Basic information

1996/2214(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic) Relations with Turkey: developments since the entry into force of the Customs Union. Annual Report **Subject** 6.40.05.08 Relations with Türkiye **Geographical area** Türkiye	Procedure completed

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs, Security and Defense Policy	MCMILLAN-SCOTT Edward (PPE)	28/01/1997

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
BUDG Budgets	GIANSILY Jean-Antoine (UPE)	18/05/1998
RELA External Economic Relations	SCHWAIGER Konrad K. (PPE)	18/12/1996
LIBE Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs	DEPREZ Gérard (PPE)	28/04/1998
LIBE Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs	SCHULZ Martin (PSE)	31/10/1996

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
General Affairs	2011	1997-06-02

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
30/10/1996	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1996)0491	Summary
28/11/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		

23/06/1998	Vote in committee		Summary
23/06/1998	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0251/1998	
16/09/1998	Debate in Parliament		
17/09/1998	End of procedure in Parliament		
12/10/1998	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1996/2214(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/4/08352

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0251/1998 OJ C 313 12.10.1998, p. 0006	23/06/1998	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0511/1998 OJ C 313 12.10.1998, p. 0127-0176	17/09/1998	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1996)0491	30/10/1996	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	COM(1998)0147	04/03/1998	Summary

Relations with Turkey: developments since the entry into force of the Customs Union. Annual Report

1996/2214(COS) - 30/10/1996 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: first annual report on the implementation of the customs union with Turkey and on the economic aspects and the human rights situation in this country. SUBSTANCE: This report reviews the developments in the relations of the Community with Turkey since the entry into force of the Customs Union on 31 December 1995: - on the functioning of the Customs Union itself, the report confirms that the customs duties and charges having equivalent effect have been abolished, as have quantitative restrictions. The Customs Union is thus functioning satisfactorily and at present there are no longer any quantitative restrictions or import or export duties in the industrial sector in trade with Turkey. - in economic terms the impact of the customs union is still unclear as there is insufficient statistical data to allow a proper analysis to be made. However, European exports to Turkey have

risen sharply since 1996 and there has been a smaller growth in exports from Turkey to the Union. The economic health of this country is not at present a matter for concern as growth during the first quarter of 1996 was 8%. The principal concern remains the macro-economic stability and Turkey's budget deficit which continues to grow. - as regards financial cooperation, as the financial regulation has still not been adopted by the Council (no unanimity following the events at Imia) the budgetary aid of ECU 375 million has still not yet been made available to this country. - there is most cause for concern as regards the political situation: the last elections enabled Mr Erbakan (REFAH Islamic party) to take up power in coalition with the DYP party (Mrs CILLER's party, who is currently deputy Prime Minister of Turkey). However, since the establishment of this new coalition legislative activity has been virtually at a standstill, which has also slowed down the expected developments as regards the strengthening of the democratization process. At the same time, the events in early 1996 involving the islands of Imia in the Aegean have considerably aggravated relations between Turkey and Greece and between Turkey and the Union as a whole. The difficult political situation in Turkey and the problems associated with the events on Imia have done little to enusre progress on the problem of Cyprus. The violent incidents in Cyprus in August 1996 clearly helped to worsen the tension on the island and have served to convince international opinion that cohabitation of the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities as part of a single Federal state was 'impossible'. - as regards human rights the situation is hardly improved: because of the political situation the 1995 reforms (constitutional reform, amendment of Article 8 of the anti-terrorism law, etc.) have in the end not had any practical effect as prosecution for expression of opinions still continue to occur (although in smaller numbers). With regard to measures specifically against torture and ill-treatment, disappearances and extrajudicial executions, there has not been any major progress either. These practices have also been the subject of vigorous condemnation on the part of the EU Presidency. The situation in the prisons is also a matter for concern where dramatic hunger strikes have drawn attention to the appalling conditions of detention for Turkish prisoners. Furthermore, the state of emergency in the south-east provinces of Turkey has still not been lifted. Similarly, the Kurdish problem, far from being resolved has become bogged down and associations are now bearing the cost of government repression of the Kurdish cause and in particular its action against the Kurdish party PKK (which the Turks consider to be a terrorist party). While the Commission criticizes the criminal activities of the PKK (combated by several Member States), it stresses that action against this movement must not stand in the way of the recognition of the rights, particularly the cultural rights, of Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin, whilst still respecting Turkey's unity and integrity. In conclusion, although not particularly encouraging, the efforts made by Turkey in recent months should not halt Turkish-European partnership. This is in any case the Commission's wish, which considers that the Union should remain a full partner of Turkey, in particular to deal with the tension in the Aegean and in Cyprus.

Relations with Turkey: developments since the entry into force of the Customs Union. Annual Report

1996/2214(COS) - 17/09/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mr Edward McMILLAN-SCOTT (PPE, UK) on customs union between the EU and Turkey, the European Parliament considered that customs union was working satisfactorily. It did, however, call for the social impact of customs union on Turkish society to be monitored. It supported proposals from Turkish civil society aimed at achieving improvements in Turkish democracy and human rights and stressed that Turkey?s application to join the EU, like that of every other applicant country, would be examined in the light of the Copenhagen criteria. It hoped that the dialogue for which provision was made in the Association Agreement would continue and asked for contacts between Parliament and Turkish political parties and foundations and the organisations of civil society to be encouraged. However, it regretted that some of the ministerial meetings between Turkish and European representatives in the trade and transport sector had not yet been held since customs union entered into force in 1995. The European Parliament reiterated that only projects approved by the Commission/Parliament interinstitutional working party could be granted a financial commitment under MEDA. The European Parliament called on the Council to inform it of any initiatives taken with the Turkish authorities allowing adoption of the financial regulation concerning special aid for Turkey to go ahead. It called on the Commission to consider if a specific budgetary item for Turkey should be included in the MEDA programme on democracy. It also called on the Commission to continue publishing an annual report on relations between the EC and Turkey without showing any indulgence. Noting that future relations between the European Union and Turkey cannot develop without financial intervention on the part of the European Union, it stated that the financial impact of proposals to consolidate customs union will be decided by the budgetary authority during the annual budgetary procedures. Welcoming the huge efforts made by Turkey to align its legislation and preferential regime with that of the European Union, it supported current and future initiatives to improve the implementation of all the administrative procedures of customs union. In order to help Turkey in its effort to adapt and restructure its economy, the European Parliament asked for priority to be given to sectors such as energy, the environment, vocational training and reform of the civil service. It also called on the Commission to assess the programmes for applicant countries with which Turkey might be associated (especially Socrates, Leonardo, Youth for Europe, Kaleidoscope, Raphaël, LIFE, SAVE, AIDS Prevention and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women). The European Parliament called on Turkey to assist the resumption of intercommunal talks on the basis of the UN resolutions and the agreements on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation and to withdraw its military forces from Cyprus. It also supported the action described by the Commission in its report on democratization, safeguarding human rights and political control of the armed forces; the establishment of good neighbourly relations Greece and Turkey; respect for the principles of international law in resolving differences in the Aegean and the Cyprus question. As far as the Kurdish question was concerned, it stated that there could be no military solution to this question and asked the authorities to begin negotiations with organisations representing the Kurdish people in order to respond to their demands for freedom and autonomy. It pointed to the need for a ceasefire and asked the Turkish authorities to seek a peaceful negotiated political solution to the Kurdish question. Condemning the invasion of northern Iraq and the unstable political situation in the Kurdish security zone, it asked for the immediate release of Leyla Zana and other political prisoners. Finally, it insisted that political dialogue with Turkey should be relaunched.

Relations with Turkey: developments since the entry into force of the Customs Union. Annual Report

1996/2214(COS) - 04/03/1998 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: to submit a report on the implementation of the customs union between the Union and Turkey and on economic, political, democratic and human rights developments there. SUBSTANCE: This second annual report, like the previous one (see COS0487 - COM(96)491), reviews developments in the Community's relations with Turkey since the entry into force of the customs union on 31.12.1995 : 1) functioning of the customs union: the customs union continues to function satisfactorily, Turkey having continued to harmonize its laws with Community laws in the field of competition and trade policy. Free trade agreements have been signed with most of the CEECs, and Turkey's preferential regime is being revised to align it with that of the Union. With regard to agricultural products, an agreement improving market access entered into force in 1998. Other initiatives are anticipated with the aim of consolidating trade relations (agriculture, competition, motor vehicles, etc.); 2) economic situation: the impact of the customs union is undeniable, as the volume of trade between the Union and Turkey has increased substantially (exports from the Union to Turkey have increased by 36% and Turkey's exports to the Union by 10%). The vitality of Turkey's economy is incontestable (and it grew by 6% in 1997). Significant problems remain, however, with regard to inflation, the public deficit and currency depreciation. With regard to these three aspects, Turkey has not yet succeeded in defining a credible economic strategy and introducing the necessary structural reforms; 3) financial cooperation: the financial Regulation granting ECU 375 m in aid to Turkey is still blocked for lack of unanimity, and it has been impossible to implement numerous projects. However, some MEDA projects were undertaken in 1996 and 1997; 4) political dialogue with Europe: in this respect the atmosphere has deteriorated since the Union's decision (at the Luxembourg Council of December 1997) not to accept Turkey in the next round of accessions. The meetings officially scheduled in the ambit of the customs union have not been able to take place, and for the time being the political dialogue is suspended; 5) domestic political situation: the situation may be described as unstable, with the new minority coalition headed by Mr Yilmaz (ANAP) having been in power since June 1997. As regards reforms, only a law on the extension of compulsory education from 5 to 8 years - which was very controversial - has been adopted. The REFAH party, the first Islamic party, has been dissolved (a decision censured by the Union). Internationally, the situation is little better, with constant tensions in the Aegean Sea and no resolution of the Cyprus issue. In this respect the Commission recalls that under Agenda 2000, whatever the political situation on the island, acession negotiations are to begin with the Greek Cypriot party; 6) human rights: the situation may be regarded as mixed. Apart from the adoption of a law on police custody in March 1997, there have been no substantial constitutional reforms. However, the setting-up of a High Committee on the democratic reform process may be noted; it is too soon to gauge its impact. As regards prosecutions for offences of opinion, there has been a slight change with the adoption of an amnesty law in 1997, but the anti-terrorism law enshrined in Turkey's Constitution (although revised) still permits prosecution of journalists and opponents of the government. The state of emergency in 6 of the 9 provinces of Southeast Turkey has not yet been lifted, although measures have been announced to assist the socio-economic development of these regions. Greater decentralization of power could also be granted to these regions in some sectors of domestic and external policy. In conclusion, and in accordance with the conclusions of Agenda 2000, the Union should continue its efforts to help Turkey resolve its internal problems and restore a climate conducive to closer relations. In this context, the Commission recalls that a series of proposals were made in March 1998, after the Luxembourg European Council, with the aim of outlining a new European strategy towards Turkey (see COS0614).