# Turkey's progress towards accession. Recommendation and 2004 report

2004/2182(INI) - 15/12/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Camiel EURLINGS (EPP-ED, NL) on Turkey's progress towards accession. (Please see the summary of 30/11 /04.) The resolution was adopted by 407 votes in favour, 262 against and 29 abstentions in a secret ballot. Considering the overall progress outlined in the Commission report, Parliament called upon the European Council to open the negotiations with Turkey without undue delay. The opening of negotiations is recommended so long as it is agreed that in the first phase of the negotiations, priority is given to the full implementation of the Copenhagen political criteria. Parliament welcomed the political reform process in Turkey and the adopted constitutional and legislative changes, but was none the less, of the opinion that the Turkish authorities still have to adopt and implement further reforms and put current reforms into practice in order to fully meet the Copenhagen political criteria.

Parliament was satisfied that Turkey has fulfilled a number of recommendations included in Parliament's resolutions, in particular, the complete abolition of the death penalty, the reform of criminal procedure, strengthening the rights of the defence, the reduction of the role of the National Security Council and the lifting of the state of emergency in the south-east. Parliament regretted, however, the reservations expressed on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

It went on to welcome the fact that the Turkish Government has introduced legal changes which enable private language centres to offer courses in mother tongues other than Turkish (Kurdish, Circassian, Armenian et al.), to broadcast media programs and to open and operate stations which broadcast in other languages. It called on the Turkish government to lift all remaining restrictions in the area of broadcasting and education in minority languages. In addition, Parliament made the following requests:

- Turkey should drastically improve its perception of ethnic and religious minorities, for instance by highlighting their contributions to the cultural heritage of the country;

- it should apply EU environmental and human rights standards to large-impact projects like the construction of dams in the Munzur Valley and Ilisu;

- Turkish authorities must fully implement a 'zero-tolerance' approach at all levels and in all aspects to the complete eradication of torture;

- the electoral system needs to be reformed by reducing the threshold of ten per cent, thereby ensuring a wider representation of political forces in the Grand National Assembly, including predominantly Kurdish parties;

- the Turkish government is invited to take more active steps to bring about reconciliation with those Kurdish forces who have chosen to abandon the use of arms;

- the Turkish authorities must step up their efforts to ensure that women whose free access to primary or secondary education is hindered by difficulties stemming from their family or cultural environment are able to assert to the full their right to an education;

Parliament called on the Commission and the Council to report annually to the European Parliament and the national Parliaments of the EU Member States on the progress made by Turkey in fulfilling the political criteria, and to include in this report all verified cases of torture reported in that year and the number of Turkish asylum seekers accepted by the EU Member States during that year.

Finally, Turkey must continue the process of reconciliation with Armenia.