

Resolution on the 2008 Turkey progress report

2008/2691(RSP) - 12/03/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate on 11 March 2009, the European parliament adopted by 528 votes to 52 with 43 abstentions, a resolution on Turkey's progress report 2008 in response to the Turkey 2008 Progress Report of the Commission. The resolution was tabled on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Parliament is concerned to see in Turkey, for the third consecutive year, a continuous slowdown of the reform process, and calls on the Turkish government **to prove its political will to continue the reform process** to which it committed itself in 2005. It stresses that such modernisation is first and foremost in Turkey's own interest and for the benefit of Turkish society as a whole.

Members are further concerned by the ongoing polarisation within Turkish society and between the main political parties. This has deepened in the course of 2008 and has negatively affected the functioning of the political institutions and the process of reforms. Political reforms are at the heart of the reform process, and Parliament welcomes the fact that the Turkish government prepared and approved the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis. It urges the leaders of the political parties to seriously seek dialogue and to agree, in a spirit of compromise, on a reform agenda for the modernisation of Turkey towards a stable, democratic, pluralist, secular and prosperous society, guided by respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and based on the rule of law.

With regard to the **Copenhagen Criteria**, Parliament made the following principal points:

On **democracy and the rule of law**, Parliament regrets that the initial effort to reform the constitution resulted in dispute over the headscarf issue and generated further polarisation of society. It calls on the Turkish government to resume its work on a new, civilian constitution which would place the protection of human rights at its core, and urges the government to ensure that political parties and civil society, as well as ethnic and religious minorities, are closely involved in this constitutive process.

Parliament further regrets that no progress has been made on establishing full civilian supervisory functions over the military, and points to the urgent need for further systematic efforts to enhance the impartiality of the judiciary, and to ensure that members of the judiciary refrain from interfering in political debate. Welcoming the beginning of the trial against those accused of being members of the Ergenekon criminal organisation, Parliament urges the Turkish authorities to provide them with a fair trial.

With respect to **human rights**, Members regret that freedom of expression and freedom of the press are still not fully protected in Turkey. It is also of the opinion that the amendment to Article 301 of the Penal Code, adopted in April 2008, was not sufficient, as people continue to be prosecuted for expressing non-violent opinions on the basis of this as well as of other laws, such as the 1995 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought laureate Leyla Zana.

The report expresses concern over the failure of the judiciary to prosecute cases of torture and ill-treatment the number of which is growing. It goes on to call on the Turkish government to launch a political initiative favouring a lasting settlement of the Kurdish issue. At the same time, Parliament condemns the violence perpetrated by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and other terrorist groups on Turkish soil. It is also concerned that Turkey has made no progress on ensuring cultural diversity and promoting respect for, and protection of, minorities in accordance with ECHR standards.

The resolution welcomes the Commission's assessment classifying Turkey as a **functioning market economy**, and encourages the Turkish government to continue its cooperation with the International Monetary Fund.

With regard to the **obligations of membership**, Parliament regrets that a number of commitments made by Turkey within the EC-Turkey customs union remain unfulfilled, distorting bilateral trade relations. It also regrets that the EC-Turkey Association Agreement and its Additional Protocol have not yet been implemented fully by the Turkey. The non-fulfilment of Turkey's commitments by December 2009 may further seriously affect the process of negotiations.

Parliament then makes a series of observations on enhancing **Turkey's social cohesion and prosperity**, reiterating its calls for the Turkish government to take further tangible steps to empower women in the political, economic and social sector, through, for instance, temporary measures to increase their active involvement in politics.

It welcomes the ongoing direct negotiations by the leaders of the two communities in **Cyprus**, and calls on Turkey to facilitate a suitable climate for negotiations by withdrawing Turkish forces and allowing the two leaders to negotiate freely their country's future. Members also call on the Turkish and Armenian governments to start a process of reconciliation, in respect of the present and the past, and want the Commission to facilitate this reconciliation process.

On **bilateral cooperation**, Parliament commends the progress achieved by Turkey in the field of energy. It expects that an inter-governmental agreement aimed at bringing the Nabucco pipeline into operation will be concluded soon.

On **international issues**, Parliament appreciates Turkey's efforts to contribute to a solution for many of the world's crisis regions, in particular in the Middle East and the South Caucasus, and also with regard to relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It welcomes Turkey's constructive involvement, following the conflict between Russia and Georgia, notably through its proposal for a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform.