

GRF – CeSPI Initiative

“Italy and Turkey: A Vision for Europe and Beyond”

19 January 2026 | Feriye Palace, Istanbul

Program

09:00-09:30 | *Registration and Welcome Coffee*

09:30-10:00 | *Opening Remarks*

- **Zeynep Bodur Okyay**, President and CEO, Kale Group; Chairperson, GRF Board of Directors
- **Daniele Frigeri**, President and CEO, CeSPI

Keynote speech by Enrico Letta, former Prime Minister of Italy (Online)

“Deepening and Reforming the EU Single Market: An Opportunity to Strengthen EU-Turkey Relations”

10:00–11:45 | **Session 1: Overcoming Political Obstacles for a Secure Future**

The relations between the EU and Turkey have been in flux for nearly a decade. The relationship has suffered due to the situation of the rule of law in Turkey ever since the attempted coup of July 2016. In addition, the Cyprus problem has prevented moving head on a number of issues. As a result, the accession process has been frozen, and dialogue has remained limited. Tentative talks between Brussels and Ankara have not produced any substantial development. The continuation of the Russian-Ukrainian war for over three years, coupled with the uncertainty created by President Trump’s ambivalent approach to NATO and the EU, has caused consternation in European capitals, and a window of opportunity to improve relations between the EU and Turkey has arisen. As Turkey has an excellent relationship with Italy at all levels, Rome could be instrumental in bridging the gap.

Moderator: **Selim Yenel**, Ambassador (R); President, Global Relations Forum (GRF)

Speakers:

- **Mehmet Kemal Bozay**, Ambassador, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye and Director for European Union Affairs
- **Jurgis Vilčinskas**, Chargé d’Affaires a.i., Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye
- **Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe**, Professor of International Relations, Kadir Has University
- **Valeria Giannotta**, Scientific Director CeSPI Observatory on Türkiye
- **Michelangelo Guida**, Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Medeniyet University

12:00-13:30 | **Session 2: Economic and Commercial Opportunities**

Turkey has an emerging market economy with market-based mechanisms and an active role of the state, and ranks among the world's top 20 economies and Europe's top 10 by nominal GDP. Turkey's rapid economic growth since the 2000s was strained by the economic crisis in 2018. Despite recent economic difficulties, the country has begun to recover and is well positioned to serve as a gateway to the Middle East, Asia, and beyond. Turkey and the European Union (EU) have established a Customs Union (CU) that has been operational for three decades. However, despite mutual efforts and a roadmap agreed upon in 2015, the long-anticipated modernization of the CU has yet to begin. Turkey and Italy are both members of the G20. Between 2002 and 2023, Italian direct investment in Turkey reached approximately USD 5.45 billion. Bilateral trade increased from around USD 26 billion in 2023 to more than USD 32 billion in 2024. The two countries have now set a new target of reaching USD 40 billion in annual trade volume. Given this momentum, how can Ankara and Rome further promote and accommodate joint business opportunities?

Moderator: **Stefano Manservigi**, Ambassador (R), Former Head of the EU Delegation to Türkiye

Speakers:

- **Çiğdem Nas**, Associate Professor; Secretary General, Economic Development Foundation (İKV)
- **Selim Kunalalp**, Ambassador (R); Former Turkish Ambassador to the EU and the WTO
- **Gino Costa**, Country Advisor, Investment and Finance Office of the Presidency of Türkiye
- **Massimo Pellegrino**, Chief Representative Istanbul Rep. Office, Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena

13:30-13:45 | Closing Remarks

13:45-14:45 | Lunch at *Lokanta Feriye*