

**Question for written answer E-000746/2012
to the Commission
Rule 117
Frank Vanhecke (EFD)**

Subject: New genocide denial law in France

The French National Assembly has passed at first reading a law which makes it illegal and punishable by heavy fines and prison sentences to deny and/or minimize the Armenian genocide by the Turks during the First World War. The law still needs to go to the Senate but it is generally assumed that it will approve it.

The Turkish Government has reacted strongly against this French law, seeing it as an insult to the Turkish identity since Turkey officially denies that there was genocide committed against the Armenians. Ankara has recalled its ambassador from Paris for consultations and is threatening, in the words of its foreign minister, to impose sanctions, including economic sanctions against French companies, if the law finally comes into force.

Even though one should be able to question the legislative codifying of history and the penalisation of dissident opinions about historical events, the stance of the Turkish Government nevertheless raises questions. After all, threats of sanctions boil down to blackmail. Turkey is applying to become an EU Member State.

1. Does the Commission condemn the official threats on the Turkish part of imposing economic sanctions against France?
2. Is it not the Commission's opinion that historical research into the genocide against the Armenians in Turkey during the First World War should be free and not limited by any statutory rules, either in EU Member State France or in applicant country Turkey?
3. Is the Commission going to formulate an official position on this issue?