

Türkiye

Türkiye has long been a strategic European Union partner on migration, security, and trade. However, following the attempted coup in 2016, Türkiye's democratic backsliding led the Council to freeze accession negotiations in 2018. Although relations have thawed, the EU is exploring a more realistic framework for bilateral relations.

Background

Milestones in Türkiye-EU relations include the 1963 Ankara Association Agreement, the 1995 customs union, and the 1999 application to join the EU. While accession talks began in 2005, just 16 (of 35) [negotiation chapters](#) have been opened, and only one (science and research) has been provisionally closed. Despite some progress in EU-Türkiye relations through high-level dialogues, in particular on [energy security](#), energy affordability and climate change mitigation, the Council's June 2018 [decision](#) ruling out the opening of any new chapters still stands, and accession talks are on ice. The Commission did not mention Türkiye in its 2020 [communication](#) on the EU's [new enlargement methodology](#). As a candidate country, Türkiye retains access to EU funds through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance ([IPA-III](#), 2021-2027) and the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus ([EFSD+](#)). In November 2023, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented a strategic and forward-looking [report](#) on the state of play of EU-Türkiye relations, which outlines a possible deepening of relations in geopolitics and trade, including [modernisation of the customs union](#). The Commission maintains that these steps must be 'phased, proportionate and reversible', and subject to the established conditionalities already set out by the [European Council](#) in June and March 2021 (the 'scalable yet reversible' approach).

The Commission's [2023 annual report](#) notes 'serious deficiencies in the functioning of Türkiye's democratic institutions. Democratic backsliding continued during the reporting period. Structural deficiencies in the presidential system remained'. It also notes that, since the [attempted military coup](#) in 2016, Türkiye has increasingly chosen to distance itself from EU values and standards. Aggressive moves in the [eastern Mediterranean](#) have led to further tension, with [unauthorised drilling](#) in Cypriot waters, threats of naval exercises, hostile rhetoric towards Greece and Cyprus, and other action potentially undermining regional stability (e.g. in relation to [Libya](#)). Nor has there been progress on normalising bilateral relations with Cyprus. In 2023, President Erdoğan secured his third – and presumably last – presidential mandate until 2028. Following the [2023 elections](#), the ruling conservative-nationalist bloc led by his Islamic-oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP) continues to maintain unity. Nevertheless, alliances among the liberal-secular and pro-Kurdish opposition marked significant successes in the March 2024 local elections in Istanbul and Ankara. In total, the Republican People's Party (CHP) [won](#) the municipalities of 36 of Türkiye's 81 provinces. The CHP leader Özgür Özel said these elections 'open the door to a new political climate in our country'. The outcome of the municipal elections is seen as a determinant of Erdogan's constitutional reform agenda.

European Parliament position

Parliament's [resolution](#) on the Commission's 2022 Türkiye report, adopted on 13 September 2023, points to continued deterioration of democratic and human rights standards, and calls on the Commission to do more to fund pro-democracy efforts. Welcoming Türkiye's efforts in facilitating talks between Ukraine and Russia, Parliament stresses the importance of good EU-Türkiye cooperation on foreign and security policy, in the Black Sea region, and the Middle East. Parliament also notes Türkiye's alignment rate with the EU's common foreign and security policy has slipped to an all-time low of 7 %, compared to 11 % in 2021.

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