



JOINT DECLARATION
ADOPTED BY THE
EU-TÜRKIYE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
AT ITS 43RD MEETING HELD IN ANKARA ON 25-26 JUNE 2026

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the representatives of organised civil society from Türkiye, meeting at the 43rd meeting of the EU-Türkiye Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) in Ankara on 25-26 June 2026, adopted the following Joint Declaration. This Declaration builds on the discussions held during the meeting and on the reports entitled *Resilient SMEs in Turbulent Times: Competitiveness, Quality Employment and Sustainable Transformation* and *Digital Transformation: Economic, Social and Governance Dimensions*.

1. State of play of EU–Türkiye relations

- 1.1 The JCC reaffirms the strategic importance of the relationship between the European Union and Türkiye. This relationship is based on deep economic interdependence, cultural and historical links, longstanding people-to-people contacts, and a shared interest in stability, prosperity, sustainable development and resilience in an increasingly challenging international environment.
- 1.2 The JCC points out that Türkiye is still a candidate country to the European Union. It emphasises the importance of maintaining a constructive and forward-looking approach to EU-Türkiye relations, based on dialogue, mutual interest, gradual confidence-building and continued engagement between organised civil society and institutions on both sides. In this context, the JCC underlines the importance of maintaining momentum in the EU accession process, in line with the established framework and the relevant decisions of the European Council.
- 1.3 The JCC welcomes recent efforts by the European Union and Türkiye to keep up dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including trade, energy, security and civil protection, connectivity, migration, climate action and the creation of disaster knowledge network, digitalisation and regional stability.
- 1.4 The JCC underscores the important contribution made by organised civil society, the social partners and professional organisations to strengthening mutual

understanding, fostering dialogue and supporting inclusive and sustainable development. The Committee points out that meaningful stakeholder participation and consultation contribute to better policies, stronger societal resilience and greater public trust.

- 1.5 The JCC reaffirms its strong commitment to continuing its work as a platform for constructive dialogue between organised civil society representatives from the European Union and Türkiye.
- 1.6 The JCC notes that the European Union and Türkiye remain closely integrated economic partners, with highly interconnected industrial value chains and strong trade relations anchored in the Customs Union.
- 1.7 The JCC underscores the growing importance of resilience, preparedness and cooperation in the face of natural disasters, cyber threats, disinformation, economic shocks and geopolitical crises.
- 1.8 The JCC reiterates the importance of closer cooperation on climate policies, sustainable finance and the green transition. The JCC welcomes Türkiye's preparations for COP31 and acknowledges TOBB's role in promoting private-sector engagement on climate action.
- 1.9 The JCC considers it important to facilitate visa procedures for Turkish citizens travelling for legitimate professional, educational, academic and civil society purposes, including business representatives, students, researchers, social partners and young professionals. This will strengthen people-to-people contacts, economic cooperation and mutual understanding between the European Union and Türkiye.
- 1.10 Given the importance of the Mediterranean for the European Union and Türkiye, the JCC emphasises the importance of ensuring peace in the Mediterranean region. This global public good is a goal to which all countries in the region must fully commit. The Mediterranean must once again become an area of cultural, social and commercial exchange between people, and the European Union and Türkiye must be among the first to ensure this goal.
- 1.11 The JCC notes the value of constructive cooperation with civil society organisations and welcomes continued efforts to support transparent consultation, access to information and regular dialogue with public authorities. Such cooperation contributes to mutual understanding and inclusive socio-economic development.
- 1.12 The JCC notes the constructive contribution that civil society organisations can make to climate, environmental and disaster resilience initiatives. The JCC supports

cooperation among public authorities, social partners, businesses and civil society organisations in advancing a fair and effective green transition.

1.13 The JCC is in favour of facilitating access for civil society organisations, social partners and professional bodies to EU programmes and cross-border cooperation initiatives which support capacity building, dialogue and shared learning.

1.14 The JCC recalls the importance of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue. The Committee encourages continued efforts aimed at promoting dialogue, cooperation and a just, lasting and sustainable solution.

2. Strengthening SMEs

2.1 The JCC emphasises the central role of SMEs as the backbone of employment, innovation, entrepreneurship and regional development in both the European Union and Türkiye.

2.2 The JCC welcomes ongoing efforts on both sides to support industrial upgrading, inclusiveness, innovation, digitalisation and sustainable and social transformation.

2.3 The JCC emphasises that competitiveness and sustainable economic growth should go hand in hand with quality employment, social dialogue, skills development and safe working conditions. The JCC further stresses the need for a holistic approach based on social justice and inclusiveness, paying particular attention to micro and social enterprises, which are often more vulnerable in transition processes.

2.4 The JCC considers that the EU-Türkiye Customs Union remains a cornerstone of the economic relationship between the two parties.

2.5 The Committee points out that predictable regulatory frameworks, legal certainty and effective stakeholder consultation continue to be important factors in supporting investment, competitiveness and sustainable economic integration.

2.6 The JCC welcomes continued efforts geared to strengthening structured dialogue and practical cooperation between the European Union and Türkiye in areas of common strategic interest.

2.7 The JCC points out that initiatives intended to strengthen European industrial competitiveness, including Made in Europe policies, should allow for the highly integrated nature of EU-Türkiye value chains, the contribution of Turkish enterprises to European production networks and the Customs Union. The Committee encourages continued dialogue between the European Union and Türkiye to ensure

that industrial and competitiveness policies support sustainable growth, resilient value chains, quality employment and mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

- 2.8 The JCC emphasises that social dialogue, freedom of association and effective participation of the social partners are fundamental components of competitiveness, quality employment and sustainable growth. The JCC calls for continued efforts to strengthen cooperation between employers, workers and public authorities.

3. Digital transformation, technological development and innovation

- 3.1 The JCC recognises that digital transformation has become a strategic priority for both the European Union and Türkiye.
- 3.2 The JCC emphasises the importance of strengthening EU-Türkiye cooperation in the digital field.
- 3.3 The JCC recognises the importance of trustworthy, inclusive and human-centred digital transformation grounded in transparency, accountability and respect for fundamental rights. It is particularly important to build structured cooperation on trusted digital infrastructure, 5G security and interoperability, data governance, combating disinformation, and cross-border trust, as well as cybersecurity. The JCC considers that it is essential to extend roaming cooperation to Türkiye as a tangible, citizen-facing measure that supports business, travel and social interaction.
- 3.4 The JCC emphasises the importance of digital inclusion, media literacy and the protection of vulnerable groups for ensuring that the digital transformation benefits everyone. The JCC encourages cooperation on initiatives promoting equal access to digital skills, services and opportunities.
- 3.5 The JCC underscores the importance of ensuring that the digital transformation benefits all parts of society.
- 3.6 The JCC stresses the importance of strengthening education systems, vocational training and lifelong learning. Enhanced cooperation between public authorities, businesses, the social partners, universities and civil society organisations continues to be essential. Meaningful cooperation between these actors can strengthen the effectiveness and public acceptance of digital transformation policies. Identifying common strategies for the involvement of women in both ICT education and employment in the ICT sector would be an important area for further cooperation.

4. Final provisions

- 4.1 The JCC thanks the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) for hosting the 43rd meeting of the EU-Türkiye Joint Consultative Committee in Ankara.
- 4.2 The JCC agrees to continue its discussions on future areas of cooperation and to prepare the next meeting of the Committee in a spirit of constructive dialogue and partnership.