The Center for International and European Studies (CIES) at Kadir Has University will host the 4th International Neighbourhood Symposium at Heybeliada, Turkey between Tuesday, 24 June and Sunday, 29 June 2014. This year’s Symposium will focus on “Exploring the Challenges of Political and Social Change in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Mediterranean South”.

The Eastern Neighbourhood and the Mediterranean South are shared neighborhoods of the European Union, its member states, the Russian Federation, and Turkey. While each is distinct with its own historical, political, social, cultural and economic characteristics; their proximity suggests synergy across many sectoral issues such as energy, transport, and the environment as well as more immaterial concepts such as identity, culture, and democracy. While the Eastern Neighbourhood is composed of many states that aspire to closer ties including membership in the European Union and NATO; it is also home to the Russia Federation whose estrangement with the West and its institutions is growing while it claims the neighborhood for itself. The Mediterranean South finds itself in a state of ebullition for over two years since the Arab Awakening began. Furthermore more regions are positively influenced by the existence and the work of the European Union which the Norwegian Nobel Committee focused when it granted the Union the Peace Prize in 2012: “The successful struggle for peace and reconciliation and for democracy and human rights. The stabilizing part played by the EU has helped to transform most of Europe from a continent of war to a continent of peace.” The EU’s success in bridging the gap between Iran and the rest of the international community in order to achieve an interim nuclear accord and the inspiration the Union projects as Ukrainians decry their government’s decision not to sign an Association Agreement with the EU are a testament to its appeal and potential.

The International Neighbourhood Symposium aims to discuss, assess, and understand these changes and challenges as well as explore the synergies between the two regions and the rest of Europe. Consequently, it focuses on the themes of Politics and Social Change and their challenges in each region. The Politics theme will focus on the security context in each region and sub region as well as the political changes, revolutions, uprisings in the region and the role of other extra regional actors be it states, international organizations, and non-state actors. The Social Change theme will concentrate on issues such as the drivers of change, economic change and the role of social and new media in both regions. The themes of Democracy and Democratization will constitute the backdrop around which the debates will be geared. The issues of the domestic development of democracy, the role of the domestic arena as part of the democratization process, as well as the subjects of identity, pluralism, cultural diversity, secularism, and religion will all be debated to assess the state of play in both regions and their prospects for the future. All of these points will be discussed further through Structured Dialogue workshops facilitated by Professor Benjamin Broome from Arizona State University whereby participants will be presenting project proposals emanating from their cooperation in the workshops. For the first time this year, the projects could benefit from funding from the Black Sea Trust should those conceiving them formally apply.

The International Neighbourhood Symposium aims to promote further understanding and cooperation in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Mediterranean South and beyond by providing a forum for study, dialogue and networking in a multicultural and interdisciplinary environment. Young professionals and
graduate students primarily from the countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood, the Mediterranean South, EU member states, and the United States are the Symposium target group. In addition, applicants from the fields of public policy, politics, journalism, and business are especially encouraged to apply. The target age group is 22-35 years of age.

The CIES project enjoys the support of numerous international partners and sponsors. To date these include the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation; the Corporate Social Responsibility Association of Turkey; the Anna Lindh Foundation, Alexandria; the Harvard University Black Sea Security Program; the International Relations Council of Turkey (UIK); Kadir Has University; the European Studies Institute of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO); the Open Ukraine Foundation, Kyiv; the International Center for Hellenic and Mediterranean Studies (DIKEMES), Athens; Friedrich Naumann Foundation; the Hollings Center for International Dialogue; Karaköy Institute; the Georgian Institute for Strategic Studies; the International Institute for Peace, Vienna and the Turkish Policy Quarterly.

The draft program and application can be accessed at http://www.khas.edu.tr/en/cies/129.