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on the 2022 Commission Report on Türkiye
(2022/2205(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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on the 2022 Commission Report on Türkiye
(2022/2205(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the European Council conclusions of 23 June 2022, 24 June 2021 and 1 October 2020, and to all relevant previous Council and European Council conclusions,

– having regard to the statement of the members of the European Council of 25 March 2021 on Türkiye,

– having regard to the EU-Turkey statements of 18 March 2016 and 29 November 2015,

– having regard to the negotiating framework for Turkey of 3 October 2005,

– having regard to the Commission communication of 12 October 2022 on EU Enlargement Policy (COM(2022)0528) and to the accompanying Türkiye 2022 Report (SWD(2022)0333),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 24 May 2022 entitled 'Sixth Annual Report on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey' (COM(2022)0243),

– having regard to the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections held in Türkiye on 14 May 2023 and the second round of the presidential elections of 28 May 2023,

– having regard to the statements of preliminary findings and conclusions of 14 May 2023 and 28 May 2023 of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) international election observation mission to the Republic of Türkiye,

– having regard to Resolution 2459 (2022) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 12 October 2022 entitled 'The honouring of obligations and commitments by Türkiye' and to the related report by its Monitoring Committee of 14 September 2022,

– having regard to the Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (Black Sea Grain Initiative) of 22 July 2022,

– having regard to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's economic survey of Türkiye of 27 February 2023,

– having regard to the 2023 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders, which ranks Türkiye 165th out of 180 countries,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Türkiye, in particular those of 7 June 2022

on the 2021 Commission Report on Turkey[1] and of 19 May 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on Turkey[2],

– having regard to its resolution of 5 May 2022 on the case of Osman Kavala in Turkey[3],

– having regard to its resolution of 7 October 2021 on the implementation report on the EU Trust Funds and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey[4],

– having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0000/2023),

A. whereas Türkiye held presidential and parliamentary elections in May 2023;

B. whereas devastating earthquakes struck south-eastern Türkiye on 6 February 2023, causing numerous fatalities and extensive infrastructure damage;

C. whereas Türkiye remains a candidate for EU accession, a NATO ally and a key trade and economic partner, as well as a key partner on migration;

D. whereas Türkiye has been gradually moving further away from the EU's values and normative framework, as exemplified by a number of measures curtailing fundamental freedoms and human rights;

E. whereas the Russian war of aggression continues to cause unprecedented geopolitical shifts in Europe; whereas Türkiye's key location allows it to play an instrumental, strategic role in the events;

F. whereas the Turkish Government has repeatedly employed political delaying tactics and a transactional approach with regard to Sweden's application for NATO membership;

G. whereas, after the efforts in previous years to depict in detail the developments regarding many aspects of Türkiye's EU accession process and EU-Türkiye relations, this resolution intends to offer a more concise political assessment of the way forward;

General assessment and latest developments

1. Takes note of the results of the recent presidential and parliamentary elections in Türkiye and considers them a sign foreboding political continuity in the country; acknowledges the peaceful manner in which the Turkish people conducted this process and applauds the high turnout; regrets, however, that, as reflected by the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission, the elections did not take place on a level playing field and were impacted, among other things, by essential freedoms being heavily hindered by the current legal framework and practice, and by the unjustified advantage enjoyed by the ruling parties;

2. Reiterates its profound sadness about the deadly, devastating earthquakes that shook

[1] OJ C 493, 27.12.2022, p. 2.
[2] OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 81.
[3] OJ C 465, 6.12.2022, p. 112.
[4] OJ C 132, 24.3.2022, p. 88.

south-eastern Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023 and its heartfelt condolences to the victims' families; welcomes the international relief and recovery effort, including by the EU and its Member States;

3. Is of the opinion that the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine continues to impact EU-Türkiye relations in ways that are yet to unfold; reiterates its appreciation for Türkiye's role as an early mediator between Ukraine and Russia and the key part played by Türkiye in brokering and keeping alive the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which has been crucial in helping to counter a severe global hunger crisis;

4. Acknowledges the partial measures taken in recent months by the Turkish authorities to prevent the re-exportation to Russia of goods covered by EU sanctions, but urges them to go further in order to ensure that Türkiye stops being a hub for entities and individuals that wish to circumvent such sanctions;

5. Deplores, against the backdrop of the war, the delaying of the ratification of Sweden's NATO accession, which only plays into Russia's hands; invites the Turkish authorities to deliver on their promise of a more constructive partnership in NATO and to ratify Sweden's NATO membership in the Grand National Assembly as early as possible;

6. Considers that, in terms of human rights and the rule of law, the desolate picture painted in its resolution of 7 June 2022 on the 2021 Commission Report on Turkey remains valid, and reiterates the content of that resolution; fully endorses the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 12 October 2022, and the related report by its Monitoring Committee, on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Türkiye;

7. Is dismayed by the fact that, far from the negative trend stopping or being reversed, the democratic backsliding in Türkiye has continued in the last year, with new legal reforms and a relentless crackdown on any critical voice, particularly ahead of and during the recent elections; affirms with regret that Türkiye has now become a global showcase for all kinds of authoritarian practices;

8. Remains deeply concerned about the lack of independence of the judiciary, the continued breach of the obligation to abide by the landmark rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, the serious restrictions on fundamental freedoms – particularly freedom of expression and of association – and the constant attacks on the fundamental rights of members of the opposition, lawyers, journalists, academics and civil society activists in Türkiye; is particularly worried by the continued crackdown on Kurdish politicians, journalists, lawyers and artists; expresses concern about the deterioration of the rights of women and the constant targeting and harassment of LGBTI+ people, both of whom could see their rights further curtailed by the possible amendments to Türkiye's constitution;

9. Expresses its strong concern over the continued hyper-concentration of power in the Turkish presidency, without any effective checks and balances, which has seriously eroded the democratic institutions in the country;

10. Concludes that the Turkish Government has no interest in closing the persistent and growing gap between Türkiye and the EU on values and standards, as it has shown, for the past few years, a clear lack of political will to carry out the necessary reforms to

address, in particular, the serious concerns about the rule of law and fundamental rights that continue to negatively affect the country's EU accession process;

11. Expresses concerns about the continued proper functioning of Türkiye's market economy, particularly with regard to the conduct of monetary and fiscal policies, and the institutional and regulatory environment;

12. Welcomes, after a confrontational period, Türkiye's recent steps towards normalising relations with several countries, such as Armenia, Egypt, Israel and the Gulf states, but remains concerned by the fact that Türkiye's foreign policy still clashes in many aspects with EU interests and, far from growing closer to the EU, it has further diverged in the last year, reaching a record low of alignment with just 7 % of common foreign and security policy decisions;

13. Welcomes the overall de-escalation of tensions observed in the eastern Mediterranean in recent times, particularly in the wake of the February earthquakes, and expresses its hope that a possible new era in Türkiye's foreign policy might yield positive results in the bilateral relations between Türkiye and all EU Member States; reiterates its long-standing support for a solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation and reaffirms its positions on the matter expressed in its resolution of 7 June 2022;

The way forward for EU-Türkiye relations

14. Reiterates its firm conviction that Türkiye is a country of strategic relevance in political, economic and foreign policy terms, a key partner for the stability of the wider region and a vital ally, including within NATO, and reaffirms that the EU is committed to pursuing the best possible relations with Türkiye based on dialogue, respect and mutual trust;

15. Considers, in view of all the above, that in the absence of a drastic change of course by the Turkish Government, Türkiye's EU accession process has lost its purpose and will not endure much longer in the current circumstances; recommends, in that case, starting a reflection process to find an alternative and realistic framework for EU-Türkiye relations in substitution for the accession process; calls on the Commission, therefore, to explore possible formats for a mutually appealing framework through a comprehensive and inclusive process;

16. Insists that democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights should remain at the heart of good neighbourly relations between the EU and Türkiye and that any framework for those relations should be firmly underpinned by the principles of international law and multilateralism;

17. Acknowledges and commends the democratic and pro-European aspirations of the majority of Turkish society (particularly among Turkish youth), whom the EU will not forsake; expresses its utmost commitment to sustaining and increasing the support for Türkiye's independent civil society in whatever circumstances and under whatever framework for relations that the future may bring;

18. Reaffirms its support for an upgraded customs union with a broader, mutually beneficial scope, which could encompass a wide range of areas of common interest, including

digitalisation and Green Deal alignment; insists that such a modernisation would need to be based on strong conditionality related to human rights and the aforementioned principles; stresses that both parties must be fully aware of this democratic conditionality from the outset of any negotiations, as Parliament will not give its consent to the final agreement if no progress is made in this field; remains ready to advance towards visa liberalisation as soon as the Turkish authorities fulfil the six outstanding benchmarks;

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19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the Council and the Commission; asks that this resolution be translated into Turkish and forwarded to the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Türkiye.