



27th meeting of the EU-Turkey  
Joint Consultative Committee

Stockholm, 2 December 2009

**JOINT DECLARATION**

**by**

**Mr Sandy Boyle (co-chair) and Mr Tuğrul Kudatgobilik (co-chair),**

**at the 27th meeting of the**

**EU-TURKEY JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**held in Stockholm on 1 and 2 December 2009**

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1. The EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) is a body that brings together representatives of organised civil society from the EU and Turkey. It complements the bodies within the framework of the Association Agreement between the EU and Turkey and allows civil society organisations from both sides to monitor the accession negotiations and initiate debates on issues of common interest. Its members come from various economic and social interest groups.
2. The 27th meeting of the JCC was honoured by the presence of H.E. Egemen Bağış, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator of Turkey, H.E. Cecilia Malmström, Minister for EU Affairs of Sweden and Ms Alexandra Cas Granje, Director of DG Enlargement of the European Commission.

### **Organised civil society and Turkey's accession process**

3. The JCC expresses its firm commitment to Turkey's accession to the EU in the foreseeable future. The JCC calls on the Turkish government to fully implement the Ankara Protocol and thereby facilitate the opening of 8 chapters for which negotiations were suspended by the Council decision of 11 December 2006. The JCC also takes note of the decision of the Council of the EU of 22 January 2007 regarding the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot Community. The JCC calls on the Council of the EU to open negotiations on chapters where Turkey has met the technical requirements in order to speed up and facilitate the negotiation process.
4. The JCC welcomes the opening of the chapter on taxation in June 2009. It regrets that no chapter has yet been opened during the Swedish Presidency and asks the Turkish government and the Council of the EU to make the necessary efforts to open the chapter on the environment before the end of the year. This is of particular importance in the context of the preparation of the Copenhagen Climate Summit and in relation to Turkey's efforts to adopt a national strategy following its ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.
5. The JCC regrets that the chapter on social policy and employment has not yet been opened and calls on the Turkish government to make the necessary reforms concerning trade union rights and the informal economy, key benchmarks for opening the chapter. It points out that consensus was achieved on the issue of trade union rights at its 25<sup>th</sup> meeting in Paris on 18-19 November 2008, through the adoption of a joint report fully supported by social partners from both the EU and Turkey. The JCC expresses its disappointment that the repeated promises by the Turkish authorities to reform legislation on trade union rights, both for the private and public sector, in line with EU standards and ILO conventions, has not been followed by action. The co-chairs of the JCC are ready to continue the dialogue with the Turkish authorities on this issue.
6. The JCC is concerned that existing trade union rights, as reported by the European Commission in the 2009 Turkey progress report, have in some cases been subject to continuing and ongoing restrictions.

7. The JCC takes note of the concerns expressed by the EU members of the JCC regarding the arrest of members of the Confederation of Public Employees Trade Union (KESK), which is an affiliate of the European Trade Union Confederation, as reported in the 2009 progress report on Turkey.
8. The JCC expresses its deepest sorrow as regards the attack on Mr Çelebi, President of DISK and former co-chair of the EU-Turkey JCC, at his offices in October.
9. The JCC is very pleased that the Turkish government has taken into account the recommendations of the JCC to involve civil society more closely in the national reforms and negotiation process in order to create a better overall understanding at all levels of society. However, the JCC calls for the setting up of an institutional structure aiming to involve the relevant economic and social partners on a permanent basis. The JCC also reiterates the need to develop and strengthen social dialogue in Turkey and insists on the need to reform the Economic and Social Council.
10. The JCC calls on the European Commission to thoroughly consider the views of the JCC as well as of other civil society representatives in Turkey while elaborating the progress reports on Turkey.
11. The JCC welcomes the fact that the European Commission is strengthening its information network in Turkey through local partners, as recommended by the JCC, in order to reach out to a wider public and provide better information about EU-Turkey relations. It supports the commitment of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, to host EU information centres in Ankara and Istanbul and the surrounding areas.
12. The JCC reiterates its commitment to playing an active role in disseminating information and leading debates on the accession process among civil society organisations in the EU and in Turkey. On the fringe of its meeting in Stockholm, the JCC is organising a seminar with civil society organisations and media in Sweden on "Communicating Turkey" in order to raise awareness and open up a dialogue on how organisations and media can better communicate Turkey's future accession to the EU.
13. The JCC is pleased that the Turkish government finally has agreed to resume formal negotiations on an EC-Turkey readmission agreement and urges the Turkish government and the European Commission to work for the adoption of a visa facilitation agreement as soon as possible. In this context, the JCC takes note of the Turkish request expressed during the Turkey-EU Troika meeting on 26 November 2009 that the EU should follow the policies it applies to other candidate countries.

14. The JCC once again calls on the European Commission and the Members States to comply, without delay, with the ruling of the European Court of Justice of 19 February 2009, “EEC-Turkey Association Agreement – Freedom to provide services – Visa requirement for admission to the territory of a Member State”.
15. The JCC deeply regrets that occasions have arisen when Turkish Members of the JCC have been unable to attend meetings because of visa issues.
16. The JCC takes note of the concerns expressed by Turkish representatives of the JCC regarding the negative consequences that the conclusion of Free Trade Agreements between the EU and third countries has on Turkish trade in the context of the customs union.

### **The consequences of the economic and financial crisis on the EU and Turkey**

17. The JCC notes that both the EU and Turkey have been hit hard by the economic and financial crisis, affecting almost all sectors of the economy. A large fall in domestic and external demand has led to a downward trend in industrial production with a resulting increase in unemployment.
18. The JCC calls on the Turkish government and the governments in the EU Member States to establish, in consultation with the social partners and representatives of civil society, employment and social protection policies that are consistent and effective, in order to mitigate the effects of the crisis, especially as regards the problem of employment, which particularly affects women and young people.
19. The JCC welcomes the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) crisis response package that Turkey is benefitting from in order to face the consequences of the economic and financial crisis. It stresses the importance of securing the sustainability of enterprises and workers' salaries in companies that are affected by the crisis, through the adoption of appropriate legislation. In this context it welcomes the regulation on shorter working hours that was adopted by the Turkish authorities to save companies from having to close down or lay workers off because of the crisis.
20. The JCC reiterates its previous call to the Turkish government to improve SMEs' access to finance, which would benefit economic recovery. It welcomes the legislation that was approved in May 2009 to increase the scope of action of the support organisation for SMEs (KOSGEB) and to strengthen the Credit Guarantee Fund for SMEs that will alleviate the impact of the crisis.
21. The JCC notes that despite being hard hit by the crisis, Turkey has managed to avoid a severe financial crisis thanks to recent important structural reforms in key areas like banking and enterprise restructuring and privatisation. These kinds of reforms should also be developed in the EU Member States, in particular through the establishment of stricter requirements concerning bank supervision and regulation.

22. The JCC stresses that supervision, through globally set rules, is key to preventing another financial crisis. It points out that all stakeholders should have a role in the new supervisory functions.
23. The JCC considers that the current crisis, which was caused by inadequate financial regulations, must be transformed into an opportunity for reducing inequalities and laying the foundations for sustainable development. In this context, the JCC considers that Turkish and EU financial institutions must increase cooperation.
24. A shift towards a low-carbon economy and sustainable development should be priorities in the current recovery plans. The JCC recommends increasing the sustainable production and use of renewable energies, in this way possibly creating green jobs.

### **The informal economy in Turkey and the EU**

25. The JCC notes that the role of informal or undeclared work in forming national GDP in the EU and Turkey is underestimated and reduces the overall growth potential of economies.
26. The JCC points out that it would be useful to clarify, on a comparative basis both within the EU and with Turkey, the actual impact of undeclared work on the economies and competition, as well as the links between these types of work and counterfeiting, criminal networks and illegal immigration.
27. The JCC stresses that the fight against undeclared work calls, besides adequate national legislation, for effective cross-border cooperation and surveillance by authorities and dissemination of information on the sanctions arising from performing undeclared work or making use of undeclared work.
28. The JCC underlines that the strategy that should be adopted is to sanction undeclared work, in particular the employers, but also reward law-abiding companies that correctly apply standards on work, social security and safety, through incentives and easier access to contracts and tenders. Business rules and regulations should be changed, where appropriate and necessary, so as to cut red tape in the case of overwhelming bureaucratic burdens in order to facilitate employment, especially with regard to start-ups and SMEs. The aim is to make declared work less trouble than work that is wholly or partly illegal and rooted in abuse of or lack of respect for standards.
29. The JCC points out the importance of following up actions combating the informal economy through social protection and decent work policies and regulations for workers in order to support transition and to provide benefit for all.
30. The JCC points out that the social partners have an important role to play in combating undeclared work and in reducing the informal economy. It recommends that the social partners should be involved in prevention, information and training actions in order to reduce the informal

economy. The JCC proposes that the social partners should work together, both at EU level and within Turkey, to analyse and publicise good practice.

31. The JCC welcomes the adoption by the Turkish government of a comprehensive action plan to combat the informal economy, combining a series of incentives and legal sanctions. It reiterates the importance for Turkey of tackling this issue rapidly in order to continue with the accession negotiations by opening up the social and employment chapter.
32. The JCC intends to continue the discussion on the informal economy at its next meeting in Istanbul and present a joint report.

### **Women's rights and role in the EU and Turkey**

33. The JCC points out that gender equality is a productive investment that contributes to overall economic progress, growth and employment. It underlines that labour market and social protection policies must support the individual through the course of life and that new family patterns that emerge alongside the traditional models have to be supported through adequate policies.
34. The JCC notes that women play an active role in society, socially and economically, often without recognition, reward or legal status. In particular in Turkey, female participation in the labour market is in the informal economy. Purchasing power and growth in general would increase if employment in the sectors of domestic services were formalised.
35. The JCC stresses the need to do more to enforce current legislation, which prohibits gender discrimination in the EU and Turkey. It notes that women in the EU and Turkey remain lower paid than men, are under-represented politically, in the workforce, at management level and as entrepreneurs.
36. The JCC recognises that although gender equality has not yet been achieved in the labour market, the situation of working women in the EU is among the best in the world thanks to efforts to implement statistical tools, studies, analyses and legislation. It calls on the Turkish government to fully implement the adopted national action plan for gender equality for 2008-2013 in order to achieve EU standards.
37. The JCC calls on the social partners, both in the EU and in Turkey to reach gender equality in their organisations.
38. The JCC notes that most Turkish women are still not fully aware of their rights, and acknowledges the important work done by women's organisations in Turkey and in the EU to raise awareness and increase female participation in all spheres of society. It recommends implementing information campaigns through radio and TV and in schools, at all levels of education.

39. The JCC stresses the importance of combating violence and discrimination against women both in the EU and Turkey. It underlines the need to implement the UN Declaration on the elimination of violence against women and invest in high quality shelters.
40. The JCC welcomes the fact that the gender gap in primary education in Turkey was halved between 2008 and 2009 and that the number of children in primary school education increased significantly. Nevertheless, the JCC is concerned that women's access to education in Turkey is still the lowest among OECD countries. The JCC calls on the Turkish government and the newly established Consultative parliamentary committee on equal opportunities for men and women to engage in a true dialogue with civil society organisations on gender-related issues, in order to combat discrimination and strengthen women's access to education, the labour market and political representation.

#### **Next JCC meeting**

41. The 28th meeting of the JCC will take place in Istanbul on 12-13 April 2010, on the occasion of Istanbul being the cultural capital of Europe, which will be highlighted during the meeting. The JCC will continue its discussion on Turkey's accession negotiations and the involvement of organised civil society in the process and also resume its debate on women's rights and role in the EU and Turkey, as standing points on the agenda. The meeting agenda will also include a discussion on a joint report on the informal economy in Turkey and the EU and a debate on the environment (including climate change) after the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December 2009. The JCC also decided that food safety would be included in the agenda of its forthcoming meetings.

*This declaration has been sent to the Turkish authorities, the EU institutions, the representatives of Turkish and EU civil society organisations and the media. The EU-Turkey JCC working documents and any further information can be obtained by contacting the secretariats: **Mr Mustafa Bayburtlu**, Head of the EU Department, Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB). (Tel.: 00.90.312.413 82 30; email: [abm@tobb.org.tr](mailto:abm@tobb.org.tr)) and **Ms Laila Wold**, Administrator, Section for External Relations, European Economic and Social Committee (Tel.: 00.32.2-546.91.58; email: [laila.wold@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:laila.wold@eesc.europa.eu)).*

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