

Turkey: Don't tie joint refugee action plan to EU accession talks, urge MEPs

[15-03-2016 - 17:42]

EU-Turkey cooperation on migration should be uncoupled from the EU accession negotiating process, say Foreign Affairs Committee MEPs in a report voted on Tuesday. MEPs praise Turkey for hosting the largest refugee population in the world, and note that it remains a "key strategic partner for the EU" but nonetheless call for progress on rule of law and fundamental values and "a more structured and frequent political dialogue on key thematic issues".

"The overall pace of reforms in Turkey has not only slowed down but in some key areas, such as freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary, there has been a regression, which is particularly worrying", said rapporteur Kati Piri (S&D, NL). In this report "we also express our concern about the escalation of violence in the south east of Turkey, which caused almost 400,000 people to leave their houses", she added.

"Outsourcing the refugee crisis to Turkey is not a credible long-term solution to the problem", say MEPs. They believe that the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan on refugees and migration management should be implemented immediately, but only as "part of a comprehensive cooperation agenda based on shared responsibility, mutual commitments and delivery". Furthermore, "EU-Turkey cooperation on migration should not be linked to the calendar, content and conditionality of the negotiation process".

Serious backsliding on fundamental freedoms

MEPs urge Turkey to act against intimidation of journalists in all its forms, condemn its violent and illegal take-over of several newspapers and highlight its serious backsliding, over the past two years, on freedom of speech, expression and opinion, both on-line and off-line.

To match the EU's commitment to the rule of law, fundamental values and freedoms, which are core European values, reforms of the judiciary, justice, freedom and security are urgently needed in Turkey, says the text.

Kurdish peace process

MEPs call for an immediate ceasefire in south east Turkey and the resumption of the peace process. They urge the Turkish government to shoulder its responsibility to resume negotiations for a negotiated, comprehensive and sustainable solution to the Kurdish issue. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), should lay down its arms, abandon terrorist tactics and use peaceful and legal means to voice its expectations, they add.

Cyprus reunification talks

Welcoming the considerable progress made in the Cyprus reunification talks, MEPs pledge support for the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus into "a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality between the two communities and equal opportunities for all its citizens". They urge both parties to implement all agreed measures without further delay.

Next steps

The full House will vote on the report in Strasbourg in April.

Press release

Further information

- EP Live: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20160315-1500-COMMITTEE-AFET>
- EbS: <https://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=2&institution=0&date=03/15/2016>
- Committee on Foreign Affairs: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/afet/home.html>
- Kati Piri (S&D, NL): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/37229.html>
- Dynamic page containing videos and photos: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=2491>
- European Commission - Fact Sheet: Key findings of the 2015 report on Turkey: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-6039_en.htm

Contact

Emilie TOURNIER

BXL: (+32) 2 28 30578

STR: (+33) 3 881 72649

PORT: (+32) 473 55 74 66

EMAIL: foreign-press@europarl.europa.eu

TWITTER: EP_ForeignAff