

Istanbul Policy Center – Sabancı University – Stiftung Mercator Initiative Grand Opening

February 1, 2012
The Seed at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum



The Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative inaugurated its programs with a thought-provoking panel discussion on “The Policy Challenges for Europe” on February 1 at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum in Emirgan, İstanbul. With the participation of such distinguished guests as Kemal Derviş and Daniel Gros, the event also kicked off the Initiative’s partnership with the Centre for European Policy Center in Brussels on EU-Turkey relations. The 150 guests who attended the opening had the distinct opportunity of learning about the key pillars of the five-year strategic partnership between Istanbul Policy Center and Stiftung Mercator and the indispensable work it will perform on climate change, EU/Germany-Turkey relations and education.

The event began with a brief welcome by **Güler Sabancı**, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Sabancı University. Sabancı stressed that the historic importance of the Initiative for the Turkish-German relations. She thanked the directors of both institutions and encouraged the Initiative to engage actively in strengthening civil society in both Turkey and Germany.

Nihat Berker, President of Sabancı University, was next on stage. Berker

emphasized the role of this partnership for youth exchange between Turkey and Germany. Berker announced that the first in the line of many exchange programs between Sabancı University and Stiftung Mercator will take off this summer, with the arrival of the first patch of German high school students to study along the side of their Turkish counterparts in a diverse range of subjects from Turkish culture, history, and society to economics and natural sciences.

The program ensued with the IPC Director **Fuat Keyman**'s elaboration on the goals of the IPC-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative. Keyman underscored that the partnership will focus on academic research on three core themes: climate change, EU/German-Turkey relations and education.

Keyman stressed that the partnership will provide a platform for many academics and experts to conduct their research in Turkey and support their innovative and creative research. The initiative is also going to help foster closer relations between the Turkish and German people, Keyman said.

“This partnership will be built on the subjects of living together, social policies, climate change. We want to contribute to the NGOs especially on the subject of climate change and provide scholarships for the young scholars who are immersed in the three cores areas of the Initiative. We are working on the idea to have courses on “Climate Change” in the high schools. We will hold comparative studies on climate change, renewable energy, the contemporary trends of the urban transformation in key German and Turkish cities.”

Keyman further noted that as a European think tank known in the global arena, it is important for IPC to consolidate its research output. One of the aims of the initiative is to give financial and logistic resources for the international scholars who join the IPC with their research and practical projects. He vowed to throw the full intellectual and financial weight behind and make them visible to the public and policy makers in areas of economy, politics and culture.

"Policy Challenges for Turkey and the EU: A 2012 Perspective"

Kemal Derviř, Vice President of the Brookings Institution and Advisor to IPC, **Daniel Gros**, Director of the Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels, and **Michael Thumann**, Istanbul Bureau Chief of the German daily *Dei Zeit*, discussed the “Policy Challenges for Turkey and the EU: A 2012 Perspective” in an engaging panel discussion, which marked the beginning of the Initiative’s partnership with the CEPS.

Kemal Derviř said that the current political and economic crisis in Europe has shown that the conditions to which the EU subject Turkey were not absolute. He urged both actors to leave behind their prejudices about one another and move forward. He recommended that Turkey’s accession should be seen in a different light and the talks should be proceeded on a different premise. He cautioned that by no means his remarks allude to a privileged membership that keeps Turkey on the outside of the EU. He said he rather defends a special relationship that keeps Turkey inside Europe.

Daniel Gros also stressed the recent events have shown that good governance was more important than the economic indicators and some of the conditions imposed on candidate countries. He implied that the economic and political perils of Greece has demonstrated this delusion clearly.

Please find the details of the strategic partnership framework agreement between Sabancı University Istanbul Policy Centre and the Stiftung Mercator [click here](#).