

# Resolution on Turkey's 2010 progress report

2010/2996(RSP) - 09/03/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on Turkey's 2010 progress report.

It recalls that accession negotiations with Turkey were opened on 3 October 2005 and **the opening of those negotiations was the starting point for a long-lasting and open-ended process**. It notes Turkey's **slow progress with regard to reforms** and calls on the Turkish Government to increase its efforts in undertaking comprehensive reforms both with a view to fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria and for the sake of Turkey's own modernisation. Members are concerned about the ongoing confrontation between political parties and the lack of readiness on the part of Government and opposition to work towards consensus on key reforms, and they urge all political actors, the Government and the opposition to work together. Whilst welcoming the adoption of constitutional amendments as a step in the right direction, Parliament underlines the **pressing need for overall constitutional reform** transforming Turkey into a fully fledged pluralistic democracy with the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at its core. Systematic improvements are needed in order fully to recognise the rights of minorities.

**Fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria:** the resolution expresses concern about the **deterioration in freedom of the press**, about certain acts of censorship and about growing self-censorship within the Turkish media, including on the internet. It calls on the Turkish Government to uphold the principles of press freedom; and underscores the need for adoption of a new media law addressing, inter alia, the issues of independence, ownership and administrative control. Parliament decides to closely follow the cases of Nedim ener, Ahmet k and other journalists facing **police or judicial harassment**. It expresses concern at the fact that broadcasting may be stopped on grounds of national security without a court order or a ruling by a judge, and notes with concern the practice of bringing criminal prosecutions against journalists who communicate evidence of human rights violations or raise other issues in the public interest. Furthermore, whilst Members appreciate the progress made in reforming the judiciary, they are concerned that Turkish judicial arrangements have not yet been improved sufficiently to ensure the right to a fair and timely trial.

Parliament underlines the fact that investigations of alleged coup plans, such as the **'Ergenekon' and 'Sledgehammer' cases**, need to demonstrate the strength and the proper, independent and transparent functioning of Turkish democratic institutions and the judiciary. They are concerned by the lack of progress in these investigations and note that the recent detention of well-known journalists such as Nedim ener and Ahmet k might lead to a loss of credibility of these trials which should, on the contrary, strengthen democracy.

Regarding **religious freedoms**, the resolution supports the Government's ongoing dialogue with religious communities, including the Alevis, as well as the Greek, Armenian, Aramean and other Christian communities; but is disappointed that only limited progress has been made on the legal framework for the functioning of these communities. It calls for an effective effort on implementation of the Law on Foundations, which must enable religious communities to function without undue constraints.

Parliament strongly condemns the continuing terrorist violence by the PKK, and calls on the Government to revitalise its efforts, as part of the process of democratic opening, to address the **Kurdish issue** comprehensively with a view to reaching a peaceful solution.

Whilst welcoming the strengthening of the legal framework guaranteeing **women's rights and gender equality** through the constitutional package, Parliament is concerned about the falling rates of labour force participation even among highly educated women. It deeply deplores the persistent high levels of

domestic violence, including so-called honour crimes and the phenomenon of forced marriages. It urges the main political parties to reach a solution on the **headscarf ban** in universities, in order to counter the polarising effects of the issue on Turkish society, and urges that this solution be based on respect for women's free choice.

Parliament commends the resilience of the **Turkish economy** vis-à-vis the global economic crisis, stressing that this economic revival is a unique opportunity to increase labour force participation and employment rates, which are still very low, barely reaching 50%.

**Building good neighbourly relations:** Members call on the Turkish Government and all parties concerned to give their active support to the ongoing negotiations on the **Cyprus issue**, and calls on the Government to facilitate a suitable climate for negotiations by starting to withdraw its forces from Cyprus immediately. Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriot authorities are asked to refrain from any new settlements of Turkish citizens on the island, as this would continue to change its demographic balance. On **Armenia**, Parliament urges both parties, Turkey and Armenia, to ratify, without preconditions, the protocols and to open the border, and calls on Turkey to use its regional weight to enhance confidence-building measures.

**Advancing EU-Turkey cooperation:** the resolution deplores Turkey's non-implementation of the **Additional Protocol to the EC-Turkey Association Agreement**, which continues to affect the process of negotiations, and calls on the Turkish Government to implement the protocol in full. It welcomes the finalisation of the negotiations on the **EU-Turkey readmission agreement** and takes the view that, once the readmission agreement enters into force, the Council should mandate the Commission to initiate a visa dialogue, with particular attention to the matter of entry conditions for businesspeople and students travelling to the EU.

On foreign policy, Parliament calls on the Turkish Government to step up its foreign policy coordination with the EU. It asks the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union to intensify the existing dialogue with Turkey on foreign policy issues of mutual interest; in light of the inspiration Turkey provides to many in the Arab world, as a secular democracy with a majority Muslim population.

Lastly, Members call on the Turkish Government to sign and submit for ratification the Statute of the International Criminal Court, thus further increasing Turkey's contribution to, and engagement in, the global multilateral system.