2022 Commission Report on Türkiye

2022/2205(INI) - 25/07/2023 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Nacho SÁNCHEZ AMOR (S&D, ES) on the 2022 Commission Report on Türkiye.

General assessment and latest developments

Members noted the results of the **recent presidential and parliamentary elections** in Türkiye and considered them a sign foretelling political continuity in the country. They regretted however, that, as reflected by the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission, the lack of a level playing field gave an unjustified advantage to the incumbent. They regretted, further, that harsh rhetoric, inflammatory and discriminatory language, including against minorities, the continued intimidation and harassment of supporters of some opposition parties and false claims by ruling parties affiliating the opposition with terrorism undermined the process.

Expressing its profound sadness about the deadly, devastating **earthquakes** that shook south-eastern Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023, the report stated that EU should continue to support the people of Türkiye in addressing their humanitarian needs and in their reconstruction efforts.

The report welcomed Türkiye's vote in favour of **condemning the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine** in the UN General Assembly and its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. It regretted, at the same time, that Türkiye does not support sanctions outside the UN framework. It also welcomed Türkiye's efforts in facilitating talks between Ukraine and Russia and reiterated its appreciation for the key part played by Türkiye together with the UN in brokering and keeping alive the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Members also urged Türkiye to ratify **Sweden's NATO membership** without any further delay and invited the Turkish authorities to deliver on their promise of a more constructive partnership in NATO, including in the Eastern Mediterranean. They stressed that the NATO accession process of one country can in no way be linked to the EU accession process of another, as the EU accession process of the other country remains based on its own merits.

The report welcomed Türkiye's efforts to continue hosting the largest refugee population in the world of almost 4 million people and welcomed, in this regard, the continued provision of EU funding for refugees and host communities in Türkiye and expressed its strong commitment to sustain this in the future. The Commission is called on to put forward a proposal for the continuation of financing for Syrian refugees and host communities in Türkiye after 2024.

Members are dismayed by the fact that the negative trend is far from stopping or being reversed and that the **democratic backsliding in Türkiye has continued** over the last year, with several laws being amended that tighten online censorship and restrict access to information under the guise of preventing misinformation. They also noted the relentless crackdown on any critical voice, particularly ahead of and during the recent elections.

The report condemned the **lack of independence of the judiciary** and the political instrumentalisation of the judicial system and called on Türkiye to fully implement all judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. It also condemned the continued prosecution, censorship and harassment of journalists and independent media in Türkiye. It noted that no significant progress has been registered with regard to the protection of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

Members expressed their concern about the deterioration of **women's rights**, gender-based violence and the increase in femicides as well as the widespread hate speech and discrimination against the LGBTI+ community.

Highly concerned about the **Kurdish question**, Members reiterated the urgency of resuming a credible political process involving all relevant parties and democratic forces in order to lead to its peaceful settlement.

The way forward for EU-Türkiye relations

Members reiterated their firm conviction that Türkiye is a **country of strategic relevance** in political, economic, energy and foreign policy terms, a key partner for the stability of the wider region and an important ally, including within NATO. They reaffirmed that the EU is committed to pursuing the best possible relations with Türkiye based on dialogue, respect and mutual trust, in line with international law and good neighbourly relations.

Members considered that in the absence of a drastic change of course by the Turkish Government, **Türkiye's EU accession process cannot be resumed in the current circumstances**. The report urged the Turkish Government and the European Union's institutions and Member States to break the current deadlock and move forward towards a closer, more dynamic and strategic partnership. It recommended approaching this matter with the highest level of responsibility and dedication and to start a reflection process to find a parallel and realistic framework for EU-Türkiye relations that encompasses the interests of all parties involved.

The report insisted that **democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights**, as well as mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and respect for the rights of minorities, should remain at the heart of good neighbourly relations between the EU and Türkiye.

While commending the democratic and pro-European aspirations of the majority of Turkish society, Members expressed their utmost commitment to sustaining and increasing the support for **Türkiye's independent civil society**, including by regularly monitoring the situation of the right to freedom of assembly and association in Türkiye, as well as the protection of human rights defenders and shrinking civic space.

Members reaffirmed its support for an **upgraded customs union** with a broader, mutually beneficial scope, which could encompass a wide range of areas of common interest, including digitalisation and Green Deal alignment. Such a modernisation would need to be based on strong conditionality related to human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for international law and good neighbourly relations.