Resolution on the opening of negotiations with Turkey

2005/2576(RSP) - 28/09/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the opening of negotiations with Turkey on accession to the EU. Parliament noted that the Commission and the Council take the view that Turkey has formally fulfilled the last conditions for starting the accession negotiations on 3 October 2005, namely the bringing into force of the six outstanding pieces of legislation and the signing, in accordance with its own undertaking, of the protocol extending the Ankara Agreement to the ten new Member States. Parliament was of the opinion that, on these and other points, the implementation still has to be fulfilled.

It deplored the fact that Turkey has cast serious doubt on its willingness fully to implement all provisions of the Protocol by releasing a statement saying that the signing, ratification and implementation of that Protocol does not amount to any form of recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. (Please see AVC20050091). This unilateral declaration by Turkey does not form part of the Protocol and has no legal effect on Turkey's obligations under the Protocol, and should not be sent to the Grand National Assembly for ratification.

Parliament went on to state that Turkey is in breach of the Ankara Agreement and the related Customs Union irrespective of the Protocol by maintaining restrictions against vessels flying the Cypriot flag and vessels approaching from harbours in Cyprus, in the form of denial of access to Turkish ports, and against Cypriot aircraft, by denying them overflight rights and landing rights at Turkish airports. This practice infringes the principle of the free movement of goods. Parliament called on Turkey fully to implement all the provisions of the Protocol. The Commission is asked to make a full assessment of the implementation of the extended Ankara Agreement. Parliament stressed that failure in the implementation of this agreement would have serious implications for the negotiation process and could even lead to a halting of the negotiation process. Rapid normalisation of relations between Turkey and all EU Member States, including Turkey's recognition of Cyprus, is a necessary component of the accession process. Turkey's recognition of Cyprus can in no way be the subject of the negotiations.

Parliament stated that, in addition, Turkey must recognise the Armenian genocide. It felt that this recognition is a prerequisite for accession to the European Union.

Whilst respecting the democratic will of the Greek Cypriot community on the matter of the Annan plan, Parliament hoped that Turkey would maintain its constructive attitude in finding an equitable solution. Meanwhile, the Council should keep its promise and put an end to the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community reach an agreement on the financial aid and trade package for northern Cyprus.

On other issues, Parliament voiced its concern about the criminal proceedings against Turkish author Orhan Pamuk, about article 305 of the penal code which criminalises "acts against the fundamental national interest", about the restrictions on foreign funding for associations, and about the "Law on Foundations" concerning religious communities.

On the accession negotiations, Parliament wanted each negotiation session at ministerial level to be preceded by an assessment of the fulfilment of the political criteria, both in theory and in practice, thus exerting permanent pressure on the Turkish authorities to maintain the pace of the necessary reforms. Also, a full programme of clear targets, timeframe and deadlines should be fixed for the fulfilment of the political criteria. The Commission and the Council should report annually to the European Parliament and the national parliaments on the progress made by Turkey in this respect.

Parliament reiterated that the shared objective of the negotiations is accession, and that these negotiations are an open-ended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed in advance.

Finally, Parliament recalled that the Union's capacity to absorb Turkey while maintaining the momentum of European integration is an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and Turkey. It stated its support for the Commission in monitoring the Union's capacity to absorb Turkey, and therefore reminded the Commission of its demand to receive the follow-up to the impact study in 2005, which would provide useful information about this important aspect of the question.