2022 Commission Report on Türkiye

2022/2205(INI) - 13/09/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 434 votes to 18, with 152 abstentions, a resolution on the 2022 Commission Report on Türkiye.

General assessment and latest developments

Parliament took note of the results of the recent presidential and parliamentary elections in Türkiye and considered them a sign foretelling political continuity in the country. It welcomed the high turnout and notes that the elections were largely peaceful, despite isolated instances of violence primarily against opposition supporters.

Expressing its profound sadness about the deadly, devastating **earthquakes** that shook south-eastern Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023, Parliament welcomed the swift activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to assist affected areas and stated that EU should continue to support the people of Türkiye in addressing their humanitarian needs and in their reconstruction efforts.

Russian war of aggression against Ukraine

Parliament 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.

Stressing that trade between Türkiye and Russia has nearly doubled since the start of the war in Ukraine and that there is an elevated risk that sanctioned goods and technologies, such as semiconductors, could pass through Turkish territory, Members deplored the fact that circumvention of EU sanctions by Türkiye undermines collective efforts. They called on the Commission to examine the increase in trade between Russia and Türkiye and assess the relevant trade flows that could indicate circumvention of sanctions.

Sweden's NATO membership

Parliament 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. It 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.

Refugees

Parliament 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.

Democracy and human rights

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 resolution 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.

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.

Furthermore, no significant progress has been registered with regard to the **protection of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities**, including those of the Greek Orthodox population of the islands of Gökçeada (Imbros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos); calls on

The way forward for EU-Türkiye relations

Parliament 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. It called for the EU-Türkiye relations to be based on a **long-term vision** and built upon cooperation and not confrontation.

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**. They 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. They 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.

Parliament 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.

Parliament 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 democratic conditionality** from the outset of any negotiations, as Parliament will not give its consent to the final agreement if no progress is made in this field.