

Turkey: 2018 country report

In March 2019, the European Parliament is due to vote on a motion for a resolution on Turkey's 2018 country report. Both the Commission's report and that of the Foreign Affairs Committee point to backsliding in key areas. The Foreign Affairs Committee calls for improvement, and for the suspension of accession negotiations.

Background

Turkey is a long-standing partner of the European Union. After the conclusion of an Association Agreement in 1964 and of a [Custom Union](#) in 1995, the European Council granted Turkey the status of [candidate country](#) in 1999 and accession negotiations opened in 2005. Since then, 16 [chapters](#) have been opened and one closed. In the wake of the 2015-2016 migration crisis, the EU and Turkey concluded a [deal](#) by which the EU funds migrant settlements in Turkey in exchange for Turkey accepting irregular migrants returned from the EU. Although [Turkey](#) has several times reiterated its [commitment](#) to accession, the corresponding implementing measures have not been taken, and since 2016 and the failed [military coup](#), the government has taken steps in [contradiction](#) with previous engagements, especially regarding the respect of human rights. The Presidency [conclusions](#) of December 2016 outlined that under these circumstances, no new chapter can be opened.

European Commission report

In its 2018 [report](#), the European Commission recalled that the EU strongly condemned the 2016 military coup and reiterated its full support for democratic institutions. Nevertheless, the state of emergency saw the rule of law and human rights deteriorating. Following the purge and the constitutional reform of 2017, there has been serious backsliding regarding the independence of the judicial system and freedom of expression, as well as in public administration regarding the right to administrative justice and seek compensation. Some progress has been recorded in the fields of organised crime and on the economic criteria, where Turkey is well advanced. In the field of migration and asylum policy, Turkey welcomed more than 3.5 million refugees, and is cooperating with the EU in border management. Regarding financial assistance, in 2017, the Commission further reoriented funding towards the rule of law, fundamental rights and civil society, and recentralised the management of support to civil society.

Turkey 2018 report, main areas
(European Commission)

	Progress	Level of preparation
Judiciary	Serious backsliding	Early stage
Fight against corruption	None	Some
Organised crime	Some	Some
Economic criteria	Some	Well advanced
Freedom of expression	Serious backsliding	Early stage
Public administration	Serious backsliding	Moderate
Migration and asylum policy	Good	

European Parliament position

The Foreign Affairs Committee's report calls for the immediate and unconditional release of a number of prominent opposition figures, and expresses concern over violations of human rights in south-east Turkey, as well as of the right for citizens to designate their local mayors. The report calls on the Commission and Member States to **formally suspend negotiations** with Turkey, but remains committed to democratic dialogue and asks the European Commission to use Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) II and IPA III funds to support Turkish **civil society**. It recommends that the door should remain open for the modernisation and upgrading of the 1995 Custom Union, should improvements take place on democratic reforms. It recalls Turkey's role in responding to the **migration crisis** and calls on the EU and its Member States to keep their promises regarding resettlement and to assist Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Own-initiative report [2018/2150\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: Kati Piri (S&D, the Netherlands).

