

CONCLUSIONS OF THE *EUROPEAN COUNCIL* ON TURKEY SINCE LUXEMBOURG (DECEMBER 1997)

1. The *Luxembourg European Council of December 1997* "confirmed Turkey's eligibility for accession to the European Union. Turkey will be judged on the basis of the same criteria as the other applicant States. While the political and economic conditions allowing accession negotiations to be envisaged are not satisfied, the European Council considers that it is nevertheless important for a strategy to be drawn up to prepare Turkey for accession by bringing it closer to the European Union in every field".
2. The *Vienna European Council of December 1998* "underlined the great importance it attaches to the further development of relations between the EU and Turkey taking forward the European Strategy to prepare Turkey for membership. In this context it recognises the central role of the further implementation of the European Strategy in line with its conclusions in Luxembourg and Cardiff".
3. The *Helsinki European Council of December 1999* stated that "Turkey, like other candidates, will benefit from a pre-accession strategy to stimulate and support its reforms. This will include enhanced political dialogue, with emphasis on progressing towards fulfilling the political criteria for accession with particular reference to human rights, as well as the issues referred to in paragraphs 4 and 9(a). Turkey will also have the opportunity to participate in Community programmes and agencies and in meetings between candidate States and the Union in the context of the accession process.
4. The initiatives of Turkey as a candidate country to meet accession criteria were noted at the *Feira European Council in June 2000*. The European Council went on to say that it looked forward to concrete progress, in particular on human rights, the rule of law and the judiciary.
5. The *Nice European Council in December 2000* welcomed "the progress made in implementing the pre-accession strategy for Turkey" and stressed the importance of the Accession Partnership.
6. The *Göteborg European Council of 15 and 16 June 2001* concluded that: "The decisions in Helsinki have brought Turkey closer to the EU and opened up new prospects for her European aspirations. Good progress has been made in implementing the pre-accession strategy for Turkey, including an enhanced political dialogue."
7. The *Laeken European Council of 14 and 15 December 2001* declared that "Turkey has made progress towards complying with the political criteria established for accession, in particular through the recent amendment of its constitution. This has brought forward the prospect of the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey. Turkey is encouraged to continue its progress towards complying with both economic and political criteria, notably with regard to human rights. The pre-accession strategy for Turkey should mark a new stage in analysing its preparedness for alignment on the *acquis*."
8. The *Seville European Council of 21 and 22 June 2002* welcomes the reforms recently adopted in Turkey. It encourages and fully supports the efforts made by Turkey to fulfil the priorities defined in its Accession Partnership. The implementation of the required political and economic reforms will bring forward Turkey's prospects of accession in accordance with the same principles and criteria as are applied to the other candidate countries. New decisions could be taken in Copenhagen on the next stage of Turkey's candidature in the light of developments in the situation between the Seville and Copenhagen European Councils, on the basis of the

regular report to be submitted by the Commission in October 2002 and in accordance with the Helsinki and Laeken conclusions.

9. The *Brussels European Council of 24 and 25 October 2002* welcomes the important steps taken by Turkey towards meeting the Copenhagen political criteria and the fact that Turkey has moved forward on the economic criteria and alignment with the acquis, as registered in the Commission's Regular Report. This has brought forward the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey. The Union encourages Turkey to pursue its reform process and to take further concrete steps in the direction of implementation, which will advance Turkey's accession in accordance with the same principles and criteria as are applied to the other candidate States. The Council is invited to prepare in time for the Copenhagen European Council the elements for deciding on the next stage of Turkey's candidature, on the basis of the Commission's Strategy Paper and in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council in Helsinki, Laeken and Seville.

10. The *Copenhagen European Council of 12 and 13 December 2002*, recalls its decision in 1999 in Helsinki that Turkey is a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states. It strongly welcomes the important steps taken by Turkey towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria, in particular through the recent legislative packages and the subsequent implementation measures which cover a large number of key priorities specified in the Accession Partnership. The Union acknowledges the determination of the new Turkish government to take further steps on the path of reform and urges in particular the government to address swiftly all remaining shortcomings in the field of the political criteria, not only with regard to legislation but also in particular with regard to implementation. The Union recalls that, according to the political criteria decided in Copenhagen in 1993, membership requires that a candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. The Union encourages Turkey to pursue energetically its reform process. If the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay. In order to assist Turkey towards EU membership, the accession strategy for Turkey shall be strengthened. The Commission is invited to submit a proposal for a revised Accession Partnership and to intensify the process of legislative scrutiny. In parallel, the EC-Turkey Customs Union should be extended and deepened. The Union will significantly increase its pre-accession financial assistance for Turkey. This assistance will from 2004 be financed under the budget heading "pre-accession expenditure".

11. The *Thessaloniki European Council of 19 and 20 June 2003*, welcomes the commitment of the Turkish government to carry forward the reform process, in particular the remaining legislative work by the end of 2003, and supports its on-going efforts to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria for opening accession negotiations with the Union. Taking into account progress achieved, significant further efforts to this end are still required. With a view to helping Turkey achieve this objective, the Council adopted recently a revised Accession Partnership, which sets out the priorities that Turkey should pursue, supported by substantially increased pre-accession financial assistance. In accordance with the Helsinki conclusions fulfilment of these priorities will assist Turkey towards EU membership. The Accession Partnership constitutes the cornerstone of EU-Turkey relations, in particular in view of the decision to be taken by the European Council of December 2004.

12. The *Brussels European Council of 12 December 2003*, welcomes the considerable and determined efforts by the Turkish government to accelerate the pace of reforms, many of which are significant in political and legal terms. The legislative packages so far adopted, the first important steps taken to ensure effective implementation, as well as the progress in addressing many priorities under the Copenhagen political criteria and in the revised Accession Partnership have brought Turkey closer to the Union. Turkey has also made significant progress in meeting the Copenhagen economic criteria. However, further sustained efforts are needed, in particular as regards strengthening the independence and functioning of the judiciary the overall framework for the exercise of fundamental freedoms (association, expression and religion) the further alignment of civil-military relations with European practice, the situation in the Southeast of the country and cultural rights. Turkey also has to overcome macro-economic imbalances and structural shortcomings. The European Council underlines the importance of Turkey's expression of political will to settle the Cyprus problem. In this respect a settlement of the Cyprus problem, based on the principles set out in section IV. below, would greatly facilitate Turkey's membership aspirations. The European Council encourages Turkey to build on the substantial progress achieved so far in its preparations for launching accession negotiations and underlines its commitment to working towards full implementation of the pre-accession strategy with Turkey, including the revised Accession Partnership, in view of the decision to be taken by the European Council in December 2004 on the basis of the report and recommendations of the Commission.