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'Türkiye, Province by Province, on the EU Road': Giresun

The sixth "Turkey, Province by Province on the EU Path" project, implemented with the cooperation of TESEV and Bahçeşehir University and the support of the Consulate General of Sweden in Istanbul, took place in Giresun. Hosted by the Giresun Chamber of Commerce and Industry and moderated by the author, the meeting was attended by Bahçeşehir University Rector Prof. Süheyl Batur and Faculty of Business Administration Dean Prof. Eser Karakaş. They each delivered speeches addressing the economic and legal changes that would occur in Türkiye, and particularly in Giresun, upon full EU membership. Berna Hartoka, an expert on the subject, also briefed the participants on EU education programs.

In his opening remarks at the meeting, Swedish Consul General Ingmar Karlsson explained why they support this project. In his speech, Ambassador Karlsson stated that Sweden supports Türkiye's full EU membership. He also stated that it is highly misguided for other Christian Democratic Parties in the EU to oppose Türkiye's membership because it is a Muslim country. He also stated that there are currently nearly 15 million Muslims in Europe, a population larger than the Protestant population in the Scandinavian countries combined. If Türkiye is not accepted as a full member simply because it is a Muslim country, these 15 million people will be considered second-class citizens, a situation that contradicts the EU's founding principles and philosophy.

Later, he appeared on a live program on a local television broadcasting throughout the Black Sea region.

Ambassador Karlsson reiterated his above-mentioned thoughts in more detail.

The meeting, which attracted considerable interest from the people of Giresun, was attended by local officials, union and NGO presidents, bar association presidents, district governors, intellectuals, businesspeople, and students. During the meeting, which lasted over three and a half hours, participants posed many interesting questions related to the EU.

Both the interest shown in the meeting and the questions asked during and after it indicate that Giresun, a small Black Sea city, is very positive about EU membership and is preparing for it.

The hospitality of Giresun, which hosted the meeting, and especially the Giresun Chamber of Commerce and Industry, greatly pleased everyone who came here, especially Ambassador Karlsson.

The words of those attending the meeting, "We didn't have the opportunity to come to Istanbul and learn about these issues, but you came here and enlightened us. We didn't know about these issues," pleased everyone who organized this project, especially Ambassador Karlsson, and further motivated them for the future.

Our suggestion and call here is that individuals and organizations interested in the EU – although few in number – should pay particular attention to Anatolian cities and organize meetings to introduce the EU and the opportunities it will provide during the full membership process.

With the morale boost they received from Giresun, TESEV and Bahçeşehir University will continue to hold such meetings in the coming months.