



**The Speech Delivered By
The Chairman of TÜSİAD
Tuncay Özilhan**

At the European Academy Berlin

**January 9, 2004
Berlin**

Mr. Prime Minister, honored guests, dear friends,

It gives me great pleasure to be the guest of the European Academy Berlin and its chairman of the board Dr. Peter Jörg Klein in my last visit to Germany as TÜSİAD's chairman.

We are all aware of the importance of the work done by the Academy, so I need not spend much time telling you about it. It must be obvious to everyone concerned that in the coming decades one of the most critical challenges for the European Union will be the integration of migrants who come from many different backgrounds.

The recent and still ongoing debate in France concerning the headscarf reminded us once more how vital a matter the integration of 14 million Muslims living in many European countries is.

We are pleased with the progress made by the Turks who are living in Germany in adapting themselves to the social structures and mores of Germany. We are also happy that an increasing number of Turks who have made Germany their home are choosing to become citizens of Germany, conscious of the rights and responsibilities that citizenship confers.

The European Union will increasingly be shaped as a mosaic and defined by its multiculturalism. Those new residents and citizens of the Union who successfully integrated with their societies enjoy the equality and freedom that are its hallmark.

The self-confidence brought about by this equal status and individual liberties lead them to engage more actively in the societies they now belong to. They can thus make important contributions to these in different fields.

Every year brings to us more good news concerning the contributions of Turkish origin businessmen to the German economy. In addition to that we are witnessing a rising number of success stories among the second and third generation German-Turks as they become active in arts, industry, services and at the universities. Kreuzberg where many German-Turks took residence is fast shedding its character as a place of refuge for new migrants. It is fast becoming a sought-after neighborhood that offers the colors and lifestyles of a leading cosmopolitan city of the world that Berlin is. It is our wish to see this trend accelerate.

We find it invaluable that migrant Turks, the new German-Turks, actively participate in German society by speaking one of the most treasured languages of the world well. We want them to think about the ways they can contribute to their new country, as they become equal members of its polity and society.

There is no doubt that there is still a long way to go to attain these goals at levels desirable for us all. There is also no question that this process accelerated appreciably after the citizenship law was changed by the German government a few years ago. With the privilege and security of citizenship German Turks began to develop a more emotional commitment to their new country. Yet, it is quite obvious to us that as Turkey makes progress on the way to EU membership and particularly as it becomes a member, these processes will deepen and the tasks be made easier to accomplish.

We are aware of the difficulties of adjustment that a possible Turkish membership in the EU generates both within the EU and in Turkey. But we also know that neither the EU nor Turkey can easily do without one another. There were always good reasons to cite as to why this was the case. In recent months strategic considerations were added to these as the EU undertook to define its security dimension more seriously.

Mr. Prime Minister, honored guests, I probably do not need to reiterate here TÜSIAD's commitment to EU membership for Turkey. We have braved many unjust attacks, took considerable risks as we took a leadership role in the pursuit of this goal. We have staked our reputation and took the lead in matters that in most countries would never be the concern of a business community. We did these because we thought it was the right thing to do. We have not changed our minds or our position.

Turkey must become a member of the EU and I believe she will in due time. We have and will continue to support all efforts made in this direction. But we will also continue to speak the truth to everyone concerned. Whether they be in Turkey or in the European Union.

When we visit EU capitals we have a list of simple messages to deliver:

Do not repeat the mistake you have made in Copenhagen when it is time to decide on starting negotiations with Turkey at the end of the year. Think from the perspective of the future rather than be constrained by the fears, concerns and parameters of today.

Think of Turkey that will not burden the EU budget, of her economy dynamism and the economic opportunities offered by all the regions she is at the center of.

Consider Turkey's population, the youth of that population as a demographic chance, particularly if it is well educated and trained, rather than a nightmare.

Appreciate the profound meaning in Turkey's identity as a secular, democratic Muslim country with a functioning market economy. Do not underestimate the fact that we have reached that station by our own historical choices as a state and as a society.

Think about the symbolic significance of the fact that for over 50 years Turkey has been a member of the Atlantic Alliance and a participant in Western and European institutions. Pay special attention to the significance of this fact particularly in a post-September 11 world.

Evaluate Turkey in terms of the integration of your growing Muslim population and the nature of your relations with the wider Muslim world and see her centrality. Syrian President Beshar Assad who recently visited our country expressed his excitement about Turkey's progress towards membership. He used almost the same words as the President of Iran a few months ago. Both Presidents voiced their happiness with the possibility of being Europe's neighbors. Do not dismiss the importance of such pronouncements because of the fear of "bordering the Middle East".

The EU has a chance to make a vast area that opens up from the Middle East and the Caucasus to central Asia an extension of its zone of peace. Turkey is the key to the realization of such a project. A Turkey that has increasingly better relations with almost all its neighbors, a Turkey that can continue being an economic magnet for neighboring countries even when it is in the throes of crisis herself is such an asset.

We usually do not need to say much about the security or strategic aspects of Turkey's importance since our interlocutors know it better than we do.

Finally we give the following message: We do what we need to do. EU membership is our society's project and its most cherished goal. We are the ones who have to reach the club's standards. But do not withhold from us the political incentives, the understanding you have so generously extended to Central and Eastern European countries. Do not miss the opportunity by fixating on petty details, on concerns that will become meaningless in ten years' time. At least think what the absence on the map of a Turkey with the characteristics that she has would have meant for the EU.

Mr. Prime Minister, we repeatedly say these to our interlocutors in the EU. With your indulgence, I wish to take advantage of this opportunity to share our views with you here in Berlin as well.

We have always supported your efforts towards EU membership. We will continue to do so.

You will have our unwavering support in every step towards a solution that you will take on the Cyprus problem as well. The Annan Plan may need to be changed and negotiated further. But let us be at the table to negotiate and demand changes.

Negotiate the Plan and to defend our interests as well as those of Turkish Cypriots. If Turkey is not given a date by the EU in December even if it complied with the Copenhagen criteria and solved the Cyprus problem, the EU will have dynamited the Annan Plan itself. For that Plan cannot be implemented without Turkey's membership in the EU or at the very least without significant progress towards that goal.

Mr. Prime Minister, honored guests, I have gone on a bit longer than usual since this is one of my last speeches as chairman of TÜSİAD. But I also wanted to present everything as clearly as possible since I am convinced that this is a year of great significance for Turkey.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to you for having listened to me. I also wish the Academy the continuation success in its future projects as well.

Auf Wiedersehen.