



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2118(INI)	Procedure completed
Report on Turkey's progress towards accession		
Subject 8.20.01 Candidate countries		
Geographical area Turkey		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible		Rapporteur
	AFET Foreign Affairs		Appointed 13/09/2004
			PPE-DE EURLINGS Camiel
	Committee for opinion		Rapporteur for opinion
	DEVE Development		Appointed The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	INTA International Trade		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	BUDG Budgets		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	CONT Budgetary Control		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	TRAN Transport and Tourism		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	REGI Regional Development		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	PECH Fisheries		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	CULT Culture and Education		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	JURI Legal Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs		The committee decided not to

European Commission		give an opinion.
	AFCO Constitutional Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	22/06/2006
		PSE BOZKURT Emine
	PETI Petitions	The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	Commission DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	Commissioner REHN Olli

Key events

01/06/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
04/09/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
13/09/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0269/2006	
26/09/2006	Debate in Parliament		
27/09/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
27/09/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0381/2006	Summary
27/09/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/2118(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/6/37036

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE374.360	06/06/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE376.373	04/07/2006	EP	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE376.341	05/07/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0269/2006	13/09/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0381/2006	27/09/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)4772	19/10/2006	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)5076	13/12/2006	EC	

Report on Turkey's progress towards accession

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Camiel EURLINGS (EPP-ED, NL) on Turkey's progress towards accession. MEPs remained committed to accession as the goal of EU negotiations with Turkey, but said that both in Turkey and in the EU important reforms were needed in order to achieve this outcome.

The report welcomed the start of the accession negotiations with Turkey, but expressed regret that the reform process in Turkey had slowed down over the last year. It went on to look at the current situation with regard to democracy and the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities, and regional issues and external relations. The committee noted "persistent shortcomings" in areas such as freedom of expression, religious and minority rights, the role of the military, policing, women's rights, trade union rights and cultural rights, and urged Turkey to "reinvigorate" the reform process.

The report recognised the improvements in legislation resulting from the Turkish Government's efforts since 2002 as regards the policy of zero tolerance towards torture, but stressed that more effective implementing measures were needed. It also noted that certain progress had been made in the area of women's rights following the introduction of the new Penal Code, but said that further efforts were needed to eradicate discriminatory practices and violence against women.

The committee said that the drafting of a new Constitution was "a further and probably necessary reflection of the very fundamental nature of the changes required for EU membership". It also reiterated the need for Turkey to comply with the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. With regard to freedom of religion in particular, MEPs deplored the absence of progress and reiterated Parliament's previous calls to the Turkish authorities to fulfil their commitments and to take concrete steps to eradicate obstacles facing religious minorities. While respecting the sensitivities of a country with a large majority of Sunni Muslims, the report nevertheless reminded Turkey of the important cultural and historic heritage "handed down to it for safe-keeping by the multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious Ottoman Empire".

Looking at the situation in the South East, the committee strongly condemned the resurgence of terrorist violence on the part of the PKK and expressed concern about the tensions in this region, which constituted a serious threat to peace and stability. The Turkish Government, for its part, was urged to pursue a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue, inter alia by promoting the political dialogue and the economic and social development of the South East region, possibly using EU pre-accession assistance.

MEPs also called on Turkey "to take concrete steps for the normalisation of bilateral relations" with Cyprus "as soon as possible". They referred in this context to the Council declaration of 21 September 2005 (which said that continuing negotiations would depend on Turkey opening its borders to Cypriot vessels and airplanes and that the situation would be reviewed in 2006). Regarding Cyprus itself, the committee welcomed the meeting between Mr Papadopoulos and Mr Talat, which led to the agreement of 8 July 2006.

Turning to other issues, the committee called on Turkey to recognise the Armenian genocide as a precondition for accession. And it called for a lowering of the threshold of ten percent of the votes below which political parties cannot enter the Turkish parliament. MEPs also repeated that negotiations do not lead automatically to accession and said that whether or not negotiations are successfully concluded, Turkey must remain "fully anchored in European structures."

Report on Turkey's progress towards accession

The European Parliament adopted a resolution, by 429 votes in favour to 71 against with 125 abstentions based on the own-initiative report by Camiel EURLINGS (EPP-ED, NL) on Turkey's progress towards accession. It called on the government in Ankara to recognise the Republic of Cyprus, withdraw its forces from the island and lift its embargo on Cypriot vessels and aircraft. It reminded Turkey that a lack of progress in implementing the Ankara Protocol will have serious implications for the negotiation process, and could even bring it to a halt. It also called on both Greece and Turkey to refrain from tension-prone military activities. Moreover, Parliament stressed that Ankara has to introduce freedom of expression and amend Article 301 of its Penal Code.

However, Parliament rejected the clause calling for the acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide a "precondition" for Turkey's European Union accession. It nevertheless stressed that, although the recognition of the Armenian genocide as such is formally not one of the Copenhagen criteria, it is indispensable for a country on the road to membership to come to terms with and recognise its past. Parliament called on the Turkish authorities to facilitate the work of researchers, intellectuals and academics working on this question, ensuring them the access to the historical archives and providing them with all the relevant documents. Turkey was also urged to take the necessary steps, without any preconditions, to establish diplomatic and good neighbourly relations with Armenia, to withdraw the economic blockade and to open the land border at an early date, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by Parliament between 1987 and 2005, thereby fulfilling the Accession Partnership priorities and the requirements of the Negotiation Framework on 'peaceful settlement on border disputes' which are both mandatory for EU accession. A similar position should be adopted for the cases of other minorities (e.g. the Greeks of Pontos and the Assyrians).

Parliament stated, furthermore, that it hoped that the forthcoming visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Turkey would contribute to strengthening inter-religious and intercultural dialogue between the Christian and Muslim world.

With regard to Cyprus, Parliament reminded Turkey that recognition of all Member States, including the Republic of Cyprus, is a necessary component of the accession process. It called upon Turkey to take concrete steps for the normalisation of bilateral relations with the Republic as soon as possible. Turkish authorities should maintain a constructive attitude in finding a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question within the UN framework, acceptable to both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and based on the previous work of the UN. It went on to call on both parties to adopt a constructive attitude in finding a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question.

Parliament welcomed the opening of broadcasting in Kurdish, while nevertheless noting the continued intimidation of civil society representatives in the South East of the country. The report strongly condemned the resurgence of terrorist violence on the part of the PKK and

called on the PKK to declare and respect an immediate ceasefire. Parliament called on the Turkish Government to pursue a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue following Prime Minister Erdoğan's encouraging statement of last year. It was essential to strike a balance between the need to control the situation as regards security, avoiding civil-military strains, and effectively promoting the political dialogue and the economic and social development of the south-east region through a comprehensive strategy supported by adequate means.

Despite the recent acquittal of the novelist Elif Shafak, Parliament remained troubled by the remaining barriers to freedom of expression in Turkey. It called for the abolition or amendment of those provisions of the Penal Code which threaten European free speech norms -such as Articles 216, 277, 285, 301 (which foresees punishment for "denigrating Turkishness"), 305 and 318. These provisions allowed for arbitrary interpretations by judges and prosecutors leading to judgments which run counter to freedom of expression and freedom of the press and thus constitute a threat to respect for human rights and freedoms and negatively affect the progress of democracy.