

Brussels, 17 May 2012

## Positive EU-Turkey agenda launched in Ankara

*The new positive agenda intended to bring fresh dynamics into the EU-Turkey relations was launched by Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle and the Turkish Minister for European Affairs and Chief EU negotiator Egemen Bağış in Ankara on Thursday. The aim of this process is to keep the accession process of Turkey alive and put it properly back on track after a period of stagnation.*

Commissioner Füle said at the press conference this morning: "This is a special day in the EU-Turkey relationship - the day of opening positive agenda in the EU-Turkey accession process. This positive agenda should bring fresh dynamics and a new momentum into our relations. Our aim is to keep the accession process alive and put it properly back on track after a period of stagnation, which has been a source of frustrations on both sides. Let me stress again that the positive agenda is not to replace, but to complement and support the accession process of Turkey. At the same time it is not an abstract concept, it is not window-dressing. It is about a new way of looking at the accession negotiations. It is the new way we communicate and interact with each other. It is the way how we look at each other as two equal partners. It is positive not only in the name, but first of all in the intention and in the content. The positive agenda is not only to support but to go beyond the accession negotiations. It covers all important elements of our relationship. We have new goals and new determination to deliver results. It is a joint determination that will require efforts from both sides.

To find the way back to re-energised European-Turkish dynamism we are starting concrete work, building on joint achievements and joint strategic interests, to bring a new momentum into our engagement.

The idea of the positive agenda is to enhance our cooperation and to promote reforms in Turkey in areas of joint interest where progress is both needed and feasible. These include, to name the most relevant of them: the alignment with the EU legislation, political reforms and fundamental rights, visa, mobility and migration, trade, energy, counter-terrorism or dialogue on foreign policy. Reforms in these areas are crucial for enhancing freedoms and living standards of the Turkish people.

That is why we try to make the positive agenda as interactive as possible and go even beyond the contact with the government and officials. The positive agenda is also the way to engage and interact with the civil society and I will meet representatives of several dozens of organisations later today.

Now a few words on how exactly this will work: with our Turkish friends we have agreed to set up working groups whose task will be to accelerate the process of alignment of Turkey with EU policies and standards under eight chapters. This is indispensable for making progress in the accession negotiations.

I will proceed now with the first meeting of the working group dealing with Judiciary and fundamental rights, clearly the most essential of all, in presence of Egemen Bağış and the Minister of Justice Mr Sadullah Ergin.

The citizens of Turkey look forward to reforms in this area, and are hopeful that the future new Constitution, for which work of substance has started, will meet their expectations."