THE BALKANS – EU – TURKEY

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In the daily bulletin of Center for Eurasian Studies dated 1 October 2012, a news item was published in which Stefan Füle, EU Commissioner responsible for enlargement, had reiterated the Unions open door policy towards the Western Balkan countries. It is noteworthy to state what this news item and Füles statements evoke for Turkey and the Balkans. As it is well known, the Balkans is a region in the southeast of Europe with distinguishing geographical, political, cultural, social and demographic features. As a matter of fact, the Balkans has been an inseparable part of Europe throughout history and the soft belly of Western Europe. Turkey, which has a focal position in the crossroads of continents and regions, is also a Balkan country. As such, Turkey has always been active in Balkan affairs, has opposed the negative and belittling approach which was coined as balkanization in recent times and has always been in the forefront for the stability and cooperation among the Balkan countries. The EU has come to realize years ago that it was inevitable to include the Balkans in the EU enlargement and concrete steps have been taken in this direction. On the other hand, the fact that Turkey is a Balkan country seems to have led the EU into adopting a discriminatory approach towards the Balkans, coming up with the creation of a novel division labeled as Western Balkans. It is understood that the Western Balkans entails the new republics which gained their independence from the disintegrated Yugoslavian territories and Albania. The west has an east. However, the east is not mentioned for the Balkans and the EU policies have encouraged the perception that Greece, Bulgaria and Romania complete the east. It would be appropriate to take into consideration that a membership negotiation process which excludes Turkey from the Balkans is bound to weaken Turkeys European references.

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