



Flemish  
Parliament

**572** (2020-2021) - No. 3  
Submitted on 9 December 2020 (2020-2021)

**Text adopted by the plenary assembly** on the  
proposal of resolution

entered by Karl Vanlouwe, Karin Brouwers, Gwendolyn Rutten,  
Joris Nachtergaele, Orry Van de Wauwer and Cathy Coudyser

on a fundamental strategic review of relations  
between the European Union and Turkey

Documents in the file:  
**572** (2020-2021) - No. 1: Resolution proposal  
- No. 2: Amendments

dispatch code: BUI

The Flemish Parliament,

- having regard to:

- 1° the resolution of the Flemish Parliament of 15 March 2017 regarding the freezing of Turkey's accession procedure to the European Union (*Parl.St. Fl.Parl. 2016-17, no. 1080/3*);
- 2° the resolution of the Flemish Parliament of 21 March 2018 regarding the Turkish offensive against Afrin in Northern Syria (*Parl.St. Fl.Parl. 2017-18, no. 1535/3*);
- 3° the resolution of the Flemish Parliament of 16 October 2019 regarding the Turkish offensive in Northern Syria (*Parl.St. Fl. Parl. 2019-20, no. 111/2*);
- 4° the conclusions of the European Council of 19 August 2020 on the Eastern Mediterranean, of 27 February 2020 on the illegal drilling activities conducted by Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean, and of 17 and 18 October 2019 on Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus;
- 5° the statements of the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers of 15 May 2020 and 14 August 2020 on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean;
- 6° the resolution of the European Parliament of 17 September 2020 on preparations for the extraordinary summit of the European Council, with particular attention to the dangerous escalation and the role of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean;
- 7° the conclusions of the extraordinary meeting of the European Council of 1 and 2 October 2020 on the Eastern Mediterranean;
- 8° the conclusions of the European Council of 15 and 16 October 2020 on the relationship between the EU and Turkey;
- 9° the Turkey 2020 Report of the European Commission accompanying the presentation of the annual enlargement package of the European Commission of 6 October 2020, which states that Turkey remains an important partner for the EU, but simultaneously establishes a serious decline in democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and the independence of the judiciary, confirming that the opening or closing of further chapters is not being considered and the talks have essentially come to a standstill. The report also states that Turkey's foreign policy is increasingly at odds with the EU's priorities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy;
- 10° the announcement by Greece and Turkey that the countries will resume their direct exploratory talks with a view to defining the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zones of both countries;
- 11° the statement by the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas that the new provocation and unilateral action by Turkey has made the dialogue on the maritime territorial demarcation between Turkey, Greece and Cyprus impossible;
- 12° the recent statements by President Recep Erdogan about France and President Emmanuel Macron, which were strongly condemned by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell and several European heads of government, which expressly called on Turkey to put an end to this dangerous confrontational spiral;
- 13° Resolution 2020/2844(RSP) of the European Parliament of 26 November 2020, calling on the European Council to consider the possibility of imposing targeted sanctions against Turkey in the context of the escalating situation in the Cypriot district of Varosha;

- whereas:

- 1° Turkey is an important NATO partner, and an important strategic economic and geopolitical partner of the EU;
- 2° Turkey is the fifth largest export market for the EU, the EU is Turkey's largest trading partner, accounting for over 40 percent of Turkish exports, and the EU accounting for 75 percent of foreign direct investment in Turkey;
- 3° the EU made important agreements with Turkey on 19 March 2016 about tackling the refugee crisis, whereby Turkey will receive extra financial support in exchange for taking in more migrants and providing better border security, whereby these agreements were extended in 2018 to 2020;
- 4° the Eastern Mediterranean is of strategic importance to the EU and crucial for peace and stability throughout the entire Mediterranean region and the Middle East, but the region is plagued by a number of long-standing and multi-layered disputes of a political, economic and geostrategic nature;
- 5° Turkey's recent illegal exploration and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean have led to an intense and dangerous militarisation of said area, posing a serious threat to peace and security throughout the region;
- 6° the escalating tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean are fuelled by Turkey's unilateral steps, including its military action, the lack of an inclusive diplomatic dialogue and the regrettable failure of efforts to mediate in the conflict;
- 7° since January 2020, Greece has registered over six hundred violations of its airspace by Turkey's Air Force;
- 8° the humanitarian situation on the Turkish-Syrian and Turkish-Greek borders is worrying and the way in which the Turkish Government exploits and abuses human suffering as a geopolitical means of exerting pressure is unacceptable;
- 9° the actions of Turkish President Erdogan in the region have led to a further escalation of violence, with many civilian casualties, increasing instability in the region, in particular in Syria and Libya, with a possible regrouping and resurgence of the Islamic State (ISIS);
- 10° Turkey's acquisition of Russian S-400 missile systems has led to serious tensions within the NATO alliance;
- 11° Turkish President Erdogan is using illegal migration as a political weapon against Europe;
- 12° the ruling of the Turkish Council of State on the museum status of the 6th century Hagia Sophia Cathedral in Istanbul ensures that the building is de facto turned into a mosque while its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site is ignored;
- 13° on 17 September 2020, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in which it:
  - a) expressed its deep concerns over the current state of EU-Turkey relations, especially with regard to the appalling human rights situation in Turkey and the erosion of democracy and the rule of law;
  - b) underscores that Turkey's unilateral foreign policy initiatives, both past and present, have had a negative impact on the wider region, and that Turkey's illegal exploration and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean are further damaging EU-Turkey relations in general;
  - c) calls on Turkey and the EU Member States to work together for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, to support political dialogue in Libya and to abide by the arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council;
  - d) deplores the negative impact of Turkey's current foreign policy and other actions in the Mediterranean region on the stability of the region;
  - e) reiterates the position set out in its resolution of 24 October 2019 on Turkey's military operations in north-eastern Syria and their consequences;

- f) the Council requests, in the absence of significant progress in relations with Turkey, readiness to draw up a list of further sanctions, and proposes that such measures should be sectoral and targeted. The European Parliament firmly believes that these sanctions should not have a negative impact on the people of Turkey, on European support for independent civil society in Turkey or on refugees residing in Turkey;
- 14° at its extraordinary meeting on 1 October 2020, the European Council stated that:
- a) it is imperative that the dialogue be continued in good faith and that unilateral actions contrary to the interests of the EU, international law and the sovereign rights of EU Member States be refrained from;
  - b) all differences of opinion must be resolved through peaceful dialogue and in accordance with international law. In this context, the Council reiterated its unmitigated solidarity with Greece and Cyprus, whose sovereignty and sovereign rights must be respected;
  - c) the demarcation of the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone should be addressed through dialogue and negotiations in good faith, in full compliance with international law. The Council calls on Turkey to accept the invitation of Cyprus and to engage in dialogue with a view to settling all maritime disputes between Turkey and Cyprus;
  - d) the Council supports the swift resumption of negotiations under the auspices of the UN and remains fully committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem within the UN framework and in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions, including Resolutions 550 and 789, as well as the principles on which the EU is founded, and expects the same from Turkey;
  - e) the Council stands ready to play an active role in supporting the negotiations, including by appointing a representative to the UN mediation mission after negotiations are resumed;
  - f) the Council agreed, subject to continued constructive efforts to end illegal activities vis-à-vis Greece and Cyprus, to establish a positive EU-Turkey political agenda, with particular emphasis on the modernisation of the customs union and trade facilitation, people-to-people contacts, high-level dialogues and continued cooperation on migration issues, in accordance with the 2016 EU-Turkey Declaration;
  - g) the Council shall invite its President Charles Michel, to work up a proposal, in association with the President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen and with the support of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, to lend fresh impetus to the EU-Turkey agenda;
  - h) the Council, in the event of new unilateral actions or provocations in breach of international law, shall use all instruments at its disposal to defend its interests and those of the Member States, including pursuant to Article 29 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The European Council stated that it would return to this issue if necessary and take appropriate decisions at its meeting in December 2020 at the latest;
- 15° the European Council on 15 and 16 October 2020 reaffirmed its previous conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020 and expressed its deploration of Turkey's new unilateral and provocative actions in the Eastern Mediterranean, including recent exploratory activities. The Council insists on compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions 550 and 789, stresses the importance of the status of Varosha and reiterates its unmitigated solidarity with Greece and Cyprus. The Council also urges Turkey to reverse these actions and to defuse tensions in a consistent and sustainable manner, and stated that it would continue to closely monitor the issue in order to follow up on its conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020;

- 16° a country that is an aspiring EU Member State is expected to maintain the highest standards of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, including compliance with international conventions;
  - 17° Turkey has been a candidate country for membership of the European Union since 1999 and has made little progress since accession negotiations got under way in 2005. More so, the relationship has seriously deteriorated in various areas in recent years, in particular with regard to the improvement of human rights;
  - 18° only 16 out of a total of 35 chapters have been opened since the start of the talks and only one chapter, the chapter on science and research, has been brought to conclusion;
  - 19° the European Commission's Turkey 2020 Report accompanying the presentation of the European Commission's annual enlargement package on 6 October 2020 states that Turkey remains an important partner for the EU, but at the same time is experiencing serious deterioration in the areas of democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and the independence of the judiciary. Said report confirms that the opening or closing of further chapters is not being considered and that talks have in fact come to a standstill. In addition, the report also states that Turkey's foreign policy is increasingly at odds with the EU's priorities under the Common Foreign and Security Policy;
  - 20° In recent months and years, Turkey has not exactly acted as a candidate country for EU membership. Under the current Turkish regime, democracy and fundamental rights in Turkey are under pressure, including through the restrictions imposed on the freedom of expression, the freedom of assembly and the independence of the judicial system. In particular, since 2014, the power of the Turkish Parliament has been curtailed, the free press and the independent judiciary are under pressure, and there have been acts of intimidation against politicians, the opposition and civil society;
  - 21° The European Union pays Turkey around EUR 600 million a year in so-called pre-accession aid - over EUR 9 billion for the 2007-2020 time frame - of which EUR 66 million was frozen in recent years. These resources could be better invested in the protection of Europe's external borders, for example through Frontex;
  - 22° the EU pursues a twin-track policy, which sees it set afoot political dialogue that opens the way to greater stability and predictability, while demanding clear results and an end to obstructions;
  - 23° the EU is willing to discuss a modernisation of the EU-Turkey customs union, which would allow Turkey to increase its trade with Europe;
  - 24° at the meeting of the Commission for Foreign Policy, European Affairs, International Cooperation and Tourism of 13 October 2020, Minister-President Jan Jambon stated that the Government of Flanders has called on all those involved to seek solutions through dialogue, that the provocations on the Turkish side have accumulated over the past few months and that additional measures are therefore needed in the absence of a change in the Turkish attitude. The Minister-President stated that a thorough reflection is needed on the future of EU relations with Turkey, because it is clear that the policy of the current Turkish Government runs counter to the standards and values of the European Union;
  - 25° at a consultation meeting with the federal government and the other federated states, in amongst other things aimed at establishing the Belgian position in the run-up to the European Council of 1 October 2020, the Government of Flanders has shown itself to be critical of the continuation of Turkey's process of rapprochement with the EU;
  - 26° the European Council will decide on the future relationship with Turkey by December 2020 at the latest;
- expresses its emphatic support for Greece and Cyprus in the context of the continuing provocations by Turkey;

- concludes that, in light of the series of new incidents, on top of the pernicious developments in the field of democracy and human rights, and the current framework for talks with Turkey on EU membership, there is currently no future for Turkey in the EU;
- calls for a fundamental strategic reappraisal of EU-Turkey relations, recognises the multidimensional nature of the EU's relations with Turkey and advocates a renewed business-like neighbourhood relationship ship between Turkey and the EU;
- calls for the negotiations and the procedure for Turkey's accession to the EU to be halted;
- against this background calls for the budget allocated to Turkey as part of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Aid (IPA II) to be scrapped and for part of the funds thus freed up to continue to be used only to support Turkish civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights;
- calls on the European Union to put in place better arrangements on the reception of refugees in Turkey and at the same time to continue as much as possible its support for refugees through international organisations and NGOs;
- calls on the European Commission to examine the resolution in hand in the context of the political dialogue and to indicate how it will take this into account;
- requests the Speaker of the Flemish Parliament to convey the resolution in hand to the Government of Flanders, the Federal Government, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.