

## FOREWORD

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The second of the Marmara Conference on European Studies (MCES-2020) was conducted in Istanbul on 7-8 February 2020 by the Institute of European Studies, Marmara University. The conference was organised in memory of Prof. Dr. Dominik Lasok and it created an international platform for scholars to share their views on various aspects of European studies. The theme of this year's conference was "Debating Europe: Past, Present and Future" and the conference consisted of eleven parallel sessions both in English and Turkish. The conference hosted various panels on current and important topics such as the EU as a security actor, the problems in EU-Turkey Association Law, rising populism, xenophobia and Euroscepticism, migration and minority rights in the EU policies, democratization and European identity, European Foreign Policy, the EU's enlargement policy, energy security, the legal dimension of European integration, public diplomacy and lobbying, and economic relations of the EU.

MCES-2020 proceedings and abstracts book gathered studies on European Law, Political Communication in Europe, European Economics and Business, and mainly European Politics and International Relations. This special issue of the Marmara Journal of European Studies (MJES), which has been published by the Marmara University Institute of European Studies for more than 25 years, includes selected articles which were presented at MCES-2020 and which passed through double (blind) peer-review process. The common point of the articles in this special issue of MJES is that they debate the Past, Present, and Future of Europe with its legal, economic, and international relations aspects.

Assoc. Prof. İlke Göçmen, in his article, seeks the answer to the question of "To What Extent Can Association Law Offer Solutions Regarding the Main Problems of Road Transport from Turkey to the European Union?". According to Göçmen, EU-Turkey Association Law can only offer a partial solution to the important problems of road transport. The main reason for this is that road transport is primarily the subject of disputes regarding services rather than goods. As a solution, Göçmen emphasizes the necessity of the achievement of

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further integration between the EU and Turkey. Göçmen concludes that this problem can be overcome by taking steps to liberalize road transport services as made possible by the Ankara Agreement. For a comprehensive solution, he underlines the necessity of concluding an agreement in this regard between the EU and Turkey.

The second article is Gizem Yılmaz's article and it is entitled "European Ethical Charter on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Judicial Systems". Yılmaz mentions that the European Union has created a Declaration of Cooperation and published the Ethical Charter on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in judicial systems, and emphasizes the importance of these two basic texts in artificial intelligence studies in the EU. Here, the author argues that the purpose of artificial intelligence software is not to substitute humans, but to increase the potential of human beings and to create reliable intelligence in the judicial system.

Halil Çeçen discusses the EU's 2009/28/EC and 2018/2001 Directives which cover 2020 and 2030 renewable energy targets of the EU and he examines the reflections of these directives on the EU's Free Trade Agreements in his article entitled "The Role and Importance of Renewable Energy in The Free Trade Agreements of The European Union". This article defends the argument that the EU guides the international renewable energy law and trade with its Free Trade Agreements signed with third countries in the field of investments and trade.

Assoc. Prof. Sevgi İnceci and Assist. Prof. Z. Yeşim Gürbüz conduct an econometric analysis about "The Effect of the European Banking Union on Banking Performance of the Central and Eastern European Countries". In this study, they examine the impact of the European Banking Union and the Single Supervisory Mechanism on Hungary, Czechia and Poland. The empirical analysis focuses on the period between 2008 and 2019 and the authors suggest that the net return on assets of banks in these countries stabilized and the measures taken by the Banking Union led to an increase in their profitability, especially in the post-2015 period.

Dr. Hasan Tekin examines the impact of firm size and financial crisis on dividends of 5,377 firms in 18 European countries during the period between 2001 and 2017, by using the Tobit model in his article entitled "Firm Size and Dividend Policy of European Firms: Evidence from Financial Crises". The study shows that small firms paid less dividends than the bigger firms in this period and that small firms decreased their dividends more during the global financial crisis of 2007-2009, however, this type of differentiation did not occur during the Eurozone Debt Crisis of 2010-2012. Thus, Tekin underlines that in their decisions concerning dividends, the investors should pay attention to

uncertainties and firm size when they make a choice regarding which firm to invest in.

The next article is “Towards a Progressive Agenda for the EU?” authored by Assoc. Prof. Suna Gülfer Ihlamur-Öner. This study claims that Covid-19 shows the importance of the main goals of progressive politics and that progressive politics creates an opportunity to build a new agenda for the EU which is based on equality, social justice, pluralism, and inclusiveness. The article discusses how progressive politics besides the issues of migration and security, would help transform the EU in the face of the pandemic.

The last article of this special issue of MJES is “Minority Rights in the Western Balkan Countries” by Assist. Prof. Nihan Akıncılar Köseoğlu. This study examines the Europeanization levels regarding minority rights of three Balkan countries Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia, which are candidate countries to the EU. The article concludes that harmonization regarding minority rights as part of Copenhagen political criteria shows similarities in these three Balkan countries and that this facilitates their entry to the EU.

I hope that the Marmara Conference on European Studies will continue during the coming years to create an international scientific platform with new themes. I would like to thank all our valuable authors, referees, editorial assistants, and everyone who contributed to this special issue of the Marmara Journal of European Studies.