



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0133

2015 Report on Turkey

European Parliament resolution of 14 April 2016 on the 2015 report on Turkey (2015/2898(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 2015 Commission report on Turkey (SWD(2015)0216),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 December 2015 on the enlargement and stabilisation and association process and to previous relevant Council and European Council conclusions,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 November 2015 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Enlargement Strategy (COM(2015)0611),
- having regard to Council Decision 2008/157/EC of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the Republic of Turkey ('the Accession Partnership'), and to the previous Council Decisions of 2001, 2003 and 2006 on the Accession Partnership,
- having regard to the joint statement following the EU-Turkey Summit of 29 November 2015 and the EU-Turkey Action Plan,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 April 2015 on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide¹,
- having regard to the intergovernmental conference of 14 December 2015 during which chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy was officially opened,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Turkey, in particular those of 10 February 2010 on Turkey's progress report 2009², of 9 March 2011 on Turkey's 2010 progress report³, of 29 March 2012 on the 2011 progress report on Turkey⁴, of 18 April 2013 on the

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0094.

² OJ C 341 E, 16.12.2010, p. 59.

³ OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 98.

⁴ OJ C 257 E, 6.9.2013, p. 38.

2012 progress report on Turkey¹, of 13 June 2013 on the situation in Turkey², of 12 March 2014 on the 2013 progress report on Turkey³, of 13 November 2014 on Turkish actions creating tensions in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus⁴, of 15 January 2015 on freedom of expression in Turkey⁵ and of 10 June 2015 on the 2014 Commission progress report on Turkey⁶,

- having regard to its call on the Commission, in its resolution on the 2014 Commission progress report on Turkey, to re-assess the way in which negotiations have been conducted so far and how EU-Turkey relations and cooperation could be improved and intensified,
- having regard to the Negotiating Framework for Turkey of 3 October 2005,
- having regard to the declaration issued by the European Community and its Member States on 21 September 2005, including the provision that the recognition of all Member States is a necessary component of the negotiations, and the need for Turkey to fully implement the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement by removing all obstacles to the free movement of goods without prejudice and discrimination,
- having regard to the fact that Turkey’s accession to the EU depends on full compliance with the Copenhagen criteria and the EU’s integration capacity, in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council meeting of December 2006,
- having regard to Article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which states that the contracting parties undertake to abide by the final judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in any case to which they are parties,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the crisis in Syria, the efforts towards a ceasefire and a peaceful settlement, and Turkey’s obligations to enhance stability and promote good neighbourly relations through intensive efforts in order to resolve outstanding bilateral issues, disputes and conflicts with its neighbouring countries over land and maritime borders and airspace, in accordance with the UN Charter and the values and principles upon which the EU is founded,
- having regard to the fact that respect for the rule of law, including in particular the separation of powers, democracy, freedom of expression, human rights, the rights of minorities and religious freedom, are at the core of the negotiation process,
- having regard to the approval of EUR 3 billion for the management of the refugee crisis in Turkey, with EUR 1 billion coming from the EU budget and the rest from the Member States,
- having regard to the work of Kati Piri as the standing rapporteur on Turkey of the European Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs,

¹ OJ C 45, 5.2.2016, p. 48.

² OJ C 65, 19.2.2016, p. 117.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0235.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0052.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0014.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0228.

- having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the accession negotiations with Turkey were opened on 3 October 2005, and whereas the opening of such negotiations is the starting point for a long-lasting and open-ended process based on fair and rigorous conditionality and a commitment to reform;
- B. whereas the EU should remain the anchor for reforms in Turkey, given the transformative power of accession negotiations and the enlargement process;
- C. whereas, in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council meeting of December 2006, there should be full compliance with the Copenhagen criteria and the EU's integration capacity; whereas Turkey has committed itself to the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria, adequate and effective reforms and progressive alignment with the EU acquis; whereas these efforts should be viewed as an opportunity for Turkey to strengthen its institutions and continue its process of democratisation and modernisation;
- D. whereas respect for the rule of law is at the core of the negotiation process, including in particular the separation of powers, freedom of expression and of the media, human rights and democracy, the fight against corruption and organised crime, good neighbourly relations, freedom of religion, freedom of association and peaceful protest, the rights of minorities, the rights of women, and tackling discrimination against vulnerable groups such as Roma, people with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people;
- E. whereas, regarding the political criteria, the pace of reforms has slowed down and there has been significant backsliding in the areas of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly;
- F. whereas Turkey still has one of the highest number of imprisoned journalists in the world;
- G. whereas, according to the ranking made by Freedom House for freedom of the press and media, Turkey is still ranked as not having a free press and its internet freedom as being only partly free;
- H. whereas the security situation in Turkey is rapidly deteriorating, both internally and externally;
- I. whereas Turkey has faced multiple terrorist attacks, attributed to the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Daesh, in Diyarbakir, Suruc, Ankara and Istanbul, in which a total of 150 innocent people lost their lives;
- J. whereas the Russian bombing of Aleppo and other parts of Syria is resulting in large numbers of additional refugees seeking protection in Turkey;
- K. whereas the EU and Turkey have agreed to reinvigorate the negotiation process and to cooperate intensively on migration;
- L. whereas the Turkish population has been admirably hospitable to the large number of refugees living among them; whereas Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world, with approximately 2,7 million registered refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the UNHCR;

M. whereas the Turkish authorities did not agree to the reopening of the Orthodox Seminary on the island of Heybeliada;

I. State of play in EU-Turkey relations

1. Is deeply concerned, in the light of the backsliding on respect for democracy and rule of law inside Turkey, that the overall pace of reforms in Turkey has slowed down considerably in recent years, and that in certain key areas, such as the independence of the judiciary, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and respect for human rights and the rule of law, there has been a regression moving increasingly away from meeting the Copenhagen criteria to which candidate countries must adhere;
2. Underlines that Turkey is a key strategic partner for the EU and that active and credible negotiations would provide a suitable framework for exploiting the full potential of EU-Turkey relations; takes note of the reinvigoration of the negotiation process by the EU and hopes that the opening of chapters will lead to concrete progress; calls, in this connection, for concrete progress and a genuine commitment on Turkey's part; reiterates its call on the Commission to reassess the way in which negotiations have been conducted so far and how EU-Turkey relations and cooperation could be improved and intensified; strongly supports a structured, more frequent and open high-level political dialogue on key thematic issues of joint interest such as migration, counter-terrorism, energy, economy and trade;
3. Believes that the postponement of the Commission's 2015 progress report until after the November 2015 Turkish elections was a wrong decision, as it gave the impression that the EU is willing to go silent on violations of fundamental rights in return for the Turkish Government's cooperation on refugees; asks the Commission to commit itself to publishing the annual progress reports in accordance with a specific and fixed timetable; calls on both the Commission and the Council not to ignore internal developments in Turkey and to clearly stand up for respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights in Turkey, as stipulated in the Copenhagen criteria, and irrespective of other interests;
4. Takes note of the results of the parliamentary elections held on 1 November 2015 and the formation of a new government; reiterates its call for the 10 % electoral threshold to be lowered, and calls for transparency in the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns; commends the active participation of civil society volunteers during elections and the high voter turnout; condemns, however, the intimidation and harassment of the media and discrimination of opposition parties in terms of pre-election coverage, the atmosphere of violence and intimidation, marked in particular by attacks on individual candidates and opposition party offices, particularly that of the People's Democracy Party (HDP), and the intense political polarisation; welcomes the fact that the Turkish Grand National Assembly has become more inclusive for minority groups in Turkey as a result of the last two elections and despite the 10 % threshold;
5. Calls for the customs union to be upgraded and for its scope to be expanded to cover new sectors, including agricultural products, services and public procurement; takes note that the negotiations on this are set to start in the second half of 2016; recalls that the customs union can only reach its full potential when Turkey fully implements the Additional Protocol vis-à-vis all Member States; is of the view that Turkey's interests should be considered in future free trade agreements signed by the EU with third parties, in particular in the case of the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

(TTIP) negotiations; calls for the free movement of people to be improved and for increased intercultural exchanges;

6. Takes positive note of the intensified political dialogue between the EU and Turkey in the area of foreign and security policy and of Turkey's increased alignment with EU declarations and Council decisions in 2015; regrets that Turkey did not align with the Council's decision following the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the events in Eastern Ukraine, including the restrictive measures;
7. Reiterates that Turkey should further align its foreign policy with that of the EU in accordance with the provisions of the Negotiating Framework; considers it essential to increase exchanges of information on foreign-policy issues and invite the Turkish Foreign Minister to attend meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council whenever relevant; recalls Turkey's strategic importance for the EU's energy security as a key transit country; considers the rapid development of energy cooperation and the broadening of the energy transit corridor through Turkey to the European Union to be essential;
8. Reiterates the need to strengthen good neighbourly relations, which constitute a fundamental part of the Negotiating Framework and an essential element of the enlargement process; calls on Turkey, in this connection, to step up efforts to resolve outstanding bilateral issues, including unsettled legal obligations and disputes with its immediate neighbours over land and maritime borders and airspace, in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter and with international law; calls on the Turkish Government to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); urges the Turkish Government to end the repeated violations of Greek airspace and territorial waters, as well as the practice of Turkish military aircraft flying over Greek islands; expresses its regret that the casus belli threat declared by the Turkish Grand National Assembly against Greece has not yet been withdrawn; urges Turkey and Armenia to proceed to normalise their relations by establishing diplomatic relations without preconditions, and calls for opening the Turkish-Armenia border, which could lead to improved relations, with particular reference to cross-border cooperation and economic integration;

II. Respect for the rule of law, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms

9. Takes the view that, in keeping with the EU's commitment to the rule of law and fundamental values, reforms in the areas of the judiciary and fundamental rights and of justice, freedom and security are urgently needed in Turkey; calls, without prejudice to Member States' positions, on the Council of the EU to propose, once the official opening benchmarks are met, the opening of chapters 23 (judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (justice, freedom and security) and to ensure that the reform process in Turkey is shaped on the basis of EU values and standards; calls on Turkey to engage fully with the Council of Europe and with the Venice Commission in the areas of judicial reform;
10. Deplores the serious backsliding, over the past two years, on freedom of speech, expression and opinion both online and offline in Turkey, which is ranked 149th out of 180 countries in the latest Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index; recalls that, according to the Turkish authorities' own figures, Turkey is the country which holds the record for the highest number of journalists behind bars; reiterates that freedom of opinion, expression and speech, including independent media, are core European values; welcomes the ruling of the Constitutional Court that the rights of Can Dündar and Erdem Gül had been violated; recalls that they still face trial, with prosecutors demanding

multiple life sentences, expresses concern about the decision to exclude the public for the whole duration of the trial, and calls for a thorough and objective investigation into the journalist's allegations regarding the transport of weapons to Syria; condemns recent statements by the President of Turkey against the Constitutional Court; calls for the immediate release of all jailed journalists and encourages European diplomats to continue to monitor closely all criminal cases against journalists; deplores the personal attacks by leading government officials against journalists and opponents, and the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the Turkish leadership; urges Turkey to act against intimidation of journalists in all its forms, in particular by investigating all physical attacks and threats against journalists and actively preventing attacks against media outlets, but also by defusing the tense political climate which creates an environment curtailing freedom of speech in the media and on the internet;

11. Notes the Corruption Perceptions Index 2015 released by Transparency International on 27 January 2016, which shows an increase in corruption in Turkey during the past year and which now ranks Turkey 66th; underlines the need for the Turkish Government to send out clear and consistent signals that it is truly intent on combating corruption at all levels of power;
12. Recalls that the fight against corruption should be one of Turkey's priorities; calls on Turkey therefore to update the anti-corruption strategy and action plan, to establish an independent anti-corruption body and to build a credible track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions, including high-level cases;
13. Calls for the independence of the media of Koza İpek Holding and the Feza media group to be restored and for all government representatives to be removed from the boards of directors, for the dozens of sacked employees who expressed their dissatisfaction at the government takeover to be reappointed, and for the charges of terrorism to be withdrawn;
14. Condemns the violent and illegal takeover of several Turkish newspapers, including Zaman most recently, and expresses its concern about the decision of Digiturk, allegedly based, inter alia, on political grounds, to stop transmitting television channels; calls on the Turkish Government to end the political and economic pressure on independent media; strongly condemns verbal and physical attacks and the increasing use of defamation and anti-terror legislation against journalists; notes the content bans for online and offline reporting, as well as the practice of website blocking, particularly of social networks, which have led to self-censorship among journalists fearing that criticising the authorities would further increase reprisals; is very concerned about the blocking of tens of thousands of websites, the amendments adopted in March 2015 to the 'Internet Media Regulation Law', and the authority of the Telecommunications Directorate (TIB) that allows the blocking of websites within four hours for a variety of vague reasons; is concerned at the fact that the Turkish satellite provider Turksat halted broadcasts by IMC TV on Friday, 26 February 2016 at the request of an Ankara prosecutor investigating whether the channel supported a 'terrorist' group; expresses its concern about exceptionally high tax fines imposed on media organisations; calls for a revision of the law on the internet to support an environment conducive to freedom of speech on the internet and protection of privacy and personal rights; condemns attempts by Turkish government officials to intimidate and, in some cases, deport several international journalists; calls for an independent investigation into the murders on Turkish soil of journalists Naji Jerf and Ibrahim Abdel Qader and Fares Hammadi from the blog about Syria 'Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently'; deplores, furthermore, the investigations, arrests, prison sentences and punitive fines for allegedly insulting the head of state, based on Article 299 of the Penal Code;

calls on the Turkish Government to address these issues as a matter of urgency and priority with a view to safeguarding pluralism in line with international standards; considers an open public debate to be a key element of any healthy democracy;

15. Calls on the Turkish Government to adopt a sound data protection law and establish an independent data protection authority, in line with European standards, creating the necessary conditions for efficient and effective international police and judicial cooperation and sharing of information, and contributing, at the same time, to meeting the criteria for visa liberalisation; calls on the Turkish authorities to clearly define exceptions to the scope of the law, in particular on the processing of health-related data, and to put in place a selection procedure that guarantees the independence of the members of the data protection authority;
16. Reiterates its concern about the anti-terrorism law, in particular its broad and excessively vague definition of terrorism, organised crime and propaganda, making it manifestly impossible to determine the precise nature of such offences; insists that criminal and anti-terror legislation needs to be in line with ECtHR case law, which should be fully respected and implemented by Turkey; calls on Turkey to create a political and legal environment that allows the judiciary to perform its duties in an independent and impartial manner, also in practice, so that it does not become an instrument for the repression of internal dissent; calls on Turkey to implement all judgments of the European Courts; expresses concern about the numerous reassignments, unwilling transfers and dismissals of judges and prosecutors, which undermines the independence, impartiality and efficiency of the judiciary, as well as respect for the principles of due process and separation of powers; calls for the urgent restoration of the separation of powers and meaningful steps to ensure full independence of the judiciary; deplores the perversions of the course of justice to the benefit of certain politicians which became commonplace in Turkey in the aftermath of the 2013 corruption scandal; underlines that the role and influence of executive power within the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors must be limited and that sufficient guarantees against transfers of judges against their will are needed;
17. Recalls that Turkey's extraordinary economic growth over the past decade has led to an unprecedented boom in housing and infrastructure, often at the expense of environmental and conservation concerns; expresses its particular concern about the various megaprojects in the country, and urgently appeals to the government to operate with environmental and social impact assessments and to duly involve the local population in the project design so that long-term negative effects of urbanisation, consumption of space and environmental degradation can be avoided to the extent possible;
18. Takes the view that the constitutional reform process should develop into a secular, pluralistic, inclusive and tolerant society; underlines that a new Constitution should be based on widespread consensus across the political spectrum and in society as a whole, with full respect for the rights of minorities, irrespective of their cultural or religious background, thereby providing a solid base for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law; urges Turkey to fully respect the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms, in particular freedom of religious and ethnic minorities; emphasises the need to enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including the prohibition of discrimination and hate speech on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity, and to include the prohibition of such discrimination in a new Constitution; underlines that this should not prevent Turkey from granting specific rights to citizens on the basis of ethnic origin, religion or language, so that they can preserve their identity; notes, in this connection, that further action is needed to address the problems faced by

members of the Greek minority, in particular with regard to education and property rights; urges the Turkish authorities to take judicial measures against the people and bodies responsible for committing any sort of hate crime, including anti-Semitism, as was declared in the government's 'Democratisation Package' in 2013; condemns the passive attitude of the Turkish Government towards the serious threats against Christians and their pastors in social media; expects the Turkish Government to treat every Turkish citizen without any prejudice towards his or her religious belief; calls on the Turkish authorities, given that Turkey has the world's largest population of the Roma minority, to implement concrete and effective measures to achieve de facto equal rights for Roma in Turkish society and to improve the situation of Roma, with special attention to the situation of Roma children and the inclusion of Roma women;

19. Calls on Turkey to continue working closely with the Commission on new legislation under preparation and on the implementation of existing laws, in order to ensure compatibility with the EU acquis;
20. Underlines the need to fully respect, in line with European values, the right to different lifestyles, secular as well as faith-based ones, and to maintain the separation of state and religion;
21. Stresses the importance of continuing the reform process in the area of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, by enabling religious communities to obtain legal personality, by eliminating all restrictions on the training, appointment and succession of clergy, by complying with the relevant judgments of the ECtHR and the recommendations of the Venice Commission and by eliminating all forms of discrimination or barriers based on religion; calls on Turkey to respect the distinct character and importance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and to recognise its legal personality; reiterates the need to allow the reopening of the Halki Seminary and lift all obstacles for its proper functioning and to also allow the public use of the ecclesiastical title of the Ecumenical Patriarch;
22. Calls on the Turkish Government to halt its plans for the construction of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant; points out that the envisaged site is located in a region prone to severe earthquakes, hence posing a major threat not only to Turkey but to the Mediterranean region as a whole; requests accordingly that the Turkish Government join the Espoo Convention, which commits its parties to notifying and consulting each other on major projects under consideration that are likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across boundaries; asks the Turkish Government to involve, or at least consult, the governments of its neighbouring countries, such as Greece and Cyprus, during any further developments in the Akkuyu venture;
23. Expresses concern at the high levels of violence against women and the lack of implementation of domestic law in order to prevent and protect women from violence; further insists that the authorities effectively enforce existing laws concerning violence against women and domestic abuse, a widespread problem both in rural and urban areas, address the underreporting of gender-based violence, provide support services and shelter to victims of such violence and impose sanctions on perpetrators, and increase social awareness and tackle societal acceptance of gender-based violence; strongly recommends that the government promote gender equality in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field;
24. Calls on Turkey to undertake serious efforts to protect the rights of the LGBTI community; expresses strong concern at the lack of protection provided to LGBTI people

against acts of violence; stresses, in this connection, its disappointment at the failure to include protection against hate crimes on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in the Hate Crimes Bill; regrets that hate crime against LGBTI people often remains unpunished, or that offenders' sentences are reduced on account of the victim's alleged 'unjust provocation';

III. Kurdish peace process and the situation in the southeast of Turkey

25. Expresses deep concern about the deteriorating situation in the southeast of Turkey; recalls that the Turkish Government has a responsibility to protect all people living on its territory, irrespective of their cultural or religious origins; acknowledges Turkey's legitimate right to fight against terrorism, subject to international law; stresses, however, that security measures must be conducted with respect for the rule of law and human rights; underlines that all operations by security forces must be proportional and not take the form of collective punishment; condemns the misconduct of special security forces and calls for the perpetrators to be brought to justice; calls for humanitarian law to be enforced so that all the injured may receive the care to which they are entitled;
26. Condemns and does not find justified the return to violence by the PKK, which is on the EU's list of terrorist organisations; stresses that there is no violent solution to the Kurdish question and urges the Turkish Government to take its responsibility to resume negotiations with a view to achieving a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the Kurdish issue; calls on the PKK to lay down its arms, abandon terrorist tactics and use peaceful and legal means to voice its expectations; strongly condemns attacks against security forces and civilians; expresses serious concern, in this connection, at the building of barricades and the digging of trenches by YDG-H militants; insists, however, that peaceful protests must be allowed;
27. Calls on the Turkish authorities to immediately lift the curfews that have been implemented in breach of the Turkish Constitution; expresses particularly grave alarm at the situation in Cizre and Sur/Diyarbakır, and condemns the fact that civilians are being killed, wounded and left without water, food and medical attention; calls on Turkey to allow the International Red Crescent to alleviate the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Cizre and Diyarbakır; urges the government to allow the wounded to be taken to hospital, by complying with the interim measures of the ECHR, and to secure a safe way out to civilians in cities under curfew; is deeply concerned about the rising number of civilian deaths and injured, which need to be thoroughly investigated, and the fact that around 400 000 people have become internally displaced; underlines that, as an act of human dignity, families must be allowed to retrieve the bodies on the streets and bury them; underlines the Turkish Government's responsibility to ensure human rights and provide security and access to goods and services to the entire civilian population in the predominantly Kurdish parts of Turkey afflicted by fighting; asks the Turkish Government to put in place a formal mechanism for urgent aid and compensation for those who have had to flee their homes, become unemployed and lost their livelihoods; regrets the destruction of historical heritage;
28. Notes with concern the urban transformation and relocation projects in conflict-hit areas recently unveiled by the Turkish Government and regrets the decision on widespread expropriation in the Sur district of Diyarbakır, including properties belonging to the municipality and also church properties, which would be a violation of the rights of religious minorities; calls on the Turkish Government to respect the cultural distinctiveness of the region and to refrain from further empowering the centralised local

government structure in the region; calls for a revision of the expropriation decision and reconstruction plans by entering into a dialogue and cooperation with the district and metropolitan municipalities and respecting the rights of the residents and property owners;

29. Is dismayed by the actions of special operations police forces known as ‘Esedullah teams’, which appear to be responsible for grave human rights violations, including the deliberate killing of civilians in the southeast of Turkey; demands a thorough investigation by the Turkish authorities into the actions of the ‘Esedullah teams’, and full accountability and punishment of those guilty of human rights violations;
30. Calls for an immediate ceasefire and the resumption of the peace process in order to achieve a negotiated solution to the Kurdish issue; underlines the priority of making progress towards democratisation and reconciliation; calls, in this connection, for the establishment of a special committee in the Turkish Grand National Assembly for the resolution of the Kurdish question, in order to contribute to a lasting peace by reinstating a feeling of justice and healing the traumas which are vulnerable to political abuse; urges the EU to take an active role in the peace process without delay; underlines the importance of giving priority to enhancing the social, cultural and political rights and equal treatment of people of Kurdish origin; reiterates its call for Turkey, as a member of the Council of Europe, to lift its reservations to the European Charter of Local Autonomy with a view to ensuring its full implementation in all its aspects;
31. Strongly deplores the intimidation and prosecution of more than 1 000 academics who signed a petition calling for peace; condemns the dismissal or suspension of almost 50 of them, as well as the imprisonment of another four of the signatories; underlines that the individuals responsible for the killing of lawyer Tahir Elçi – who dedicated his life to peace and human rights – must be brought to justice; expresses serious concern about the judicial investigations targeting mainly HDP members, as well as the ongoing imprisonment and dismissal of local mayors, including 25 co-mayors, and the threats hanging over many Kurdish politicians;
32. Strongly condemns the terrorist attacks attributed to ISIL/Daesh in Diyarbakir, Suruc, Ankara and Istanbul; expresses its solidarity with the victims and their families and with the citizens of Turkey on the frontline of the fight against extremism; equally strongly condemns the bomb blasts in Ankara on 17 February 2016, for which the militant group TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Hawks) claimed responsibility, as well as the attack in Ankara on 13 March 2016, and expresses its condolences to the victims’ families and the bereaved; stresses the importance of conducting thorough investigations into these attacks with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice; believes that stronger cooperation between Europol and Turkish law enforcement agencies is key to effectively combating terrorism;
33. Welcomes Turkey’s participation in the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL and the opening of its bases to the United States and coalition forces; urges Turkey to act with the necessary restraint and in full cooperation with its Western allies;
34. Urges Turkey to continue to increase its efforts to prevent foreign fighters, money and equipment from reaching ISIL/Daesh and other extremist groups via its territory; is concerned that the Turkish authorities might not have taken all possible measures to stop and prevent ISIL/Daesh activities, in particular to combat illegal oil trafficking across its borders; asks the EU to enhance its capacity to exchange information and to cooperate closely with the Turkish authorities in this matter in order to give further support to

combating smuggling networks; notes shortcomings in the arrest of foreign fighters and in controlling borders with Iraq and Syria;

35. Welcomes Turkey's support and contribution to the agreement reached between major powers to cease hostilities in Syria and provide humanitarian aid to people in need; commends it as an important step toward resolving the Syrian crisis; notes that the cessation of hostilities should apply to all parties in conflict other than groups designated as terrorist organisations by the UNSC; calls on all parties to swiftly implement these commitments in full; recalls its belief that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict and insists on the need to reach a political solution; condemns Turkey's military intervention against Kurdish forces in northern Syria, which undermines the fight against ISIL/Daesh and jeopardises peace and security efforts;

IV. EU-Turkey cooperation on the refugee / migration crisis

36. Supports a renewed political engagement between the EU and Turkey on geopolitical challenges, in particular the refugee and migration crisis; acknowledges Turkey's great humanitarian contribution in hosting the largest refugee population in the world; urges the EU and Turkey to join forces in improving and ensuring decent living conditions and basic capacities of refugee camps and to facilitate the work of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), in order to avoid the massive exodus of migrants; urges the EU to continue to work with Turkish government officials to ensure correct documentation of migrants; recalls that Turkey is one of the key transit countries for migrants and refugees travelling to the EU, not just from Syria but from many other countries; stresses the importance of cooperating with Turkey in managing the refugee crisis and preventing losses of life at sea; welcomes the NATO monitoring mission in the Aegean Sea;
37. Welcomes the activation, on 29 November 2015, of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan on refugees and migration management, as part of a comprehensive cooperation agenda based on shared responsibility, mutual commitments and delivery, and insists on the need to implement it immediately; emphasises that EU-Turkey cooperation on migration should not be linked to the calendar, content and conditionality of the negotiation process; believes that outsourcing the refugee crisis to Turkey is not a credible long-term solution to the problem; calls on EU Member States' solidarity to increase the number of countries that will accept refugees for resettlement in a spirit of burden and responsibility sharing;
38. Stresses that the EUR 3 billion, and additional funding, of the Refugee Facility for Refugees in Turkey will have to be properly utilised in order to swiftly and directly benefit refugees and their host communities through the implementation of projects meeting immediate food, healthcare, sanitation and education needs; calls for the full involvement of Parliament in the decision-making process as a co-legislator and budgetary authority; urges swifter disbursement of the pledged funds; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure, in cooperation with Turkey, that a mechanism is put in place to check that funds are used properly to this end, that this mechanism will be closely monitored and that the European Parliament will be regularly informed by the Commission on the use of the funds; underlines the need to pay special attention to vulnerable groups such as women and children, particularly orphans, and religious minorities such as Christians and Yazidis; emphasises the urgent need to address gender-related violence and abuse against women and girls on the migrant routes crossing Turkey;

39. Commends the recent decision of the Turkish Government to open its labour market to Syrian refugees; encourages more urgent action to ensure that all 700 000 Syrian children receive education; praises the Turkish Government for providing Syrian refugees with free health services and education; deplores the fact that the UNHCR's appeal to increase funding has not been met and that the World Food Programme had to reduce its nutrition ratio to 80 % because of reduced funds; praises Turkey for unilaterally filling this financial gap and calls on the Member States and the EU to increase funds to the UN agencies and their partner NGOs in Turkey;
40. Appreciates that Turkey has, until recently, maintained an open-border policy for Syrian refugees; commends the entry into force of new rules in the Turkish visa regime, which already paved the way for a sharp decrease in irregular crossings; stresses, however, that a much stricter visa policy, in line with EU visa policy, must be applied vis-à-vis countries representing a major source of illegal migration, in order to curb the influx of migrants who are in no need of international protection via Turkey into Europe; underlines that Turkey needs every assistance in tightening its border security and to step up its fight against human smugglers; calls on Turkey to show zero tolerance and take effective measures to stop traffickers of human beings and the flow of refugees towards the Greek islands resulting in severe humanitarian, political, social and security issues within the EU; encourages more cooperation between Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece in the area of search and rescue operations in the Aegean Sea, and calls on Frontex to offer its support to the Turkish coast guard and enhance the bilateral exchange of information; acknowledges that measures against criminal smuggling can only be effective in conjunction with the introduction of safe and legal routes for refugees and asylum seekers to enter the European Union;
41. Underlines that stemming migration to the EU should not lead to pushbacks of refugees or illegal detention; calls on the Commission, as regards the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan, to investigate the allegations made by Amnesty International in their report dated 1 April 2016 that Turkey is conducting forced returns of Syrian refugees; insists that all forced return procedures from Greece to Turkey must be fully in line with international and EU law relating to access to asylum and international protection and the implementation of fundamental rights and procedural guarantees; calls, in this regard, on the Commission to closely follow the way in which the Turkish authorities implement the agreement and whether the principle of non-refoulement is respected in the case of persons returned to Turkey; reiterates its call on the Turkish Government to lift the geographic reservation to the 1951 Geneva Convention; insists that it is crucial to put in place safe and legal routes for refugees, and urges the Member States to increase their resettlement efforts substantially; is of the opinion that it is imperative to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis; urges Turkey to increase substantially its efforts to find a political solution, namely to overcome its reservations against the participation of the Kurds in the peace talks in Geneva;
42. Welcomes the fact that the Turkish authorities and the UNHCR in Turkey are harmonising their databases for the registration of refugees into one registration system; considers it urgent to look at technical ways to make that database interoperable and compatible with the European database for the registration of asylum seekers, Eurodac; stresses that it is also important that, once refugees leave Turkey to go to Europe, they should be removed from the Turkish database;
43. Stresses that implementation of the readmission agreement vis-à-vis all Member States is crucial for the EU, as it provides an opportunity for a more effective return policy of

migrants who are in no need of international protection; welcomes the political agreement reached by the two parties at the EU-Turkey Summit of 29 November 2015 for the EU-Turkey readmission agreement to become fully applicable from June 2016; calls on all parties to implement the existing bilateral readmission agreements fully and effectively and to ensure that the fundamental rights of returned migrants are respected in full;

44. Encourages the government to fully and in a non-discriminatory manner meet the criteria identified in the visa liberalisation roadmap vis-à-vis all Member States; recalls that visa liberalisation is a merit-based process and that only when the standards have been met, will visa-free travel be possible for Turkish citizens; asks the Commission to provide more technical assistance for the fulfilment of the conditions of the visa liberalisation roadmap;

V. Progress of the Cyprus reunification talks

45. Praises the considerable progress achieved in the Cyprus reunification talks, under the auspices of the UN; welcomes the joint declaration of 11 February 2014 by the two leaders as a basis for a settlement; supports the evolvement of the Republic of Cyprus into a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with single sovereignty, a single international personality and single citizenship with political equality between the two communities and equal opportunities for all its citizens, without prejudging the final agreement, and in line with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and international law; commends the constructive approach of the leaders of both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island, and their determination and tireless efforts to reach a fair, comprehensive and viable settlement as soon as possible; underlines the importance of the solution of the decades-long Cyprus problem for the whole region, and for Europe/the European Union; welcomes therefore the possibility of a new referendum on reunification and calls on all parties to contribute to a positive outcome;
46. Emphasises that non-settlement of the Cyprus issue affects the development of EU-Turkey relations, and therefore calls on all sides concerned to make an effort towards its resolution;
47. Calls on Turkey to fulfil its obligation of full, non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the EC-Turkey Association Agreement vis-à-vis all Member States, including the Republic of Cyprus, the fulfilment of which could provide a significant boost to the negotiation process;
48. Deplores Turkey's policy of illegal settlement, and calls on it to refrain from further settlement of Turkish citizens in the occupied areas of Cyprus, which is contrary to the Geneva Convention and the principles of international law; urges Turkey to terminate all actions that alter the demographic balance on the island, thus impeding a future solution;
49. Calls on Turkey to refrain from any actions in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Cyprus which might lead to friction and crisis in a very sensitive region and might have negative effects on the negotiations for a democratic solution which would end the unacceptable existing dichotomous status quo; recognises the right of its Member States to sign bilateral and other agreements in the context of their sovereign rights in order to exploit their national resources within their EEZ;
50. Welcomes the agreement by the two leaders on a series of confidence-building measures, including on the opening of two new crossings points and on the interconnection of the electricity grids; notes, however, that there has been little to no progress on mobile phone

interoperability; urges both sides therefore to implement all agreed measures without further delay; calls on the EU to fully support the settlement, both politically and financially; calls on Turkey to actively support the negotiation process and a positive outcome; calls on Turkey to begin to withdraw its troops from Cyprus and to transfer the sealed-off area of Famagusta to the UN in accordance with UNSC resolution 550 (1984); commends the fact that access is granted to the Committee on Missing Persons (which deals with both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot missing persons) to all relevant sites, including military areas; urges Turkey, however, to grant access to relevant archives which would maximise the effectiveness of the committee;

51. Welcomes the initiative of the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Nicos Anastasiades, to make Turkish an official language of the EU, and urges the parties to accelerate this process; notes that the implementation of the EU acquis in the future Turkish Cypriot constituent state upon entry into force of the settlement agreement must already be well prepared; welcomes, in this connection, the establishment of the bi-communal ad hoc committee on EU preparation; encourages both the European Parliament and the Commission to intensify their efforts to engage with Turkish Cypriots in preparation to fully integrate into the EU; encourages the President of the European Parliament to take the necessary steps in the event of a settlement;

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52. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Turkey.