THE EUROPEAN UNION'S CONNECTIVITY STRATEGY AND TÜRKİYE

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It can be observed that the European Union (EU) has recently accelerated its initiatives toward transport and connectivity projects in the South Caucasus. In this context, the technical preparation process for the Akhurik-Kayan and Margara-Kayan road projects has been initiated with the letter of intent signed between the European (Union) Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB), and Armenia. The projects in question aim to integrate border gates into Armenia's transport network within the scope of the country's "Crossroads of Peace" initiative and to strengthen regional connectivity in line with the EU's "Connectivity Agenda" and "Global Gateway" strategies.[1] In the same period, the visits expected to be paid by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to Azerbaijan on 1 July, and subsequently to Armenia on 2-3 July, also demonstrate that the strategic importance attributed to the South Caucasus by Brussels has increased.[2]

□□□□ developments that have taken place demonstrate that the EU is placing greater emphasis on Armenia in its South Caucasus strategy. Both the technical and financial support for transport infrastructure and the high-level visit to be paid by von der Leyen to Yerevan point to the EU's effort to position Armenia as an important actor in its regional connectivity policies. While this situation enhances the visibility of Armenia in the EU's geopolitical approach in the South Caucasus, it also brings the positions of the actors in the region to the fore.

The political dimension of the EUs approach is at least as remarkable as its economic dimension. Von der Leyens visit to Yerevan can be evaluated as a continuation of the momentum that EU-Armenia relations have recently gained. Particularly, the visible EU support for the pro-Western rapprochement policies of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who reaffirmed confidence in the recent elections, can be read as part of a strategy to distance Armenia from Russias traditional sphere of influence. The European Commissions recent announcement of financial support for Armenian companies affected by Russian trade pressures stands out as an element complementing this political message.

□□□□ discourse recently utilized by the EU also clearly reveals this strategic orientation. European Commission officials emphasize that the Northern Corridor passing through Russia and the Suez route are no longer reliable, stating that Europe needs "reliable routes" for its trade, energy, and digital security. Therefore, the Middle Corridor is not merely an economic project but also a security project aimed at mitigating the EUs geopolitical risks.

□□□ this point, Türkiye's position carries a distinct importance. The European leg of the Middle Corridor passes through Türkiye, and Ankara continues to be one of the indispensable actors of this route due to its geographical location.

However, the policy recently pursued by Brussels points to a search for creating a multi-actor structure in the South Caucasus that integrates Armenia more strongly into the system, rather than a regional architecture in which Türkiye is decisive. This approach is also observed in the EUs Central Asia policy. While deepening its direct relations with the countries of the region, the EU attempts to develop alternative partnerships that will reduce dependency on traditional regional powers. Nonetheless, geography ensures that Türkiye maintains its strategic role in the connectivity between Europe and Asia.

□□□ conclusion, the recent steps of the EU are consistent with the goal of transforming the South Caucasus into an alternative connectivity belt to Russia and Iran. While Armenia becomes an increasingly visible and supported actor in this strategy, Türkiyes status as the indispensable transit country of the Middle Corridor is strengthened as well. In this process, while Armenia is prioritized as a strategic partner, the efforts aimed at attempting to limit Türkiye's regional hub position also do not go unnoticed. The EUs connectivity policy should therefore be read not merely as an economic project but as a geopolitical strategy aimed at reshaping the balance of power in the South Caucasus.

**Picture: KyivPost*

[1] Armenia, EU and EIB Advance Connectivity Cooperation with New EPIC Advisory Support, ArmenPress, June 24, 2026, https://armenpress.am/en/article/1253858.

[2] Sevinj Osmanqizi, Von der Leyen to Visit Azerbaijan and Armenia as EU Pushes the Middle Corridor to Avoid Russia and Iran, KyivPost, 24 June 2026, https://www.kyivpost.com/post/78836.

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