Resolution on the 2013 progress report on Turkey

2013/2945(RSP) - 12/03/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 475 votes to 153 with 43 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2013 progress report on Turkey.

Credible commitment and strong democratic foundations: while Parliament welcomed the 2013 progress report on Turkey and shared the Commission's conclusion that Turkey is a strategic partner for the EU, it stressed **the importance and urgent need for further reforms** with a view to ensuring greater accountability and transparency in the Turkish administration and the promotion of dialogue across the political spectrum and in society more broadly, in particular through the **proper involvement, and a process of empowerment, of civil society**. Members emphasised the principles of democracy and the importance of an impartial and independent judiciary.

Fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria: Parliament expressed deep concern at the recent developments in Turkey with regard to allegations of high-level corruption. It reminded the Government of Turkey of the commitment made to eradicate corruption, in particular by implementing the majority of the recommendations issued in the 2005 evaluation reports by the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO).

Members pointed to the **crucial role of a system of checks and balances for any modern democratic state** and to the fundamental role that the Turkish Grand National Assembly must play at the centre of Turkey's political system in providing a framework for dialogue and consensus-building across the political spectrum. They emphasised the crucial role of civil society organisations and the need for adequate communication with the public on the reform process.

Members also stressed:

- the urgent need for further progress in implementing the 2010 constitutional amendments, in particular the adoption of laws on protection of personal data and military justice;
- the need to revise the rules governing the election, composition and functioning of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors to be fully in line with European standards;
- the urgent need for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and the establishment of an anti-discrimination and equality board, protecting all citizens, including LGBTI people;
- establishment of an independent supervisory body for police offences following event in Gezi parc (excessive police violence towards protesters);
- further measures improving press freedom and internet freedom;
- reform of anti-terror legislation;
- accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Parliament also reaffirmed the importance of opening Chapters 23 **(judiciary and fundamental rights)** and 24 **(justice and home affairs)** early in the negotiation process. Delivering to Turkey the official benchmarks for the opening of these Chapters would provide a clear roadmap for, and give a boost to, the reform process.

Parliament also called for further measures regarding **violence against women**.

With regard to the **Kurdish issue**, it welcomed the fact that education in Kurdish was now allowed in private schools, but expressed concern at the large number of cases launched against writers and journalists writing on the Kurdish issue and at the arrest of several Kurdish politicians, mayors and

members of municipal councils, trade unionists, lawyers, protesters and human rights defenders in connection with the KCK trial. It welcomed the expected speedy implementation of the statement of intent by the Turkish Government regarding the reopening of the Greek-minority school on the island of Gökçeada (Imbros).

Building good neighbourly relations: Parliament noted the continuing efforts by Turkey and Greece to improve their bilateral relations, including through bilateral meetings, but urged the Turkish Government to **end the repeated violations of Greek airspace and territorial waters**, as well as Turkish military aircraft flights over Greek islands. It also called on the Turkish Government to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which was part of the acquis communautaire, and recalled the full legitimacy of the Republic of Cyprus' exclusive economic zone.

Parliament reiterated its strong support for the reunification of Cyprus, on the basis of a fair and viable settlement for both communities. It welcomed Turkey's decision to grant the Committee on Missing Persons **access to a fenced military area in the northern part of Cyprus** and encouraged Turkey to allow the committee to access relevant archives and military zones for exhumation.

Members urged Turkey and Armenia to proceed to a normalisation of their relations.

Advancing EU-Turkey cooperation: Parliament deplored Turkey's refusal to fulfil its obligation of full, non-discriminatory implementation of the **Additional Protocol to the EC-Turkey Association Agreement** towards all Member States. It recalled that **this refusal continued to have a profound effect on the negotiation process.**

It believed that, in view of Turkey's strategic role as an energy hub and source of plentiful renewable energy resources, consideration should be given to **close cooperation between the EU and Turkey on energy** and particularly on green energy issues. It asked the Commission to prioritise financing in favour of renewable energy projects, the energy grid and interconnectivity in Turkey.

Lastly, Parliament welcomed Turkey's commitment to the provision of humanitarian assistance to almost one million Syrian refugees. It asked Turkey to **closely monitor its borders to prevent the entry of fighters and arms** to the benefit of groups credibly found to be implicated in systematic human rights violations or not committed to the democratic transition **of Syria**. It asked the Commission, the Member States and the international community to cooperate closely with Turkey on providing assistance to the refugee population.