

Progress Recorded by Turkey in 2009

- o EU perspective has been a great external driving force for the sweeping reforms of the last seven years, which culminated in a strengthened democracy as well as expanded fundamental rights and more freedoms.
- o Turkey is determined to carry on the reform process. The following steps that were taken in the last nine months prove our commitment:
- o **The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis was approved and went into effect** as of 31 December 2008. The NP involves more than 400 primary and secondary legislation to be adopted in order to continue with our alignment process with the EU acquis.
- o **In January 2009**, for the first time since the beginning of accession negotiations, a **full-time and full-fledged EU Chief Negotiator**, with the status of State Minister was appointed.
- o The **European Union Secretariat-General (EUSG)**, the main body of coordination for EU affairs, was placed under the EU Chief Negotiator. The law, adopted in June, granted the EUSG wider responsibilities and allowed it to increase substantially its staff. The new structure will help the EUSG to function more effectively and efficiently.
- o **In January 2009**, the public broadcaster **TRT, started to broadcast in Kurdish 24** hours a day through the newly-opened channel, TRT-6.
- o **In March 2009**, the public radio **broadcasts in Armenian and in Kurdish** were begun.
- o A cooperation agreement was signed between the public broadcaster **TRT and Euronews** in February 2009, making Turkish the 9th broadcast language of Euronews. Accordingly, as of 1 January 2010, 24 hours broadcasts will start in Turkish. This will allow for a much better mutual understanding between the Turkish and EU public opinion.
- o **In March 2009**, the Turkish Grand National Assembly established a **Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men**.
- o **The Reform Monitoring Group (RMG)** – made up of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chief Negotiator, Justice and the Interior Ministers as well as the EU Secretary General – decided to **meet more regularly** (every two months, at a different city so as to help increase **public visibility** to the EU accession process).
- o The Group met every two months as foreseen and **provided strong support to the process of reforms**, taking decisions and following up on their implementation. Re-activation of the RMG became the engine of the reform process in 2009.
- o In June 2009, Turkish Parliament passed the legislation which brings **restriction on the jurisdiction of military courts and enables civilian courts to try military personnel for non-military offences**. This new legislation also **eliminates the powers of military courts to try civilians in peacetime**, thus further aligning Turkey with EU practices.

- o A comprehensive **Judicial Reform Strategy** -covering issues related to the independence, impartiality, efficiency and effectiveness of the judiciary- and an action plan to implement the Strategy were approved in **August 2009**.
- o As part of the decisions taken by the RMG, Turkey submitted its letter of intention to take part in the **EU's Fundamental Rights Agency** in September 2009.
- o **Education programmes** geared towards public institutions were intensified. As per a protocol signed in April with the Ministry of Justice, **178 judges and 178 prosecutors in 76 provinces and districts will be trained** on violence against women and gender equality. Training in gender equality for the personnel of representations of public institutions in the provinces also started as of March 2009. This programme will continue for two years and 800 civil servants will be trained.
- o **Anti-Corruption Strategy** was prepared under the coordination of the Prime Ministry Inspection Board and is expected to be approved as soon as possible.
- o **The amendment to Article 301 of the Penal Code** entered into force in May 2008. It seems to be having the desired effect. Various training programs and seminars have contributed to a broader interpretation of the **freedom of expression** as regards cases filed under Article 301, especially in light of the European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Most recently, a TAIEX seminar on the freedom of expression was held in Ankara in October. As of mid-November, 548 potential cases have been reviewed by the Ministry of Justice in order to obtain permission to prosecute under Article 301. Of these 548, only 8 have been given permission to prosecute. That is only 1.65%.
- o The new **Law on Foundations** revised in 2008 has been smoothly implemented in 2009.
- o **In September 2009**, Turkey **ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. Several publicly funded projects were initiated to address the problems of persons with disabilities.
- o **"Draft Law on the Fundamental Principles of Elections and Electoral Registry"** aiming at ensuring transparency in the income and expenses of political parties and candidates during the election period was finalized in September 2009 for submission to the Council of Ministers.
- o Comprehensive work in the field of **"fight against discrimination"** has been initiated by all relevant institutions. Within this framework, a screening process is being carried out to harmonize the national legislation with international commitments.
- o In line with the determination on **fight against torture**, the draft Law on the approval of the ratification of the **Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT)** has been sent to the Parliament for ratification.
- o The Government is currently working on the modalities for the establishment of a **national human rights institution (NHRI)**, in line with the Paris Principles, with the competence to promote and protect human rights.

- o As an important first step for the **normalization of bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia**, two protocols were signed on 10 October 2009 by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries.
- o Turkey took **bold initiatives** with a view to ensuring **regional peace and stability** in its immediate neighborhood, such as the “Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform”.
- o **Nabucco Intergovernmental Agreement** was signed on 13 July 2009 in Ankara
- o Negotiations started with the EU Commission in September 2009 for **Turkey’s accession to the Energy Community**.
- o Upon the completion of adoption procedures, Turkey became a party to the **Kyoto Protocol** in August 2009.
- o In June 2009, negotiations on the chapter “**Taxation**” were opened after Turkey met the opening benchmark, which was about the taxation of alcoholic drinks and tobacco products.
- o Technical preparations are in progress for the opening of the chapter “**Environment**” during the Swedish Presidency.
- o 1st of May was declared a public holiday, marking the “**Labor Day and Solidarity Day**”.
- o **Turkish citizenship was returned to** famous poet **Nazım Hikmet**. This constitutes reconciliation with the past.
- o The Government has embarked on a **comprehensive democratic opening process**. This process has two main objectives: First, ending the scourge of terrorism. Second, raising the democratic standards in Turkey in an all embracing manner for all our citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origin, belief, gender or political preference.
- o Within the context of the democratic opening process, a regulation was adopted on the 13th of November lifting the restrictions on broadcasting in languages and dialects other than Turkish. As of now, there will be no limitations on timing. Programs aiming to teach these languages and dialects are no longer forbidden. The requirement to have Turkish subtitles is also no longer valid. This is a huge step forward for cultural rights in Turkey.
- o Another important step forward has been the adoption of a regulation on the visits to prisoners. Restrictions concerning the rights of prisoners or their visitors who do not speak Turkish to speak their own language have been lifted.
- o The democratic opening process **also** includes these future steps:
 - o The establishment of Kurdish faculties in universities
 - o Establishment of a Commission on the Fight Against Discrimination
 - o Establishment of an independent Human Rights Institution
 - o Establishment of a mechanism to fight against impunity

- Returning original names of towns and cities
 - Abolishing the restriction to use languages other than Turkish during political campaigns
 - As a long term project, the approval of a pluralist and liberal Constitution with full societal consensus.
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- The Government prepared the “**Southeast Anatolia Action Plan**”, which foresees the allocation approximately 500 million Euros to region.
 - A Comprehensive **EU Communication Strategy** towards the EU and Turkey was adopted, which so far was the missing part of TR-EU relations as a third pillar.
 - Continuous and successful integration with the **European Research Area** kept going. This was also stated in the Progress Report 2009. Turkey, despite the economic crisis, has recently allocated an extra 200 Million TL to R&D, which constitutes a 36% increase in its overall R&D budget.
 - Turkey assumed the Chairmanship of SEECP (**South East European Countries Process**) from June 2009 to June 2010, throughout which it will focus its efforts on the European convergence of the SEECP participating states and consolidating regional cooperation.
 - A number of **high level visits to Brussels** were realized, including the recent visits of President Gül, Prime Minister Erdoğan, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, Chief Negotiator Bağış and the Chairman of the Main Opposition Party, Mr. Baykal.