistic culture emerged in the 15th and 16th Century. We must strive to maintain links with these lands, where there are remnants of Polish settlements and historical monuments belonging to the common heritage of the First Republic – in the spirit of respect and friendship for the people living there now”.

This also explains why the development of active Eastern policy tends to be supported almost unanimously by the Polish population, across the political spectrum and the “civil society”, unlike the European integration which is subject to much more fluctuations depending on the mood.

The self-perception as a regional power

Yet another important element has to do with the self-perception of Poland as a key regional power. Again, this appears regularly in official and unofficial statements, in particular by Foreign Minister Geremek.

As suggested by the annual foreign policy speeches before the Polish Sejm, the ambitions appear to be wider: “Poland’s geographic and political position in Europe and his historical experience explain Poland’s concern with and readiness to share responsibility for the situation in the region. We have been helping to generate, to the best of our ability, the conditions of secure development for our eastern and southern neighbours. That is why Poland will be striving, also with its own interest in mind, to surmount all divisions and sweep away all barriers and differences handed down to us by the cold war and forming the legacy of the communist past. All the nations of Central and Eastern
Europe should be given a chance to undo their developmental arrears and join when it is feasible for them the structures created by the Euro-Atlantic democracies. As international security and regional situation settle into stability, and Poland’s international position improves, our foreign and economic policies must search for more ambitious goals and wider geographic horizons\textsuperscript{11}.

He goes as far as to talk about the “special responsibilities” of Poland in the area (it is worth reminding that Polish Cultural Institutes have been established in Kiev and Minsk). How not to link these statements to the frenetic diplomatic activism leading Poland to participate to all the range of regional initiatives (in a North-South dimension) from the Council of Baltic Sea States and The Northern dimension to close relations with Romania, Moldova as well as a seat of observer in the Council of Black Sea States. And in an East-West dimension primarily by means of active participation to the (extended) Weimar Triangle linking France, Germany, Poland and unofficially Ukraine.

This idea is coupled to the self-perception as a country bridging the East and the West. This idea has been the cradle of many theories about the role of Poland in Central Europe: bulwark of Western Christianity against orthodox slavs, multicultural state representing in itself Central Europe as an area which divides the Germans from the Orthodox Slavs\textsuperscript{12}. More recently, Geremek has spoken about a “Western country with Eastern roots”. This in itself is something that leads Poland to claim a special knowledge and expertise of the former Soviet Union to be used at EU level. It is a widespread idea among Polish intellectual circles that Poland is geographically and culturally much better placed for conducting this pedagogy of Europe.

\textbf{The shaping factors of Polish Ostpolitik}

\textbf{Poland’s grand design: from the Baltic to the Black Sea}

Poland’s design is basically to contribute to the build up of an area of peace, stability and prosperity in an area which corresponds to NATO/EU Eastern border. This area stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Poland seeks to consolidate its function as a bridge between East and West. Fostering closer relation between Poland and Eastern neighbours (Belarus and Ukraine) is seen as a mean to stimulate closer contacts with Russia and to help Westernize the country.

\textbf{The principles of Polish Ostpolitik}

Against the above mentioned background, Polish Ostpolitik is based on the following assumption that Poland’s relation with its Eastern neighbours are as important for Poland’s independence as and long-term sovereignty as Euro-Atlantic integration. Pursuing this goal requires combining two principles which can prove antagonistic:

- Fostering the existence of independent and sovereign (buffer) states between Poland and Russia;
- Fostering good relations with Russia\textsuperscript{13}.

Whether the implementation of these principles is not contradictory depends basically from the acceptance by Russia of its identity of a normal (mid-size) “European” power, implying the renunciation to any imperial ambition. According to some observers, what divides Poland and Russia is not their mutual

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11} Policy statement by Prof. Bronislaw Geremek, Foreign Minister, to the Polish Sejm, 8 April 1999

\textsuperscript{12} Christophe Dwernicki, \textit{Geopolitique polonaise}, February 2000, Complexe, P 10-11

\textsuperscript{13} Antoni Kaminski, Jery Kozakiewicz, \textit{Polish-Ukrainian relations 1992-1996}, Center for International Relations, Warsaw, 1997, p 7.}
antagonism but rather, the perception that each of these countries has on countries located in between. In this context, how not to notice the feeling and the fear, widely spread among Polish population and Polish elite circles, that Moscow has not given up its imperial ambitions. This fear, coupled to the alleged “unpredictable character” of Russia, haunts Polish-EU dialogue as suggested by the political discussions in the context of Association agreement and the wider context of the Northern dimension.

Coming to the contents of Polish Ostpolitik, one cannot but acknowledge the “organic” character, meaning that this policy is more than the addition of bilateral relations. Rather, it unfolds according to a systematic and well-defined pattern ranging from diplomatic to economic, and other means of action.

**Recent developments of Polish Ostpolitik**

Put simply, the rationale behind Polish Ostpolitik is to foster good-neighbourly relations with Eastern countries, to support the independence and sovereignty of the countries between Poland and Russia, to support Polish minorities living outside of the Polish territory. There is however a certain amount of differentiation among Eastern neighbours. The relations with Ukraine have by far the most crucial importance. They are followed in line of importance by Lithuania and subsequently by Belarus. The relations with Russia exceed the mere context of Ostpolitik as they form a distinct though not separated subject matter.

1. Relations with Ukraine

As put by Foreign minister Geremek, Ukraine is the axiom of Polish Foreign Policy and arguably the cornerstone of Polish Ostpolitik. Both countries are bound by a strategic partnership. An independent Ukraine is the absolute guarantee against the revival of anything like the Soviet Empire. To be observed that the recent political developments in Russia following Putin’s takeover are fuelling the fears of Polish elites about Russia’s “imperial behaviour”.

Fostering the closest possible kind of bilateral relations has been the aim of the current Government. Maximal degree of openness, unconditional support to Ukrainian independence and sovereignty, active promotion of Ukraine integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, these are many example of the current attitude of Poland versus Ukraine. Bilateral relations are at highest level with frequent presidential meetings, close working relations between governments (Foreign Affairs, Defence, Economy, Justice and Home Affairs) and local authorities.

For Poland, keeping strategic relation with Ukraine implies:
- Unconditional support of Strengthening Ukraine’s independence by advocating early interpretation of this country into Euro-Atlantic structures.
- Thwarting anything which makes Ukraine EU/NATO more problematic (best example is the introduction of visa and new border regime);
- Great sense of “responsibility” of Poland vis-à-vis its neighbours leading to some kind of pedagogy. Hence the numerous initiatives aimed at explaining the impact/consequences of EU integration to Ukrainian counterpart through a ‘Polish Ukrainian standing Committee’.

14 Interestingly, these fears are often voiced in the context of the Political dialogue between the EU and Poland in the context of Association council.
for Poland to ‘pre-empt’ EU position to Ukrainian relations. This sometimes goes as far as promising the Ukrainians that no visa regime will ever be introduced.

- ey interest in the EU common strategy concerning the Ukraine. Poland makes no secret that it wants to see a significant leap forward in EU-Ukrainian relations going beyond the new partnership approach. Some disappointment is noticeable on the Polish side: while the strategy is generally perceived to be a step in the right direction, it is generally far to lukewarm when it comes to Ukrainian’s aspiration to join the EU. In the comments submitted by Poland, it is interesting noticing the emphasis on the energy issues (Ukraine gateway to the Caspian).

2. Belarus

Relations with Belarus are a little more ambiguous. While Poland is clearly concerned about the autocratic derive of the Lukashenko’s regime, it has been a constant policy not to isolate Belarus. For this reason, the Polish Government has always tried to adopt a balanced attitude. This has been the main reason behind Poland’s refusal to go along with the CFSP common action against Belarus including a visa ban. Of particular interest were the comments made by F. M. Geremek who motivated Polish decision by the particular position of Poland which was at that time OSCE chairman in Office by the existence of Polish minorities in that country.

The recently adopted treaty of Union between Belarus and Russia is a matter of serious concern for Poland. However, the real threat associated with this tends generally to be played down: Polish elite regards it as a personal derive of the autocratic leader rather than as a deeply-rooted feeling among the population. The prospects of a victory of the communist candidate Simonenko at the last presidential elections in Ukraine generated more concern.

Bilateral relations between both countries are often dominated by the role treatment of national minorities. In particular, the role of the 400000 strong Polish (catholic minority in the region of Grodno and Brest). A second aspect concerns the support to the opposition. A radio free Belarus is broadcast from Bialystok, directed at both the Belarussian minority in Poland and the opposition in Belarus.

3. Lithuania

With Lithuania, the situation is slightly different owing to the good prospects for EU accession. That does not mean that bilateral relations are never strained (role of minorities %8 of the total population resentments). Basically, there is a strategic partnership leading Poland to be Lithuania’s more enthusiastic supporter for Euro/Atlantic integration.

4. Russia

As already mentioned, Polish perception of Russia is still haunted by its imperial ambitions coupled to unpredictable characters of its leaders. Part of Poland’s motivation to explain that NATO membership is not directed against Russia but against its unpredictability: a country with 10 times zone... at odds with herself, asking nostalgic questions about its imperial past and reshaping its stand on foreign policy issues... its present unpredictability obviously makes it
more difficult to answer which way it may turn: to Europe or to Asia. This explains the very difficult nature of Poland–Russian relations. Bilateral contacts are fraught with ups and downs depending on the mood and the climate. Among contentious bones are:

- The extraterritorial “corridor” (anathema to Poland) meant to establish energy/transport links via Poland between Kaliningrad enclave and mainland Russia; in recent months however, Russia has dropped using the word corridor leading to some appeasement on the Polish side;

- Although NATO membership has long been poisoning bilateral relations, attention is steadily turning to EU enlargement as another issue increasingly affecting bilateral relations; while Russia was previously focusing almost obsessively on the security debate, it is now starting to realize that the EU is more than a mere free-trade area.

With the accession negotiations pressing ahead, the EU is progressively being viewed as a political entity around which West, Central and Eastern Europe are becoming structured.

What Russia tends to be most worried about is the closing of an area that was traditionally regarded as a window to the West. These fears concern in particular:

- the ever increasing level of harmonisation of Polish legislation to EU standards and the corresponding widening gap with Russian standards;

- higher entry barriers for Russian products;

- the tightening of the Polish Eastern border in line with Schengen standards including visa regime;

The adoption early 1998 of the new Aliens law introducing tighter conditions for border crossing ought to be seen in this context. Primarily meant to bring Poland closer to Schengen standards, this new provision led to some tensions with Russia. Side consequences including a sharp decrease in bilateral trade, in particular in the “bazaar-trade”, very attractive for Russians and very popular in eastern Poland. Noticeably the above mentioned law did not replace the Poland-USSR agreement of 1979 which is still governing visa-free traffic between the two countries.

There was up recent tensions a declared political willingness to address these fears in a very pragmatic fashion: through a permanent dialogue structured around 5 bilateral commissions dealing with specific issues. One of these commissions was devoted specifically to EU accession. This exercise expectations but unfortunately was short-lived: it did not resist to the different waves of tensions.

Although a significant improvement was in sight in January 1999 when Polish FM Geremek offered a Polish-Russian partnership for the XXI century, the prospects for deepening relations are rather bleak. There was no visit of high officials from Russia since the Buzek Government took office back in 1997, and commercial relations are at an all-time down level.

Additionally, it ought to be stressed that while the official Polish rhetoric is bent on keeping good neighbourly relations with Russia, the anti-Russian feelings are wide spread among the population. The parliament never misses an opportunity to adopt resolutions or to act in a way which Russia perceived to be unfriendly (organizing ceremonies for the Chechen leader Mashkadov for example): Tensions between both countries reached a peak late January 2000 when, in an unprecedented move the
Polish Government decided to expel 9 diplomats (the largest group since the cold war) on the grounds that they were conductive spying activities. This decision triggered protests from the Russian side blaming Poland for what is allegedly a regarded as a “provocation” and a very serious blow to good neighbourly relations between both countries. Not surprisingly, the Polish decision led to a corresponding decision by the Russian authorities, since two days later 9 Polish diplomats were declared persona non grata.

More recently the public anger against Russian consulates ed Polish activist to burn Russian flags and replace them Chechen ones. As a consequence, the Russian ambassador in Poland has been recalled in Moscow for consultations and Foreign minister Ivanov planned visit was cancelled.

**Poland Ostpolitik in the context of EU enlargement**

Having discussed at some length the quality of Poland’s relations with its eastern neighbours, the next question is how his interacts with the prospect of EU integration. This prompts yet another question: does the EU have an Eastern policy if so, how far is the Polish Ostpolitik compatible with it.

Looking at the recent developments of EU policies in relation to the future external border. It is possible to make the following basic observations:

- at EU level, there is yet nothing such as an organic Eastern policy governing in a systematic fashion the relations between the EU and its present /future Eastern Neighbours. The approach is a fragmented one, based mainly on the existence of Partnerships and Common Strategies. This is the case for Russia and Ukraine. Some observers claim that these document hardly add anything new: they are a mere repetition of existing arrangements under the Partnerships.

- When it comes to some sort of neighbourhood policy, the question of the approach towards the new external border appears as the most crucial one since one might expect the new border to the pivotal for this policy. And yet, one cannot but acknowledge the imbalance in terms of strategic approach: the future EU external border tends to be seen almost exclusively through JHA/III pillar prism;

1. *The EU view about the external border: the imbalance between the III pillar approach and the security implications*

Arguably, border issues constitute a very important part of the EU accession process. Borders, as any other issue listed under the 38 chapters screening-list are subject to the strict adoption of the Acquis Communautaire. Precisely because of the core of EU Acquis is mostly to be founding Schengen and the field Justice and Home Affairs, there is a very clear tendency to envisage the EU external border almost exclusively through the prism of security and Schengen standards related to border management.

A part from the pressure deriving the accession, considerable political pressure has been brought to bear on Poland by EU Member States to tighten the Eastern border. In this context, the EU MS main concern is on the fight against organised crime and illegal immigration as well as against any other-soft security threats.

In terms of financial assistance, the bulk of the available funds to Poland out of the PHARE programme for the Eastern border (100 millions euros for 1993-2000) has been for assisting Poland in sealing the Eastern border (beefing up infrastructure /purchase of equipment).
When it comes to cross-border Co-operation, one cannot but acknowledge that the latter shares with Common Security and Foreign Policy the privilege of being a poor –parent in this context. It is sufficient to look a the imbalance in terms of financial assistance between security /Schengen related assistance and cross-border co-operation to be further convinced about the above mentioned one-way approach. Up to now, a very neglectable portion of the total EU funding related to the Eastern Border concerns CBC. This tends to be viewed very negatively by Candidate Countries /Eastern countries.

The 600000 Euros allocated under the PI9705 PHARE Eastern Border Programme to small cross-border projects hardly make the difference. The same can be said about the CREDO scheme that allocated roughly 1.5 Meuros to cross-border co-operation projects. Whilst the degree of financial assistance is still very limited (average of 7000 euros/project) some of these projects have considerable political importance.

For the rest, little attention is paid to Eastern border beyond JHA/Schengen matters, in particular to Foreign Policy (and obviously geopolitical) consequences of moving the EU external border 500 km eastward, leaving aside key questions such as:

- what will be the impact of the future external border on new EU Eastern neighbours;
- what kind of neighbourhood policy toward former Soviet countries;
- how far is the new EU external border to play the role of pivot in the development of an EU Eastern policy.

The EU JH /Schengen approach is increasingly perceived negatively by countries across the border. Viewed form of the side of the former soviet countries like Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, the external borer of the EU is widely seen as a new barrier of civilisation/new dividing line. All the more to since after NATO enlargement, attention is steadily tending to the alleged negative consequences of EU enlargement in particular from Russia, Belarus and to a large extent Ukraine.

This imbalance between III pillar and CFSP raises the question of the security implication s of the extending EU border eastwards. Again, one cannot but acknowledge that in current context, too little attention is paid to this aspect with an overemphasis on the Third pillar.

2. Poland as a case study of the widening gap between EU and Candidate countries perception h the role of the future EU eastern border

The political debate surrounding the nature and the role of the future External border of the EU is a heated one. In this context, it is striking to observe that in candidate countries in general and in Poland in particular, there is very clear perception of the national/vital interests with respect to the future external border.

Among some of Polish elites, the EU accession driven objective of sealing the Eastern border through the implementation of third pillar measures tend to be viewed as conflicting with the Polish perception of the very role of
the Eastern border. The main reasons can be grouped as follows:

- psychologically, it is felt that anything aiming at introducing new dividing lines in Eastern Europe ought to be rejected. Separating Poland from its immediate neighbourhood is viewed very negatively. Although of a very benign nature, one should no underestimate the deeply rooted popular tradition in Poland on the “nostalgia of frontiers”. Far from being anything amounting the territorial claims, this tradition is a shaping factor of the Polish national identity, buttressed by literature, culture and history. According to widespread popular belief, the “Polish civilisation” is regarded to go well beyond the Yalta-inherited borders to encompass former historical Polish lands. Therefore, anything that affects what is commonly called kresy (frontiers of Polish civilisation) tends to be seen with great suspicion.

- geopolitically, it is vital for Poland to strengthen the independence of Ukraine and to avoid any movement to re-integrate Russia. New dividing lines are indirectly serving this purpose as they create a disincentive for former communist countries citizens to get acquainted with (Polish) Western democratic standards;

Sealing the Polish eastern border produces a negative impact on the principle of good-neighbourly relations. The introduction of visa is widely seen as an unfriendly act against neighbours.

This is particularly the case for the Ukraine where the process of reconciliation still requires continuous efforts; President Kwasniewski assured that Poland’s authorities would be discussing with the EU such solutions that would allow maintaining normal movement of people on the Polish-Ukrainian borders. The Foreign Ministry added that it was hoping for the removal of Ukraine from the list of countries for which there is a visa requirement. In Kwasniewski’s opinion, it is necessary to find methods to fight crime and terrorism, but “borders must be opened to people – tourists, businessmen –as wide as possible because that is needed”. He went as far as saying that the introduction of visa duty for Ukrainians once Poland becomes a European Union member, “would be (...) the worst thing one could do in the 21st century”.

As reflected in the recently adopted strategy on the border management, in the timetable for adoption of visa for required for foreign countries, Ukraine is indeed among the last three countries for which visa should be introduced in 2002.

- A negative impact on the Polish ethnic minorities (roughly 1 million in former Polish lands.) Polish authorities claim that dividing minorities on both sides of the border could amount to a violation of the Council of Europe Minority Framework Convention. Interestingly, the Polish Senate has voted recently a draft legislation meant to extent the Polish ID card to any ethnic pole who could bring evidence of its polish decent, of his command of Polish language and even more who could claim to be part of Polish civilisation. Although this draft legislation was eventually outvoted, it reveals an ever greater interest in anything which could contribute to offset negative consequences of EU requirements as the introduction of a visa regime.

- the principle of open-border policy is key for the development of cross-borer cooperation. All the mores so since the Polish Eastern provinces are generally much less developed than the Western ones;
3. **Polish Ostpolitik versus EU Ostpolitik**

Any in depth analysis of the role and the nature of the future EU external border unmistakably raises the question of what kind of relationships between the EU and its new Eastern neighbors. This question is coupled to the even more tricky issue of the development of an Eastern policy of the enlarged Europe. While this policy seems to be still extremely embryonic at EU level, Poland seems to have a very articulated vision of its own Ostpolitik. This approach has been expressed at a number of different occasions by Foreign Minister Geremek\(^20\). This has been also very clearly formulated by Andrej Olechowski, a former foreign minister: “Poland must influence the future EU’s Eastern policy. Our membership is only one step in the Polish strategy. The door open for us must also be open for our neighbors”\(^21\).

As a result, one could ask the question of whether Poland’s EU accession in the context of Ostpolitik is not conceived as an instrument to ‘Europeanize ‘its regional ambitions. This is turn prompts another set of questions concerning future enlarged EU-Russian relations: how to avoid that an European Ostpolitik modelled after the Polish pattern could affect negatively their bilateral relations. It is of course in everybody’s interest to assist Russia in getting westernized and become a normal European State repudiating any imperial ambition on its Near Abroad. Poland is seizing the historical opportunity of the uncertainty about Russia’s identity to try to influence to a maximal extent the reorganization of the area located between the Baltic and the Black Sea. The guarantees offered by the EU/NATO umbrella is undoubtedly playing in its favour.

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\(^{20}\) Bronislaw Geremek, “The Ostpolitik Enlarged European Union. Relations with Russia, Ukraine and other States”, address at the International Bertelsmann Forum, Warsaw, 26 June 1999

\(^{21}\) Quoted by Gilles Lepesant, La politique de la Pologne à L’Est, des ambitions en quête d’un projet in
On reading the following text, we can understand Alessandro Missir di Lusignano’s admiration, fascination and hunger for Paul Morand’s works. He had even begun a unique collection—wherever possible in their original version—of Paul Morand’s books and publications about him, in order to constitute a quite unconventional library on the traveller and eminent diplomat. Alessandro certainly identified with his qualities as an “intrepid”, “insatiable” and “indefatigable” traveller. Like him, he was a man “avid for new sensations, undiscovered landscapes, sounds, smells and encounters...”

A writer, traveller and sociologist, in his writing he depicts a sceptical and dazzling account of modern life. (Le Petit Larousse illustré, 2006).

Throughout his lifetime, Paul Morand was an intrepid, insatiable, indefatigable traveller. His diplomatic career and affluence certainly contributed to his tastes. But even without these advantages, he would nevertheless have satisfied his desires: he was a born globetrotter. If his novels and novellas (certain of which were prefaced by Marcel Proust) reveal his unrivalled talent as a storyteller, his travel writing introduces us to a man who is avid for new sensations, undiscovered landscapes, sounds, smells and encounters. Of course, Morand was not the first person to have travelled. From Herodotus to Marco Polo, from Montaigne to Montesquieu, writers have associated their exploration of the world with that of mankind. Yet Morand does not indulge in any exercise of moral or political relativism, nor does he attempt to console himself in the face of the narrow-minded bourgeois world with some oriental exoticism. He travels because he wants to feel free and always in motion. “We set about devouring the earth, impatient with the slowness of steamers, excited by the sudden freedom. We sought to live as quickly as possible and to immobilise ourselves as little as possible, to melt into what appeared to us to be the very essence of all life: movement.” (Extract from the biography of Paul Morand, Robert Kopp) in Paul Morand, Voyages. Robert Laffont, 2001.
Introduction

What is the place, in Paul Morand’s cosmopolitan world, which is occupied by the East? Is it simply that of an “Arrow”, as suggested by the title of one of his stories? Or on the contrary, is it possible to say that Paul Morand’s entire oeuvre presents a specific, coherent sensibility to the East? And if so, how can it be identified?

The following paper proposes to describe and identify some of Paul Morand’s spiritual, cultural and geographic connections with the East. The purpose is to reveal his constant sensibility with regard to the East through a selection of his writings, novels and novellas, portraits of cities, theatre and personal diary. This sensibility, which was to become an integral part of his literary genius as his life progressed, is the result of several factors.

We should first define what is meant by the East. It is a specific, geographical and cultural area, combined with the cultural heritage of the Byzantine and former Ottoman regions, something akin to what the Romanian historian Iorga referred to as “Byzantium after Byzantium”.

Paul Morand is not an Orientalist in the strict sense. Although his work is interwoven with numerous accounts inspired by certain oriental themes, it is not connected with that romantic genre which, according to Edward Said, speaks of and describes the East from a Western viewpoint. Neither is Paul Morand another Pierre Loti, who liked to dress up in Turkish clothes in order to better describe the reality of contemporary harems. Morand only dressed up as a Turk from the Rive des Esclavons to go to the costume ball given by Paul Cambron, the French ambassador in London from 1914-1915 and former ambassador in Constantinople.

Cartography of the East

In the map he presents to us of the East, it is possible schematically to distinguish three circles: Eastern Europe (Bucharest, the Balkans and Russia), East of Europe (Greece, Asia Minor, the Levant and Egypt) and finally East of the East, which merges with the Far East.
This world view depicts a shifting East, consisting of stopovers and embarkations, cruises and visits and colonial experiences. This vision is nurtured by numerous journeys, notably between 1921 and 1936. The principal theme here is that of the route to the Orient, i.e. principally the route to the Indies, and that of the discovery of the Far East, Rien que la Terre (nothing but the Earth). It is Egypt, the Holy Land, Arabia, Baghdad, Aden, as well as Marseilles, Crete, Port Said, Alexandria and Mascate, before entering the oceans beyond.

There is also the East of profound meditation, the East rooted in the history and civilisations that Morand visited, to cite Olivier Frebourg’s eloquent phrase, like Herodotus at the wheel of a Bugatti. This is the East, centred on the Mare Nostrum and the Pontus Euxinus, between Constantinople and Byzantium, in which Morand bases certain of his most insightful works.

**The Awakening of the East**

The writings and publications of the writer and historian Albert Vandal played a major role in the formation of Morand’s awareness of the East whilst he was still a political sciences undergraduate in Paris. A specialist in the Eastern Question, Vandal later admitted to having marked Morand through his teaching. By one of those admirable shorthand comments, Morand describes him as a man with a monocle on a black ribbon at the bedside of Abdul Hamid, the sovereign of the Sick Man of Europe¹. Beyond the Eastern Question, Morand reveals the accounts of travellers, semi-adventurers and semi-diplomats, who distinguished themselves in relations between France, Europe and the East, particularly the Ottoman Empire.

In his speech following his election to the Académie Française, he recounted the tumultuous biography of Pacha Bonneval, a 17th century Frenchman who entered into the service of the Sultan and several years later, became the Advisor of the Porte and ‘three-tailed Pacha’, a high honour in the Empire. Bonneval was a Turk among Turks and western with westerners, rather like the Venetian Gritti, also a guest of the Sublime Porte, to whom Morand compared him. Vandal was also the author of the Marquis de Nointel’s journeys in the East, as Louis XIV’s ambassador in Constantinople. Unquestionably, these accounts marked the beginnings of an apprenticeship. Beyond individual destinies, they relate all the complexity of East-West relations, between Europe and the Great Turk. In short, they describe an interaction which is one of the constituting elements of European history from Manzikert to Vienna, via Lepanto and Navarino.

**The Intimacy of the East**

If Vandal was the awakener, Helen Soutzos, whom he met in 1916, was the one who made him cross the line, both physically and spiritually, separating East from West. With Helen, Morand definitively stopped looking at the East with a view of appropriation, but instead he experienced directly and intimately an East as it has been lived through the centuries. This East coincides with the imperial area which, from Byzantium to the Ottoman Empire, constitutes the direct heritage of the Roman Empire in its territorial, political, cultural and social dimensions².

This imperial reality, passed down through the ages in a range of political and religious

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¹ Speech on his election to the Académie Française, on 20th March 1969, www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/discours-reception/morand.html
forms, is characterised by a multinational element. Its history is as multicoloured as a mosaic, made up of Turkish, Armenian, Greek, Arabic, Jewish, Balkan, Middle-Eastern, Muslim and Christian fragments.

For those who originate from this world, cosmopolitanism understood in its broadest sense is an integral part of personal and metanational identity.

It is in this light that we have to envisage the relationship with Helen Soutzos. It is remarkable to note the insistence with which his wife, Helen Soutzos, is attributed with a harmful influence on her husband’s political choices and directions. Some even go so far as to make her entirely responsible for the errors of judgement notably committed by Paul Morand during his diplomatic career, and the consequent problems.

This is to blatantly ignore Helen Soutzos’s exceptional contribution to his identity as a writer. As Alain Peyrefitte commented, it was she who initiated Paul in this imperial heritage we spoke of above, in the cult of Byzantine memory, in the unswerving attachment to the Orthodox faith and in a kaleidoscopic space where the Danube meets the Aegean, the Bosphorus meets the Adriatic, Istanbul meets Trieste, and London meets Bucharest.

We simply have to glance at Helen Soutzos’s genealogy to understand the pre-First World War circles in which Paul Morand moved.

Her name indeed appears as an isolated monad, a sort of foreign body in a family tree which illustrates the purest imperial tradition where the most eminent names of the Ottoman aristocracy of Byzantine and Phanariote origin are found side by side.

Thus among Soutzos’s ancestors we find such names as Mavrocordatos, Cantacuzino and Sturdza. These names interweave with those of protagonists in Ottoman history during five centuries, from the empire’s incipience to its dissolution, but which will never cease to influence European history.

The world of these Phanariote families revolved around Constantinople and they were responsible for maintaining the Byzantine traditions within the empire’s territorial boundaries, under the Sultan’s authority.

For nearly four centuries, the unchanging Byzantine tradition was to live on through them, in a form of civilisation made up of Hellenic intellectuality, Roman law, Orthodox religion and Byzantine art.

At the heart of the Ottoman Empire, these families were famed for the hereditary exercising of eminent functions. On several occasions in his writings, Morand speaks of the Ottoman-Levantine Empire, as if to emphasise the confederal Greek and Turkish nature of this empire. The sultans could not manage without the Greeks; how would they have organised their Empire without them?

The Phanariote families lived literally in the direct entourage of the Greek Patriarch, the official personality of the Empire and head of the Orthodox nation on which it imposed its religious, cultural and fiscal supremacy. These families were firstly designated the principal political functions of logothetes, rhetors and chartophylaxes to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, i.e. in the Vatican of the Orthodox Church, located in the district of Phanar.

From the mid-17th century onwards, the Phanariote aristocratic community became the melting pot for major officials in the Ottoman

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5 This theory is developed by the historian Kitsikis, op. cit.
Empire and passed directly into the service of the Sultan. Morand calls them 'les hauts fonctionnaires de la Porte' (senior civil servants of the Porte).7

Thus the position of the Grand Dragoman of the Porte, the de facto equivalent of Minister of Foreign Affairs, became the exclusive monopoly of the Phanariotes. Until the mid-17th century, this post had been held by Jews, Armenians and western renegades. As these groups were unpopular with the Turks, they turned to the Greeks from the Phanar district of Constantinople who formed one of the principal social, economic and intellectual factors in the country. These Phanar Greeks spoke several foreign languages such as Arabic, Persian, Italian and French and had a western culture which set them apart as being more competent. It is striking to observe the way in which, towards the end of his Journal Inutile (Pointless Diary), Morand stresses his wife’s perfect knowledge of several languages.

The Grand Dragomans played a leading role through the rank of Minister and as members of the ‘Divan’, receiving the credentials of foreign ambassadors, taking part in all the diplomatic meetings and enjoying legal privileges equivalent to those of the Viziers.

The Grand Dragomans played a crucial role in relations between the Ottoman Empire and the principalities of the Danube and Romania, where they made themselves indispensable and even occupied the princely thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia.

In Bucarest, with his inimitable style and famous use of the disconcerting metaphorical meaning, along with a precise knowledge that he admits borrowing from the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, Paul Morand retraces all the mutations of these Phanariotes who, from Constantinople to Bucharest8, from their ‘lamasseries’ (houses in Phanar were made of wood), found their way to ‘Perou’ (Romania).

One of the most striking aspects is precisely the account of the investiture ceremony of a hospodar, in which Morand reconstructs with virtuosity the constancy of the imperial spirit: “the hospodar receives a double investiture, politically from His Imperial Majesty the Sultan and religiously from the Patriarch; the latter crowns him in accordance with the ceremony used for Byzantine emperors...he kisses the Patriarch’s hand...the successor to the prophet hands him his honorary sword...Then holding the firman of appointment to his chest, the hospodar leaves the reception room walking backwards...He then visits the all-powerful French ambassador.”9 It is a literary monument, describing the protocol and vividly capturing all the symbolic dimensions of the transmission of power in which the crescent moon and the bicephalous eagle coexist.

Among Dimitri Soutzo’s direct ancestors and consequently those of Helen’s grandson Jean-Albert Broglie, we can find one of the most legendary figures of Ottoman diplomacy in the person of Alexander Mavrocordato, also known as the Exaporite10.

He was the most powerful of the Phanariote lords, born into one of the great families on the island of Chios and became the Grand Dragoman of the Porte between 1673 and 1709. He was a scholar and fine diplomat, playing an eminent role in relations between the Ottoman Empire and the western powers of France, Austria and Russia at the end of the 17th century.

7  Ibid, p. 601.
10 cf. the biography by Nestor Camariano, Alexandre Mavrocordato, le Grand Drogman, Salonica, 1970.
Helen was only a Soutzo by marriage to Dimitri, a military attaché in Paris during the First World War. Her father, Nicolas Chrisoveloni was born in 1838 in Constantinople and was transferred to Bucharest where he became one of the leading representatives of the Greco-Byzantine community in Romania.

He built up a large fortune, which he bequeathed to his daughter Helen. When she died, Paul Morand decided to use part of this capital to found a literary prize which bears her name.

Who is Helen Soutzo? Born in Galati in Romania, her family destiny could have led her to be born in Constantinople like her father, Nicolas Chrisoveloni.

The Chrisoveloni (golden needle) family are one of the archons from the island of Chios in the Aegean, like the aforementioned Mavrocordatos. Unlike the latter, the Chrisovelonis only belonged to the circle of twenty, as described by Philip Argenti, whereas the Mavrocordatos feature among the five main families (pentad).

Chios, immortalised by Delacroix, this ‘Turkish Greece of Hugo and Byron is also Venetian and Genoese Greece’ which Morand describes in Méditerranée, mer des surprises. On Chios in the suburbs and the countryside, Muslim influence is still apparent. The women hide their mouths when strangers pass, while the elderly wear large black pantaloons alla turca. But in the town centre, the houses of those ennobled four centuries ago by the Venetians are emblazoned with coats of arms and escutcheons, the balconies are braced in the Italian style. The streets are lively, the trades still grouped in quarters and the merchants standing in their doorways, as everywhere in the East..., watch for customers as if they were prey... In the main square, rakis and masticas are drunk in the pale shadows of the eucalyptus and kiosks.

Helen’s family history inspired Morand to write his novel Lewis et Irene, the setting of which are the transactions of the Apostolatos bank, between London, Athens, Constantinople and Trieste. In the character of Irene the features described are actually those of Helen. The reference to Trieste is borrowed from Helen’s maternal family. Her mother, Callirohe Economou, was born into a family originally from Macedonia which in the early 19th century was at the head of the Greek community in Trieste. “Hellenic independence, one hundred and fifty years ago, suddenly caused the Greeks to spread; some followed the paths of Antiquity to the Black Sea and its grain counters, from Galati to the mouth of the Danube as far as Odessa; others, tentatively following the Mediterranean coastline, like a blind man on the pavement, eventually reached Trieste...”

A cosmopolitan family nevertheless, the Economous received the title of baron from the Emperor Franz-Joseph in 1904 with the predicate ‘von San Serff’, after the name of their chateau near Trieste. Her mother’s brothers, Alexander and Andrew, received the title of count by Pontifical Bull from Leon XIII in 1897, which was subsequently recognised by the King of Italy in 1928. As Sturdza notes, this is one of the rare titles to be granted by a Catholic pontiff to a Greek Orthodox family, but also the...
only one for which the beneficiaries requested confirmation from the Sultan.

These Greeks from Trieste were like, “old Greek citadels. Here the aristocracies are closed, impassive, not admitting marriages beneath their station. Little Italian counts seeking dowries were thrown out and marriages were made with large, very black goats who speak with nasal tones and grunting like pigs, offer enormous engagement gifts that flatter Viennese tastes.”

The Eastern city

“Europe is a larger version of Constantinople. Constantinople is its extreme point. It was placed by God in a crucial position, like a crucifix at a crossroads”.

Morand devoted a number of reflections and meditations to this city. A centre of gravity for the interaction between East and West and the cradle of the Phanariotes, the city reappears on several occasions in Morand’s work. As a diplomatic destination, I was taking the bag, as nostalgia, it’s been ten years since I was last in Constantinople, and as a backdrop to his novellas. Morand liked to describe it as the place where the heart of Europe and its destiny pulses.

In the texts which are devoted specifically to it, Constantinople and then Istanbul offer us snapshots taken at dusk. La Nuit Turque describes a dying city. The scene is of the city’s occupation by the Allies in 1918-1920 who divide between them what remains of the Ottoman Empire. Morand captures the surreal, pusillanimous atmosphere in which the Greeks, Italians, British and Russian exiles move between Pera and Istanbul, Eyup and Scutari. In La Nuit Turque, people are dancing on a volcano. It is Constantinople just after Loti, one which is too late for the Disenchanted and the last diplomatic yachts in the Bosphorus. It is the adieu to the Orient Express.

The privileged spectator of a troubled time, Morand is inspired by a journey in Turkey between 1920 and 1921, at the heart of the tragic events which saw the end of the Ottoman Empire, the humiliation of the Treaty of Sèvres, the fire in Smyrna and the Kemalist revolution. This atmosphere is palpable in the pace of La Nuit Turque. Added to it is a perspective of Constantinople on the shores of the Black Sea, like Odessa, Sebastopol, Yalta and the Crimea. Until the end of the 17th century, the Black Sea was an inland sea. The gradual retreat of the empire to Anatolia and the rivalry with Russia made this sea the main route for relations between the Turks and other western powers, which reached its height with the Eastern Question in the mid 19th century. La Nuit Turque presents the significance of this dynamic around the Black Sea, which would soon cease to exist owing to the Cold War, and which would only reappear at the end of the 20th century.

Agony is also the theme of Fin de Byzance, a play written in 1959. Morand belongs to the tradition of writers who published accounts of the fall of Constantinople. The English author Steven Runciman and the Finnish writer Mika Waltari are among those who loved Byzantium. In his own way, Paul Morand recounts one of the ‘star hours of humanity’ to borrow Stefan Zweig’s expression. By tracing back Basileus’s desperate attempts to convince the European sovereigns to hasten to the aid of the city threatened by the Turks, he reveals the dynamics that oppose the Patriarch and the Pope.

Better the Sultan’s turban than the Pope’s tiara. Islam preserved orthodoxy just as the Turkish whitewash preserved the mosaics in Hagia Sophia. Morand knew that Gennadios, the

18 Paul Morand, La Fin de Byzance, 1959, p. 16.
Orthodox monk who opposed with all his might the union with Rome, made an alliance with Mohammed and in exchange for his support, in turn obtained his enthronement as Patriarch. The 19th century scene of the end of Byzantium is overwhelming. In the tumult of the conquest, a priest says mass before a distraught crowd, leaving the most holy hymn of the Trisagion to gently disperse and make way for the muezzin who calls Allah Akbar. Morand adds that a dog bays at the moon.

Helen must surely have told him of the lullaby that all Greek children learn from their mothers, according to which when Constantinople becomes Greek once again, the priest who was interrupted by the irruption of Mohammed II in 1453 will be able to end the Mass. Morand remembers, for in Russian Europe, he is sensitive to Dostoyevsky’s idea of wanting Russia, the third Rome, to take possession of Constantinople, the sanctuary of orthodoxy and the sole guardian of Christ.

**Eastern faith**

We are familiar with Morand’s spiritual testament in Venises: “I will be watched over by this orthodox faith to which Venice has led me, a religion that has fortunately remained immobile, which still speaks the first language of the Gospels.” Owing to a lack of space Morand could not be interred in the family vault in Yerres, and is said to have accepted the asylum offered by his wife’s cousins, the Economou von San Serffs, Helen’s mother’s family.

For Ginette Guitard-Auviste, it was not so much a conversion as a movement. “Helen’s presence, her secret inveterate atavism, along with the close contacts with Helen’s Greek Orthodox parents, not to mention the sentimental, aesthetic attraction of a sumptuous liturgy, unchanged in an unchanging religion, all had an influence.”

This secret atavism to which Ginette Guitard-Auviste refers is in fact one of the fundamental components of Helen’s identity which marked Morand so profoundly. A fleeting trace of this identity is found in Lewis et Irène. Describing the arrival in Constantinople and the confrontation with the Turks, Morand says of Irène: “How a being so close to him allowed herself, in an instant, to be devastated by a sentiment that she couldn’t represent to herself? For the first time, Lewis realised that he had bound his life to someone whom he did not know.”

We should always bear in mind the religious dimension of the national reality, in Byzantine times as well as during Roman and Ottoman domination. “It was actually the Orthodox church, controlled from Istanbul by a Greek or Graecised high clergy, which saved Greek culture and the memory of Byzantine glory.”

We can nevertheless question Morand’s quite spiritual approach which, beyond the strictly family context and material contingencies, may have drawn him closer to Orthodoxy. Can Morand’s Orthodoxy be summed up solely as a final impetus, a sort of coincidence which brought this traveller to the last spiritual level?

On reading these highly diverse books and writings, a sort of inner journey appears to emerge, accompanied by thoughts on the merits and profound meaning of the Orthodox faith.

The aesthetic dimension plays a significant role here. In Mediterranée, mer des surprises and again in Bucarest, written in 1935,
Morand devotes several beautiful pages to the description of Romanian churches and monasteries. He confesses that it took him many years to feel the attraction of Orthodox churches.

His visit to Mount Athos certainly contributed to this. “Gradually, in holy places where the majesty of Catholicism struggles with the vague splendours of a more primitive rite, in Syria, Romania and at Mount Athos, I learned to love these icy walls, like water tanks; these gateaux removed too hastily from their moulds with heavy apses, blind arcades lost in the darkness, the columns topped by thick cushions and their cumbersome ornaments finally enchanted me.”

The headiness of incense, the light from the icons, the mystery of the holy of holies behind iconostases, the yellow wax of enormous candles, the rich austerity of voices that rise up, hollow like the vaults, without the support of any instrument, such are the many aspects which resound in his aesthete’s soul. Nurtured by the holy milk of the Roman Church, Morand finds in Orthodoxy the application of the old adage “Lex orandi, Lex credendi”. It is here that the dimension of the rite and the liturgy arises: ‘I can remain immobile listening to interminable offices, the reading of twelve gospels, the interminable vigils on Sundays and holy days... unable to detach myself from this liturgy which was as alien to me as the ritual of Buddhist temples.

To borrow the beautiful expression of Paul Evdokimov, Orthodoxy is the sensation of the divine. The rite, architecture and liturgy represent the earthly version of the celestial Jerusalem, a sort of visible sign of the invisible, to cite Saint Paul. The dilemma which Paul Morand had to confront is perhaps that of being a practicing agnostic.

This reflection is taken a step further in his commentary in *L’Europe russe* on Dostoyevsky’s *A Writer’s Diary*. Implicit in this study written in 1948 are certain themes which indicate an evolution in his movement towards Orthodoxy. It is striking to see his insistence on the divine nature of Christ. The God-man prevails over the man-God. We find here one of the fundamental aspects of Orthodox spirituality which is summed up in the phrase by Maxime the Confessor: God became man so that man might become God.

The supreme manifestation of Christ’s divinity is on Easter night, with “the joy of Easter which illuminates all Orthodox theology and liturgy. After the bleeding Christ, the Glorious Christ.”

Neither did the characteristics of Orthodox geopolitics escape Morand. His considerations on the international activism of the patriarchate in Moscow, the strained relations between Moscow and Rome and the even greater tensions between Moscow and Constantinople are of burning topicality. From our perspective, just a short time after Pope John-Paul II’s visit (in May 2002) to Bulgaria, the second Slav Orthodox country ever to be visited by a pontiff, Morand’s reflections offer a sort of penetrating insight. He glimpses ‘on the one hand the Slav clergy, violently opposed to Roman Catholicism, and on the other a Mediterranean clergy, politically favourable to harmonious relations with the Vatican.”

In his own words, the oriental Venice was the culmination of his path towards Orthodoxy. The prodigious synthesis it represents never ceased to haunt Morand, as witnessed by his personal diary. Certain people see in Saint Mark’s the reflection of Hagia Sophia and Byzantine art. Morand spoke of the “mosque, whose inclined, uneven tiling resembles prayer mats placed side

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24 Bucarest, op. cit., p.671.
by side.” In this permanent exchange between East and West, in the memory of Mediterranean epics and wars against the Turks, Orthodoxy appeared as a natural, almost familiar dimension. Venice, which on the island of San Giorgio, houses the Greek Orthodox cemetery where Stravinsky and Diaghilev are buried, and a little further on, Ezra Pound.

For Morand, Orthodoxy is the church of the ultimate end, which offers man his sense meaning and thirst for eternity. His personal diary provides an interesting insight in the figure of Msgr. Meletios, a Metropolitan Bishop in the Orthodox Church and Exarch of Spain and Portugal.

In his diary however, Morand refers to a conversation with Msgr. Meletios, to whom he asked whether he had to accomplish “any positive action to belong to the Orthodox Church or renounce the Catholic Church”. When Msgr. Meletios replied in the negative, Morand declared that “a renunciation would have upset him out of respect for his mother’s memory.26 Fidelity to his wife’s faith, fidelity to that of his mother, fidelity to the faith of the Gospels in their two expressions, Latin and Greek, is probably what makes Morand an ecumenical cosmopolitan.

In a letter to Chardonne, Morand justifies himself saying: “What was this Rome and the religion of my childhood if not an immense edifice of composite style, built on rites? What attached me to the religion was its rites. Nothing remains of that. I shall die a son of the Orthodox Church; there, everything is immobile.”27

The ignorance of the concrete has preserved orthodoxy and has maintained its freshness. Whereas Catholicism, bogged down in its social adaptation efforts has distanced itself from the Holy Spirit, orthodoxy will be able to rise up to it.28

**Conclusion**

Through these lines, we have been able to see that the East is far more than simply a stopover point on Morand’s world tour. It is an essential part of his sensibility and literary genius. Paul Morand managed to capture the subtleties and challenges of this world space somewhat in the manner of Braudel, whose perception is characterised by a coherence of complexities and interactions that contributed to European identity. But beyond this, Morand presents us with an entire vision, articulated around the eternal dialogue between East and West, in its cultural, historic, spiritual and religious dimensions.

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27 Ibid., p.313.
28 L’Europe russe, op. cit., p.818.
A new “Eastern Question”?  

European Union Heads of State and Governments undertook to take a decision on the opening of negotiations for Turkey’s adhesion in December 2004. As the deadline approaches, this new Eastern Question is weighing increasingly heavily in people’s minds. The debate provoked by Valéry Giscard d’Estaing’s comments shows the extent to which Turkey’s adhesion in the European Union incites impassioned reactions throughout public opinion. Yet how could we dissociate this debate from the perceptions that have accompanied centuries of history and whose roots plunge into a collective imagination responsible for so many stereotypes?

As confirmed by a recent Eurobarometer survey, Turkey comes last in the list of European countries with a 0 vocation of EU membership, followed only by Albania. The dozens of letters received by the European Commission, a large proportion of which is either controversial or downright offensive, are clear evidence of this. In short, a broad sector of public opinion continues to reflect the persistence of cultural and religious stereotypes that form the basis of a resolute opposition to any prospects of membership, which has only been exacerbated by VGE’s remarks.

This appeared once again relatively recently during a European Parliament debate on Turkey, which crystallised opinions. The reaffirmation of Europe’s Judeo-Christian values in the resolution combined with certain major criticisms of the Kemalist ideology that is supposedly considered to be an obstacle on Turkey’s path to EU membership has profoundly irritated and even scandalised Turkish public opinion. It is interesting to note the minority opinion presented by a parliamentary group condemning the moralistic attitude of this resolution, highly marked by precepts of a religious order. The group emphasises that on the contrary, the aim of the EU was the extension of democracy and human rights through the extension of a humanist
The historic dimension

Centuries have shaped the presence of Turkey in European consciousness. A quick glance through history reveals that relations between Europe and the Turks are marked both by permanent interaction at all levels and a gradual and constant movement of Turks towards the West.
of Anatolia, perhaps a Holy Empire of the Turkish Nation could have come about, whose consequences for European history would have been quite different.

Another, far more pragmatic logic postulates partnership and alliance with Turkey, which is being called upon to join the European League of Nations. Despite the frequent signing of political alliances in the 15th and 16th centuries (Francis I, Genoa, Venice) the significance of this logic became fully apparent with the Turkish decline, marked by Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) and the slow, gradual retreat of the Turks from Central Europe. It was formally acknowledged by the Congress of Paris in 1856 and enabled Turkey to be associated, admittedly more as a subservient party than a protagonist, in the management of European balances of power. Following this logic, Turkey’s adhesion to the European Union is seen by certain people as nothing more than the continuation of this historic process.

This is matched by a corresponding development in a genuine aesthetic appreciation of Turkey, as epitomised by the Orientalism and turquoiseries of the 18th and 19th centuries. It is striking to note that this movement coincided with the rise of the Phanariote families, that is to say the families who were the heirs of Byzantium, whose role was to advise the Ottoman sultans in their diplomatic and foreign policy affairs. The life of the Grand Dragoman Alexander Mavrocordato the Exaporite is an illustration of the role these families played in exchanging ideas and shaping the representation of the East in Europe.

The long march to the West

Following the dynamic of its geography as the only Mediterranean peninsula which extends from East to West, the history of the Turkish people is nothing more than a long, patient march to the West. Since their appearance on the global stage during the battle of Manzikert in 1071, the Turks have continued to seek out contact with people from the West and in spite of Islam, to adopt its customs and espouse its meanders. In his book *Turkey in Europe*, the former President Turgut Özal even defended the theory that as the Turks had mixed with the local populations for centuries, they were in fact the descendants of the Hittites, Hourrites and other peoples of ancient Anatolia. Numerous authors have demonstrated how, well before the defeat of Constantinople, numerous alliances were formed between the Christian principalities and dynastic marriages were made with Byzantine princesses in Anatolia and around the Aegean. These disconcerting alliances opposed Christians, who turned to Turkey as an arbitrator. Perhaps it is this Turkish loyalty in the face of European duplicity which gave rise to the expression “li Turchi sono gentilomini, li cristiani puttane”?

Turkish openness to ideas, fashions and concepts from the West is revealed constantly throughout history. Shortly after his conquest of Constantinople, the Sultan requested Gentile Bellini to paint his portrait, as Soliman was to do a century later. The recent novel by Orhan Pamuk, *My name is Red*, presents a fascinating allegory of this open relationship to imported ideas.

But once Constantinople had been conquered, the Turks saw themselves as the successors of the Byzantine Empire, thus achieving the famous *translatio imperii*. The Sultan took the title of sultan of the Romans and by recognising orthodoxy, allowed it to survive and spread faced with the Latin culture in Rome. This was the famous “Better the Sultan’s turban than the Pope’s tiara”. The historian Kitsikis spoke of a triple succession, territorial, political and finally cultural, economic and
The Ottoman Empire was an empire in the Roman sense of the term which, with the Byzantine Empire, slipped into the same historic, legal and strategic gesture with an acute sense of continuity.

The road to the West was followed down the centuries with the work of such reforming sultans as Selim III at the end of the 18th century, and culminated with the Tanzimat, the political reforms which led to the adoption of the first Constitution in a Muslim country at the end of the 19th century. As Olivier Abel states, when it fell, it is not entirely wrong to say that it was the Roman Empire which was falling. Describing this empire as the Other in European history, the former Foreign Affairs Minister Ismail Cem even went as far as speaking of the heritage of the Balkan and eastern half of Europe, with links to 28 countries!

The transformation of the Empire into a national, centralised Republic was achieved in a rough and ready manner through the strokes of genius of Atatürk who, by aligning himself also with the great Ottoman tradition, sanctioned an age-old movement by undertaking the most radical westernisation process ever attempted.

The objective of the principle of secularism and Kemalist principles and reforms was to subject Turkey very quickly to the equivalent of the western Renaissance and to catch up with contemporary civilisation. Mustapha Kemal’s great design was to renounce the empire in order to become a centralised nation-state based on the French model. Given this historic experience, how is it possible to consider the reforms required by the famous Copenhagen criteria as anything more than a simple grooming exercise?

This is to forget however the ideological interpretation of the Kemalist state, which assigns a meta-constitutional value to the principles of the republic’s indivisibility and secularity, and therefore not possible to change. Opposition between conservatives and liberals hinges on the interpretation of these principles and their compatibility with the political criteria of Copenhagen, such as for example the exercising of fundamental freedoms and minority rights. On the one hand there are those who consider that Turkey should be accepted as it is, owing to its particular features (the fight against separatist terrorism, Muslim fundamentalism and its proximity to the Middle East). According to this theory, inspired by what is sometimes referred to as the Sèvres syndrome, after the Treaty repealed by Lausanne which resulted in the division of what remained of the Ottoman Empire between the allied powers, Turkey has to be treated “sui generis” and its adhesion should be “alla turca”.

On the other hand, there are those who consider that Turkey should become a pacified democracy, like all the other EU countries. These liberals consider that it is time to put aside security obsessions in a country supposedly in a state of permanent siege, surrounded by enemies who are plotting to carve it up. The issues raised in this debate include such thorny questions as the role of the army, how to deal with the Kurdish population and the place of religion in public life.

**The Turks in the face of the European challenge**

However this may be, everyone considers that European Union adhesion is the ultimate accomplishment in the grand Kemalist design. General Buyukanit, an eminent member of the military hierarchy which considers itself to be the guardian of Kemalist heritage, forcefully repeats that joining the European Union means a definitive anchorage in the West. Denying EU membership to Turkey for whatever reason is an implicit denial of the process to form the
Turkish identity on its historical path. Even if this process is carried along by immense surges of enthusiasm, it generates equally numerous frustrations. It is now forty years since the Europeans and Turkey established contractual relations in 1963, which enshrined Turkey’s vocation to join the other nations in what is now called the European Union.

To this Turkey, a steadfast, loyal ally of the West, on the front line for the entire duration of the Cold War, the Europeans do the injustice of preferring ten central European countries, newly emerged from totalitarian communism, not to mention Cyprus which it does not recognise. Turkey therefore resigned itself to the enlargement on 1st May 2004, not without a certain bitterness, biding its time by accelerating, sometimes spectacularly, the pace of its political reforms.

In Turkey’s line of argument, we find two recurrent themes used to substantiate the importance of this country as a future member of the EU. The first is related to Turkey’s geopolitical position. At the dawn of the 21st century, Turkey lies at the crossroads of a range of variables which determine international security. There is nevertheless a whole series of frustrations in terms of EU relations concerning security. Turkey has for many years bemoaned that it is not welcomed as a partner on equal terms with the other members of the EU, at least in the military and strategic field, where it has proved its metal and is capable of making a practical contribution with troops and logistical resources. This is especially questionable when almost all of the crisis scenarios envisaged by the planning structures relate to Turkey’s direct neighbours.

The Iraq war and the Turkish government’s vote on 1st March 2003 refusing transit authorisation for American troops contributed to a further accentuation of the country’s image as a deeply loyal ally of the European Union. Whereas scarcely a few months ago Turkey didn’t think twice in urging America to intervene directly on its behalf in Brussels, we are now witnessing an inverse movement in which certain member States, notably France, that have until now been lukewarm on the issue, are using the argument of Turkey joining the EU to increase Europe’s weight in relation to the United States...

Another argument used to substantiate Turkey’s importance is its function as a bridge between the West and the East, a gateway between the West and the Muslim world. Turkish diplomacy has pulled out all the stops to launch a number of initiatives in this direction. The most significant of these was the conference on the ‘Harmony of Civilisations’, held in Istanbul in February 2002, which brought together EU and OIC member states for the first time. These initiatives are now relayed by the AKP-led government’s attempts to provide the Middle East and the Muslim world with a model for a Muslim country that respects liberal democracy and fundamental freedoms. The recent speech made by Prime Minister Gül in Teheran provided an eloquent illustration of this.

Conclusion

As Stéphane Yerasimos said, few people have an image as controversial in European eyes, and few people have a destiny so bound up in European affairs. Since the Turks appeared on the shores of the Mediterranean, Turkey has been involved in all the major European questions of war and peace, alliances and divisions in opposing camps – from the Crusades and conflicts during the Renaissance to the Cold War – either as an enemy or an ally, unless it was requested to intervene or remain benevolently neutral.
Alongside this the Turks, who have always wanted to make Europe in their image by reconstructing the Empire for their benefit, have chosen to integrate within the western world whilst retaining their specific character.

This is the crucial difficulty of the current process in Turkey, which is contributing to the country’s redefinition of itself and its place in the world. Our age is particularly fascinating, as it has spotlighted the tension in Turkey to complete its historic process by fully integrating within the great family of European nations.

Will the Turks find the courage and lucidity to rid themselves once and for all of their obsessions, fears and uncertainties, by choosing resolutely in favour of a peaceful western model, in which democracy and freedom are combined with respect for national identity? Will the Europeans manage to overcome their contradictions and welcome a country with a number of challenges but whose stability is a guarantee of peace and security for the whole of Europe? How can the spiny questions of Cyprus and the dispute between Greeks and Turks be resolved? Answers to these questions necessarily assume a certain knowledge of the general context of reciprocal perceptions of one another.

The months ahead will tell us whether Norman Davies is right: integration of Turkey in the EU would pose enormous problems, but the problems caused by its exclusion would be even greater.

**Bibliography**

EU-Turkey relations after 17 December 2004: the beginning of a new era?

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Introduction

Concluding one of their most difficult diplomatic exercise in recent years, the Heads of State and Government have decided at the European Council meeting of 17 December 2004 to open accession negotiations with Turkey.

Few decisions have carried so much importance in the context of the European integration process. At the same time, few decisions have been so controversial.

Whether Turkey should join the European Union has been a matter of passionate debate in the last years and months, dividing supporters and opponents among EU governments and public opinion at large. This decision raises almost endless questions about the future of the European Union, its borders, the nature of the European integration process, the evolution of Turkey as a predominantly Moslem democracy as well as the implications for peace and stability in a world increasingly divided between the West and the Moslem world. One point finds everybody in agreement: the problematic of Turkey’s EU membership is one of the major issues on the European and International agenda in this century.

The purpose of this article is threefold: 1) to decrypt the exact significance of the decision of 17.12.04 and explain its concrete implications, 2) to try to briefly recapitulate the general framework in which the above mentioned decision by the European Council was made, 3) to outline the challenges it opens.

1. What does the decision of 17 December really mean?

1.1 The general context

The decision to start accession negotiations on 3 October 2005 is a turning point for EU-Turkey relations. It is of course too early to assess its concrete implications¹.

On the “makings” of the recommendation, see in particular Die Zeit, Die Türkei-Tester, N°42/2004.
By establishing a firm procedure, the European Union has set into motion a process, albeit long and complicated, but which is geared towards Turkey’s membership of the European Union. In Turkey, this decision has been awaited for months in a climate of great nervousness amongst public opinion. Although the end result has been met with an outpouring of collective bliss, as the dust was settling the general emerging impression was one of a great relief for reaching a reasonable deal. On one hand, the Brussels invitation to start accession talks represents a major achievement for the longstanding policy objective of successive Turkish governments in the years to come. In particular, it marks the crowning of the steady efforts of the AKP government and its leaders since November 2002 to accelerate the political reforms and the convergence towards the EU.

In this sense, the European Council’s decision represents also a personal success for Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Gül. On the other hand, many voices have highlighted the ambiguities included in the text of the European Council’s conclusions. Some consider that the European Heads of State and government have grudgingly fixed a date for the opening of accession negotiations and that this is reflected in the many conditions as well as the checks and balances attached to the negotiations framework. Austria and France’s reminder that in any event the outcome of this process would be subject to a national referendum contributed to temper the initial enthusiasm.

Does the EU Council decision actually mean that Turkey EU accession has become irreversible and inevitable? Are the mechanisms foreseen to steer the accession negotiations framework specific to Turkey? What could be the obstacles in the way of Turkey’s EU membership? These are some of the questions which arise in the post-17 December context.

Before analysing the conclusions in detail, it is worth recalling that the basis of the European Council decision was a Report and a Recommendation by European Commission, which were published on 6 October 2004. These documents were formally requested by the European Council of Copenhagen in December 2002 following a joint proposal tabled at that time by France and Germany. The only objective criteria set by the European Council was compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria related to democracy and human rights and minorities protection. The Commission’s recommendation of October 2004 was twofold. Firstly, it concluded that Turkey had sufficiently met the Copenhagen political criteria with certain considerations (referring only to the adoption and the entering into force of six pieces of legislation related to the reform of the judicial system and on the law on associations—all of them eventually adopted). Secondly, it recommended the opening of accession negotiations. Along with its recommendation, the Commission proposed a strategy which included general indications related to the framework of accession negotiations. Along with its recommendation, the Commission proposed a strategy which included general indications related to the framework of accession negotiations.

The European Council decision of 17 December followed weeks and months of intense diplomatic consultations among EU Member States against the background of a very vivid public debate across public opinion.

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2 The discussions in the run up to the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002 included a very active diplomatic campaign by the Turkish government aimed at securing a date for the opening of accession negotiations. Turkey which had just gone through a general election in November 2002 leading to the landslide victory of AKP held that at that time it had already fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria. The rationale behind this diplomatic offensive was also to secure a date before the accession of the 10 new Member States. Turkey’s fears were mostly related to Cyprus as a potentially hostile new Member State.

3 As defined by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993
During the autumn of 2004, the Turkish government conducted an active campaign with a view to obtain a “clear and clean message” in December 2004 confirming Turkey’s membership perspective and giving a firm date for the opening of accession negotiations. This was motivated by the need to avoid as much as possible any ambiguous language which could lead to additional obstacles on the road to accession. Above all, Turkey deployed every effort to prevent any discriminatory treatment, as compared with other candidate countries, which would have meant second-class membership. Turkey was indeed particularly concerned by some aspects included in the Commission’s Recommendation concerning the “permanent safeguard clause”, the “open-ended process” or the other benchmarks related to the framework of accession negotiations.

Not surprisingly, these fears grew in intensity as the 17 December date drew closer, in particular as work was progressing on the draft conclusions presented by the Dutch presidency. In a solemn statement issued on 7 December following a meeting convened by President Sezer with the country’s top decision-makers, including military chief of Staff General Özkök, the EU was called on to abide by its commitments.

In particular, the principle of ‘pacta sunt servanda’ was recalled and the EU was invited to include unequivocal language about a clear membership perspective.

On the side of EU Member States, many factions pushed for a more cautious approach, not least the strong opposition of public opinion, in particular in countries such as France, Germany or Austria. In spite of the EU line supportive of Turkey’s EU integration expressed since 1999, doubts about the desirability of Turkey’s EU accession persisted in some EU countries.

Some questioned whether it was appropriate to embark upon a new accession round with such a big and important country barely six months after the EU underwent its largest enlargement wave with the accession of 10 new countries, also bearing in mind Bulgaria and Romania’s planned accession in 2007. The perception was that a decision to negotiate Turkey’s entry entailed risks for the EU which could potentially jeopardise its internal coherence and capacity to keep the momentum of ‘deepening’ versus widening. France was concerned in particular and referenda on the possible impact of a decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey on the debate about the ratification of the new European Constitution, given the generally negative attitude of public opinion not only in Paris but also in some other EU countries. Another factor which played an important role was the Cyprus issue, which had haunted EU-Turkey relations for many years. The question was whether, following the failure of the Annan plan, which was rejected by a majority of Greek-Cypriots, Turkey’s recognition of the Republic of Cyprus should be a pre-condition for the opening of accession negotiations.

Last but not least, the question of whether Turkey should be asked to make a gesture with respect to the Armenian issue was invoked, in particular in countries with large Armenian communities like France.

Adding its voice to the debate, the European Parliament adopted on 15 December its resolution6 about Turkey following passionate

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4 These views were presented in an official statement released by the Turkish government on 6 October 2004.
5 According to an opinion poll published (Ifop-Le Figaro) early December 2004, up to 67% of the French and 55% of the Germans are opposed to Turkey’s EU membership.
6 presented by the Dutch EPP member Camiel Eurlings.
debates among its members\(^7\) and the various political groups. Supported by a comfortable cross-party majority, including votes from the largely Turkey-sceptic EPP, the report’s main message was to call for the start of accession negotiations without undue delay, while calling for the continued close monitoring of the political criteria.

1.2. The language of the European Council’s conclusions

The European Council of 17 December 2004 endorsed the Commission’s assessment that Turkey had sufficiently met the Copenhagen political criteria stressing the “decisive progress made by Turkey in its far-reaching reform process”\(^8\) and invited Turkey to start accession negotiations on 3 October 2005. Undoubtedly however, the text of the Council reflects a compromise required by the unanimity rule governing the decision-making within the European Council composed of 25 Member States. Scrutinizing closely the language in the Council’s conclusions prompts the following remarks.

Negotiations are due to start on 3 October 2004

The European Council in Copenhagen in December 2002 concluded that if Turkey was found to comply with the political criteria, then accession negotiations would be opened without delay. In the last years, there has been much speculation about what this expression really meant in terms of weeks or months\(^9\).

Whilst a date fixed for the second half of 2005 might seem to go slightly beyond what is meant by without delay, it nonetheless reflects the domestic difficulties encountered by some countries, notably with respect to the referendum on the European Constitution in France.

Negotiations are geared towards accession

On Turkey’s membership perspective, the Council’s conclusions contain clear language about the goal of the accession negotiations which is accession. By making an explicit reference to the Helsinki conclusions of 1999 that “Turkey is a candidate country destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states”, the Heads of States and Governments present their decision as the conclusion of a logical sequence. To dispel any doubts, the European Council adds that “the shared objective of the negotiations is accession.”

Accession is not automatic

At the same time, the European Council stressed the “open-ended” nature of accession negotiations. Logically, every accession process is by its very nature open-ended.

In reality, experience shows that in the last 30 years, no country which started accession negotiations reached a solution different to full membership. There have been cases in the past when a candidate country itself decided to withdraw its membership application, or to reject the Accession Treaty as in the case of Norway in the 1990s.

It is also conceivable that ratification fails in one of the 25 or more Member States. Ever since this expression was mentioned in the Commission’s recommendation of October 2004, it was viewed with great suspicion by Turkey. It was argued that this reference was in contradiction with the very objective pursued by accession negotiations. Turkey’s anxieties

\(^7\) The debate in plenary on 13 December featured more than 100 interventions for 5 hours ranging across all political groupings

\(^8\) European Council Conclusions, 17.12.2004, §18

\(^9\) Asked about its, Günter Verheugen, Commissioner in charge of enlargement (1999-2004) indicated before the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament in September 2004 that in his view without delay meant ‘between 4 to 6 months’
originated from the fact that it could pave the way for a different outcome than accession.

Some EU Member States insisted on a formulation under which accession would not be presented as an automatic consequence of negotiations\textsuperscript{10}. Negotiations can fail. This speaks for itself. This prospect was however explicitly mentioned in the European Council conclusions, which stress that “\textit{while taking account of all Copenhagen criteria, if the Candidate State is not in a position to assume in full all the obligations of membership it must be ensured that the Candidate State concerned is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond.}” Turkey however questioned whether it was really appropriate to mention the prospect of a failure at the beginning of the process, something which would also undermine the EU credibility throughout the negotiations.

The inclusion of the abovementioned formula ought to be seen against the background of the debate prior to 17 December about whether to mention the idea of a “privileged partnership” as a fall back position. As shown above, the phrase “privileged partnership” in this case was watered down by the expression “\textit{the strongest possible bond}”. Interestingly, the reference to a special partnership as an alternative to Turkey’s EU accession presented in some amendments to the report of the European Parliament was eventually defeated by a large majority.

For the sake of clarification, a few more comments are needed about the concept of privileged partnership with regard to Turkey. This instrument is foreseen under the new European Constitution (Art. 57). It is intended to give special treatment to neighbours or other partners with a strategic interest for the European Union. The idea of a privileged partnership underlies the new neighbourhood policy which the EU seeks to extend to its Eastern and Southern neighbours such as Ukraine, Moldova, Israel, Jordan, Morocco or Egypt. This initiative does not apply to Turkey which is explicitly mentioned as an EU candidate country and therefore not eligible under this instrument.

Those who argue in favour of a privileged partnership often do not explain what it would mean in concrete terms. The question arises as to what more could be offered to Turkey which it does not currently have. Indeed, Turkey and the EU are bound by a customs Union which constitutes a rather far-reaching instrument of bilateral co-operation in the trade area implying a great degree of economic integration.

Turkey participates in numerous Community programmes in a wide range of areas such as culture, drugs, justice and home affairs, education, research and development.

In the key area of security and defence, as a NATO member, Turkey participates via the ESDP-NATO framework to the development of EU security operations.

There are Turkish troops in many countries in the Balkans.

\textit{The negotiations framework}

As regards the conditions attached to the framework for accession negotiations, the Council’s conclusions follow, though with some nuances, what had been proposed by the Commission’s recommendation. Is Turkey being treated differently from other candidate countries? It is clear that Turkey’s accession would be different from previous enlargements because of the combined impact of Turkey’s population, size, geographical location, economic, security and military potential.

But differentiation does not mean

\textsuperscript{10} French President Chirac made this point during his TV interview on 15 December 2004 on the eve of the European Council
discrimination. Furthermore, the European Union can benefit from lessons learnt during the previous enlargement. Although this was a very successful process, it was thought that some fine tuning to the negotiating framework, also for other potential new members, could further improve the process.

A first aspect concerns the possibility to suspend accession negotiations in case of a “serious and persistent breach of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law on which the Union is founded”.

The reason for this clause lies in the development of the acquis. The EU now has a clause in the Treaty on European Union (Article 7) and in the Constitution for Europe (Article I-59), which envisages a procedure for dealing with cases where a Member State seriously and persistently breaches basic principles of the Union.

It is only normal that similar rules should also apply to candidate countries. In fact, it has always been the case in the past that such serious situations would lead to a suspension of negotiations. In this case, the Commission can, on its own initiative, or at the request of one third of the Member States recommend the suspension of negotiations. The decision is taken on the basis of qualified majority.

The Council however adds that this is without prejudice to the general requirement of unanimity in the framework of the Intergovernmental Conference. One could question whether this is not contradictory.

The second aspect refers to the fact that the pace of the negotiations will depend on the pace of the political reforms. The sustainability of the reforms must be ensured.

In concluding that Turkey has “sufficiently” fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria as mentioned in the recommendation of October 2004, it is implied that not everything is perfect in Turkey. By this it was meant that taken together the reforms carried out to date have brought Turkey’s legislation to a substantial degree into line with European norms and practices. It is the recognition that the decision to open accession negotiations is not an end point. The irreversibility of the reform process will need to be confirmed over a longer period of time. As mentioned explicitly in the recommendation, the political reform process should continue to be consolidated and broadened.

This implies a close monitoring of the political criteria and the definition of new priorities under a revised Accession Partnership.

A third aspect concerns the conditions and benchmarks attached to the negotiations.

This was a very sensitive point. In its recommendation, the Commission only referred to a permanent safeguard clause in the area of free movement of persons.

The European Council conclusions refer to “long transition periods, derogations, specific arrangements or permanent safeguard clauses, i.e. clauses which are permanently available as a basis for safeguard measures, may be considered.”

This formulation, watering down earlier proposals, seems to be intended to allay Turkey’s fears suggesting that it could be exempted from rules on free movement of people, EU subsidies and the common agricultural policy. Given its size, its degree of development, its geographical position and its present obligations, Turkish accession raises issues which are not always identical with the ones which were central during previous enlargement waves. EU’s relations with Turkey are much older and run much deeper. Moreover, the EU has, since 1995, had a customs union with Turkey, and also agreements in the
agricultural and steel sectors, such that a considerable amount of acquis is already applied. This brings significant opportunities but could also increase the risks. The purpose is to prevent a situation where accession would lead to serious disturbances on the EU labor market.

In any case, safeguards are related to the existence of specific circumstances, so they cannot apply arbitrarily. Also, even when a safeguard is permanent, this means that it is permanently available but the actual restrictions themselves are not permanent. Finally, permanent means there is no specified end date. It does not mean “eternal”.

**Cyprus**

Cyprus was a pivotal issue in the tense bargaining, which could have disrupted the two days of European Council meeting. As noted above, the key question was to what extent Turkey’s recognition of the Republic of Cyprus should be a pre-condition for the opening of accession negotiations. Put differently, would it be conceivable to start accession negotiations with a candidate country which doesn’t recognize one of the EU member states. In its recommendation of 6 October, the Commission mentioned that “it should be noted that any accession negotiations are held in the framework of an Intergovernmental Conference consisting of all Member States of the EU”.

However, although recognition of Cyprus by Turkey is clearly desirable, neither the Commission nor the European Council has ever specified a precise date or method for such recognition to take place. The most logical sequence would appear to be first reunification of a United Cyprus and then recognition. Besides, the Cyprus question has never been considered as a pre-condition for Turkey to open accession negotiations. According to the European Council Helsinki conclusions of December 1999 relating to Turkey, Cyprus is mentioned under the heading of “enhanced political dialogue”. The Accession Partnership as revised in May 2003 includes a priority, under the same heading, that Turkey should “support UN efforts to find a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem”.

The European Council of June 2004, while welcoming the positive contribution of the Turkish government towards achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, invited Turkey to conclude negotiations with the Commission on behalf of the Community and its 25 Member States on the adaptation of the Ankara Agreement to take account of the accession of the new Member States. The advantage of signing such a protocol is, apart from filling a legal vacuum, to provide for a modus vivendi on the basis of which Turkey would acknowledge at least that the Republic of Cyprus is a member of the European Union.

During the European Council, Prime Minister Erdogan resisted any pressure to initial such a protocol on the grounds that this would imply recognition of the Republic

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11 For a detailed account on the Annan Plan, see the Reports of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus of 1 April 2003 (UN Doc. S/2003/398) and of 28 May 2004 (UN Doc. S/2004/437).

12 The Association agreement between the Community and Turkey, the “Ankara Agreement” was extended to the countries of the first enlargement in 1973, namely UK, Ireland and Denmark. However, the Ankara Agreement was not extended to any of the countries which acceded to the Community between 1973 and 2001 (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Austria, Finland). Although the protocols were signed by the countries concerned, they were not ratified in their respective Parliament. However, in practice the provisions of the Ankara Agreement were applied between Turkey and the 6 named above. As a result, Turkey has no agreement with 16 out of 25 countries constituting the enlarged EU (the 6 named above and the 10 new Member States).
of Cyprus, something which was seen as an additional condition for the opening of accession negotiations.

In addition, it was feared that signing such a protocol would also have implications for the current state of affairs on the island by bringing into question the presence of Turkish troops and opening the way for claims for compensation in cases related to property rights. After long consultations, a compromise was found whereby the Turkish Government issued a declaration “confirming that it is ready to sign the Protocol on the adaptation of the Ankara Agreement prior to the actual start of accession negotiations and after reaching agreement on and finalizing the adaptations which are necessary in view of the current membership of the European Union”.

If the signature of such a protocol appears to be a condition for the opening of accession negotiations, what are the concrete implications that Turkey will attach to it remain to be seen. Indeed, Prime Minister Erdogan made clear that in his view, such a protocol was a purely technical instrument implying no formal recognition of the Republic of Cyprus.

In any event, this question is linked to the wider problematic of finding a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem. Although many legal and practical difficulties arising under the division of the island have concrete implications for the European Union of 25, the framework for a solution falls within the competence of the United Nations. Although there is no specific reference in the European Council’s conclusions of 17 December to the resumption of the talks in the UN framework, there have been indications about a restart after the “presidential elections” in the northern part of the island in April 2005.

In any event, the Cyprus question is likely to continue to dominate EU-Turkey relations in the period ahead and certainly until 3 October 2005. How will this question play out in the dynamics opposing the different forces on the Turkish domestic scene remains unclear.

The reference to the capacity of the Union to absorb Turkey should not go unmentioned.

This is a reminder of the so-called Copenhagen accession criterion which states that the EU must be ready for Turkey. Yet again, this reference was met with suspicion by Turkey, which fears that this could constitute another excuse to prevent accession at the end of the process. EU leaders reply that it is only legitimate that the EU takes care of its own future development. The real question is to what extent Turkey could affect the functioning of the EU.

2. How to assess Turkey’s impact on the EU?

The public debate in the EU has revealed that the image which comes immediately to people’s mind as regards Turkey is that of a poor and large country. With a population of 70 million, Turkey is expected to match Germany around 2015 and to become Europe’s most populous country by 2025. With a GDP per head at purchasing power parity around 27% of the EU average and an economy estimated at less than 2% of the EU GDP, Turkey appears to be a poor emerging economy by EU standards.

This raises the question of Turkey’s impact on the functioning of the EU, not least in financial terms and the EU’s capacity to absorb Turkey. Many studies have been published in recent months offering figures, scenarios and assessments.

One important contribution was made by a study published by the European Commission on “Issues arising from Turkey’s membership
perspective” published on 6 October 2004 next to its recommendation. Its main findings can be summarized as follows:

Turkey’s EU accession perspective offers opportunities and would be challenging both for the EU and Turkey. If thoroughly prepared and of course subject to a successful outcome of negotiations and the ratification process it could extend the horizons of European integration. Turkey has the capacity to contribute to regional and international stability. Expectations regarding EU policies towards these regions will grow as well, taking into account Turkey’s existing political and economic links to its neighbors.

Much will depend on how the EU itself will take on the challenge to become a fully fledged foreign policy player in the medium term in regions traditionally characterized by instability and tensions, including the Middle East and the Caucasus.

The economic impact of Turkey’s accession on the EU would be positive but relatively small, both due to the modest size of the Turkish economy and to the degree of economic integration already existing before accession. Much will depend on future economic developments in Turkey. The launch of accession negotiations should help the continued efforts of Turkey to ensure macroeconomic stability and promote investment, growth and social development. Under these conditions, Turkey’s GDP is expected to grow more rapidly than the EU average.

Turkey’s accession would increase regional economic disparities in the enlarged EU in a way similar to the most recent enlargement, and would represent a major challenge for cohesion policy. Turkey would qualify for significant support from the structural and cohesion funds over a long period of time. A number of regions in present Member States benefiting from structural funds support could lose their eligibility on the basis of present rules.

The integration of Turkey into the internal market would be beneficial. This depends, however, not only on the fulfillment of present obligations under the customs union but also on more horizontal reforms, such as strengthening corporate governance and regulatory frameworks, intensifying the fight against corruption, and significantly improving the functioning of the judiciary.

With over three million, Turks constitute by far the largest group of third-country nationals legally residing in today’s EU. Available studies give varying estimates of expected additional migration following Turkey’s accession. Long transition periods and a safeguard clause can be considered to avoid serious disturbances on the EU labor market. However, the population dynamics of Turkey could offset the ageing of EU societies. In this context, the EU also has a strong interest in that reforms and investments should be made in education and training in Turkey over the next decade.

Agriculture is one of the most important economic and social sectors in Turkey and would need special attention. Continuous rural development efforts and an upgrading of administrative capacity would be required from Turkey to create as favorable conditions as possible to participate successfully in the common agricultural policy.

Turkey would need time to make a number of agricultural sectors more competitive.

Under present policies Turkey would be eligible for substantial support. In the veterinary area, major efforts would have to be made to improve the animal health situation and controls at the eastern borders in order to avoid serious problems upon accession.

Turkey’s accession would help to secure better energy supply routes for the EU.
It would probably necessitate a development of EU policies for the management of water resources and the related infrastructure. Because of their sometimes considerable trans-boundary effects, good implementation by Turkey of other EU policies in the fields of environment, transport, energy and consumer protection would also have considerable positive effects for EU citizens elsewhere.

As regards institutions, Turkey would have an important voice in the decision making process mainly in the European Parliament and Council in view of its population, but like any Member State it would need to build coalitions with others in order to defend and promote its interests.

As regards budgetary aspects, it is clear that given its size and level of economic development, Turkey’s accession would undoubtedly have an important impact on the EU budget, affecting all expenditure areas.

As regards agriculture, it is clear that with 7 million farmers [EU25 – 10.4 million] and an agricultural area of 39 million hectares [EU25 – 167 million hectares] Turkey would be eligible for significant support under the CAP. Based on current acquis, full direct payments and market measures in 2025 would amount to €5.3 billion and €660 million respectively in today’s terms (2004 prices).

If rural development support were granted on the same basis as agreed in the negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania, this would amount to €2.3 billion (2004 prices).

As regards regional policy, with a level of GDP per capita at about 28.5 % of the EU25 average at purchasing power standards, Turkey would be eligible for significant levels of structural and cohesion funds based on the current rules. It is very difficult to predict now how the rules will change in the future. What can be said for illustrative purposes, however, is that based on GDP growth of 4-5%, by 2025 annual transfers would amount to just over €5.6 billion (2004 prices) for each one percentage point of Turkey’s GDP granted in regional aid.

As mentioned in the Commission’s analysis, assessing the issues raised by Turkey’s possible accession is faced with a number of uncertainties. One concerns the future evolution of the Union’s policies, the possible creation of new ones, and the degree of further deepening of integration that might occur. Another factor is the economic and structural developments both in Turkey and in the EU during the next decade, as well as exogenous factors, such as energy prices and the international economic environment at large. By the time Turkey completes accession negotiations, the Union will have expanded to at least 27 members implying further evolution while bearing in mind that the timing and scope of the future enlargement process - the countries in the Western Balkans have also been given the perspective of EU membership.

3. The framework of EU-Turkey relations

3.1. How did we get there? Is the EU really serious about Turkey?

The year 2004 has been particularly eventful for the development of the European Union and for European integration in general. The largest enlargement round was completed on 1 May when 10 new Member States acceded to the European Union.

The 25 Heads of States and Government of the by now enlarged European Union signed the Treaty establishing the European Constitution. The question has arisen as to whether it was appropriate to open accession negotiations with Turkey at this particular juncture.

In the public debate, some voices questioned
this decision as threatening the European Union itself and the philosophy underlying the European integration process.

The decision of the European Council of 17 December 2004 is best understood in the framework of the development of EU-Turkey relations in the last 40 years.

In spite of the ups and downs witnessed in these years, Turkey’s vocation to join the European Union has been reaffirmed many times by the European Council.

The steady position adopted by the European Council over the years and reaffirmed on 17 December is that “Turkey is a candidate country destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to other candidate states”.

These relations started in 1963 with the Association Agreement between Turkey and the then EEC. Article 28 of this agreement contains a clear membership perspective.

In an article published in November 2004 in 15 European Dailies, former French President Giscard d’Estaing held that “the promises made in the 1960s were related to the question of whether Turkey would enter the Common Market which was exclusively economic.”

These promises were “fulfilled when the EU signed a customs Union with Turkey in 1995”.

This however hardly finds echo in the words of Walter Hallstein, then President of the European Commission at the occasion of the signature of the Ankara Agreement on 12 September 1963: “Nous voilà donc au début d’une ère d’étroite collaboration entre la Turquie et la Communauté. Les deux parties se rencontreront au sein du Conseil d’Association et y discuteront leurs soucis en qualité de partenaires égaux et s’efforceront d’aplanir dans ce nouvel esprit les difficultés qui pourraient surgir.

S’inspirant des mêmes conceptions, elles réfléchiront en commun à la manière de les réaliser dans le cadre de l’association. Et un jour le dernier pas sera franchi: la Turquie sera membre de plein exercice de la Communauté. Ce désir et le fait que nous soyons unanimes avec nos amis turcs dans ce désir sont l’expression la plus forte de notre cause commune”.

Turkey’s eligibility to join the European Union was explicitly reaffirmed by the Commission and the Council in their reaction to Turkey’s membership application submitted in 1987. A Customs Union agreement was signed in 1995.

In 1997 the Luxembourg European Council confirmed Turkey’s vocation to join the EU, but concluded that the political and economic conditions allowing accession negotiations to be envisaged were not satisfied.

Two years later in Helsinki in December 1999, the European Council gave Turkey the status of a candidate country. Since this date, a pre-accession strategy for Turkey has been implemented with the adoption of an Accession Partnership in March 2001, subsequently modified in May 2003. The purpose of these instruments is to define a road map enabling Turkey to fulfill the necessary criteria, in particular the political criteria. Among the other components of this pre-accession strategy are mechanisms of political and economic dialogue at various levels, legislative and technical assistance as part of the sub-committees under the Association Agreement as well as financial assistance amounting to €1,050 millions for 2004-2006. To help make the far-reaching and difficult reforms necessary to meet the accession criteria, Turkey gets a full panoply of financial assistance amounts to €1,050 millions for 2004-2006.

EU benefits. Turkey gets generous aid (€250 rising to €500 million a year in 2006), geared mainly to help Turkey prepare for eventual membership, and as a candidate can now take part in many resource-rich EU programs available only to EU members and those on the verge of membership.

At the European Council of Laeken in December 2001, the perspective of opening accession negotiations was mentioned for the first time. Turkey also participated in the Convention on the European Constitution. In Copenhagen in 2002, the European Council concluded that it will, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decide at the end of 2004 on whether Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria and if the reply is positive to open negotiations without delay. These conclusions were reaffirmed by the European Council in Brussels in June. Turkish representatives also participated to the European Convention chaired by Mr Giscard d’Estaing which produced the European Constitution.

The decision of 17 December can therefore be seen as the logical conclusion of this process. Irrespective of the perceptions that some clauses might amount to potential discrimination as compared with other candidate countries, the fact is that these relations have now entered a new phase which is qualitatively different from the previous one. There are still uncertainties about the course that both the EU and Turkey will take. But the fact is that there is now a new process in place which firmly ties both sides to each other for their mutual benefit.

3.2. Is Turkey really serious about the EU?16

The Turkish government has shown an impressive determination to achieve the ultimate goal of Turkey EU membership. Throughout this process, it has enjoyed the overwhelming support of a public opinion driven by what some have described as a “European desire”17.

In its Regular Report adopted on 6 October 2004, the Commission concluded that “the decision of the European Council in Helsinki in December 1999 that Turkey is a candidate for membership has proved to be a robust catalyst for Turkey to embark upon a process of far-reaching constitutional and legislative reforms. Following decades of sporadic progress and partly because of a political consolidation after the 2002 elections, there has been a substantial institutional convergence in Turkey towards European standards. Political reforms have introduced changes ranging from improved civil liberties and human rights to enhanced civilian control of the military.

Civil society has grown stronger. The reform process highlighted a growing consensus in favor of liberal democracy”. The last two years have also witnessed a period of almost unprecedented political and economic stability. The negative consequences of the February 2001 financial crisis, the worst in Turkey’s post-war history have been gradually overcome. According to some observers, Turkey is one of the fastest growing economies in the world with a growth rate estimated around 8%.

A closer look at the dynamics of political change in Turkey reveals the many difficulties of a process which has hardly been linear.

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16 I am borrowing this question and the next ones from an enlightening report published by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Commons in 2002 (www.publications.parliament.uk)

17 This expression is borrowed from Nilüfer Göl in her article “Turquie: un désir d’Europe qui dérange” in Lettres aux Turco-sceptiques, Cengiz Aktar, Actes Sud, 2004.
Every transition process is characterized by breakthroughs and hiccups. Turkey is no exception. It is however crucial to bear in mind the different political, social and not least psychological dimensions of the Turkish context to understand how changes have unfolded in Turkey, especially in the last years.

The sequence of political change can be divided into three periods stretching from 2001 to 2004.

3.2.1. The first period: 1999-2002: yes but...

The AKP government of PM Erdogan is often credited for having given impetus to the process of political reform in Turkey after the Helsinki decision which granted Turkey EU candidate status. The reality suggests that these reforms were actually initiated by the coalition government of PM Ecevit in office between 1999 and 2002.

This period was marked by the difficulty to square proposed reforms into what was politically achievable with a highly fragmented political landscape dominated by constant bickering between the liberals (ANAP) and the far right nationalist (MHP).

The debate which surrounded the adoption of the package of constitutional amendments in October 2001 was a good illustration of the tense political atmosphere.

Reforms carrying a great symbolic weight such as the abolition of the death penalty and the lifting of the ban of languages other than Kurdish were indeed important breakthroughs which were presented as revolutionary against the background of the staunchly nationalist philosophy embodied by the 1982 Constitution.

The apex was reached on 3 August 2002 with the adoption of the so-called third reform package. However, the implementing legislation which followed by means of packages was often half-hearted and real progress tended to be overshadowed by the introduction of more restrictions, in particular in the area of freedom of expression.

This was reflected in the Commission’s Regular Reports published in 2002 and 2003.

The spirit in which these reforms were adopted was marked by suspicion about alleged attempts by European governments to weaken or “unravel” the Turkish State.

Among the examples were the official position on torture and on political prisoners, both deemed to be non-existent, the allergy to any expression including the word “Kurdish”, the position vis a vis the South East and Leyla Zana. At the time many statements were made highlighting the danger represented by these criteria by certain members of the armed forces and some members of the Ecevit coalition especially the nationalist party MHP. This mental attitude18, partly based on the remnants of the “Sèvres syndrom”, was best represented by the expression “the EU must understand Turkey’s sensitivities”. Accordingly, the Copenhagen Political criteria were seen as a potential danger for the “fundamental principles on which the Turkish State is based.”

This mentality permeated a number of different spheres of administration including large sections of the Foreign Ministry and to some extent continues to enjoy the support of some small though influential circles.

In addition, PM Ecevit’s commitment to political reforms was not altogether clear. Reforms were generally presented as a concession to the EU. EU-Turkey dialogue was dominated by an attitude which called for Turkey to be admitted to the EU on its own terms, an ‘alla turca membership’ which was

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18 Alessandro Missir di Lusignano, La Turchia al bivio, Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali, 2003
best expressed by the following attitude:

“You have to understand Turkey and to accept it as it is”. Someone at a conference could be heard asking the following question: “We will make the reforms, but if you don’t take us in the end, how will you compensate us for what we have done?”

This was very symptomatic. Whenever a reform package was adopted during this period, it was unmistakably accompanied by statements indicating that now the Copenhagen Political Criteria have been met, the ball is in the EU’s court. In parallel, a press campaign was orchestrated in view of Copenhagen 2002 with the aim of achieving the opening of accession negotiations at the forthcoming European Council, contributing to raised hopes and high expectations among the Turkish population.

The Commission’s 2001 Regular Report praised Turkey for the reforms adopted considering them as a “significant step towards strengthening the guarantees in the field of human rights”. Nevertheless, although Turkey was beginning to make progress in some areas, it was considered that it did not yet meet the Copenhagen political criteria and was encouraged to intensify and accelerate the process of reforms.

An intense diplomatic campaign had already been launched in the spring of 2001 aimed at achieving a date for the opening of screening at the European Council of Laeken in December 2001. The Laeken European Council of 14 and 15 December 2001 declared that “Turkey has made progress towards complying with the political criteria established for accession, in particular through the recent amendment of its constitution. This has brought forward the prospect of the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey. Turkey is encouraged to continue its progress towards complying with both economic and political criteria, notably with regard to human rights. The pre-accession strategy for Turkey should mark a new stage in analyzing its preparedness for alignment on the acquis.”

3.2.2. The second period 2002-2003: From the Copenhagen criteria to the Ankara criteria

The second phase followed the election of 2002 and the installation of the AKP government. This marked a substantial change in philosophy and approach towards political reforms. The repeated announcements by PM Gül firstly and PM Erdogan subsequently calling for Turkey to continue the drive towards adopting the standards of contemporary civilization while laying the ground for a participatory democracy was used as a code language to accelerate and broaden the scope of reforms.

It was also a very skilful way to reassure the Turkish establishment about the real intentions of AKP by making clear that both sides were striving for the same objective: political reforms in view of Turkey’s EU accession. The transformation of the Copenhagen Political Criteria into the Ankara criteria in PM Erdogan’s inaugural address in Parliament marked also a qualitative change. Political reform was seen to be primarily in the interest of Turkey’s own modernization and for the concrete benefit of all the Turkish citizens. This culminated with the adoption of the sixth reform package at the end of July 2003 which introduced some far-reaching changes in the area of freedom of expression, civil-military relations and the fight against torture.

Another by product of this period was the initiation at the level of EU institutions of a
real and constructive dialogue both at political (seasonal ministerial troikas) and at technical (European Commission regular monitoring of the political criteria) levels, leading to an increasing convergence of views about further political reforms which contributed to create a climate of trust and mutual interest. This was reflected in the Commission’s Regular Reports which considered that Turkey had made noticeable progress (2002) and further impressive efforts (2003) representing greater compliance with the Copenhagen Political Criteria. In both reports, a strong emphasis was put on the need to ensure full and effective implementation which was still considered to be uneven.

A massive boost came from the Copenhagen European Council of December 2002 which while encouraging Turkey to pursue energetically its reform process, concluded that “if the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay.” After Helsinki and the EU candidate status, this was probably the other important milestone of EU-Turkey relations.

By stressing the compliance with the political criteria, the Heads of States and Government confirmed that there was only one objective criterion for the opening of accession negotiations. In retrospect, one could legitimately ask whether EU Member States really expected Turkey to achieve so much progress in the space of only two years.

3.2.3. The third period: 2003-2004: we want these reforms more than you!

A third phase started in September 2003 with the growing awareness that implementation was equally important for the credibility of the reforms. The decision of the government to set up a Reform Monitoring Group entrusted with the supervision of the reforms and to solve practical problems was of particular importance.

This body played a crucial role in securing the implementation of legislation in sensitive areas such as Radio/TV broadcasting and education in language other than Turkish which dated back to 2001. For whatever reason, the implementation of such legislation labeled as “revolutionary” when adopted had to face endless bureaucratic obstacles originating in particular from “conservative” administrative bodies such as the High Audio Visual Board (RTÜK). The Reform Monitoring Group proved also to be particularly efficient in preparing circulars and instructions directed to law enforcement officers regarding the interpretation of the reforms. This phase also coincided with the greater involvement of civil society in discussions of the reforms, via the institutional mechanisms put in place. As stressed in the Commission’s Regular Report, this reflected a “new approach in developing a constructive relationship between human rights organizations and the Turkish State”. This approach was accompanied by Günter Verheugen, Turkey and the EU towards December 2004, speech at the Friends of Europe Conference, Brussels, 17 June 2004 warnings that any negative decision about the opening of negotiations would amount would risk stalling the process. It is undeniable that the reform-minded personnel within the relevant ministries were instrumental in bringing about many of the reforms and promoting full and effective implementation.

20 The European Council noted the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 15 December 2004.
Another factor which played an important role was the deepening of public debate as a result of the criticism formulated by the Commission in its Regular Report, in particular as regards sensitive issues such as freedom of religion and protection of minorities. On both subjects, important progress was made in terms of public perception of what is meant by enjoying internationally recognized rights and freedoms.

An interesting example is the report presented by the Human Rights Advisory Board on the treatment of minorities in Turkey which called for an interpretation of the Lausanne Treaty in light of the International and European Treaties\textsuperscript{21}. Undoubtedly, the recommendations put forth in this report will have significant implications for the interpretation of what is meant by “minorities” in Turkey.

After the adoption of the eighth legislative package in July 2004, the Turkish government maintained that Turkey had fulfilled the Copenhagen Political Criteria on the basis of what had been requested under the Accession Partnership as revised in May 2003.

Although many legal and practical problems remain, it was held that the most “controversial and restrictive” provisions had been removed from the Turkish legal system and that further progress was to be expected in the medium-term. The dynamics underlying the reforms were dominated by the need to deliver quickly. Throughout the process, packages were adopted at a sustained pace often at the expense of coherence. The process was not based on any structured or coherent approach. This was recognized also by the Council of Europe Report of April 2004. As a result, changes tended to be often piecemeal, contributing to give a rather patchy global picture.

4. **Actors and factors of Turkey’s transition**

A comprehensive assessment of the real implications of these changes is beyond the scope of this article. However, it is possible to make some preliminary remarks.

The first remark has to do with the domestic political scene and the internal balance between the different stakeholders in Turkey. There has been so far a wide consensus in Turkey amongst government, opposition, military, business community, NGOs and public opinion towards the same goal of opening of accession negotiations.

Although united in their goals, the individual motivation varies considerably according to the interested parties. The ruling AKP party has often been accused of pursuing an EU agenda in order to undermine the secular nature of the Turkish republic as founded by Atatürk. In contrast, Turkey’s EU accession is commonly seen by the military and other establishment-related circles as a way in which to anchor Turkey to the West, to develop its prosperity and stability and hence to take away any support for “Islamist-oriented parties”. Clearly, achieving so much success would not have been possible against the will of the armed forces in Turkey which see themselves as the supreme protectors of the Turkish nation. In this context, PM Erdogan and Army Chief of Staff, General Özkök, can be credited for having worked out some sort of modus vivendi which was instrumental for the sustainability of the process\textsuperscript{22}.

Secondly, the experience of Turkey goes beyond the strict framework of EU-Turkey relations. The acceleration of the reform

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\textsuperscript{21} presented on 22 October 2004 to the Prime Minister’s Office

\textsuperscript{22} Gareth Jenkins, Symbols and Shadow-Play: Military-JDP Relations 2002-2004
process attracts much interest not only from the EU but also from many parts of the world. Turkey is increasingly viewed as an interesting laboratory of political transition. It is indeed rather surprising that such a process of change could be brought about by a political party like AKP, rooted in the Islamist political tradition and completely alien to the mainstream of the Turkish political establishment. This in turn raises the equally interesting question of the contribution of AKP to the debate related to the transformation of political Islam and its gradual evolution towards a democratic and Western-oriented force respectful of human rights and internationally recognized standards.

Moreover, the AKP experience is also significant in terms of broadening the basis for Turkey’s modernization. Indeed, Turkey’s European project has often been considered as an elite project, supported by the upper layers of the population like the business community, big cities bourgeoisie, the bureaucracy and the armed forces at the expenses of the majority of the population constituted by poor and backward citizens living in rural areas. However, AKP support for this project has been extended to large sections of Anatolian masses and the pious middle-class traditionally outside the political dynamics of Istanbul-Ankara. In this way, is it not ironic to present the Islamist turned liberal politician Erdogan as the follower of Atatürk and Özal? Does this explain why Time magazine included Prime Minister Erdogan in the list of the world’s 100 most influential personalities courted by Heads of State and Government worldwide?

Thirdly, Turkey is facing the same difficulties as any other country going through such a transition process. The drive towards reforms is punctuated by hiccups and breakthroughs. The gap between a genuine and steady pro-reform policy and the dynamics affecting the society at large often results in many inevitable contradictions. Contradiction between progress and status quo opposing conservatives often assimilated to “hard line Kemalists” or circles close to the “deep state” and the “liberals”. While the latter are committed to constitutional and legislative breakthroughs, the former never miss an opportunity to disrupt the positive course of events by using their influence to undermine the spirit of the reforms.

Examples of this attitude are the judicial episodes surrounding the Zana case, the closure of political parties (Fazilet, Dehap) or the launching of court cases by public prosecutors against writers, academics or even journalists for non violent expression of opinion.

Although not very important in numeric terms, anti-EU circles can still rely on an efficient cross-party network covering the entire political spectrum from the far left to the far right with elements in the state apparatus and within the armed forces.

Another contradiction relates to the dialectic secularism versus religious identity.

The Turkish establishment makes no secret of the fact that it remains deeply suspicious of the real intentions of the AKP ruling party. The initiatives related to lifting the ban on the headscarf, the tensions about the strengthening of Koranic schools and the greater role of religion in politics advocated by some AKP members nurtured doubts about

23 see Alessandro Missir di Lusignano, L’Union européenne et l’Islam: le modèle turc, Institut Royal des Relations Internationales, 2004
24 Speech by Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2004
25 see Franz Fischler letters to Günter Verheugen of July and September 2004
a “hidden agenda”. But experience shows that the government has consistently avoided antagonizing the armed forces in particular and whenever confronted with a potential crisis, it chose to back down.

At the same time, the compatibility of a rigid interpretation of secularism with European standards in the area of freedom of religion is often questioned. The balance between secularism and freedom of religion is sometimes emphasized as a litmus test for Turkey’s democracy. In this context, recent cases judged by the European Court of Human Rights are particularly insightful. The Court held that “le rôle de l’État en tant qu’organisateur neutre et impartial de l’exercice des diverses religions, cultes et croyances, concourt à l’ordre public, à la paix religieuse et à la tolérance dans une société démocratique” and reminded that “le principe de laïcité en Turquie est assurément l’un des principes fondateurs de l’État qui cadrent avec la prééminence du droit et le respect des droits de l’homme”26. By upholding measures such as the closure of political parties27 or the banning of the headscarf28, the Court accepted the validity of measures which in other EU countries could be regarded as potentially harmful for the exercise of fundamental freedoms or are at least controversial.

The Court reasoning was based on the peculiarities of the Turkish secular system which “appears to be consistent with the values underpinning the Convention and it noted that upholding that principle could be regarded as necessary for the protection of the democratic system in Turkey”29.

Fourthly, Turkey constitutes an interesting case study for the application of the Copenhagen political criteria. This process necessarily impinges on some issues directly related to the interpretation of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Turkish Constitution concerning the secular nature of the state and indivisibility of the territory.

This will apply in particular to issues such as minority protection, fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion as well as civil-military relations. Unlike other candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe which had largely to build their political system anew on the basis of the Tabula Rasa made of past totalitarian experience, Turkey has its own political tradition inherited from a combination of Ottoman and Kemalist memories and modeled in many respects on the French system. In both experiences, bureaucracy and armed forces have traditionally played the role of a driving engine30 with a pattern of imposing reforms from the top31. This explains the “somewhat paternalistic attitude” where “the army knows what is good for the country and if the country is not aware of the fact, the army will take the necessary measures”32. In addition, the difficulties encountered in practice should be seen against the background of this historical legacy.

The introduction of principles which are internationally recognized such as cultural rights or minority rights, still encounters considerable resistance. Discussions about ethnic groupings being the “essential components” or the

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27 ECHR, Case of Refah Partisi, 31.07.2001
28 ECHR, Case Leila Sahin, 29.6.2004
29 ibid.
30 In his book The future of Freedom (2003), Fareed Zakaria says that “on the whole these elites have played a modernizing and stabilizing role in Turkish society, but their zeal has outlived its usefulness”
31 Alessandro Missir di Lusignano, La Turchia al bivio, op.cit.
32 Report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, April 2004
“co-founders” of the Turkish nation echo similar discussions in other European countries about the role of what the French call “la citoyenneté” versus ethnic community.

Fifth, the deepening of the political reforms is part of the European transformation of Turkey coinciding with the main thrust of the Kemalist reforms. One of the most tangible results of the reform process has been a noticeable change of climate.

Taboos have been broken. Civil society is getting stronger and more organized. Issues whose mention could previously trigger criminal proceedings, such as the role of the military, the Kurdish language, or cases of torture and ill-treatment, are now freely debated. There is public debate about equipping Turkey with a new and modern constitution enshrining the basic values on which the EU is based.

 Barely a few years ago, a declaration of a group of Kurdish intellectuals asking for the official recognition of the Kurdish identity in a new Constitution would have been simply unthinkable as it would have constituted a criminal offence falling under the scope of the separatist propaganda.

In short, the reform process has brought a new mood of openness and freedom in public debate in Turkey. As put by Nilüfer Göle, these unprecedented reforms have altered the hegemony of a nationalist and mono-cultural model rooted in the Jacobine tradition which has prevailed since the establishment of the Turkish republic in the twenties.

However, much remains to be done to complete the transition process towards a modern, genuine liberal western-type democracy. In its recommendation, the Commission mentioned specifically issues such as the fight against torture and ill-treatment and the implementation of provisions relating to freedom of expression, freedom of religion, women’s rights, ILO standards including trade union rights and minority rights.

As put by the Financial Times, Turkey is a country which has reached maturity but not adulthood. One of the official arguments used by Turkish interlocutors was that the opening of accession negotiations would be absolutely crucial for the deepening of the political reforms. In saying that, there was great insistence on the process at the expense of the ultimate objective which is accession.

5. Fears and opportunities

The prospect of Turkey’s EU accession raises many legitimate questions:

- concerns about cultural and religious difference, concerns about geographical position, size and population and traditional enmity. It is worth noting in the public debate is the asymmetrical nature of the cross perceptions. In the open public debate which has developed, both in the European Union and in Turkey, many questions have arisen such as: does Turkey really belong to Europe (in terms of its geography, culture, religion, civilization, history, etc.); where are the borders of Europe; what about Morocco, Ukraine; what would be the impact of Turkey EU accession?

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33 In this context, I would only refer to the difference between France and Germany. In France, the State has created the nation while in Germany the nation created the state. An interesting parallelism can be made between France and Turkey. See Jean-Pierre Chevènement, France-Allemagne, Parlons Franc!, Plon, 1996

34 Released on 10 December 2002 and published in several European dailies

35 Nilüfer Göle, op.cit.

36 Financial Times Special Report on Turkey, 28 June 2004

37 Alessandro Missir di Lusignano, Réflexions sur l’Europe et les Turcs, une histoire de perceptions croisées, NATO College, Rome, July 2003

38 Out of the endless list of articles and books published in the recent period, I would only signal the following authors: Alain Besançon, Stephen Kinzer, Alexandre Adler, Andrew Mango, Alexandre Del Valle
on the philosophy of the European integration; what will be the impact of Turkey on the functioning of the EU (institutions, migration, unemployment, geopolitics); is Turkey a functioning democracy; what is the role of the military; what about the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities; how much is Islam compatible with democracy etc...

The concerns of Turkish public opinion are of a different nature. EU membership is Turkey’s Grand Design assigned by the Kemalist philosophy. Accordingly, the Turks perceive themselves as European and see their history as an uninterrupted movement towards the West and modernity. However, there appears to be an insecurity which runs particularly deep about the EU’s true intentions towards Turkey’s accession.

This insecurity is further exacerbated by doubts that the EU will ever accept Turkey. It is therefore understandable that such a debate carries so much emotion because it is linked to identity and self-identification. The psychological dimension has always played a central role in bilateral relations. In this context, the debate about a special partnership as an alternative to Turkey EU accession, coupled with some of the language included in the conclusions of the European Council of 17 December, further contributes to nurture this perception. Another aspect relates to the fear of discrimination vis-à-vis other candidate countries, in particular Romania and Bulgaria over which Turkey considers it has economic advantages.

All these questions generate fears and concerns which will need to be addressed through facilitating a dialogue with the different interlocutors in civil society.

It would be inaccurate to hold that these concerns have been ignored. In its conclusions, the European Council called for the strengthening the political and cultural dialogue between EU and Turkish citizens. This follows the proposal by the Commission which recognized that: “there is a clear need to strengthen the dialogue on a number of issues relating to EU-Turkey relations. Several pertinent questions, which do not immediately relate to the EU as such, need to be addressed. A number of fora should be created, bringing people together from Member States and Turkey, where concerns and perceptions can be discussed in a frank and open manner. This includes a dialogue on difference of cultures, religion, issues relating to migration, concerns on minority rights and terrorism. Civil society should play the most important role in this dialogue, which should be facilitated by the EU.”

The importance of this initiative has to be seen in the context of trying to bridge the legitimacy gap resulting from the opposition of some large sections of the EU public opinion to Turkey’s EU accession perspective. The priority for this dialogue is the preparation and the deepening of a public debate laying the ground for an evolution of mentalities. One of the main criticism voiced against Turkey’s EU membership prospects claims that this project has been conceived behind closed doors by an anonymous bureaucracy which has deliberately
ignored public opinion. It is obvious that in order to be successful, this dialogue will have to involve a wide range of interlocutors at the European, national and local level, both public and private with a strong emphasis on the different layers of civil society. In both Turkey and in the EU there exist several associations exclusively focused on promoting Turkey and the EU and vice versa. In this context, EU citizens of Turkish origin as well as Turkish communities living in the EU could play an important role. How to give concrete contents to this initiative will be a matter for the near future.

**Conclusion**

The decision to open negotiations with Turkey undoubtedly opens a new chapter in the historic process of peacefully unifying the European continent and anchoring Turkey firmly in Europe. This marks the beginning of a new process which, as demonstrated by the above mentioned analysis, prompts a long list of difficult questions which relate to the future of Europe, to its capacity to ‘digest’ a new Member State of the size and dimension of Turkey. It impinges on Turkey’s capacity to meet the accession conditions, to complete its process of political transformation and, above all, on the need to legitimize a decision by winning support from a generally skeptical European public opinion.

As stated by the European Council, although the shared objective of negotiations is accession, the outcome cannot be guaranteed beforehand. Both the EU and Turkey are perfectly aware that the road ahead will be long and difficult. As indicated in the Commission’s “Issues paper”, accession could in any case not take place until after the next financial perspectives exercise foreseen for 2014. In the light of the debate on possible alternatives to accession, some have questioned whether the emphasis was not on the process itself rather than on the ultimate objective. This was particularly noticeable in President Chirac’s insistence on the process. Turkey is at present going through a process of radical change, including a rapid evolution in mentalities.

It is in the interest of all that the current transformation process continues.

Some have even spoken of this process as a means to complete the “Europeanization” of Turkey. Turkey would be an important model of a country with a majority Muslim population adhering to such fundamental principles as liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

On the side of Turkey, there is a very large degree of convergence throughout the various political factions and within civil society on the importance of the accession process as the only way to continue and consolidate political reforms and avoid any return to the old guard which is less oriented towards the EU. It seems clear that Turkey moves further towards fully meeting the accession criteria, the process of reforms will become less and less vulnerable.

In this context, it is ironic that even the much-criticised “emergency brake” consisting in suspending negotiations in the case of a serious and persistent breach of fundamental principles is considered by many Turkish intellectuals and reformers as a guarantee against any “deviation”. The assumption is that the dynamic of accession negotiations will undoubtedly contribute to create a political climate conducive to democracy. It remains to be seen to what extent the dynamics of the negotiations will create such a momentum that accession will become inevitable as was in the case during the last enlargement wave.

The decision to open accession negotiations should also be seen in the wider context of
peace, stability and prosperity. Turkey is an important regional actor, which is commonly categorised as a “pivot state”. As a result of its combined population, location, economic and military potential, it has the capacity to affect regional and international stability. A prosperous, stable Turkey is conducive to stability in the area, while an economically weak, unstable Turkey wracked by religious, ethnic and political turmoil would be a source of instability in all neighbouring regions.

In a world increasingly marked by the emerging divide between the Moslem world and what can loosely be defined as the West, it is worth reminding that Turkey is endowed with unique characteristics: the combination of a secular, democratic state with a prevalently Moslem population.

By opening a process of negotiations, the EU offers a clear framework which anchors Turkey firmly to the European structures and provides the basis for its sustainable development.

This was also the main conclusion of the Commission’s recommendation in which it is stressed that “the negotiation process will be essential in guiding further reforms in Turkey. ...Regardless of the outcome of the negotiations or the subsequent ratification process, the relations between the EU and Turkey must ensure that Turkey remains fully anchored in European structures. Turkey’s accession would need to be thoroughly prepared in order to allow for a smooth integration which enhances the achievements of fifty years of European integration.”

Much of course will depend on Turkey’s capacity to accept the concrete implications of EU membership and particularly the limitations on its national sovereignty in a number of key areas, including Foreign, Security and Defence policy. The existence of a strong culture of national security, coupled with the persistence of a prickly nationalist ideology, raises doubts as to whether Turkey would be prepared to accept limitations to its sovereignty and external interference deriving from the supranational exercise of shared competencies. Interestingly, Turkey is among the countries in which the support for CSFP and ESDP is the lowest, with two thirds of Turkish citizens expressing doubts about common decision-making in these areas.

The way ahead is of course difficult to forecast due to a variety of factors including: The fluidity of international developments in general and in particular in Turkey’s immediate neighborhood, characterized by instability and tensions; The evolution of the European Union over the next 10-15 years; and the course of Turkey’s development and internal transformation during the same period. In recent years we have witnessed Turkey’s commitment to reforms and its concrete ability to bring about changes in the political sphere and as importantly, in the foreign policy sphere. The development of the rapprochement with Greece since 1999, the very cautious attitude vis-à-vis the Iraqi war and in particular the situation of the Kurds in the north and above all Turkey’s U-turn on Cyprus in 2003-2004 reveal significant policy shifts converging towards EU interests.

In particular, the Cyprus issue demonstrated a change in Turkey’s conception of its own security interests. The former conception was based on the retention of a balance of forces and the protection of a co-ethnic community through military presence.
These objectives were often pursued through unwavering bargaining positions and brinkmanship. By giving its support to the Annan plan, Turkey accepted that communal security could be achieved through constitutionally entrenched rights and federal practice, agreed to through multilateral decision-making and compromise.

Based on this track record of gradual, albeit sometimes laborious, normalization of relations with neighbors, it is not unreasonable to envisage further progress, in particular with Armenia. The prospect of accession should lead to improving bilateral relations between Turkey and its neighbors in line with the principle of reconciliation on which the European Union is itself founded. In Daniel Cohn-Bendit’s words, after the miracle of the Rhine and the Oder, the miracle of the Bosphorus could come to light.

In his novels, the award-winning writer Orhan Pamuk is continually exploring the relationship between Turkey and the West. *Turkey, he says*[^45], *is constantly moving towards Europe, becoming more Westernized. But a union will never be realized.*

*Turkey’s place is in a continuous flux. This limbo is what Turkey is and will stay for ever. This is our way of life here. Only the future will decide whether this prophecy will turn out to be correct. The opening of a new era in EU-Turkey relations is perhaps an indication that reality sometimes exceeds fiction*[^46].

*Alessandro Missir di Lusignano is desk officer for Turkey in Directorate General Enlargement of the European Commission. The views expressed in this article are strictly personal and do not represent the official position of the European Institutions.*

[^45]: Nicole and Hugh Pope, *Turkey unveiled*, 1997
[^46]: See also Jean François Bayart, *La Turquie, une candidature ordinaire*, Commentaires, 2004-2005
Annex

EUROPEAN COUNCIL – BRUSSELS
16 & 17 December 2004

CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY
(extract about Turkey)

Turkey

17. The European Council recalled its previous conclusions regarding Turkey, in which, at Helsinki, it agreed that Turkey was a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states and, subsequently, concluded that, if it were to decide at its December 2004 meeting, on the basis of a report and recommendation from the Commission, that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay.

18. The European Council welcomed the decisive progress made by Turkey in its far-reaching reform process and expressed its confidence that Turkey will sustain that process of reform. Furthermore, it expects Turkey to actively pursue its efforts to bring into force the six specific items of legislation identified by the Commission. To ensure the irreversibility of the political reform process and its full, effective and comprehensive implementation, notably with regard to fundamental freedoms and to full respect of human rights, that process will continue to be closely monitored by the Commission, which is invited to continue to report regularly on it to the Council, addressing all points of concern identified in the Commission’s 2004 report and recommendation, including the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy relating to torture and ill-treatment.

The European Union will continue to monitor closely progress of the political reforms on the basis of an Accession Partnership setting out priorities for the reform process.

19. The European Council welcomed Turkey’s decision to sign the Protocol regarding the adaptation of the Ankara Agreement, taking account of the accession of the ten new Member States.

In this light, it welcomed the declaration of Turkey that “the Turkish Government confirms that it is ready to sign the Protocol on the adaptation of the Ankara Agreement prior to the actual start of accession negotiations and after reaching agreement on and finalising the adaptations which are necessary in view of the current membership of the European Union”.

20. The European Council, while underlining the need for unequivocal commitment to good neighbourly relations welcomed the improvement in Turkey’s relations with its neighbours and its readiness to continue to work with the concerned Member States towards resolution of outstanding border disputes in conformity with the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the United Nations Charter. In accordance with its previous conclusions, notably those of Helsinki on this matter, the European Council reviewed the situation relating to outstanding disputes and welcomed the exploratory contacts to this end. In this connection it reaffirmed its view that unresolved disputes having repercussions on the accession process, should if necessary be brought to the International Court of Justice for settlement. The European Council will be kept informed of progress achieved which it will review as appropriate.

21. The European Council welcomed the adoption of the six pieces of legislation identified by the Commission. It decided that, in the light of the above and of the Commission report and recommendation, Turkey sufficiently fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria to open
accession negotiations provided that it brings into force these specific pieces of legislation.

It invited the Commission to present to the Council a proposal for a framework for negotiations with Turkey, on the basis set out in paragraph 23.

It requested the Council to agree on that framework with a view to opening negotiations on 3 October 2005.

**Framework for negotiations**

23. The European Council agreed that accession negotiations with individual candidate states will be based on a framework for negotiations. Each framework, which will be established by the Council on a proposal by the Commission, taking account of the experience of the fifth enlargement process and of the evolving acquis, will address the following elements, according to own merits and specific situations and characteristics of each candidate state.

As in previous negotiations, the substance of the negotiations, which will be conducted in an Intergovernmental Conference with the participation of all Member States on the one hand and the candidate State concerned on the other, where decisions require unanimity, will be broken down into a number of chapters, each covering a specific policy area.

The Council, acting by unanimity on a proposal by the Commission, will lay down benchmarks for the provisional closure and, where appropriate, for the opening of each chapter; depending on the chapter concerned, these benchmarks will refer to legislative alignment and a satisfactory track record of implementation of the acquis as well as obligations deriving from contractual relations with the European Union.

Long transition periods, derogations, specific arrangements or permanent safeguard clauses, i.e. clauses which are permanently available as a basis for safeguard measures, may be considered. The Commission will include these, as appropriate, in its proposals for each framework, for areas such as freedom of movement of persons, structural policies or agriculture.

Furthermore, the decision-taking process regarding the eventual establishment of freedom of movement of persons should allow for a maximum role of individual Member States. Transitional arrangements or safeguards should be reviewed regarding their impact on competition or the functioning of the internal market.

The financial aspects of accession of a candidate state must be allowed for in the applicable Financial Framework. Hence, accession negotiations yet to be opened with candidates whose accession could have substantial financial consequences can only be concluded after the establishment of the Financial Framework for the period from 2014 together with possible consequential financial reforms.

The shared objective of the negotiations is accession.

These negotiations are an open-ended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand.

While taking account of all Copenhagen criteria, if the Candidate State is not in a position to assume in full all the obligations of membership it must be ensured that the Candidate State concerned is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond.

In the case of a serious and persistent breach in a candidate state of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law on which the Union is founded, the Commission will, on its own initiative or on the request of
one third of the Member States, recommend the suspension of negotiations and propose the conditions for eventual resumption. The Council will decide by qualified majority on such a recommendation, after having heard the candidate state, whether to suspend the negotiations and on the conditions for their resumption. The Member States will act in the IGC in accordance with the Council decision, without prejudice to the general requirement for unanimity in the IGC. The European Parliament will be informed.

Parallel to accession negotiations, the Union will engage with every candidate state in an intensive political and cultural dialogue. With the aim of enhancing mutual understanding by bringing people together, this inclusive dialogue also will involve civil society.
Above all, I would like to thank Melih Özsöz whom I met one summer evening in 2007 quite by chance in Brussels, without whom this book could never have been written. It was his idea to involve Economic Development Foundation so that this dream could become a reality. It was also he who, day after day, gave me the confidence, hope and courage required to believe in it... May I also thank, of course, Prof. Dr. Halûk Kabaalioğlu, President of Economic Development Foundation, without whom this book would not have been published, for it was his decision to allocate the budget required for its production. M. Haluk Nuray, Permanent Representative of Economic Development Foundation in Brussels, also provided precious assistance in drawing up the initial list of contacts from among Turkish diplomatic circles, with whom Alessandro worked closely for many years. My thanks is extended also to Prof. Dr. Lerzan Özkale, former Secretary General of Economic Development Foundation for her benevolence, gentleness, kindness and efficiency during the preparation of my visits to Turkey, Istanbul and Ankara to interview the people who knew my brother, in the context of his duties as Political Administrator within the DG Enlargement team responsible for Turkey. Last but not least, I want to thank Assoc. Prof. Çiğdem Nas, Acting Secretary General of Economic Development Foundation for her support in realizing this book. Sümbül Eren, Press Officer at the European Commission Delegation in Ankara and Sema Kılıçer, Human Rights Officer at the Delegation in Ankara were my guardian angels during my stays in Ankara... I shall never forget the wonderful evening spent in their company in the restaurant Ege – where Alessandro also loved to go – talking about my brother, casting their minds back with sadness and nostalgia to so many touching memories with such incomparable sensitivity, depth and gentleness. It was during this memorable evening that Sümbül Eren offered to design the cover of this book. Of course I accepted enthusiastically, knowing her great artistic talent.
How could I not also express here my profound gratitude to all the people interviewed in Brussels, Turkey and elsewhere in the world, via internet, who have welcomed me so warmly and with such touching availability, in spite of their overflowing agendas? Among them, the kindness and enthusiasm of Philippe Mansel and Nedim Gürsel were particularly moving. The same for the precious contribution of Dr. Bahadır Kaleağası, International Coordinator of TUSIAD, aiming the publication of the book. A deep thank you of course to my family, to my mother, father and brother Stefano for their confidence and support throughout the preparation of this book.

My thoughts turn also to Patrick Bernard-Brunet, a faithful friend and unparalleled adviser, who assisted me at all times. Through his discreet, refined presence, Olivier t’Serstevens has enabled me to remain hopeful and confident from day to day, during particularly difficult moments. Adélaïde de Caters was a precious support with her critical and aesthetic vision required to select the images and photographs that illustrate the various chapters. My thanks go also to Peter Vantyghem for his sensitive perception and crucial advice in arranging the texts and structuring the book. I don’t forget Odile for her sensitivity... May I also express my gratitude for Mr. Peter Burnett, for his readiness to translate certain tributes from Italian into English. The wellknown Italian photographer, my childhood’s friend Giada Ripa di Meana, was so kind to give contribution in offering me beautiful pictures of Istanbul. A special though to Gaspare Manos, the famous Italian artist who, in this recent exhibition, inserted two impressive drawings of Alessandro. Laura Austrums, the book translator from French to English made an excellent work in a short time. A very specil thank goes to Manuela Riccio -Alessandro’s friend and colleague, whom I had the chance to meet when preparing this book and who has now become one of my closest friends. I don’t forget also Damla Özlüer and Gülderen Rençber Erbaş for their excellent work and patience. Finally, I would like to thank Stefano Sedola for his passion for Turkish geopolitics, his precious advice, his attentive presence, his objectiveness and generosity during my visits to Istanbul and Ankara in June 2008. Thanks to you all, not forgetting my close friends, this book has materialised. May it enable the memory of Alessandro to live eternally in everyone’s hearts, Alessandro: an exceptional person who has left his mark on the recent history of Turkey-European Union relations. May this book, through its testimonials, texts and publications, illuminate all who want to better understand the complexity of a country at the crossroads of the East and the West and which will certainly one day join Europe on its great adventure in the world?
Epilogue

I hope that these few fragments of memories and testimonials will contribute to a better understanding of the personality of Alessandro Missir di Lusignano and what he achieved in spite of his short life. With the help of his colleagues and through personal research, I have managed to contact a great number of people who knew him in the context of his work. However, it is possible, or even certain, that some people may have omitted. I would like to extend my apologies to them.

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<td>The tree that you brushed</td>
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<td>La pargoletta mano</td>
<td>Gösterdiği ağac</td>
<td>With your little hand,</td>
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<td>Il verde melograno</td>
<td>Kırmızı çiçekleriyle</td>
<td>The green pomegranate</td>
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<td>Da’ bei vermilligli fior</td>
<td>Parlayan yeşil narağacı</td>
<td>With fine vermilion flowers</td>
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<td>Tenha bahçede, sessiz</td>
<td>Alone in the still garden</td>
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<td>Haziran ışık ve gunesyle</td>
<td>Is flourishing again</td>
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<td>As summer bathes it once more</td>
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<td>Tekrar yasuyabildi</td>
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<td>Sen ki vurulan</td>
<td>You, flower of my garden</td>
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<td>Kuru ağacının ççeği</td>
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<td>Sen ve bircik ççeğiyan</td>
<td>Intense, unique flower,</td>
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<td>Şoguk ve kara</td>
<td>You lie in the cold earth</td>
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<td>Toprak içinde yattıorsun</td>
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<td>Senti askım bile</td>
<td>Neither warmed by the sun</td>
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<td>Ne ti risveglia amor</td>
<td>Ne sevindirir</td>
<td>Nor stirred by love.</td>
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Giosuè Carducci
Italian poet

A.H. Tarhan’ın Makber’ini, T. Fikret’ın, çocukuna İthaf ettiği yazısını düşünürken

My father Livio, thinking of Alessandro and in search of Izmir.