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on a 2020 Perspective for Women in Turkey
(2011/2066(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Rapporteur: Emine Bozkurt

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on a 2020 Perspective for Women in Turkey (2011/2066(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, which form part of international law and to which Turkey has been party since 1985 and 2002 respectively, and having regard to Article 90 of the Turkish Constitution, which states that international law takes precedence over Turkish national law,
 - having regard to the conventions of the Council of Europe, such as the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence,
 - having regard to the Community acquis in the field of women's rights and gender equality,
 - having regard to the decision of the European Council of 17 December 2004 to open negotiations with Turkey concerning accession to the European Union,
 - having regard to the Commission's Turkey 2010 Progress Report (SEC(2010)1327),
 - having regard to the Commission's communication entitled 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011' (COM(2010)0660),
 - having regard to the Commission's communication entitled 'EU 2020: a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010)2020),
 - having regard to its resolutions of 6 July 2005¹ and 13 February 2007² on the role of women in Turkey in social, economic and political life,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2011 on Turkey's 2010 progress report³,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0000/2011),
- A. whereas Turkey, as a candidate country, has committed itself to respecting human rights including women's rights and gender equality;

B. whereas gender equality policy holds great potential for reaching the objectives of Europe

¹ OJ C 157E, 6.7.2006, p. 385.

² OJ C 287E, 29.11.2007, p. 174.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0090.

2020 by contributing to growth and full employment;

- C. whereas Turkey is making progress in improving the legislative framework and ensuring that there is equal participation by women in social, economic and political life;
- D. whereas the Commission has emphasised in its 2010 progress report on Turkey that sustained further efforts are needed to turn the existing legal framework into political, social and economic reality;
- E. whereas coordinated action is especially needed in the areas of violence against women, education, work, and representation at national and local level;

Legislation, coordination and civil society

- 1. Calls on the Turkish Government to uphold and strengthen equality principles and women's rights in adopting and amending its legislative framework, including the planned process for a new Constitution;
- 2. Welcomes the establishment of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women within the Turkish Parliament;
- 3. Emphasises the importance of effective coordination in ensuring gender mainstreaming; and therefore welcomes the efforts of the Turkish Government to enhance cooperation on gender mainstreaming between state authorities;
- 4. Emphasises the need to translate existing gender-sensitive legislation into practice by allocating sufficient financial resources, providing for consistency and developing monitoring mechanisms;
- 5. Calls on the Turkish Government to acknowledge the importance of civil society participation in the development and implementation of gender policies and to ensure the involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at central and local level in arriving at the most favourable policies for women;
- 6. Welcomes Turkey's progress in registering every child at birth, the percentage of which currently stands at 93%; underlines at the same time, however, the need for consistent and systematic collection of gender-specific statistics;

Violence against women

- 7. Is deeply concerned about the regularity and severity of violence against women and the ineffectiveness of remedies, as well as the lenience of the Turkish authorities as regards punishing the perpetrators of gender-based crimes;
- 8. Calls on the Turkish Government to adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against women;
- 9. Stresses that amendment of Law No 4320 on the Protection of the Family is needed and that such an amendment should ensure a broad scope of application, effective legal remedies and protection mechanisms, and strict and immediate implementation of the

legal framework, with no concessions, in order to eradicate violence against women and introduce dissuasive and severe punishments for the perpetrators of violence against women;

10. Welcomes the continuation of training of police officers, health personnel, judges and prosecutors on the prevention of domestic violence; in order to complement these efforts, once more notes the need for a mechanism to identify and investigate those who fail to protect and assist victims;
11. Welcomes the initiatives of the Turkish Government in reorganising the system of shelters in consultation with all stakeholders;
12. Welcomes the setting up of telephone help-lines and the establishment of the Women Monitoring Centres, where victims of gender-based violence receive medical treatment and psychological counselling during their court cases in order to prevent repeated victimisation;
13. Calls on the Turkish Government to criminalise forced marriage,

Education

14. Underlines the importance of education in empowering women and mainstreaming gender at all levels of education;
15. Welcomes the fact that participation of girls in primary education has been increasing and that the gender gap in primary education is almost closed; considers it regrettable, however, that the gender gap still exists in secondary education and urges the Turkish Government to take all necessary actions to diminish this gap;
16. Notes that the percentage of pre-schooling is still very low and urges the Turkish Government to allocate enough resources to extend affordable child care services for this age group;
17. Welcomes the campaigns of the Turkish Government to eradicate illiteracy among three million women and calls on the Turkish Government to pay specific attention to eliminating illiteracy in rural areas;
18. Welcomes the initiative of the Turkish Government aimed at criminalising failure to send children to school;
19. Welcomes the establishment of the Gender Equality Commission within the Ministry of Education and its achievements in eliminating sexist language, pictures and expressions from educational material;
20. Calls on all higher education institutions to make gender equality courses compulsory in the curriculum for future teachers, and on the Turkish Government to include this topic in in-service training programmes for teachers;

Participation in the labour market

21. Notes that despite the fact that, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute figures, female participation in the labour force has been moving recently from 24 % towards 30 %, this percentage is still very low, and calls on the Turkish Government to make further efforts to increase women's participation in the labour market;
22. Urges the implementation of Prime Ministerial Circular 2010/14 on increasing women's employment and achieving equal opportunity;
23. Calls on the Turkish Government, in order to increase participation of women in the labour market, to institute a fully fledged part-time work regime, utilisation of which is left up to the employee and not the employer, does not require surrender of the right to seniority indemnity and other social security rights and upholds the principle of equal pay for equal work;
24. Stresses the importance of giving effectiveness to the prohibition of discrimination in the workplace, including gender discrimination; reiterates its request to the Turkish Government to provide accurate data on discrimination against women, including access of women wearing headscarves to the labour market, in order to establish whether there is a risk of indirect discrimination based on gender;
25. Urges the Turkish Government to allocate funds to establish affordable, widely accessible childcare and elderly and disabled care facilities, in order to increase women's employment;
26. Observes the low participation of women in trade unions and especially in their managing boards; stresses the importance of making union activities more accessible in order to achieve more female participation;
27. Highlights the fact that women working in the informal economy are those most affected by it, and welcomes the strategy of the Turkish Government on the fight against the informal economy;

Political participation

28. Welcomes the increase in the number of female members of the Turkish Parliament from 9.1 % in the 2007 elections to 14.3 % following the 2011 elections; notes, however, that this percentage is still low and calls for a new law on political parties and elections to put in place a mandatory quota system ensuring fair representation of women on election lists;
29. Encourages all Turkish political parties to adopt comprehensive gender equality strategies and internal rules guaranteeing the presence of women at all levels;
30. Is concerned about the very low percentage of female political participation at local level and invites all political parties to make sure that this situation changes in the 2014 local elections;

A 2020 Perspective

31. Invites Turkey, as a candidate country, to join in realising one of the priorities that

comprise the heart of Europe 2020, which is inclusive growth encompassing a greater involvement of women;

32. Calls on the Commission to make the issue of women's rights central to the negotiations with Turkey; stresses the importance of opening the Chapter 23 accession negotiations on judiciary and fundamental rights in support of Turkey's reforms on women's human rights under this chapter;
33. Underlines the importance of re-evaluating the rigid values regarding women's role in the social structure, and stresses that ultimately a change in mentality is required to transform the legislative framework into reality;
34. Suggests the initiation of a national project which brings together female role models and young girls in a debate on the future of Turkey so that women of all age groups and political beliefs can work together on a strategy to transform the patriarchal structure of the society;
35. Acknowledges that a change in mentality can never be realised without involving men in the debate and therefore calls for an 'alliance of genders' as the means of achieving genuine gender equality;
36. Notes that special attention should be given to the empowerment of women in the less developed regions of Turkey; welcomes, therefore, the Turkish Government's projects such as CATOMs (Multi Purpose Society Centres), but underlines the need for more of such initiatives;
37. Underlines the crucial role of the media in upholding women's rights and encourages the inclusion of gender equality in the in-service training of media organisations; points out the importance of presenting an image of women in the media which avoids gender stereotyping;
38. Stresses the importance of gender budgeting, since none of the reforms can be implemented without adequate funds;
39. Calls on the Commission to design a mechanism for the exchange of best gender equality practices between Turkey and the Member States;
40. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, UN Women, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization and the Government and Parliament of Turkey.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The rapporteur has prepared her report based on both desk research and interviews.

The desk research she conducted involved analysing a wide range of data and opinions gathered from various governmental and civil society sources as well as legislation in the area of women's rights.

Next to the regular contact the rapporteur already has with diverse stakeholders due to her years of engagement in the women's movement in Turkey, the rapporteur has also conducted interviews specifically aimed at obtaining input for the present report. These interviews included:

- exchange of views with Štefan Füle, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement,
- two visits to Turkey to investigate the situation of women's rights:

During her first visit to Turkey in April 2011, the rapporteur gave a keynote speech at an international convention on gender equality organised by UNDP and the Turkish Parliament and interviewed prominent women in Turkish society including Güldal Akşit, who was at the time the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities; Nazik Işık, the Founder of the Women's Solidarity Association; Aynur Bektaş, the Chair of Women Entrepreneurs Board of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey; Yazgülü Aldoğan, columnist; Sertab Erener, artist; Gülay Aslantepe, who was then the director of ILO Turkey; Yakın Ertürk, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. The rapporteur also visited women's shelters together with İlke Gökdemir, researcher and Mor Çatı women's shelter volunteer, and she interviewed women who have been victims of domestic violence. She also moderated a debate at a university with young girls (and boys) about their future.

During her second visit to Turkey in September 2011, the rapporteur had meetings with the EU Minister Egemen Bağış, the Minister of Family and Social Policies Fatma Şahin, the Minister of Interior İdris Naim Şahin, the Minister of Justice Sadullah Ergin, the Minister of Labour Faruk Çelik, the Minister of Finance Mehmet Şimsek, the Minister of Education Ömer Dinçer, the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women Azize Sibel Gönül, the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on EU Integration Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu, the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Relations Volkan Bozkır, the co-president of the Joint Parliamentary Committee Turkey-EU Afif Demirkıran, the Vice-Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights Mehmet Naci Bostancı, the leader of the largest opposition party Republican People's Party (CHP) Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, representatives of the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions, Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey Ambassador Marc Pierini, President of the Turkish Industry and Business Association Ümit Boyner, and representatives from a wide range of women's organisations who got together at a round table meeting organised in Istanbul to provide for input for the present report,

- a public hearing at the European Parliament with the participation of Leyla Coşkun, who was at the time the Director General on the Status of Women, Nur Ger, the Chairperson

of the Gender Equality Working Group of Turkish Industry and Business Association, Handan Çağlayan, lecturer on human rights.

Legislation

The report takes note of the fact that the legislative framework on women's rights is to a great extent in place. The government has enacted laws, by-laws, strategy papers, national action plans and protocols on important issues such as the prevention of violence against women, on the schooling of girls and eradication of illiteracy among women, increasing women's participation in the labour market. However, the transformation of this legislation into practice had not been at satisfactory levels until recently. Furthermore, the lack of cooperation between the Turkish Government and civil society has also been the case in the area of women's rights, which is especially regretful since gender equality can only be realised with the coordinated efforts of the whole of the society.

The rapporteur has witnessed a positive change in these earlier tendencies, namely the lack of implementation of legislation and the lack of cooperation. Each of the relevant ministries are busy with bringing projects to life which give effectiveness to the legislation on improving women's standard of living. More importantly, these ministries are cooperating in the area of gender equality. In the centre of this cooperation structure is the newly established Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Now a fully-fledged ministry with its own budget, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies has immediately begun setting up structural cooperation with other ministries. The ministry is also organising civil society meetings to jointly decide on important issues such as how to restructure the system of women shelters.

This change is still at a preliminary stage, which is why the report, while acknowledging the positive move, is careful in not prematurely clearing Turkey's past deficiencies.

Concerning the collection of better statistics, progress has been achieved in recent years, however, gender specific data is not available consistently and in every area.

The most recent Constitutional amendment ensures that affirmative action cannot be considered as a violation of the principle of equality. However, this possibility has to be put into practice by implementing further legislation.

Violence Against Women

Violence Against Women is one of the most urgent problems of Turkey. Two or three women are killed each and every day by the hands of their husbands, boy friends, families or ex-spouses. The existing legislation, Law No.4320, does have deficits such as the lack of a mechanism which immediately removes the one resorting to domestic violence from the vicinity of the woman who has been subjected to violence. Furthermore, the police, the prosecutors and the judges are not always on one line when it comes to the scope of the law as well as the punishment to be given to the one who has applied violence. It is of utmost importance that next to amending the law in order to put in place more immediate and efficient remedies in domestic violence cases, a uniform interpretation and application of this law should be ensured among all authorities which are involved in the implementation thereof.

The rapporteur observes on a more positive note that there is an ever increasing awareness in the Turkish society towards violence against women. The issue is being debated on a daily basis by Turkish newspapers, television programmes, and various NGOs which acts as an additional driving force behind government reforms in this area. The government has already acknowledged the existence of a serious problem and no longer asserts that cases of gender based violence are individual incidents. In an effort to eradicate violence against women the respective ministries are training the police, judges and prosecutors, health personnel and religious officers on their roles in fighting violence towards women. Both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies are busy with restructuring the system of women's shelters. However, there is a crucial need for more shelters. The Turkish Government is not yet close to the aim it set for itself of building a shelter in every area the population of which is more than 50.000. The realisation of this aim should be a priority for the government. The existing shelters should be made more secure with well-trained, well-paid personnel and vocational training courses should systematically be offered to women in shelters to support them in building a new life for themselves and their children when they leave the shelters.

Telephone help-lines have been set up to assist victims of violence. Enough resources should be allocated and the required restructuring should be made so that the applications made to these help lines after office hours are also handled immediately.

The rapporteur calls on the Turkish Government to adopt a zero tolerance policy towards violence against women. This would mean that violence against women would not go unpunished, and higher punishments will be given to those who resort to violence against women more than once. Once it becomes common knowledge that those who commit gender based crimes are punished with no exceptions, inevitably violence against women will diminish.

Education

As a result of consistent and continuous campaigns initiated by the Turkish Government and NGOs, the gender gap in primary school education is almost completely closed. However, a gender gap still exists in secondary education and the rapporteur stresses the importance of focusing on closing the gap at this level of education.

Concerning the content of the education, the Gender Equality Commission which is established within the Ministry of Education is doing important work in identifying sexist language and pictures in text books and replacing them with emancipatory content which is free of gender stereotyping, teaching children about gender equality and the sharing of family responsibilities.

Participation in the labour market

The employment rate of women has been around 24% for a number of years now. Although according to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute the recent figure is close to 30%, this is still very low. Even though this issue has been addressed in the Prime Ministry Circular 2010/14, this document has not been implemented in a way as to give effect to the principles contained therein.

The rapporteur has suggested a number of reforms in order to increase women's participation in the labour market. The setting up of a well functioning part-time work system would contribute immensely to increasing women's employment. Currently, it is the employer who decides on who will work part-time, and the social security rights of part-time workers are almost completely neglected.

The rapporteur regrets that services which are generally considered to be within the scope of responsibility of the social state such as child care, elderly and disabled care, are regarded in Turkey as challenges which have to be overcome exclusively by women. This contributes to the low employment rates of women. This is why the report calls on the Turkish Government to allocate sufficient funds to set up affordable and accessible day care services.

Political Participation

After the 2011 general elections the percentage of women parliamentarians in the Turkish Parliament has increased from 9.1% to 14.3%. Even though this is a step towards the good direction, this percentage is still low. The rapporteur calls on the drafting of a new law on political parties and on elections which will put in place a mandatory quota system.

The rapporteur observes that even though the women's organisations of political parties are very instrumental in the success of their parties, this does not translate into political careers for these women. Therefore she finds it necessary that the presence of women at all levels of party management should be ensured by internal rules of political parties.

A 2020 Perspective for Women in Turkey

Europe is going through a transformation in order to return to the growth path of before the crisis and raise its potential to go beyond it (Europe 2020), and one of the priorities which comprise the heart of Europe 2020 is inclusive growth involving a greater involvement of women as Europe will need all of its women by 2020 for a competitive European economy. In this regard, the rapporteur invites Turkey, as a candidate country, to join the gender aspect of Europe 2020 by committing to achieve actual gender equality since Turkey too will be facing similar challenges in its continuous effort to achieve further growth.

After having conducted an in-depth research concerning the situation of women in Turkey and having interviewed various persons from the public sphere and from NGOs the rapporteur has noticed that the one common plea pertaining to all of the input received is that a change in mentality is needed in order to transform the patriarchal structure of the society into a structure based on gender equality. This would be very instrumental in putting an end to gender based violence, increasing women's participation and empowering women in general. This is why the rapporteur makes a number of suggestions which would enable such a mentality change.

The rapporteur points out the indispensable role of the media in creating such a mentality change and proposes initiatives to be taken by the media. Moreover, the rapporteur is of the opinion that such a change can best be realised first of all by creating a mechanism to put female role models in active interaction with young girls concerning the future of Turkey and the place women should have in that future; and secondly, by involving men in the process of

transforming the mentality. According to the rapporteur this second aspect should be realised by a campaign to create an 'alliance of genders', in reference to the 'alliance of civilisations' which was an initiative co-sponsored by the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.