

11th Session of the High Level Commercial and Economic Consultations Türkiye -Switzerland

Bern, 15th November 2024

Agreed Minutes

The 11th Meeting of the High Level Commercial and Economic Consultations (HLCEC) between Türkiye and Switzerland was held in Bern on 15th November 2024.

The meeting was co-chaired on the Turkish Side by Mr. Hüsnü DİLEMRE, Director General for International Agreements and EU Affairs of the Ministry of Trade and on the Swiss Side by Ambassador Andrea Rauber Saxer, Head Bilateral Economic Relations SECO (State Secretariat of Economic Affairs).

The two co-chairs expressed their commitment to closely cooperate in order to intensify economic relations between Türkiye and Switzerland. Both Sides also emphasized the importance of High-Level meetings in the economic field.

The 11th Meeting of the High Level Commercial and Economic Consultations was held in a friendly atmosphere, reflecting the interest of both countries to further develop their bilateral economic relations.

The composition of the Turkish and Swiss Delegations (referred as Both Sides hereinafter) is listed in Annexes I and II respectively.

I. Economic Situation in both countries and bilateral economic relations

a. Bilateral Trade

Both Sides informed each other on the economic situation in Türkiye and Switzerland on current domestic and international challenges from their own perspective. Both Sides exchanged views on economic relations between their countries, emphasized the importance of commercial contacts, stressed the existing additional potential and confirmed their interest to deepen these relations.

b. Investments

Both Sides welcomed the organization of seminars by the private sector to inform investors on the investment opportunities in both countries and encourage visits to explore these opportunities.

The Turkish Side expressed its interest in promoting cooperation in digital transformation and frontier technologies. The Turkish Side acknowledged the importance of exchange of information and best practices, and developing joint projects in the field.

The Swiss Side agreed to transmit concrete Turkish proposals in written form to the competent Swiss services which will decide whether or not to enter into a cooperation.

c. Construction Sector and Collaboration in Third Countries

The Swiss Side recognizes the fact that Türkiye ranks in 2nd position for number of Engineering, Procurement and Construction contractors (EPC contractors) worldwide while underlining that several Swiss companies are already active in Türkiye in areas related to EPC: waste management and energy production; railways / motorway construction as well as construction of maritime port infrastructure. Both Sides agreed to strengthen their cooperation with Turkish EPCs in order to jointly build innovative and sustainable infrastructure in Türkiye and in third countries.

Within this frame Türk Eximbank and the Swiss Export Risk Agency (SERV) expressed their interest to continue their efforts towards a cooperation agreement and to explore opportunities for potential transactions to be jointly supported in third countries.

The Swiss Side expressed that the “Team Switzerland Infrastructure” brings together Swiss actors from the private and public sectors and serves as a point of contact for interested Turkish partners. The Swiss Side stressed that Switzerland offers an excellent business environment, making it a good choice for Turkish EPCs as a second base for expanding their global business.

The Turkish Side shared that from 1972 until the end of September 2024, Turkish contracting companies have undertaken a total of 12,297 projects in 137 countries, with a total value of 515.8 billion dollars. The Turkish Side explained that Turkish companies carried out 1,529 projects in Europe, worth 48.2 billion dollars, and among these projects, 3 projects, with a total value of 1.2 billion dollars, have been implemented in Switzerland.

The Turkish Side emphasized the importance of improving cooperation in the fields of contracting and consultancy services and expressed the willingness of Turkish construction companies to cooperate with Swiss companies in infrastructure and superstructure projects to be realized both in Switzerland and in the third countries.

The Swiss Side provided information on attractive conditions offered by the Swiss Export Risk Insurance SERV for financing and insuring Swiss companies exporting to Türkiye. SERV, Swissmem and Swissrail (members of Team Switzerland Infrastructure) shared their ideas on future cooperation with Türkiye.

For deepening the cooperation in construction services in both countries as well as in third countries the Turkish Side offered to establish a sub-joint working group under the HLCEC with the participation of the related government bodies, NGOs and companies.

The Swiss Side replied that SECO has set up a “Liaison office” for coordinating the cooperation of all players of the “Team Switzerland Infrastructure”, and underlined that the “Liaison office” is a good entry point for establishing contacts with Swiss companies and other players of the Team Switzerland Infrastructure. The Swiss Side informed that the Swiss Business Hub Türkiye in Istanbul is an experienced and active partner for bringing together Swiss and Turkish actors of the infrastructure sector.

The Turkish Side expressed its readiness to explore cooperation opportunities in order to advance the existing transportation and communication relations between Türkiye and Switzerland. The Turkish Side also stated its readiness to provide assistance to Swiss companies wishing to operate in Türkiye in the transportation sector.

d. Cooperation in the field of Metrology

Both Sides welcomed that the National Metrology Institute (UME) of The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) and the Federal Institute of Metrology (METAS) in Switzerland are partners in a high number of joint research projects conducted within the scope of European Metrology Research Programmes (iMERA+, EMRP, EMPIR and EPM) jointly funded by European Commission and participating member states.

The Turkish Side reiterated its desire to extend the cooperation among TÜBİTAK UME, METAS and PMOD/WRC(CH) in the areas of, inter alia: organization of bilateral comparisons of measurement standards; implementation of joint research projects; production of reference materials; exchange of experts; organization of joint meetings, workshops, conferences and similar events.

METAS welcomed the proposition to expand the cooperation with TÜBİTAK UME. Considering fruitful cooperation is, first and foremost, possible at the level of individual laboratories and technical fields, the first step is to identify specific topics where cooperation between TÜBİTAK and METAS is particularly appropriate.

Both Sides agreed that a good opportunity to exchange ideas for collaboration projects would be at the EURAMET General Assembly, where the delegates from TÜBİTAK UME and METAS will be attending. Both Sides confirmed that these ideas could later be substantiated in a meeting between TÜBİTAK UME and METAS.

e. Cooperation in Halal Accreditation

The Turkish Side declared its willingness to provide interested institutions in Switzerland with information on the basic principles of halal certification via the halal accreditation agency.

The Swiss Side declared that the Swiss Accreditation Body SAS will not offer Halal certification for the time being, and expressed that in agreement with the SAS, SECO may authorise foreign accreditation bodies to accredit Swiss conformity assessment bodies. The Swiss Side emphasized that applications for accreditation activities in Switzerland must be submitted to SECO.

f. Cooperation in Standardization

The Turkish Side expressed that Turkish Standards Institution (TSE) proposed a cooperation with the Swiss Standardization Association (SNV) for mutual support in international standardization platforms such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) and in European standardization organizations such as the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) and the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC).

The Swiss Side recommended that the Turkish Side transmits concrete proposals in written form to the Swiss Standardization Association which is not part of the Swiss Federal Administration, and expressed that the decision whether or not to enter into a cooperation falls in the competence of SNV.

II. Company issues

Considering that pharmaceutical products belong to the most important Swiss exports to Türkiye, Both Sides expressed their willingness to further develop cooperation in the pharma and health sector.

The Swiss Side explained that the Swiss pharmaceutical industry is keen to collaborate with Turkish companies to ensure sustainable and affordable access to medicines, continued investment in research, development and manufacturing. The Swiss Side underlined that the pharmaceutical industry would like to be a partner in delivering the Turkish Government's vision of healthcare for the country.

In this context;

The Swiss pharmaceutical industry raised the following issues: Patent enforcement, Compulsory Licensing, Regulatory Data Protection Failures, (FX) Exchange rate adjustments, Healthcare budget: Pharmaceutical pricing regulation. The Turkish Side noted those concerns and shared the current situation in Türkiye in the pharma sector.

The Swiss watch industry (FH) mentioned concerns on the product safety and quality control system (TAREKS), and the fight against counterfeited watches in Türkiye. The Turkish Side provided the Swiss Side with updated information about TAREKS and expressed its readiness to collaborate with the Swiss watch industry about the concerns voiced by them.

The Swiss textile industry asked for clearer communication practices, especially regarding anti-dumping duties. Sometimes communication in Turkish documents is more detailed than in the translated documents.

The Swiss mechanical and electrical engineering industries mentioned issues with CE Marking and Compliance Standards for machinery: -obstacles in importing machinery into Türkiye, - Product Safety Checks; as well as requirements for Certificates of Origin.

The Turkish Side noted the issues of the Swiss mechanical and electrical engineering industries and informed on the current situation in Türkiye.

The Swiss Side mentioned that Turkish Law No. 7255 which introduced a requirement to use 30% local tobacco for all tobacco products produced or imported into Türkiye negatively impacts tobacco products manufactured in Switzerland.

The Turkish Side shared its point of view on this matter.

The representatives of the Swiss private sector handed over Aide-mémoires with regards to some of the above-mentioned issues. The Turkish Side agreed to examine them and to provide written answers (where appropriate) as well as suggestions how to resolve these issues.

III. Multilateral Economic Cooperation

In view of the results of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi in February 2024 and the current challenges of the world trade and economy, such as problems stemming from climate change and related response policies, supply chain disruptions and market distorting policies and practices, Both Sides emphasized the importance of strengthening the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core. In this vein, Both Sides agreed to work in collaboration with a view to increase the multilateral dialogue and cooperation with respect to these current global challenges, under the framework of WTO, OECD and Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity.

Both Sides expressed their support for WTO reform aiming at improving its negotiating, monitoring and dispute settlement functions, including re-operationalization of the effective two tier dispute settlement mechanism. Both Sides agreed to increase their joint efforts in this process.

Both Sides expressed their satisfaction with the entry into force of the modernized Free Trade Agreement between the EFTA States and Türkiye on 1st October 2021, considering the first meeting of the Joint Committee took place in August 2023 and confirmed the good functioning of the agreement.

Recalling the ongoing discussions on the mechanisms for financing the costs of the eTIR International System, as well as of the TIR Secretariat and the TIR Executive Board at the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975 (AC.2), the Turkish Side explained its position and reasoning on these matters, and requested Switzerland to support the proposals of Türkiye at the AC.2 and other related fora, providing a Non-Paper to the Swiss Side explaining the issue in detail.

The Swiss Side shared its point of view on this matter.

IV. Relations with EU/ Recovery of Ukraine efforts

Both Sides exchanged information on their current relations with the European Union, and emphasized the importance of building good and stable relations with the EU considering that the EU is a very close partner for both Türkiye and Switzerland.

The Swiss Side provided information on ongoing negotiations on a package of agreements with the EU declaring that Switzerland is committed to a swift and successful conclusion of the negotiations with the EU. The Turkish Side provided information on ongoing negotiations for updating the Customs Union with the EU.

Both Sides also touched upon the recovery process in Ukraine.

The Swiss Side informed that Ukraine has been a priority country for Swiss transition cooperation with Eastern Europe for many years and that Switzerland is currently finalizing a comprehensive “Ukraine Country Programme”, which sets out key figures for support for the years 2025-2028 which will include measures aimed at further involving the Swiss private sector.

The Turkish Side provided information on Türkiye’s active involvement in reconstruction of Ukraine, and expressed its readiness to participate in projects in the field of contracting and technical consultancy services for reconstruction of Ukraine.

V. Decarbonization/ Green Deal

Both Sides reaffirmed their willingness to exchange information on technical aspects and know-how about green economy environment.

Both Sides agreed to hold the 12th Session of the High Level Commercial and Economic Consultations between Türkiye and Switzerland in Ankara, on a date to be determined through diplomatic channels.

Signed on 20.02.2025, in two originals in English language.

Co-Chair of the Turkish Delegation

Hüsnü DİLEMRE

**Director General
International Agreements and EU
Affairs of the Ministry of Trade**

Co-Chair of the Swiss Delegation

Andrea RAUBER SAXER

**Ambassador
Head of Bilateral Economic Relations
State Secretariat for Economic Affairs**

Annex I:

Turkish Delegation

Ministry of Trade

1	Hüsnü Dilemre	<i>Co-Chair</i> , Director General, General Directorate of International Agreements and EU Affairs
2	Umut Can Gök	Deputy Director General, General Directorate of Product Safety and Inspection
3	Ece Çeltikçi	Head of Department, General Directorate of International Agreements and EU Affairs
4	Hümevra Akkaş	Trade Specialist, General Directorate of International Agreements and EU Affairs

Turkish Associations

5	Şeref Yıldız	Head of Switzerland Branch of MÜSİAD (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association)
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Embassy of Türkiye in Bern

6	Ece Acarsoy	Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Switzerland
7	Murat Caliskan	Second Secretary, Turkish Embassy in Bern
8	Cumali Semeğir	Commercial Counsellor, Turkish Embassy in Bern
9	Osman Nuri Beyhan	Commercial Counsellor, Turkish Embassy in Bern
10	Tuğba Yazıcıoğlu	Assistant to the Commercial Counsellor, Turkish Embassy in Bern

Annex II:

Swiss Delegation

Swiss Federal Administration in Berne and Swiss Embassy in Ankara

1	Andrea Rauber Saxer	<i>Co-Chair</i> , Ambassador, Delegate of the Federal Council for Trade Agreements, Head Bilateral Economic Relations, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO
2	Brigitte Chassot	SECO, Head Bilateral Economic Relations Europe/Central Asia
3	Corinna Seiberth	Embassy of Switzerland to Türkiye, Counsellor Economic and Commercial Affairs
4	Jochen Janssen	SECO, Bilateral Economic Relations Europe/Central Asia, Adviser for Türkiye
5	Luciano Chianese	SECO, Bilateral Economic Relations Europe/Central Asia, Academic Intern

Swiss Associations

6	Maurice Altermatt	Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry FH, Head of Economic Division
7	Luca Degiovannini	S-GE, Director Southern Switzerland + Africa Cluster
8	Andreas Haas	Swissrail, Managing Director
9	Erik Jandrasits	Scienceindustries, Head Trade Affairs
10	Luc Schnurrenberger	Economiesuisse, Deputy Head of International Relations
11	Nicolas Stephan	Swissmem, Head economics
12	Olga Tschekassin	SERV, Senior Vice President, Country Analyst
13	Björn Von der Crone	Swiss Textiles, Economic policy, Head market access