

Eastern Mediterranean: Turkey must immediately end illegal drilling activities

- Turkey should refrain from unilateral actions
- Concern about the current state of EU-Turkey relations
- Further sanctions to be considered

MEPs condemn Turkey's actions in the Greek and Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone and express full solidarity with the two member states.

MEPs voiced their concern regarding the ongoing dispute and the related risk of further military escalation between EU member states and an EU candidate country

Ahead of a Special European Council meeting on 24/25 September on the dangerous escalation and the role of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean, MEPs express their full solidarity with Greece and Cyprus, in a resolution adopted by 601 votes in favour, 57 against and 36 abstentions.

Stating that the EU is clear and determined in defending its interests, MEPs call on Turkey to immediately end any further illegal exploration and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, to refrain from violating Greek airspace and Greek and Cypriot territorial waters and stop “nationalistic warmongering rhetoric”

Deteriorating state of EU-Turkey relations

A solution can only be found through dialogue, diplomacy and negotiations, MEPs say, calling on all actors involved, especially Turkey, to commit to an urgent de-escalation by withdrawing their military forces from the area. They welcomed Turkey's decision to withdraw one of its seismic research vessels from the area on 12 September as the first step towards easing tensions, condemning at the same time Turkey's plans to extend the term of duty of another drilling ship.

MEPs express serious concern about the current state of EU-Turkey relations, which are being seriously affected by the dire human rights situation in Turkey and the erosion of democracy

and rule of law.

Further sanctions are not excluded

They call for both Turkey and the member states to support the political dialogue in Libya and to adhere to the [arms embargo](#) imposed by the UNSC. MEPs deplore the negative impact that current Turkish foreign policy and other actions in the Mediterranean are having on the stability of the region, including Syria.

Insisting that further [sanctions](#) can only be avoided through dialogue, they call on the Council to stand ready to develop further restrictive measures that should be sectoral and targeted and would not have an adverse impact on the people of Turkey or the refugees residing there

Background

In the last few months, tensions have been mounting over Turkey's increased gas exploration activities in the area within the Greek and Cypriot exclusive economic zone. In the meantime, Greece and Turkey have put their militaries on high alert and have sent warships into the area. Prior to Tuesday's debate, MEPs discussed Turkey's problematic role in the region with the High Representative Josep Borrell in Plenary [in July](#).

Further information

[Video of the debate \(16.09.2020\)](#)

[Informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers \(Gymnich\): Remarks by HR/VP Josep Borrell at the press conference, 28.08.2020](#)

[EP debate: Stability and Security in the Mediterranean and the negative role of Turkey, 09.07.2020](#)

[Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2019/1894 of 11 November 2019 concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean](#)

[Decision on the UN arms embargo on Libya](#)

[EP Research Service: State of play of the maritime disputes in the eastern Mediterranean \(04.09.2020\)](#)

[Free photos, video and audio material](#)

[Adopted text can be found here \(17.09.2020\)](#)

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