

EU membership application of Turkey

Turkey has applied for membership in the European Union. An absolute prerequisite for membership in the EU must be the fulfilment of the so called Copenhagen criteria in every respect. Unfortunately several recent reports, among them a recent report from the EU Commission (COM 513/1999), disclose that Turkey does not at present fulfil the Copenhagen criteria, although the fundamental elements of a democratic system are at hand. There are serious flaws in the rule of law and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of minorities. Torture is widespread, and freedom of speech is at regular intervals restricted by the Turkish authorities.

The EU should support Turkey to develop a sustainable policy for its minorities and to find proper solutions for the situation of the Kurds in the country. Without peace and democracy in Turkey it is not possible to achieve stability in the Middle East. The EU could help the Turkish government to open a genuine dialogue with the Kurdish people in Turkey. Turkey already has a long tradition of constructive relations with different European institutions. These positive relations and contacts can in the coming years be enhanced and deepened.

The ELDR Party calls on the ELDR Group in the European Parliament and appropriate bodies of the Union to:

- demand total fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria as a prerequisite for Turkish membership of the EU, and at the same time,
- support the strengthening of civil society institutions in Turkey, the development of a sustainable minority policy in Turkey, and the improvement of all aspects of human rights of the Kurdish people.

Motivation:

The Turkish State's policy towards minorities in the country also needs to be scrutinised. The situation of the Kurds in Turkey is a matter of special importance when the possible membership of Turkey is discussed. Significant improvement of the situation of the Kurds, and other minorities, has to be achieved before the European Union can enter into membership negotiations with Turkey. During a transition period some form of monitoring the developments especially in the Kurdish areas seems appropriate. The monitoring could be carried out by either the OSCE, the EU or the Council of Europe. The OSCE, in particular, has a long record of missions to regions of inter-ethnic tensions and it could thus promote a dialogue between the different communities in Turkey. In the long run it is in the best interest of the whole population of Turkey that

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the Republic of Turkey is admitted as a member of the European Union. All segments of the population are to gain from a democratic Turkey that can act as a positive link between Europe and Asia. No one is to gain from continued use of repression, persecution and violence.

One important task is to create an economic basis for the education of Kurds for central civic and administrative duties and functions. There is a need for a Kurdish Cultural Foundation, that could be of important assistance in this respect. For the administration and coordination of the cultural activities there also seems to be a need for new institutions, one of which might be called the Kurdish Cultural Community, the task of which would be, among other things, to communicate with Turkish authorities and institutions and with certain institutions of the EU. The members of the proposed Kurdish Cultural Community would be Kurds, but possibly there could also be a support group consisting of non-Kurds.

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