

December 2015

## Outcome of the meeting of Heads of State or Government with Turkey<sup>1</sup> on 29 November 2015

*EU Heads of State or Government met on 29 November 2015 with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to discuss the ongoing migration crisis and the renewal of relations between the EU and Turkey. The main outcome of the meeting was a [joint statement](#). Concerning migration, Turkey and the EU decided to 'activate' the [Joint Action Plan](#)<sup>2</sup>. The EU committed three billion euro for the [refugee facility for Turkey](#). Turkey committed to implement readmission agreements and immediately increasing its cooperation with the EU on migrants who are not in need of international protection. Regarding the wider dimension of EU-Turkey relations, Leaders discussed counter-terrorism, energy, trade, and Turkey's accession process. The main agreements in this context were the acceleration of the visa liberalization dialogue and the opening of new chapters in the accession negotiations. A clear timetable has been set for both of these decisions.*

### 1. Migration

European Council President [Donald Tusk stated](#) that this summit was convened in order to decide 'what the EU and Turkey must do together to cope with the migration crisis'; the main goal being to 'stem the flow of migrants to Europe'.<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.1. Humanitarian assistance

Turkey expressed its intention to immediately adopt measures to improve the socio-economic situation. The EU agreed to 'provide immediate and continuous humanitarian assistance in Turkey' and to significantly increase its overall financial support by committing an initial three billion euro of additional resources. The agreement also clearly states that 'the need for and nature of this funding will be reviewed in the light of the developing situation'. European Parliament President [Martin Schulz pointed out](#) that 'the European Parliament has again strongly voiced its disappointment that member states time and again fail to follow-up on their promises and pledges; while the European institutions deliver every step of the way'. He also [stressed](#) that the intake of huge numbers of refugees has been unevenly shared between the Member States.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the first time this type of format has been used for discussion between the EU and Turkey

<sup>2</sup> This Joint action plan was agreed on 15 October 2015 ad referenda.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion on the political considerations behind the meeting see [Eurocomment](#).

## 1.2. Reducing irregular migration to Europe

In return for the European Union's strengthening its support of refugees in Turkey and intensifying the EU-Turkey bilateral relationship, European Council President Donald Tusk expects 'to see an immediate and substantial reduction of irregular migrants arriving to Europe'. Achievement results in stemming the influx of irregular migrants is an essential aspect of the [agreement](#) between the EU and Turkey. In order to achieve this, the EU and Turkey will step up their cooperation in preventing migrants who are not in need of international protection, from travelling to Turkey and the EU. This is supposed to complement the correct application of the provisions in the [2013 EU-Turkey readmission agreement](#) and swift return of migrants who are not in need of international protection to their countries of origin. Both sides also underlined their shared commitment to fight criminal smuggling networks.

In their statement, Leaders from the EU and Turkey also underlined the contribution made by both national and European resettlement schemes and programmes. Prior to the meeting of Heads of State or Government with Turkey, and following a German initiative, eight Member States (Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden), [met with the European Commission](#) to discuss this resettlement in the EU of refugees currently in Turkey. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker [added](#) that the European Commission has been tasked to prepare all the relevant work for this open and voluntary process by 15 December 2015. Member States should indicate if they wish to participate in this process before then. The Visegrad states (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) also met before the EU summit to reiterate their opposition to EU resettlement and relocation quotas. The proposal for the resettlement of refugees could possibly feature at the 17/18 December 2015 European Council.

Controlling the EU's external borders remains a priority. European Council President Donald Tusk recalled that this is vital to solving the migration crisis, and cannot be outsourced to a third country. European Parliament President Martin Schulz stressed that Member States must accept 'the management of our external borders as our shared responsibility.'

## 2. Other issues

EU Heads of State or Government and Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu also agreed to 'be more ambitious when it comes to the accession process, and to work together to achieve the goal of visa-free travel, while strengthening cooperation on counter-terrorism, trade, energy, and economic relations'.

### 2.1. Accession process

European Council President Donald Tusk [reported](#) that they have agreed 'to be more ambitious when it comes to the accession process'. Re-energising the Turkish accession process was, [according to Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu](#), the key aspect of the agreement. Both sides welcomed the opening of chapter 17 (i.e. Economic and Monetary Policy) in the accession negotiations, which will officially begin at an Intergovernmental Conference convened for 14 December 2015. The

European Commission also committed to completing the preparatory work for the opening of a number of other chapters, without prejudicing the positions of the Member States. European Council President Donald Tusk stressed that EU enlargement policy is not being revised, as the negotiating framework and the relevant conclusions continue to apply, including their merit-based nature and the respect for European values, such as the respect for human rights. Consequently, the agreement expects Turkey to assist the EU in 'realising the common objective of coming closer together, through reforms, the upholding of the highest standards of human rights and media freedom, and the implementation of agreed roadmaps and benchmarks.'

## **2.2. Visa liberalisation**

Turkey made a commitment to accelerate the fulfilment of the Visa Roadmap benchmarks vis-à-vis all participating Member States. The European Commission is now expected to present two [progress reports](#) on Turkey's implementation of the [visa liberalisation roadmap](#), one in March 2016 and one in the autumn of 2016. The aim is to complete the visa liberalisation process (i.e. lifting visa requirements for Turkish citizens in the Schengen area) by October 2016.

## **2.3. Counter-terrorism**

Given recent events, the fight against terrorism featured strongly in the discussions. European Council President Donald Tusk stressed that 'Turkey is a key partner regarding counterterrorism' and the [EU-Turkey statement](#) reaffirmed that the fight against terrorism remains a priority for both countries. They agreed that regular discussions and cooperation on foreign and security policy should be enhanced, including on counter-terrorism. In this context, President Tusk also called for full support for the [Vienna process](#).

## **2.4. Trade, energy, and economic relations**

Heads of State or Government agreed to launch the High Level Economic Dialogue Mechanism and hold a second meeting of the High Level Energy Dialogue and Strategic Energy Cooperation. Leaders also took note of launching preparatory steps for upgrading the Customs Union.

## **3. New processes**

In order to follow up on the various aspects of their agreement, the EU and Turkey decided in their agreement to have 'a structured and more frequent high-level dialogue'. This will create new processes or intensify already existing ones such as:

- Regular Summits twice a year, in an appropriate format, to assess the development of Turkey-EU relations and discuss international issues;
- Regular comprehensive political dialogue meetings at Ministerial/High Representative/Commissioner Level in addition to regular Association Council meetings.
- High level dialogues on key thematic issues.

## 4. Monitoring and Follow up

Turkey and the EU agreed to closely monitor all the elements of this agreement. European Council President Donald Tusk [indicated](#) that Coreper will be updated at least once a month on the implementation of the agreement.

### Timeline

- **14 December 2015:** Intergovernmental Conference for opening chapter 17 of the accession negotiations.
- **15 December 2015:** European Commission to prepare the relevant work for the resettlement scheme.
- **First quarter 2016:** European Commission commitment to complete preparatory work for opening a number of chapters in the accession negotiations.
- **First quarter 2016:** Launching a High Level Economic Dialogue Mechanism between Turkey and the EU.
- **First quarter 2016:** Holding the second High Level Energy Dialogue and Strategic Energy Cooperation meeting.
- **Early March 2016:** The European Commission will present the second progress report on the implementation by Turkey of the visa liberalisation roadmap.
- **June 2016:** EU-Turkey readmission agreement will become fully applicable.
- **Autumn 2016:** The European Commission will present the third progress report on the implementation by Turkey of the visa liberalisation roadmap.
- **October 2016:** Lifting of visa requirements for Turkish citizens in the Schengen zone.
- **End of 2016:** Launching formal negotiations for upgrading the Customs Union.

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To contact the European Council Oversight Unit, please e-mail: [EPRS-EuropeanCouncilOversight@ep.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-EuropeanCouncilOversight@ep.europa.eu)

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