



Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee

D-TR_PV(2021)1025_0

MINUTES
of the meeting of 25 October 2021, 17.00-18.45
Brussels, semi-remotely

The meeting opened at 17.00 on Monday, 25 October 2021, with Sergey Lagodinsky (Chair) presiding.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the meeting of 15 April 2021

The draft minutes were adopted without modifications.

3. Announcements of the Chair

D-TR Chair Sergey LAGODINSKY opened the meeting by referring to the recent statement of Turkish President Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN threatening to declare 10 Ambassadors from Western countries *personae non gratae*. The statement followed a call from these countries for the release of Osman KAVALA. The Chair and *rapporiteur* contended that this was nothing new because the EU had regularly called for the release of Osman Kavala in the past, moreover, it was not a question of the Ambassadors' statement, but of respecting the decision of the ECtHR. He also addressed the Turkish people by saying that the European Parliament remains in solidarity with the Turkish society. Furthermore, Turkey is a candidate country and thus the EU has the legitimacy to address any human rights or rule of law issue that arises in Turkey. The D-TR Chair and the rapporteur issued a [joint statement](#) on this issue.

The D-TR Chair also referred to his recent exchanges with the Chair of the Turkish delegation to the JPC, Mr Karayel, suggesting there might be an opening on the Turkish side for holding a joint meeting early next year.

4. State of play of EU-Turkey relations, with:

- Mr Maciej Popowski, acting Director General, DG NEAR, European Commission

Mr POPOWSKI discussed the Commission's report on Turkey presented on 19 October. Turkey is still moving further away from the European Union and the conclusions are the same as in the 2018 report ('negotiations are at standstill'). While tensions have decreased and dialogue with Turkey increased in 2021, the situation remains highly problematic with regard to the recent provocations in the Eastern Mediterranean, fundamental rights, independence of the judiciary, Cyprus, Turkey's assertive foreign policy and the (non-)implementation of the ECtHR's decisions.

The EU-Turkey statement of 2016 has shown results and the offer of the constructive agenda is still on the table. He called for the European Parliament to swiftly adopt the Draft amending budget No. 5 to enable the EU to ensure uninterrupted support for refugees. Turkey is showing increased interest in participating in EU programmes and projects (Horizon Europe, Erasmus+) and people-to-people contacts. The Commission is focusing on supporting the Turkish civil society and pro-democratic forces.

Regarding the economy, whilst Turkey has been successful in minimising the effects of COVID, high levels of inflation and depreciation of the Turkish Lira continue.

During the debate, Members called for bold and decisive action regarding the Turkish President's threats to expel the 10 Ambassadors. In addition, many deplored the instrumentalisation of migrants by Turkey, issues related to democracy and the rule of law, and provocations in its foreign policy. The rapporteur noted the difference in approaches between the Parliament and the Commission regarding the democratic conditionality: the EP cannot give the green light to a modernisation of the Customs Union that is not accompanied by real democratic reform.

Mr Popowski reiterated that while the European Commission is working on progress in several fields with Turkey (including the modernisation of the Customs Union, migration, fight against climate change), Turkey's full compliance with the current obligations, including non-discriminatory treatment of all Member States, is a necessary condition for any upgrades/progress. He drew Members' attention to the 2016 impact assessment study demonstrating that Turkey would be the one benefitting much more from the modernisation of the Customs Union. Mr Popowski also clarified that the Commission does not give budget support to the Turkish government - three grants (approx. EUR 400 million each) were given to the health, education, social and labour ministries only for the reimbursement of invoices relating to the care of Syrian refugees.

MEPs participating in the debate: Manolis Kefalogiannis (GR, EPP), Sergey Lagodinsky (DE, Greens), Pierfrancesco Majorino (IT, S&D), Costas Mavrides (CY, S&D), Nacho Sanchez Amor (ES, S&D).

5. Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and its consequences for the gender equality and the situation of women (in the framework of the [European Gender equality week](#))

- Ms Selime Büyükgöze, Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, Istanbul

Ms BÜYÜKGÖZE started by noting that the growing gap between law and implementation is a serious problem in Turkey. Despite Turkey being the first country to ratify the Istanbul Convention, civil society always knew it was just a PR stunt. The aim was to show Turkey as duly following the EU accession process and to erase the bad image of being the first country to be convicted in the ECtHR for not protecting women. There is no legal instrument to oppose a decision in Turkey even where the majority of Turkish society object to it. Mor Çatı (along with other CSOs) received the invitation to the National Assembly's newly established

commission to investigate violence against women and determine the measures to be taken. However, they felt they were not treated seriously and were constantly interrupted during this meeting. The Action Plan stemming from this commission did not mention the Istanbul Convention nor did it make any reference to gender equality.

Ms Büyükgöze further discussed the significance of Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention for women. The exit is just the latest in a long list of attacks against women's rights in Turkey. Although never implemented, the Istanbul Convention was an important reference for the Turkish women. The treaty was a crucial guiding instrument because local measures are not enough and the government blocks progress. Mor Çati now faces huge challenges in trying to protect women from violence as women are prevented from invoking their basic rights. She also noted that it paves the way for violence as attackers may feel they will not be prosecuted. This is only emphasised by President's previous statements that equality of men and women is against nature. In abandoning the Convention the government appealed to Islamist viewpoints arguing that the Istanbul Convention attacks the traditional family and promotes homosexuality. This just adds more weight to the hatred that already exists in Turkey towards the LGBTIQ+ community. Additionally, women were shown that 'their rights are not theirs and can be taken away at any moment'. She also highlighted Turkish women's decreasing access to abortions. President Erdogan has described abortion as immoral and suggested that it be made illegal. There is now only one public hospital in Istanbul performing abortions and many hospitals incorrectly inform women that they do not provide abortions because abortions are illegal in Turkey.

Bernard BRUNET, Head of the Turkey Unit, DG NEAR, noted that COMM President has been very explicit that the Commission strongly regretted the withdrawal of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention. He underlined that the withdrawal was particularly unfortunate given the increase in domestic violence during successive COVID lockdowns. 'We have been trying to get Turkey to reverse this decision but we have not been successful unfortunately. There is a worrying reluctance by Turkey to recognise the concept of gender equality and an increase in hate speech against LGBTIQ+ community. There is an increasing divergence between the legal framework and what is actually practised on the ground in Turkey'. The Commission keeps raising their concern in political dialogue and, more concretely, is trying to provide support to human rights defenders, women's rights groups and the LGBTIQ+ community. The Commission increased funding to organisations working in these areas and continues to promote equality for women and girls in education and health.

Debate

Members thanked the civil society organisations for their hard work and efforts to ensure gender equality and fight violence against women in Turkey. While Turkey is not the only country on the continent facing these problems, the situation has been worsening. D-TR Chair underlined that the EU is a value-based Union and will continue fighting for these values to be implemented in its Member States and partner countries.

MEPs participating in the debate: Evin Incir, (SE, S&D), Sergey Lagodinsky (DE, Greens).

6. Any other business

None

7. Date and place of the next meeting

Date and place of next meeting will be communicated by the secretariat.

The meeting closed at 18.37.

**ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATASTAΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZOČNIH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRĀ/DALYVIŲ SARAŠAS/
JELENLÉTI ÍV/REĢISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŚCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/
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Бюро/Меса/Председништво/Formandskabet/Vorstand/Juhatus/Προεδρείο/Bureau/Predsjedništvo/Ufficio di presidenza/Prezidijs/Biuras/Elnökség/Prezydium/Birou/Predsedničtvvo/Predsedstvo/Puheenjohtajisto/Presidiet (*)
Sergey Lagodinsky (C)
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Zastupnici/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/Képviselők/Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputati/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Manolis Kefalogiannis, Pierfrancesco Majorino, Evin Incir, Costas Mavrides, Engin Eroglu, Isabel Wiesler-Lima, Tomislav Sokol, Nacho Sanchez Amor

209 (7)	
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 Aģenda/Agendarpunkt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Tačka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)	p.4
- Mr Maciej Popowski, acting Director General, DG NEAR, European Commission	p.5
- Ms Selime Büyükgöze, Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, Istanbul	

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatel é/Observatér/Beobacht er/Vaatlejad/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

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

Laetitia Bot

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Bernard Brunet, Helene Bourdieu,

Европейска служба за външна дейност/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Evropská služba pro vnější 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 Ewropew ghall-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Europejska Służba Działań Zewnętrznych/Serviço Europeu para a Ação Externa/Serviciul european pentru acțiune externă/Europska služba pre vonkajšiu činnost/Europska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Euopeiska avdelningen för yttrre åtgärd (*)

Katerina Fatsea, Vincenzo Greco

Други институции/Otras instituciones/Ostatní orgány a instituce/Andre institutioner/Andere Organe/Muud institutsioonid/Άλλα θεσμικά όργανα/Other institutions/Autres institutions/Druge institucije/Altre istituzioni/Citas iestādes/Kitos institucijos/Más intézmények/Istituzzjonijiet oħra/Andere instellingen/Inne instytucje/Outras Instituições/Alte instituijii/Iné inštitúcie/Muut toimielimet/Andra institutioner/organ

Други участници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης Παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Drugi sudionici/Altri partecipanti/Citi klátesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Parteícipanti ohra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Altı particanı/Iní účastníci/Drugi udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare

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PPE	Jorgen Siil
S&D	
Renew	
Verts/ALE	George KARATSIOUBANIS
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Cristina Stanculescu

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Tatiana Mrazikova, Ausra Rakstelyte

Сътрудник/Asistente/Asistent/Assistent/Assistenz/Βοηθός/Assistant/Assistente/Palīgs/Padējējas/Asszisztens/Asystent/Pomočník/Avustaja/Assister

Vesselina Veleva

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