

Women's role in the social, economical and political life in Turkey

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Emine BOZKURT (PES, NL) on women's role in social, economic and political life in Turkey. The report noted that, as evidenced by the Commission's 2006 report on Turkey's progress towards accession to the EU, Turkey's legal framework on women's rights "has in general been satisfactory, but its substantive implementation remains flawed". It welcomed the start of active EU accession talks with Turkey, but regretted "the slowing-down of the reform process in Turkey over the last year and the persistent problem with women's rights". It reiterated Parliament's previous calls for "full and effective implementation of the Community *acquis* in the field of women's rights, particularly in the poorer regions of the country" and pointed out that respect for human rights, including women's rights, is a precondition for membership of the EU. The report looked at a number of different areas:

- **implementation of legislation:** the Turkish Government was urged to speed up implementation of the new legislation on women's rights, to ensure that it complies with the Community *acquis*. The committee acknowledged that the new Penal Code (in force since 2005) substantially strengthens the basic rights of women but it pointed out that (unsuccessful) attempts have been made to repeal legislation on women's rights. It deplored the fact that, in parts of south-east Turkey, girls are not registered at birth and that this hampers the fight against forced marriage and honour crimes, since the victims have no official identity. The Turkish authorities were urged to ensure that all Turkish children are registered at birth;

- **tackling violence against women:** the report condemned "instances of violence against women, including honour killings, domestic violence, forced marriage and polygamy". It called on the Turkish Government and the Commission to tackle "violence in general and honour crimes in particular as a priority" and to set up special high-security shelters. It also identified other needs, such as training of police and judicial authorities in gender equality issues and the fight against violence, and the need for Turkish institutions to build alliances with all social groupings - civil, social or religious - to raise awareness of violence against women and children;

- **women in politics:** the report noted that very few women take part in politics in Turkey, and that there is a need for female role models in positions of power. It stressed that discrimination against women can sometimes best be remedied by temporary positive discrimination measures, and suggested the adoption of a mandatory quota system for election lists as the best way to improve female participation in Turkish politics in the short term. MEPs also urged Turkey's political parties to include more female candidates on election lists, starting from the upcoming elections in 2007;

- **education and the labour market:** the committee was concerned at the Commission's observation that women remain vulnerable to discrimination in Turkey, due partly to a lack of education and a high illiteracy rate. It cited UNICEF estimates that each year between 600 000 and 800 000 girls are either prevented by their families from going to school or do not attend it because of logistical difficulties. MEPs therefore called on the Turkish government to ensure gender equality in access to education and the labour market, especially in the south-eastern regions.

Lastly, MEPs stated that they intend to evaluate progress in the field of women's rights in Turkey on a regular basis, "in addition to, and in conjunction with, the yearly progress report of the Commission".

