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E-000252/2021

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis
on behalf of the European Commission
(15.4.2021)

Since the entry into force of the EU-Turkey Customs Union on 31 December 1995, the value of bilateral trade increased more than fourfold. In 2020, the EU's exports to Turkey increased by 2.3% to EUR 69.9 billion, while EU imports from Turkey decreased by 10.3% to EUR 62.6 billion.

However, the Commission is seriously concerned about the increasing violations by Turkey of Customs Union provisions. The EU has raised Turkey's violations of the Customs Union's principles and rules regularly in the relevant fora under the Customs Union¹ as well as in bilateral contacts. The EU has called on the Turkish authorities to make clear progress in the country's adherence to the Customs Union's principles and rules.

The Commission is considering all options available within the legal framework governing the EU-Turkey Customs Union and relevant public international law principle in order to preserve the EU's interests.

The European Council² reaffirmed the EU's strategic interest in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey. At the same time, in line with the European Council conclusions of 1 October 2020³, it invited the High Representative and the Commission to submit a report on the EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations including instruments and options on how to proceed including on the extension of the scope of the above-mentioned decision⁴.

¹ See for example the report of the 2019 Customs Union Joint Committee under https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2020/january/tradoc_158587.pdf

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47296/1011-12-20-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45910/021020-euco-final-conclusions.pdf>

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/10101/2021/EN/JOIN-2021-8-F2-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>