Report on the 2021 Commission Report on Turkey

2021/2250(INI) - 07/06/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 448 votes to 67, with 107 abstentions, a resolution on the 2021 Commission report on Turkey.

Parliament reiterated its concern about the **persistent gap in values and standards between Turkey and the EU** and the continuing lack of political will to carry out the necessary reforms to address, in particular, the serious concerns about the rule of law and fundamental rights that continue to undermine the accession process, despite Turkey's repeated declarations on the objective of EU accession.

Members stressed that Turkey's commitments in the accession process have been steadily regressing over the past two years and that in the absence of clear and significant progress in this area, **Parliament cannot envisage a resumption of accession negotiations with Turkey**, which have been blocked since 2018.

Parliament reaffirmed its conviction that Turkey is a country of strategic political, economic and foreign policy importance, a key partner for the stability of the region as a whole, and a vital ally, notably within NATO, with which the EU wishes to **continue to re-establish relations based on dialogue, respect and mutual trust**. It welcomed recent statements at the highest level by the Turkish authorities on the Turkish government's new commitment to EU membership but called on the Turkish authorities to translate their words into action.

Rule of law and fundamental rights

Parliament deplored the continuing **deterioration of the human rights situation in Turkey** and called on Turkey to fully implement all the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. It also condemned Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Council Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and expressed concern about the significant decline in freedom of assembly and demonstration and the disproportionate and arbitrary measures restricting the freedom of expression of journalists, writers, media professionals and social network users. It also called on the Turkish government to guarantee judicial independence.

The Commission is invited to provide **sufficient funding** to civil society and non-state actors to prioritise pro-democracy efforts that could help generate the political will necessary to strengthen EU-Turkey relations.

Wider EU-Turkey relations and Turkey's foreign policy

Members expressed their gratitude to the Turkish authorities for their condemnation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They welcomed Turkey's alignment with NATO and the EU, its continued financial and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, and the Turkish government's willingness to mediate between the parties to the conflict.

Parliament also welcomed Turkey's efforts to continue hosting the world's largest refugee population and supported **continued EU funding for refugees and host communities in Turkey**. It insisted that respect for fundamental freedoms should be at the centre of the process of implementing the EU-Turkey Statement.

Members also support the Commission's proposal to start negotiations to **modernise a mutually beneficial Customs Union** but warned that Parliament will only support the final agreement on this modernisation when democratic conditions relating to human rights, fundamental rights and respect for international law and good neighbourly relations are met. Parliament reiterated its support for the **visa liberalisation process** once the conditions are met.

Welcoming the Turkish government's decision to ratify the Paris **Climate Agreement** and its commitment to become carbon neutral by 2053, Parliament considers the implementation of the European Green Deal as an important opportunity for the EU and Turkey to align their trade and climate change policies.

Members expect Turkey's foreign policy to be pursued through diplomacy and dialogue based on international law and, given its status as a candidate country, to be increasingly aligned with that of the EU. They believe that increased cooperation between the EU and Turkey can be achieved in a number of foreign policy areas, notably on the issues of Ukraine and Afghanistan. Parliament called on the Turkish government to **deal in good faith with Finland's and Sweden's applications for NATO membership**, to play a constructive role in resolving any outstanding issues and to refrain from exerting any pressure during this process.

Parliament regretted that the **Cyprus problem** remains unresolved and stressed that a solution in line with UN Security Council resolutions will have a positive impact on Turkey's relations with the EU. It reaffirmed that the only lasting solution to the Cyprus question was a fair, comprehensive and viable settlement within the framework of the United Nations, based on a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation with a single international legal personality, a single sovereignty, a single citizenship and political equality.

Parliament reiterated its condemnation of Turkish military interventions in **Syria**, which violate international law and undermine the stability and security of the entire region. It also called on Turkey to commit itself fully to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Libya under the auspices of the United Nations.

Prospects for EU-Turkey relations

Parliament noted that it did not find arguments at this stage to change its conditional position on the formal suspension of accession negotiations with Turkey. It noted that by deciding to openly defy the binding rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in the Osman Kavala et al. case, the **current Turkish government has deliberately undermined any aspiration to reopen the EU accession process in the current circumstances**.

The Union should pursue all possible forms of dialogue, common understanding and convergence of positions with Turkey. Turkey is invited to **engage in a constructive dialogue in good faith**, including on foreign policy issues on which Turkey and the EU disagree, with a view to finding common ground and common understanding with the EU, resuming dialogue and cooperation on good neighbourly relations and re-launching the reform process in Turkey.

Parliament called on the Presidents of the Commission and the European Council and the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to show **stronger, strategic and values-based leadership** and to be accountable to Parliament.