

Finance

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Entrepreneurs living abroad meet in Istanbul

ISTANBUL - Istanbul is the gathering ground for more than 2,000 Turkish investors and entrepreneurs living abroad. As the Turkish government requests that they make their presence felt in locations where they reside, visiting business people seek further collaboration on government policies

Increased collaboration between the Turkish government and Turkish investors and entrepreneurs living abroad was the focus of the World Turkish Entrepreneurs Convention on Friday.



The two-day conference, which gathered more than 2,000 businesspeople, aims to ensure Turkish people living and working abroad have their presence felt in Europe. Turkish businesspeople living all around the world convened in [Istanbul](#) to participate in the convention, which was organized by the Foreign Economic Relations Board, or DEİK. The convention seeks more effective cooperation between the state and Turkish entrepreneurs scattered across the globe.

While there are 12 Turkish firms among Europe's 500 biggest enterprises and 24 among the 100 biggest enterprises of the Islamic world, there are no Turkish firms among the world's biggest 500 enterprises, said Nazım Ekren, the deputy prime minister responsible for the economy.

"We want to see Turkish firms among the biggest 500 in the world," Ekren said. The government will continue to pursue production-and-growth-friendly monetary and fiscal policies, he said, adding that the Turkish government is dedicated to making [Istanbul](#) a regional and global finance center.

"Political and economic stability experienced especially after 2002 have signaled that Turkey's regional and global influence will gradually increase," Ekren said.

There currently are about 4 million Turkish citizens living in European Union countries. Some 300,000 Turkish citizens reside in the United States, while 200,000 live in the Middle East and 150,000 live in Australia. The total number of Turkish citizens residing abroad is around 5 million, according to Ekren. "We aim to increase the quality and representation of this population," he said, adding that Turkey's target was also to raise the number of Turkish companies worldwide.

Growing numbers

The number of Turkish businesspeople active in the EU exceeds 120,000, according to Rifat Hisarcıklioğlu, the chairman of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, or TOBB.

He requested that Turks working abroad cooperate more with each other. Instead of competing, they should focus on working shoulder to shoulder and in support of each other, he said.

Urging Turkish investors and entrepreneurs to aim high, Hisarcıklioğlu said, "There is not just Germany, there is Europe, and there is not just Europe, there is the world."

Hisarcıklioğlu urged younger generations to focus on learning other languages Ğ not just English, but Russian and Chinese. Hisarcıklioğlu also requested further participation in politics from Turkish businesspeople living abroad. "Elections for European Parliament are coming up in June," he noted. "You should run for these elections und make your presence felt in Europe."

Representatives of the Turkish business community abroad asked to be better informed about government policies and have requested assistance from the government on this issue. "I do not know what the policies of my government are in Central Asia," said Zeki Pilge, a businessman active in Kazakhstan.

Complaining about the absence of a communication network among the Turkish business community abroad, Vural Öger, a German member of the European Parliament, underscored the need to develop strategies to better benefit from the potential of the Turkish diaspora.

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Although there has been a considerable increase in bilateral trade volume between Turkey and the Gulf countries, Turkish businesses are still not able to benefit as much as they should from the opportunities, said Cem Ataç, who spoke on behalf of the Turkish business community in that region.

"Despite the fact that Turkish construction companies are quite popular in the Gulf, their share in the region's construction portfolio is still very small when compared to the existing potential," said Ataç, who also called for more state support for effective cooperation between the public and private sectors. State Minister Kürşat Tüzmen said there is talk in the international community that Turkey will be a superpower in the new world order and that the world's attention would therefore be focused on Turkey.

