

Global Hot Topics

The EU & Turkey deal on refugees: a step in the right direction

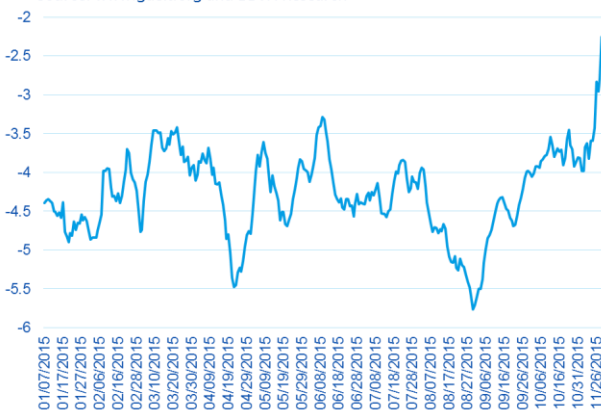
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The refugee crisis opens a new chapter in the relationship between the European Union and Turkey. EU and Turkish officials met on Sunday in Brussels for a summit aimed to tackle the migration crisis. Europe is offering Ankara an aid package of 3 bn euros (\$3.2 bn) and closer ties in return for help in curbing the flow of new arrivals in the Continent. The deal also includes relaxing visa restrictions for Turkish citizens and the resumption of Turkey's EU accession negotiations in return of higher Turkey's cooperation to help Europe with its humanitarian emergency, stemming the flow of refugees. The deal offers opportunities to recover Turkey-EU relationship and will support the reform process. However, some challenges and risks would remain.

Higher EU and Turkey's cooperation to tackle refugees problem...

Sentiment Turkey - European Union relationship

Lower values indicate a deterioration of Turkey-EU relations
Source: www.gdelt.org and BBVA Research



The massive inflows of refugees arriving into Europe continue posing important risks and challenges in the Continent, especially after Paris attacks. During the last months, Europe has carried out several extraordinary meetings to tackle the problem. The discussions have focused on how Europe could accommodate the massive influx of refugees who have arrived to its territory, but also on stopping this flow and restricting new entrances. As a result, the **European Union (EU) implemented two types of immigration policies** to manage the crisis: some designed to **distribute equitably the migrants across member states** and other aimed at **reducing the number of asylum seekers heading to Europe as a first place**.

Since late September 2015, the **EU** also began to work on a **joint Action Plan** to be implemented together with **Turkey**, which finally materialized on Sunday, **to reduce**

the number of refugees that goes to Europe. EU leaders agreed to give "political support" for an action plan for Turkey in return of greater cooperation of the country to help EU with the refugee crisis, stemming the flow of refugees and taking back those rejected by Europe. Under the signed agreement, **the European Union will give Ankara 3 bn euros (\$3.2 bn) over two years** to manage the difficult situation in the country, which hosts more than 2 million Syrians refugees. **Turkish citizens also will be able to travel without visas in Europe's Schengen zone by October 2016**. In return, it's asked Turkey to tighten border security, take back migrants who don't qualify for asylum and crack down on illegal traffickers. Both sides agreed to **have regular Summits twice a year, which will provide a platform to assess the development of Turkey-EU relations** and to discuss and cooperate on foreign affairs and security issues.

The EU is also offering to resume talks with Turkey on the enlargement process. As expected, the chapter 17 on Economic policies will be open next month. Besides **the European Commission is committed to complete, the preparatory work for the opening of a number of chapters** "without prejudice to the position of member states" will take place in the first quarter of 2016. **As it looks that the negotiations on the Cyprus Issue are in the good direction, both the EU Enlargement and the reform process could be clearly enhanced.**

... Although some some risks remain

Despite the deal were finally achieved, some important challenges would remain on financial issues and the opening of chapters. First, the refugees crisis has the potential to deteriorate further. The recent **Russian military involvement in Syria complicates** the Turkey's demands to establish an international **safe zone in northern Syria** to allow some of the refugees to return. If **Aleppo city falls, the cumulative number of refugees could increase to more than 3 million** from the current 2.2 million. Last, **Cyprus could oppose to the deal, vetoing the opening of new chapters about Turkey's EU accession.**

In sum

All in all, the Turkey and EU agreement will be helpful to deal with the refugee crisis and re-energize the Turkish accession. Much of the agreement is still uncertain, but the fact that was apparently backed by Germany, UK, France and Italy and our positive expectations from the Cyprus negotiation lead us to maintain some optimism in the revival of the relationships between EU and Turkey.

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