

Key findings of the 2010 progress report on Turkey

On 9 November, the Commission adopted its 2010 Enlargement package. It comprised a Strategy paper, the Opinions on the membership applications by Montenegro and Albania and seven Progress Reports on the other candidate countries and potential candidates, including on Turkey. On Turkey, the Commission concluded that the country has made progress in meeting EU membership criteria, in particular through the reform of its constitution. However, further results are needed as regards fundamental rights, in particular to assure freedom of expression in practice. Overall, accession negotiations advanced albeit rather slowly. If Turkey proceeds to full implementation of its Customs Union obligations with the EU, and makes progress towards normalisation of relations with Cyprus, it will be able to accelerate the pace of negotiations.

Ahead of the adoption of the Report, Commissioner Füle stated: "Despite overall progress in 2009, we are concerned that Turkey's accession process is losing its momentum. The key to changing this is primarily with Turkey, which is expected to fully implement its current contractual relations with the EU – the Customs Union – before it can gear up to full membership of the Union".

Political criteria

Turkey continues to sufficiently fulfil the political criteria. The package of constitutional amendments approved in a referendum on 12 September created the conditions for progress in a number of areas, such as the judiciary and fundamental rights and public administration. The reforms limit the competence of military courts; restructure the constitutional court; widen the composition of the high council of judges and prosecutors, making it more representative of the judiciary as a whole; broaden trade union rights in the public sector; provide the basis for the adoption of special measures protecting the rights of women and children; guarantee protection of personal data and grant the right to apply to an ombudsman.

Implementation of the constitutional amendments in a transparent and inclusive way is key. Moreover, significant efforts are still needed on fundamental rights. Journalists repeatedly face prosecutions and convictions, and pressure on the media undermines freedom of the press in practice. Non-Muslim religious communities and the Alevi community continue to face undue constraints. The "democratic opening" aimed notably at addressing the Kurdish issue has produced only limited results.

With regard to regional issues and international obligations, **Turkey has expressed support for the negotiations between the leaders of the two communities under the good offices of the UN Secretary-General to find a solution to the Cyprus problem.** Turkey still has not complied with its obligation of full non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement. There is no progress towards normalisation of bilateral relations

with the Republic of Cyprus. As regards relations with Greece, there is renewed impetus to improve bilateral relations.

Economic criteria

Turkey is a functioning market economy. It should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term, provided it implements its comprehensive reform programme in order to address structural weaknesses.

Economic growth resumed in 2009 and accelerated in 2010, recouping most of the losses incurred during the crisis. Fiscal sustainability was maintained and access to external finance remained unproblematic for both the public and private sectors. Trade and economic integration with the EU remained high and Turkey strengthened its presence in new markets.

Privatisation and economic reforms advanced, albeit at a slower pace. Unemployment is higher than pre-crisis levels and external imbalances and financing needs increased. Access of SMEs to financing remains difficult.

EU Legislation

Turkey continued improving its ability to take on the obligations of membership by aligning its laws and regulations with those of the EU. The adoption of the State Aid Law by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in October is an important step towards starting accession negotiations in the area of competition. Much alignment remains to be done, in particular on fisheries, social policies, justice and home affairs. As regards the Customs Union, a number of longstanding trade irritants remain unresolved. For most areas it is crucial that Turkey improves its administrative capacity to implement and enforce the EU-related legislation.

Turkey remains an important partner in the area of EU energy security. Turkey ratified the Intergovernmental Agreement on Nabucco. The initialisation of the EU-Turkey horizontal aviation agreement in March 2010 paves the way for closer cooperation between Turkey and the EU in the aviation sector. Substantial progress was made towards finalising negotiations on an EU-Turkey readmission agreement.

State of play on accession negotiations

Two chapters were opened over the reporting period: environment and food safety. In total, 13 out of 33 negotiation chapters have been opened since EU accession negotiations with Turkey began on 3 October 2005. One chapter has been provisionally closed¹. In addition, opening benchmarks have been set as conditions for opening negotiations on 8 chapters².

As a result of Turkey not having fully implemented the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement, the EU decided in December 2006 that eight negotiating chapters could not be opened³ and that no chapter could be provisionally closed until Turkey meets its obligations.

¹ Food safety, environment, taxation, information society and media, free movement of capital, intellectual property law, company law, trans-European networks, consumer and health protection, financial control, statistics, enterprise and industry, provisionally closed: science and research.

² Free movement of goods, freedom to provide services, public procurement, competition policy, financial services, agriculture, employment and social policy, customs union.

³ Free movement of goods, right of establishment and freedom to provide service, financial services, agriculture and rural development, fisheries, transport policy, customs union and external relations.

EU-TURKEY: KEY DATES

September 1959 - Turkey applies for associate membership of the European Economic Community (EEC).

September 1963 – Signature of the association agreement (known as the Ankara Agreement), aiming at bringing Turkey into a Customs Union with the EEC and to eventual membership.

April 1987 - Turkey applies for full membership to the EEC.

1995 – Turkey - EU Association Council finalises the agreement creating a customs union between Turkey and the EU.

December 1999 - Turkey obtains status of an EU candidate country.

December 2004 - The European Council defines the conditions for the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey.

October 2005 - Opening of accession negotiations with Turkey.

More information at:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2010_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/candidate-countries/turkey/index_en.htm

Contact:

Angela Filote +32 229 51968

Anca Paduraru +32 229 66430