



Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee

MISSION REPORT
Ankara, Turkey (23 March 2018)

which included

Meeting of the Bureau
of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)

Participating Members:

Mr Manolis KEFALOGIANNIS, EPP
Chair of the EP delegation to the EU-Turkey JPC

Mr Miltiadis KYRKOS, S&D
1st Vice-Chair of the EP delegation to the EU-Turkey JPC

Mr Takis HADJIGEORGIOU, GUE/NGL
2nd Vice-Chair of the EP delegation to the EU-Turkey JPC

Summary

The EU-Turkey JPC Bureau held a very constructive joint meeting. The Bureau agreed on the date, place and agenda of the 77th EU-Turkey JPC meeting. This marked the re-launch of the EU-Turkey inter-parliamentary relations after three years of pause (the 76th EU-Turkey JPC meeting took place on 19-20 March 2015 in Ankara)

Side meetings with the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of EU Affairs were very informative and provided the Members with a valuable insight on the situation in Turkey and the Turkish perspective of the country's relations with the EU.

D-TR Bureau Members laid flowers at the place in the Great Turkish National Assembly which was bombed during the foiled coup and held a minute of silence for all its victims.

The following meetings took place:

- **Joint EU-Turkey JPC Bureau Meeting**

The Bureau meeting took place in the Great Turkish National Assembly. Bureau Members have agreed that the 77th EU-Turkey JPC meeting will take place on 26 April 2018 in the European Parliament in Brussels. The substantive points of the JPC agenda were agreed as follows:

- EU-Turkey relations and state of play of the accession negotiations
- EU-Turkey economic cooperation
- Security challenges

- **Meeting at the Ministry of EU Affairs** (Mr Selim YENEL, Ambassador, Undersecretary)

Mr Yenel stated that Turkey is aiming at deepening the dialogue with EU and the upcoming EU-Turkey Leaders' meeting in Varna, Bulgaria (26 March 2018) is seen as a starting point. 2018 shall be the 'year of getting back together' and putting the EU-Turkey relations back on track at all levels.

Mr Yenel also explained that Turkey is traumatized after the foiled coup of 15 July 2016 and that the EU should be asking how to help Turkey. Regarding the mass dismissals and imprisonments he admitted that mistakes might have been made, due to the scope of the FETO infiltration.

Mr Yenel also stated that the EU-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016 is a package agreement comprising not only the management of refugee flows but also visa liberalisation and upgrading of the customs union. He informed the EP Bureau Members that the documents on implementation of visa-liberalisation benchmarks were submitted to the European Commission in February 2018 and replies are expected after the Varna summit.

Regarding the EU Enlargement strategy for Western Balkans, Mr Yenel stated that it is seen as a confirmation of double standards - even if Turkey supports the EU path of the Western Balkans countries, most of them seem to be less prepared for the EU membership than Turkey.

EP Bureau members underlined the mutual importance of Turkey and the EU and praised the positive role of Turkey in the management of the migration crisis. They raised EU concerns regarding the rule of law situation in Turkey, independence of judiciary, freedom of press and other fundamental freedoms. Need for finding a mutually acceptable and sustainable solution for the Cyprus issue was also highlighted.

- **Meeting at the Ministry of Justice** (Mr Mustafa EROL, Deputy-Undersecretary)

EP side raised concerns over the state of emergency, purges and arrests of opposition parliamentarians, journalists, academics, and public officials. Mr Erol explained the

situation in Turkey in the aftermath of the foiled coup and the multiple terrorist threats facing Turkey. He stated that Turkey is ready to open negotiating chapters 23 and 24. Mr Erol also pointed out that several EU member states do not comply with the Copenhagen criteria.

EP Bureau Members reiterated concerns related to the rule of law situation and independence of judiciary in Turkey. They also highlighted the case of the two Greek soldiers recently imprisoned after mistakenly entering Turkish territorial waters in the Aegean Sea.

Conclusions

Successful, timely and very informative mission which enabled the re-start of the EU-Turkey inter-parliamentary relations after 3 years of stalemate.

Follow-up required

Preparation of the 77th EU-Turkey JPC (26 April 2018, Brussels).

Attachments:

- Program
- List of participants