

13 February 2006

# Screening report

# Turkey

## Chapter 26 – Education and Culture

**Date of screening meetings:**

Explanatory meeting: 26 October 2005

Bilateral meeting: 16 November 2005

## I. CHAPTER CONTENT

The areas of education and training, youth and culture are primarily the competence of the Member States. The EC Treaty provides that the Community shall encourage cooperation between Member States and support and supplement their actions, while fully respecting their responsibility for the content of teaching, organisation of education and vocational training systems, and their national and regional cultural diversity.

In the field of education, training and youth, the *acquis* consists beside a directive on education of the children of migrant workers and the judgments of the European Court of Justice on cases related to non-discrimination between nationals of an EU Member State and other EU nationals, mainly in a cooperation framework. In the light of the Lisbon Strategy, an open method of coordination on education, training and youth policies has been established with a view to convergence of national policies and the attainment of shared objectives. The concrete future objectives of education and training systems endorsed in 2001, as well as the Copenhagen process for vocational training and the Bologna process for higher education, are providing directions for the improvement and development of the quality of education and training systems. This resulted in the work programme 'Education and Training 2010', which integrates all actions in the fields of education and training at European level. Common objectives have also been agreed for the EU youth policies. In addition, Member States need to have the legal, administrative and financial framework as well as the necessary implementing capacity in place to ensure sound management including financial management of all decentralised education, training and youth Community programmes (currently Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates and Youth and in future Integrated Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes).

As regards cultural policy, Member States need to uphold the principles enshrined in Article 151 of the EC Treaty and, in particular, ensure that their international commitments allow for the development and implementation of policies and instruments aiming at preserving and promoting cultural diversity. In accordance with these principles, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, once ratified, will become a major element of the Community *acquis* in the field of culture.

## II. COUNTRY ALIGNMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

This part summarises the information provided by Turkey and the discussion at the screening meeting.

Turkey indicated that it can accept the *acquis* regarding Education and Culture. Turkey indicated that it does not expect any difficulties to implement the *acquis* by accession.

### II.a. Education, training and youth

#### Cooperation in the field of policies

The Turkish Constitution guarantees the right of education and training, and the basic law covering formal and non-formal education specifies that educational institutions are open to all, regardless of race, sex and religion; equal opportunities shall be provided to everybody and general and vocational education should continue throughout people's lifetime.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for planning, conducting and controlling educational activities, including the opening-up of formal and non-formal education institutions and the performing of vocational training activities, all with the exception of

higher education. Another body, the constitutionally autonomous Council of Higher Education (YÖK), composed of 21 members appointed by the President of the Republic, is organising, orientating and controlling the activities of the institutions of higher education. In state universities, the rector is appointed by the President of the Republic; the final selection is among three candidates selected by YÖK out of six determined by the vote of the faculty members.

Eight years of primary education is compulsory and free of charge in state schools. The duration of secondary education (general, vocational and technical) was extended in 2005 from 3 to 4 years. Admission to higher education (77 universities) is centralised and based on a nation-wide single-stage examination, administered by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (OSYM), which depends on the YÖK.

Turkey stated that it fully shares the ambitious set of goals and objectives in the field of education agreed upon by the EU as part of the broader Lisbon Agenda and aims to converge to those in the process of accession. Turkey takes part in the Education and Training 2010 process and has submitted a report in 2005 on its progress and national strategies towards the common goals.

The proportion of the total public education budget as a share of GDP increased from 3.79% in 2003 to 4.18% in 2005. Turkey aims at ensuring more efficient use of these resources and encouraging private investments in the educational system. Enrolment ratios increased at all educational levels during the last decade. Curricula have been redesigned following the results of the 2003 PISA study which showed that the performance of Turkish pupils is relatively low compared to EU and OECD averages, in particular for reading literacy. In addition, Turkey plans to significantly increase the average percentage of people having at least upper secondary education and to ensure a more efficient use of information and communication technologies at all levels of education.

Lifelong learning has been a priority for the last two decades. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Turkish Employment Organisation carry out special programmes in order to strengthen the link between vocational training and employment. Lifelong learning activities are provided by many different actors: government institutions, private sector and increasingly by NGOs. As a result of recent focus, stemming from the Lisbon Agenda, plans are made to develop a unified strategy.

Turkey has joined the Bologna Process in 2001 and took measures to implement its action lines. The structure of Turkish higher education degrees is a three-cycle system. Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) were made mandatory at all universities. Work is ongoing on the implementation of a new set of regulations for the quality assessment of all universities. Today, European studies are present in 29 out of 77 higher education institutions. There are 14 universities in Turkey where the medium of instruction is English or French. A new regulation was enacted, to provide more student involvement in the universities and a legal basis for a national representation of student councils. Nevertheless, Turkey still faces some challenges in the area of higher education, such as to overcome the obstacles influencing the mobility of students and staff, to further promote joint degrees and joint study programmes and to create synergies between education and research and between educational and research institutions.

Turkey has not yet been invited to take part in the open method of coordination in the field of youth and to submit a national report on its youth policy. However, it participated in the consultation process on the Commission's White Paper on Youth, which resulted in common objectives being established at EU level for youth participation and information,

greater understanding and knowledge of youth and voluntary activities for young people. Turkey adopted national measures in relation to these objectives. Current youth policy in Turkey includes the promotion of the participation of youth in social and political life, creating better opportunities for integrating young people in the economy and enhancing the participation of vulnerable young people.

NGOs are in general involved in developing and implementing youth policies. The revised Law of Local administrations made it an obligation for each municipality to establish Youth Councils within City Councils to foster participation of the young population in determining local policies. The government plans to establish a National Youth Parliament and envisages to reduce the age limit for sitting in parliament. The government also aims at strengthening the youth centres for spare time and social activities nationwide and supports the enhancement of youth employment and entrepreneurship under several programmes.

#### Access to education for EU citizens

As regards the education of school aged children of migrant workers, implementing legislation, adopted in 2002, guarantees equal education, training and scholarship opportunities to these pupils. It specifies that a central executive board and provincial educational directorates have the duties, inter alia, to take the necessary measures to help those pupils learn their language and culture of origin, to preserve their identity and also to provide Turkish language courses for them and their parents.

In higher education establishments, foreign students are admitted on the basis of an entrance examination in English, assessing their basic learning skills, or on the basis of a selection by a joint committee in implementation of bilateral agreements with their country of origin. The governmental scholarships are available for EU and third country nationals through cultural agreements and cultural exchange programmes with foreign governments and institutions. Currently, Turkey applies the 'principle of reciprocity' through bilateral agreements with a number of countries, meaning, that foreign nationals enjoy the same prerogatives in Turkey as Turkish citizens in the foreign country. Turkey stated that accession to the EU would supersede this principle and would result in an equal treatment of students of all EU Member States. Turkey has committed itself to fully apply the principle of non-discrimination upon accession.

#### Community programmes

Turkey has been participating in the Community programmes Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth since 1 April 2004 after having implemented preparatory measures, including the establishment of the institutional and administrative structure, regulatory work, training of staff and information campaigns for potential beneficiaries.

The Turkish National Agency (NA) is an independent public entity with a legal status, reporting on the one hand to the European Commission and on the other hand to the National Authority. The functions of the National Authority are carried out by a Steering and Monitoring Committee (SMC) under the political responsibility of the Minister of State and Deputy Prime Minister, involving 7 institutions and chaired by the Deputy Undersecretary of the State Planning Organisation.

Supported by continued information campaigns by the NA, all three programmes met right from the start with a strong interest among stakeholders. In 2005, there was a considerable further increase in the number of applications, which had already been very significant in 2004. However, the increase in the number of approved projects is lower due to the

programmes' limited budget. Nevertheless, around 15,000 Turkish citizens are expected to have benefited from the three programmes in 2005.

Turkey's priorities and policies in the near future include increasing the number of potential beneficiaries, to facilitate access to the programmes by disadvantaged groups and citizens in less developed areas of the country and to give priority to quality projects.

To increase the number of potential beneficiaries, Turkey has provided complementary funds for Erasmus students and envisages to increase its financial contribution to the future Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme. To facilitate access to the programmes by disadvantaged groups, each programme has its own tools, such as giving additional points in the assessment phase to projects including people with fewer opportunities or granting additional funds to such projects. The selection of cities, where information-training events are held, and the selection of the participants in these events also contributes to this policy. As the eastern and south eastern regions of Turkey have a large number of disadvantaged people, an increased number of information meetings are held in these regions and project applications from these regions are given first priority.

No decision has yet been taken on Turkey's possible participation as a candidate country in the Erasmus Mundus programme, but Turkish universities may already cooperate with European universities in the framework of action 3 and 4 of this programme. There is no legal obstacle to establishing and recognising joint studies or study programmes with other European universities (action 1). However, they need to be approved by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK).

## **II.b. Culture**

Turkey shares the fundamental aims of the European Union to encourage the development of culture and to promote cultural diversity. Turkey also pursues EU policies in seeking to foster cooperation with other countries, including EU Member States and in cooperating with international organisations, such as UNESCO, and the Council of Europe.

Although the main responsibility for the formulation and implementation of Turkey's cultural policies lies with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, regular cooperation with other bodies, such as with the Atatürk High Council of Culture, Language and History, takes place; the current administrative structure for culture is centralised, but the role of local administrations is being strengthened by means of the government's decentralisation policy.

The public sector is mainly responsible for providing infrastructure and shaping broad policies for the development and expression of communities, including promotion of cultural diversity, and the preservation and development of cultural heritage. Turkey intends to increase access to culture for all; with this aim, it plans to initiate and support the development of a database of statistics on access to cultural activities and art, compatible with EU practice. The current basis for Turkey's cultural policy is its 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Development Plan with the 9<sup>th</sup> currently being prepared.

Turkey has signed the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (adopted on 20 October 2005), but has not yet established a plan for ratification. Evaluations are currently being made in Turkey.

Turkey is party to the UNESCO Convention on Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage and signatory to three Conventions of the Council of Europe in the field of culture and it has bilateral cultural cooperation agreements with 88 countries.

Turkey has submitted an application for Istanbul as European Capital of Culture for 2010.

Turkey will participate also in the Culture 2000 programme from 2006 onwards and has taken measures regarding its financial contribution to the programme.

Turkey intends to decide on its participation in the programme to promote active European citizenship on the basis of experience gained with participation in other Community programmes.

### **III. ASSESSMENT OF THE DEGREE OF ALIGNMENT AND IMPLEMENTING CAPACITY**

Overall, Turkey has reached a good level of alignment with and capacity to implement the *acquis*. In order to make best use of the pre-accession period in terms of preparing for the full application of the *acquis* under this chapter, Turkey will need to continue its efforts towards the common objectives agreed at EU level for educational and training systems. Implementation of the principle of non-discrimination between EU and Turkish nationals at the date of accession must be ensured. Furthermore, Turkey will need to ratify the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

#### **III.a. Education, training and youth**

##### Cooperation in the field of policies

The objectives and priorities of Turkey's education, training and youth policies are largely in line with those of the EU. Turkey is willing to participate in the EU cooperation framework including the open method of coordination, to work towards the fulfilment of common objectives by exchanging good practices and present reports on its policies. Turkey already takes part in the Education and Training 2010 process.

No particular difficulties are expected as far as Turkey's full participation by the time of accession in EU education and training policies is concerned. The Law on education includes the basic principles of education for all, especially equal opportunities. Turkey shares the goals and objectives in the field of education agreed at EU level and aims to converge towards those in the process of accession. Turkey is willing to work on the common indicators and benchmarks and continue its efforts in the areas where its performance is below EU average (such as the reading literacy proficiency, the completion of upper secondary education and the participation in lifelong learning). Through its annual report on indicators and benchmarks, the Commission will be able to follow progress made by Turkey in relation to the EU targets in these fields.

Turkey made major efforts for increasing investments in education and improving access to education at all levels during the last years. In addition, an increasing involvement of the private sector and NGOs in Turkey's educational system can be observed. However, there is still room for further improvements in various levels of education, such as to improve access to primary education, to better link the vocational training to the labour market, to continuously advance education quality, to overcome still existing gender and especially regional differences in terms of enrolment rates, to reduce even more the rate of early school leavers (currently 14% after compulsory primary education), to further enhance lifelong learning, to decentralise the system of higher education and to ensure administrative and financial academic autonomy. Education should remain one of the priorities during the pre-accession period as a catalyser for sustainable development.

The objectives of Turkey's youth policy are in line with the Commission's White Paper and common objectives agreed at EU level. Turkey is ready to participate in the open method of cooperation in the youth field when it is invited to do so.

#### Access to education for EU citizens

The implementing legislation on education of school aged children of migrant workers, adopted in 2002, is in line with the Directive 77/486/EC.

Turkey has committed itself to apply fully the principle of non-discrimination between EU and Turkish nationals by the time of accession. This implies in particular, that Turkey will have to ensure that there is no restriction concerning the number of EU students who may be admitted to its establishments and that conditions for enrolment, tuition fees and scholarships are non-discriminatory. Turkey will need to present its intentions concerning the modalities for ensuring the transition from the currently applied reciprocity principle and the possible legislative or administrative measures envisaged to guarantee the respect of the non-discrimination principle towards the EU.

Related issues such as residents' permits for foreign students will be treated under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights).

#### Community programmes

Turkey's participation in the Community Programmes Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth has been successful.

The Turkish National Agency satisfactorily fulfilled its tasks related to the management of the programmes' decentralised activities in 2004 and 2005, including the organisation of the project selection, contracting, payments to beneficiaries, project monitoring and reporting to the Commission. The National Agency will have to continue its efforts to consolidate its management capacity to cope with the considerable increase in the number of applications.

The Steering and Monitoring Committee has an essential role to play in monitoring and evaluating the work of the National Agency and in strengthening cooperation and coordination between all ministries involved.

Concerning the new generation of EU Programmes (the Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme), no particular difficulties are expected, as Turkey intends to continue its participation and increase staff levels in the National Agency and to concentrate on the quality aspect of the applications. Turkey also envisages to increase its financial contribution to the programmes.

No difficulties are expected concerning the Erasmus Mundus programme, which is centrally managed and for which there are no requirements to establish structures such as a National Agency and a National Authority.

### **III.b. Culture**

On the assumption that efforts will continue, Turkey is on the way towards alignment with EU cultural policy as required by the *acquis* under this chapter.

Following its signature of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Turkey must now present its plans for ratification, which will be monitored by the Commission.

No difficulties are expected concerning participation in the Culture 2000, Culture 2007 or citizenship programmes,, as these programmes are centrally managed and no requirements to establish structures, such as a National Agency and a National Authority, exist.