



**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
PRIME MINISTRY
SECRETARIAT GENERAL FOR EU AFFAIRS**

9 November 2010

**PRESS POINTS FOR MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN UNION AFFAIRS AND
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR H.E. MR. EGEMEN BAĞIŞ ON
TURKEY'S PROGRESS REPORT 2010**

- Since 1998, the European Commission publishes an annual Progress Report on Turkey, as it is the case with all candidate countries. In addition to Turkey's Progress Report 2010, Enlargement Strategy Paper, assessing the developments in candidate and potential candidate countries, has also been published today. This report is the 13th Progress Report prepared for Turkey.
- Final version of the report will be available on the web-site of EUSG both in English and in Turkish translation.
- The progress report covers the period of October 2009-October 2010. It includes the legislation adopted and concrete measures put into effect within that period. Alignment efforts that are in the pipeline are not covered by the report if it has been put into force yet.
- Comprehensive and technical assessment made by the Report is a very clear and apparent indicator that Turkey has taken important steps in the right direction and that the membership process is indeed "maturing."
- As is the case in previous reports, almost all positive steps taken in each chapter are succeeded by observations and the challenges that we have to face in the alignment process. Criticisms in the report will guide our future work. Obviously, the Progress Report allows us to look inward and engage in self-criticism.

- We should bear in mind that these texts are not divine. We believe that Progress Reports are prepared with a fair and objective perspective. The reports have an objective of preparing the candidate countries to membership and contribute to their transformation into a more democratic, modern and prosperous country.
- 2010 Progress Report contains no element of surprise for us. It is, after all, a picture of Turkey taken by the Commission, and it is natural that it contains some criticism. Had there been Progress Reports prepared for current member states, it would be inevitable to contain criticism on topics such as democratization, rights and freedom, economic criteria and harmonization with the acquis.
- On the other hand, there are also areas where we do not share the point of view of the European Commission. A study will be carried out with the contributions of all relevant institutions and under the coordination of EUSG so that our views shall be brought to Commission's notice.
- Last year, I said that the 2009 Progress Report was the most positive Progress Report until then. I am pleased to repeat the same words for the 2010 Report. 2010 Progress Report is the most positive and encouraging one when compared to other 12 Reports.
- Turkey has recorded great progress since the first Progress Report of 1998. Through our efforts in the last 8 years, Turkey has become the fastest growing economy of Europe, with high democratic standards pursuing a proactive foreign policy. Therefore, the pictures of Turkey reflected in the Progress Report of 1998 and that of 2010 are completely different. The progress Turkey achieved during these years is striking.
- Looking at today's report, we can say that we will not be waiting for another 13 years for becoming an EU member state. The Commission's recognition of our progress on all chapters is the indication of bright days ahead.

- I believe that everyone shall take the right message from the Progress Report. This Report has one message and it is that everyone who supports EU membership has a responsibility in this process.
- The Report is positive and balanced.
- It reflects Turkey's determination to the EU process by specific efforts:
 - Inter-institutional coordination improved by the EU Minister and Chief Negotiator,
 - Incorporation of civil society into the accession process,
 - Dialogue with the representatives of different religious groups,
 - Appointment of deputy governors as EU points in 81 provinces,
 - Reform Monitoring Group convening for the first time under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Erdoğan,
 - RMG meetings taking place in different parts of the country to incorporate the society into the accession process,
 - Turkey's EU Strategy and 2010-2011 Action Plan.
- The report stresses Government's reform efforts particularly mentioning the Constitutional Reform Package.
- The report states that the Constitutional Amendments and the Judicial Reform has strengthened the independence, impartiality and effectiveness of the judicial system.
- The reforms are praised for limiting the competence of military courts; restructuring the constitutional court; widening the composition of the high council of judges and prosecutors, making it more representative of the judiciary as a whole; broadening trade union rights in the public sector; providing the basis for the adoption of special measures protecting the rights of women and children; guaranteeing protection of personal data and granting the right to apply to an ombudsman.

- The Progress Report points out that the disputes between political parties are affecting the reform process and delaying the legislation process. The Report also stresses the importance of incorporating civil society and other political parties in the constitutional amendment process. As you may remember, we have tried hard for reaching a consensus but other parties had been reluctant to discuss any constitutional amendment.
- “Democratic Opening” efforts of our government are also emphasized in the Progress Report. Broadcasting in different languages and dialects, permission to use different languages and dialects in prisons have been mentioned as positive developments.
- In the field of human rights, establishment of different institutions are mentioned. The report also praises our government’s steps to establish the Ombudsman Institution, National Human Rights Institution and an independent monitoring mechanism.
- Investigations and cases about secret coup plans and illegal organisations such as Ergenekon are evaluated as an opportunity for Turkey to strengthen the confidence in the proper functioning of its democratic institutions and the rule of law. There are some criticisms on the trial process and length of pre-trial detention. We have also raised similar concerns on those issues which will be fixed through the judicial reform process.
- Concrete steps taken by our Government against torture and ill treatment, fighting against the culture of impunity, developments on the enforcement of penal sanctions against torturers are stated as positive developments.
- Amendment in the election law allowing the use of other languages than Turkish in election campaigns is listed as another development.

- Positive discrimination of children and women introduced by the Constitutional amendment and steps taken to resolve the issues of different religious groups such as the related Prime Ministry Circular are also praised in the Report.
- As in the previous reports, issues of Halki Seminary, “Ecumenical” title and education of minority religious officials have been mentioned in the 2010 Progress Report. However, our government’s efforts of enhancing the tolerance and mutual understanding with different religious groups were also mentioned in the same Report. Furthermore, positive repercussions of the visits paid to the leaders of different religions by public institutions under the organization of the EUSG, in terms of freedom of faith, has been mentioned positively.
- Moreover, there are criticisms regarding the inadequacy of the representation of women in the political life, high-levels of public institutions and NGOs, the low level of women’s employment, the existence of prejudices about the role of women in the school books and the increase in the number of honour killings. Our efforts increasingly continue in order reflect the legislative changes into the social and cultural situation of women.
- The Progress Report points out the existence of free and open debate in Turkey in the media and in different segments of the society. It also stresses the positive developments in the implementation of the Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code. However, there are still criticisms about freedom of expression and some provisions of the Turkish Penal Code.
- The criticisms about freedom of expression and the press will guide us. However, I would like to stress that most of the criticism is linked to the judicial process. I also want to stress that we consider the media to be a mirror that shows the truth and makes constructive criticism. But we do have the right to ask from the media to make their criticism without any insult and defamation.

- Despite of our objections, the Aegean and Cyprus issues have been placed under the heading of Political Criteria. Regarding Cyprus, the Report underlines the support Turkey provided to the negotiation process on the island and reiterates the demand for “non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement”. It is worth highlighting that the report contains no wording on suspending Turkey-EU negotiations.
- The report also emphasized the increase in the number of terrorist attacks by the PKK, which is on the EU list of terrorist organisations, not only in the south-east but also in cities throughout Turkey.
- On the other hand, the report appreciates Turkey’s contribution to EU’s common foreign and security policy, as well as her efforts for developing the stability in South Caucasus, Middle East and Balkans and also her relations with EU member countries, particularly with Greece.
- In terms of economic criteria, the Report highlights that, as in the case of the last year, Turkey, despite all recessionary effects of the economic crisis, still has a smoothly functioning market economy. Additionally, it is emphasized that Turkey’s economy has so far shown strong flexibility and resilience in responding to the crisis and Turkey has recovered rapidly as revealed by the high growth rates since the second half of 2009.
- The report particularly points out the success of the economic stability programme undertaken in the last decade. The report draws attention to the fact that our economy has shown a great growth performance with a rate of 11% in the first half of 2010 and the expansion in trade, industry and construction by over 15% in the same period. In tandem with the economic recovery, the Report also underlines the substantial improvement in the unemployment rate by mid-2010. This is definitely a concrete result of the successful policies of our government during its term in office.

- Generally speaking of the developments since the last Progress Report, progress or good progress has been mentioned for 23 chapters out of 33.
- On the other hand, we have provided limited progress for 7 Chapters (*Free Movement of Goods, Agriculture and Rural Development, Financial Control, Free Movement of Capital, Financial and Budgetary Provisions, Company Law, Information Society and Media*); and very limited progress for 3 chapters (*Freedom of Movement for Workers, Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services, Intellectual Property Law*)
- It is noteworthy to underline that, contrary to the 2009 Report, 2010 Report does not identify any chapter where there is “no progress.”
- This is an indicator of the fact that our new EU strategy functions well with the support and effort of all relevant institutions. Therefore, I would like to thank to all the institutions and everyone who contributed to this process.
- As I mentioned before, we would like to advance our accession negotiations together with Brussels. However, in case this process continues to be hindered by the attitudes of several political leaders who lack common sense, we will have to proceed in Ankara on our EU path.
- Our actual progress will be better appreciated if we also consider that we are not able to open 17 chapters because of political blockages in the negotiation process and we are not even given the opening criteria for some chapters.
- The Commission states that progress has been recorded in chapters such as “Energy”, “Economic and Monetary Union”, “Education and Culture” where no opening benchmarks exist and in chapters such as “Judiciary and Fundamental Rights” and “Justice, Freedom and Security” that are crucial for the political reform process. However, those chapters being subject to political blockage indicates EU’s own paradox.

- We would also like to see a corresponding goodwill and sincere effort on the EU side. I hope that our EU membership negotiations shall be carried out on a technical basis that is independent from political blockages as in the case of other candidate countries.
- Turkey's objective is full membership to the EU and beyond that, to provide Turkish people the level and the life standard they deserve. It is evident that many crucial steps could be taken more easily, if the opposition parties also give support to this process.
- Today is November 9th, the anniversary of the fall of Berlin Wall. EU has no time to lose by erecting new walls. New bridges shall be established instead of walls. EU project can only be completed by Turkey.
- Tomorrow is November 10th. We will be commemorating Atatürk, the founder of the Republic. In accordance with the objective of reaching the level of contemporary civilizations that Atatürk pointed out, our government has been working hard for the last 8 years. I would like to emphasize that Atatürk can be commemorated properly only by progressing on his path to make Turkey a more democratic, more modern and more reputable country; not with heroic remarks as some do.