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*Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee*

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**D-TR\_PV(2021)0415\_1**

**MINUTES**  
of the meeting of 15 April 2021, 14.00-15.45  
Brussels, remotely

The meeting opened at 14.00 on Thursday, 15 April 2021, with Sergey Lagodinsky (Chair) presiding.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Announcements of the Chair

D-TR Chair Sergey Lagodinsky opened the meeting at 14:00.

He referred to numerous recent developments in relations with Turkey and highlighted the importance of the public projection of disunity of the institutions in light of the “Sofagate” incident, also referring to the recent CoP meeting with the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Council. D-TR Chair urged the institutions to provide an explanation to all MEPs prior to the plenary session, allowing for the EP to focus on substantial issues in the plenary debate and to not let the discussion on arrangements of protocol overshadow the substance. Furthermore, he expressed his regret that the incident was used to culturalize the issue and that Turkey alone was being blamed for a misstep in protocol.

3. Exchange of views on the latest developments in the EU-Turkey relations, with

- Mr Bernard BRUNET, Head of Unit, Turkey, DG NEAR
- Mr Thomas FRELLESEN, Head of Unit, Turkey, EEAS
- Mr Nacho Sanchez AMOR - EP Rapporteur on Turkey

Bernard Brunet (Head of Unit: Turkey, DG NEAR) discussed the state of play of the domestic situation in Turkey and its bilateral relations with the EU. He underlined the increased political polarization, the politicization of the judiciary system, the economic deterioration, and the impact of the pandemic. Turkey was facing its third and so far the worst wave, which had a particularly negative impact on the social cohesion, the vulnerability of workers and refugees, economy and tourism. Regarding the relations with the EU, he highlighted that negative rhetoric

from Ankara towards the EU had been reduced, and that Turkey was showing willingness to engage in discussions on the Cyprus issue. The EU was engaged in preparatory work regarding the positive agenda, which is reversible subject to Turkey's compliance to the engagement with the EU. Furthermore, he touched upon the proposals to modernize the Customs Union (CU), reiterated that the 2016 statement on migration remained valid and urged Turkey to implement its part of the statement and to reduce the flow of migrants entering Cyprus.

Thomas Frellesen (Head of Unit for Turkey, EEAS) stressed that Turkey was an important neighbour and that relations had improved, but remained fragile. He reiterated that the Council had decided to engage positively with Turkey in a number of areas, but that position could be reversed depending on Turkey's actions. He underlined that Customs Union should be seen as a future investment in the bilateral relations and that it could provide renewed leverage, help drive reforms in the country, and ensure a rule-based framework for the future. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of the rule of law and human rights, and the cooperation with the US in realizing the common objective of anchoring Turkey to the West. He concluded by informing about possible foreign policy cooperation and the Turkish positions towards Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Ukraine.

Nacho Sánchez Amor, the EP *rappoiteur*, gave a brief presentation on the EP report on Turkey and reiterated its focus on human rights and the rule of law. He argued that democratic conditionality should be introduced from the very start of the debate on the Customs Union, as a means to achieve reforms. Furthermore, he addressed the issue of fragmented approaches among the European institutions, and urged the other institutions to match the EP's commitment to human rights and the rule of law in every aspect of their relations with Turkey - in order to convey an image of unity and to endorse European values. He expressed his concern over the mixed signals from Ankara regarding the negative developments in the country on the one hand and the sudden new rhetoric and its sincerity, on the other.

## **Debate**

Ilhan Kyuchyuk, the first Vice-Chair of D-TR agreed that the EU institutions needed to convey a common and united response to the "Sofagate" incident, but expressed frustration over the lack of inter-institutional information on the issue. He agreed that pre-conditions for the Customs Union, as mentioned by the *rappoiteur*, could be a good idea, and expressed hope that visa liberalization could present a good opportunity for the Turkey-EU relations. Özlem Demirel, the second Vice-Chair of D-TR expressed concern over the human rights situation in the country and the EU's approach emphasizing geopolitics. She enquired about the difference and the link between domestic and foreign policy. She stressed the importance of following the worrying developments in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, regarding the free passage of warships, concerns about the Montreux convention and enquired about the EU's position on this.

Other MEPs also expressed their concerns over the "Sofagate" incident, the need to have an open dialogue, but be strong when it comes to the respect of the Rule of Law and fundamental rights. EU has to continue supporting the democratic opposition in the country. A couple of MEPs strongly urged to organise a delegation mission to Turkey, despite the pandemic restrictions, in order to show solidarity with the oppressed.

Issues regarding the migration issues were raised, stating that the EU is partially responsible for the mismanagement of the migration issue and for giving Ankara the weapon to blackmail the Union.

Concerns over the re-Islamization of Turkey and its consequent Islamization of Europe, and Turkey's military activities in the Balkans have also been raised by an ID MEP.

MEPs participating in the debate: Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Özlem Demirel, Virginie Joron, Pierfrancesco Majorino, Michaela Sojdrova, Giorgos Georgiou.

#### 4. Cyprus issue: state of play

- Ms Judit ROZSA, Director, Coordination, Resources and Aid Programme, DG REFORM
- Ms Amanda PAUL, Senior Policy Analyst, European Policy Center

Judit Rozsa (Director, Coordination, Resources and Aid Programme, DG REFORM) discussed preparations for the UN-led 5+1 Cyprus talks, explaining that the outcome of the meeting was uncertain as the parties continued to advocate different settlement models. Turkish Cypriots, supported by Turkey, insist on the two-state solution with a sovereign equality. She stressed that the EU's position remained to support fully the comprehensive settlement based on a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation with political equality within the UN framework and in line with the EU's founding principles, and asserted that the EU wanted to play an active role in supporting the negotiations (opposed by the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey). The EU stands ready to offer its full support, including by appointing - upon resumption - an EU representative to UN's good offices mission.

Furthermore, she stressed that Turkey's contribution to the process was key and would have implications for the stability of the whole Eastern Mediterranean region and the EU-Turkey relations. She also informed about the new PDO measures adopted by the EU regarding halloumi/hellim and highlighted their importance for the reunification efforts or as a confidence-building measure. This would enable the Turkish Cypriot producers sell their product on the EU market, and act as a tangible reminder of the benefits they can get from the EU, but which would be lost should the two-state solution materialize.

Amanda Paul, Senior Policy Analyst at the EPC, discussed difficulties in finding a solution, one of them being Ankara's disbelief that the Greek Cypriots have ever been truly committed to the bi-zonal and bi-communal federation model, so in their eyes there is no point in pursuing it. Ms Paul believed that there was a big chance that the talks in Geneva would end in deadlock, which would risk further exacerbating tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the EU-Turkey relations.

Ms Paul believes it is important to understand why reconciliation efforts have failed in the past. While Turkey has been blamed for all the failures, she believes this is not completely correct: while Turkey carries a lot of shared responsibility for all these failures, the problem is far more complex. Unfortunately, there has been a real lack of political will, courage and determination, unwillingness to put the prosperity of the island above personal power. All parties are excellent masters of blame-game. Two huge opportunities - offered by the Annan Plan and the Crans-Montana talks - have been lost due to above-mentioned reasons.

The way out would be, first of all, for both sides to understand that holding on to their maximalist positions is unproductive, and the status quo cannot last forever. Meanwhile, Turkey's footprint and influence in the North has become bigger and bigger. Turkish Cypriots are financially dependent on Ankara, Turkification of the North of Cyprus risks eroding the local culture, values and identity, which was clearly visible in the last elections. Turkish Cypriots risk becoming minority or simply being absorbed in the Turkish state if the solution is not found soon. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has not helped in people-to-people and intercommunal relations. It is clear that Turkey of today is not Turkey of 2017 - Ankara pursues a more nationalistic and assertive foreign policy and has hardened its stance on Cyprus,

meaning that it is uncertain whether Turkey is ready to be as flexible as in the past. So far, there were no signs of that, but Turkey has surprised us in the past, it can still do so in the future. For Ms Paul, a two-state solution is not viable, with North Cyprus becoming a province/region of Turkey, therefore it is necessary to start where it was left off in Crans-Montana and work on a viable bi-zonal and bi-communal model. If this proves impossible, there needs to be a change in thinking. One of the alternative solutions discussed in some circles would be a Swiss model of a confederation, with a single international personality, but preserving self-determination of the entities - not an ideal model, but could serve as a new starting point.

## **Debate**

Members urged for a constructive stance on the Cyprus question and for the EU to be a more active player in the debates on the solution. It is crucial that the EU stays united in its stance towards Turkey on all issues, but in particular on issues concerning Greece and Cyprus. It is unfortunate, that certain member states prioritise their own economic and geopolitical interests over EU interests, which sends a message of disunity.

Some argued that the Turkish two-state proposal could be a bargaining chip, and that there is no legal basis for such a model. The idea of a two-state solution is not acceptable, as a federation is the only viable option and a way that ensures that the population can live autonomously but at the same time together. Some expressed frustration over the framing of the issue and argued the importance of discussing it in terms of invasion and occupation. Despite the opposition of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot administration, EU should play an active role in the solution process.

MEPs participating in the debate: Tomislav Sokol, Niyazi Kizilyürek, Manolis Kefalogiannis.

5. Any other business

6. Date and place of the next meeting

The meeting closed at 15.45.

**ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/  
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/  
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZOČNIH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRĀ/DALVIŲ SARAŠAS/  
JELENLÉTI ÍV/REĢISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŚCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/  
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Sergey Lagodinsky (C), Oslem Demirel (VC), Ilhan Kyuchyuk (VC)
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Zastupnici/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/Képviselők/Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputati/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Loucas Fourlas, Manolis Kefalogiannis, Pierfrancesco Majorino, Evin Incir, Virginie Joron, Alice Kuhnke, Georgiou Giorgos, Tomislav Sokol, Nacho Sanchez Amor
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Mihaela Sojderova, Andrey Slabakov

209 (7)
Niyazi Kizil Yurek
216 (3)
56 (8) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/Päevakorra punkt/Ημερίσια Διάταξη Σημείο/Agenda item/Point OJ/Tačka dnevnog reda/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkēs punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt Aġenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Tačka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatel é/Observatér/Beobachter/Vaattlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Promatrači/Osservatori/Nověrotáji/Stebétojai/Megfigyelők/Osservaturi/Waarnemers/Obserwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Observatörer

По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání předsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Esimene kutsel/Με πρόσκληση του Προέδρου/At the invitation of the Chair(wo)man/Sur l'invitation du président/  
Na poziv predsjednika/Su invito del presidente/Pēc priekšsēdētāja uzaicinājuma/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/  
Fuq stedina taé-'Chairman'/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitacija președintelui/Na pozvanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan

Judit Rozsa, Director, Coordination, Resources and Aid Programme, DG REFORM

Amanda Paul, Senior Policy Analyst, European Policy Center

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nõukogu/Συμβούλιο/Council/Conseil/Vijeće/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (\*)

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Bernard Brunet, Helene Bourdieu,

Европейска служба за външна дейност/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Evropská služba pro vnitřní činnost/  
EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger Dienst/Euroopa välisteenistus/Ευρωπαϊκή Υπηρεσία Εξωτερικής Δράσης/European External Action service/Service européen pour l'action extérieure/Europska služba za vanjsko djelovanje/Servizio europeo per l'azione esterna/Eiropas Ārējās darbības dienests/Europos išorės veiksmų tarnyba/Európai Külügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Europew għall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Europejska Służba Działalna Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Ação Externa/Serviciul european pentru acțiune externă/Európska služba pre vonkajšiu činnosť/Europska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europiska avdelningen för yttra åtgärd (\*)

Thomas Frelesen, Eva Horelova

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PPE	Alexandra Entrena Rovers
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Renew	Rune Glasberg
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Tatiana Mrazikova, Ausra Rakstelyte

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Vesselina Veleva

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