



COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
THE SECRETARIAT

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ENVI COMMITTEE DELEGATION TO TURKEY

ANKARA, 27 - 28 OCTOBER 2008

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I. COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION

The following Members of European Parliament participated in the delegation to Turkey:

- Ms Satu HASSI (GREENS) - Head of Delegation
- Mr Alojz PETERLE (EPP-ED)
- Ms Renate SOMMER (EPP-ED)
- Mr Roberto MUSACCHIO (GUE/NGL)
- Mr Salvatore TATARELLA (UEN)

Mrs Tamara Miczki (Group advisor ALDE), Mr Walter Mancini (assistant of Roberto Musacchio), Mr Georgios Amanatidis (Environment Committee Secretariat) and Mr Edwin Koekkoek (Environment Committee Secretariat) accompanied the Delegation.

II. GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Helsinki European Council of December 1999 granted the status of candidate country to Turkey. Accession negotiations with Turkey were opened in October 2005. The Association Agreement between Turkey and the then EEC was signed in 1963 and entered in force in December 1964. Turkey and the EU formed a customs union in 1995. Accession negotiations with Turkey continued. During the preparatory analytical phase the level of preparedness to start negotiations on individual chapters has been assessed on the basis of screening reports. So far, negotiations have been opened on eight chapters (*Enterprise and industry, Statistics, Financial Control, Trans-European Networks, Consumer and health protection, Intellectual property law, Company law*), one of which (science and research) was provisionally closed. In addition, the EU informed Turkey about the progress needed to reach a satisfactory level of preparedness to start negotiations on eleven chapters. Due to Turkey's refusal to fully implement the additional protocol of the Ankara agreement (i.e. opening its ports to Cypriot ships) the EU suspended in 2006 the opening of 8 chapters (*Financial services, Free movement of goods, Agriculture & rural development, Freedom to provide services, Fisheries, Transport, External relations, Customs*) and decided that no chapter can be provisionally closed. On 5 November the European Commission published the 2008 progress report in which the Commission services monitor and assess the achievements so far (http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008_en.htm). Negotiations have not yet been started on the environment chapter.

III. PROGRAMME

– **27 October 2008**

Briefing at the European Commission Delegation in Ankara

The delegation started with a briefing by the Head of the EC Delegation in Turkey, Mr Marc Pierini. He described the general political situation in Turkey, the implementation of the *acquis communautaire*, and more specifically the situation concerning environment, food safety and public health issues.

Meeting with H.E. Mr Mehmet Mehdi Eker, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs

The delegation had a meeting with H.E. Mr Mehmet Mehdi Eker, the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs. He emphasised that Turkey is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of biological diversity. There are for example 12.000 plant species in the whole European continent, while there are 10.000 species in Turkey of which 3.500 endemic. The Minister emphasised the importance of the agricultural sector for Turkey, stressing that 46% of the Turkish population is working in the agricultural sector, and he described projects related to irrigation, to assisting SME's in investing in new technologies and to alternative sources of energy. He stated that the agricultural sector in Turkey uses relatively small amounts of chemicals and chemical fertilizers. He described in more detail the Turkish way to handle the mad cow disease crisis. A short discussion took place afterwards on food control issues, including on the draft new Framework law in the food and veterinary domains.

Meetings with Members of the Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

The delegation met with five Members of the Agriculture Committee, Mr Vahit KIRIŞCI (Chairman of the Committee), Mr İkrım DİNÇER, Mr İbrahim BİNİCİ, Mr Ertekin ÇOLAK, and Mr. Ramazan Kerim ÖZKAN. A discussion took place on inter alia the need for a communication strategy in case of an outbreak of diseases in livestock, measures to address animal diseases that affect human health, such as Brucellosis, Foot and Mouth Disease, BSE and Avian Flu and on the draft new Framework law in the food and veterinary domains. Furthermore, the way animals are transported and traded was discussed.

Lunch at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

Informal discussions took place during the lunch, which was kindly hosted by the Vice-Chairman of the Environment Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Prof. Dr. Mr. Mustafa ÖZTÜRK at the parliament premises.

Meeting with Members of the Environment Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

After the lunch the delegation met with five Members of the Environment Committee, Prof. Dr. Mr. Mustafa ÖZTÜRK (Vice-Chairman), Mr. Ali Rıza Alaboyun, Mr. Hamza Yanılmaz (Speaker of the Committee), Ms. Birnur ŞAHİNOĞLU (Clerk Member), Mr. Hüseyin DEVECİOĞLU. Several issues were discussed, including the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol (a draft law was forwarded to the Assembly), which was expected to take place in the coming two months, legislation on air pollution, waste, drinking water, water scarcity and the pricing of water, the need for implementation of the environmental legislation, the need to strengthen the administrative capacity for this implementation, the high costs concerned, the need for environmental impact assessments for several mining activities and water dams and the increasing demand for energy. From the side of the Turkish Members it was stated that it would accelerate the work in the area of environmental issues if the environment chapter would be opened. They also acknowledged the EU support in many environmental projects in Turkey, i.e. the two solid waste projects in Çanakkale and Kuşadası. The delegation expressed concerns about the environmental impacts of mining activities and water dams in Turkey and neighbouring countries. They emphasised the need for environmental impact assessments and the involvement of the civil society.

Meetings with Members of the Industry, Trade, Energy, Natural Resources, Knowledge and Technology Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

The next meeting of the delegation was with the Members of the Industry, Trade, Energy, Natural Resources, Knowledge and Technology Committee, Mr Osman COŞKUN (Clerk Member), Mr Alim IŞIK, Mr. Yılmaz Tankut, Mr. Metin KAŞIKOĞLU, Mr İbrahim Halil MAZICIOĞLU. The Members of the Energy Committee had a special request with respect to the visa regime of the Community. They argued that it would be important to lift the visa regime particularly for business people. This would increase transfer of sustainable technologies, since it would be easier for Turkish entrepreneurs to attend e.g. European conferences. The Energy Committee emphasised the importance of combating climate change and the need for investments in renewables. There was a discussion about the overall renewable target

for Turkey, the use of nuclear power (the aim is to produce 5GW by 2020), the increasing energy demand and the need for diversification of the energy supply. The Members of the ENVI delegation questioned the need for the high number of water dams (more than 500 are planned), in particular the Ilisu dam. The Energy Committee members delegated most questions raised by the MEPs to civil servants of the Energy Ministry, who were sitting behind the Members of the National Assembly. Therefore the discussion was in some cases rather between MEPs and the Turkish Energy Ministry than between parliamentarians. In this meeting, as in many other meetings, the European Parliament delegation got the impression that the Turkish decision makers have not fully accepted the fact that each country must implement the existing EU legislation before joining the EU.

Meetings with Members of the Health, Family, Labour and Social Affairs Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

The last meeting in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was with the Members of the Health, Family, Labour and Social Affairs Committee, Mr Agah KAFKAS (Vice-Chairman), Cafer TATLIBAL, Ms. Selma Aliye KAVAF, Mr. Kemalettin AYDIN, Mr. Şevket KÖSE. Several issues were discussed, including the public health system, rehabilitation centres for people with mental disabilities, communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS and cancer. For both the Health Committee and the delegation it was considered to be essential to invest in prevention of diseases. A good example is the new policy on restricting smoking. The quality of teeth was considered to be a significant problem in Turkey, with 60% of the population having dental problems. The Health Committee members welcomed the pressure coming from the EU in the accession negotiations for various reforms supporting improving public health.

Meeting with the Undersecretary Mr Selahattin Çimen, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources

The delegation had a meeting with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Mr Selahattin ÇİMEN. In this meeting the Turkish spokespeople were mainly the same ones as in the meeting with the Energy Committee of the National Assembly. The Undersecretary expressed his disappointment about the fact that the chapter on Energy is still not open for negotiations. He emphasised the need for cooperation between the Community and Turkey in the area of energy. A

discussion took place on the increasing energy demand in Turkey, the need to increase the share of renewables, including solar energy, wind energy, geothermal energy and hydropower. A more extensive discussion took place on the need for ambitious climate targets in the negotiations on a future climate post-Kyoto regime. Turkey doubled its greenhouse gas emissions since 1990. The ENVI delegation emphasised the importance of the new European climate-energy package and the need for Turkey to also set ambitious targets. The delegation invited Turkey to work closely together with the European Union in the negotiations on a post-Kyoto climate regime.

Meeting with Dr. Sibel Sezer Eralp, Director of Regional Environmental Centre REC for Turkey

At the end of the first day the delegation visited the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) for Turkey. In a brief presentation Dr. Sibel Sezer Eralp explained the role of the Regional Environmental Centre. The centre aims at assisting in solving environmental problems by promoting cooperation among NGOs, governments, business and other environmental stakeholders. The REC network has centres in 17 countries and is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 29 countries and the European Commission and on an international agreement with the government of Hungary. More information can be found on:

<http://www.rec.org/REC/Introduction/CountryOffices/Turkey.html>

– **28 October 2008**

Visit to Ankara River

The next morning the delegation visited the Ankara River, which is a small river that runs through the city of Ankara. The river is exposed to sewage and industrial pollutants and solid waste, so that it is no longer viable as a water source for irrigation even though it is still used for irrigation down stream, increasing therefore the risk on cholera and other diseases.

Meeting with NGO representatives and press conference

After the visit to the Ankara river the delegation met with several NGO representatives (EC Delegation premises), including TEMA, BUGDAY, CEKUL,

Doğa Derneği, Greenpeace Mediterranean-Turkey, WWF Turkey, the Bird Research Association, Consumer Protection and Solidarity Union and the Business Council for Sustainable Development. Several issues were discussed, including again the Ilisu Water Dam, the need to protect the cultural heritage, the existence of legislation but the lack of its implementation, i.e. in the area of the Water Framework Directive and the Environmental Impact Assessments. Several NGO representatives expressed that the Ilisu Dam is the environmental problem number one, and pointed out that many problems culminate in this project, not only lack of adequate environmental impact assessment, but also lack of local participation and violation of rights of ethnic minorities, and lack of cooperation with the neighbouring countries.

According to the NGOs, environmental reports are only written after the projects are already designed and not during the designing process. NGOs also stressed the need for Turkey to apply the Strategic Environmental assessment to HES projects in a given river basin. After the discussion with the NGOs there was a brief press conference, in which the Members of the Delegation explained their preliminary key findings.

Meeting with H.E. Prof. Dr. Veysel Eroğlu, Minister for Environment and Forestry.

In the afternoon the delegation had a meeting with the Minister for Environment and Forestry, H.E. Prof. Dr. Veysel Eroğlu. The Minister emphasised the importance of environmental policy and described the progress in the area of transposing the environmental legislation. He stated that the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was likely to ratify the Kyoto Protocol in the coming two months. The delegation discussed the character of the environmental part of the acquis and the fact that all new Member States have been struggling with the complexity and the large quantity of environmental legislation. The delegation welcomed the upcoming ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by Turkey and emphasised the need for cooperation in the negotiations on a future climate regime. A substantial discussion took place on the need for the high quantity of water dams and the possible social and environmental impacts, including the impacts on neighbouring countries, focusing on the Ilisu Dam. The Minister spoke intensively in favour of the Ilisu Dam and other dam projects. He also told that he is a former director of the State Hydrological Authority, which has initiated these dam projects.

Visit to Mogan Lake

The delegation visited the Mogan Lake, which is a nutrient-rich, stream-fed freshwater lake close to Ankara. It is an important site for breeding water birds and globally threatened bird species such as the White-Headed duck, Ferrigineus duck and Imperial Eagle. The site is declared as a Special Protected Area under the Turkish legislation and the lake is a future Natura 2000 site. At this site the Members of the delegation received an explanation on the decreasing water quality and the threatened biodiversity due to the increasing anthropogenic activities surrounding the lake.

Meeting with H.E. Prof. Recep AKDAĞ, Minister for Health

The last meeting was with the Minister for Health, H.E. Prof. Recep AKDAĞ. A discussion took place on the need to define access to adequate health services as a human right. The Minister described the areas where substantial progress has been made (inter alia measles) and areas with less progress. The importance of prevention in the area of communicable diseases was discussed. The Minister emphasised the importance of prevention in the area of cancer and cardiovascular diseases, including policies related to smoking, food and sufficient movement. He stressed also the considerable improvement in combating baby mortality in Turkey. The integration of health in other policies was discussed.

IV. KEY FINDINGS

The delegation very much appreciated the open and pleasant character of the different visits and the hospitality from the Turkish Government and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. In several meetings it was unfortunately not possible to have detailed political discussions on the different issues, because of the time used for welcoming addresses and introductory statements. The following key findings can be identified:

- A key issue is the importance of the implementation of the environmental legislation. The delegation got the impression that the Turkish decision makers have not fully accepted the fact that each new member country must implement the existing EU legislation before joining the EU. The delegation tried to

communicate this by pointing out that also the current Member States had many difficulties when they were implementing the rather complex legislation in order to access the European Union. Improvement of the implementation level of the environmental acquis in Turkey is seen as a priority by the delegation, including the required involvement of the civil society.

- Turkey is not yet a Party to the Kyoto Protocol. The delegation welcomed the message that Turkey will ratify the Kyoto Protocol in the next two months. Turkey was encouraged not only to ratify this protocol as soon as possible but also to set ambitious emission reduction targets. Turkey was invited to cooperate with the European Union in the international negotiations on a future climate regime.
- The water policy in Turkey, including the hydropower production, was one of the most sensitive issues. The delegation questioned the need for the high amount of planned water dams, posing important questions on their environmental impacts in sensitive ecosystems (e.g. the Ilisu dam and Çoruh river dams). The delegation considered it to be crucial to ensure that the environmental and social impacts are already studied in the designing phase. Several hundreds of dams are under construction or planning. The Turkish legislation on environmental impact assessment excludes all projects of which the planning has started before 1993, which in practice means excluding most of these dam projects from environmental impact assessment. The delegation got the impression that Turkey wants to turn many of these dams to existing facts before joining the EU, to undermine the EIA. It would be important to take on board the Water Framework Directive concept as much as possible in order to achieve sustainable water policy and to ensure involvement of the neighbouring countries.
- Nature Protection requires special attention in Turkey, which is the richest country in terms of biological diversity when compared to the EU Member states. However, developments such as roads, dams, tourism, drainage of wetlands, the current agricultural practises and industrial pollution are causing significant damage to the natural ecosystems and species.
- Considerable efforts have been made, and significant progress has been achieved, in modifying Turkish legislation and regulation in the areas of food standards and food safety towards harmonization with EU standards. However, a large number of regulatory issues exist, where current requirements differ in Turkey from those

stipulated by Community legislation on food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary issues.

- Public health issues should give greater emphasis on prevention. Despite recent progress, Turkey still has a significant problem with communicable diseases. HIV prevention policy needs to improve as well as access to information on HIV/AIDS. General medical care and treatment problems persists in mental health hospitals and rehabilitation centres for people with mental disabilities, to be addressed in a National Activity Plan for Mental Health planned for 2009.
- Strengthening of administrative capacity for implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation needs particular attention – IMPEL and ECENA networks are very important instruments in order to improve this area.

In conclusion, Turkey needs to give higher priority to implementing EU environmental legislation and protection of its air, water, and marine and terrestrial ecosystems obtaining development, at the same time as manner addressing local, regional and global development challenges. Environmental benefits for Turkey, the greater region and Europe are foreseen – richer biodiversity, increased protection of the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea, diminishing transboundary pollution, improvement of the status of the environment and better enforcement of international conventions - once Turkey fully implements the EU environmental law and liaise with her in international negotiations.