Press release | 12.03.2014

Turkey

EP highlights concerns with rule of law but underlines support for accession process

The European Parliament today adopted its 2013 progress report on Turkey. Commenting after the vote, **Hélène Flautre**, co-chair of the EU-Turkey joint parliamentary committee, said:

"While acknowledging the need to restart the negotiation process, the European Parliament has today issued a strong rebuke to the setbacks for democracy in Turkey. As the Parliament was discussing this report, there were demonstrations across Turkey to mourn the death of Berkin Elvan, a young man killed by the police. This served as a pertinent reminder of public demands for rule of law, fundamental freedoms and participative democracy. There is major concern about the crisis hitting the democratic institutions in Turkey, with revelations of alleged intervention in media and the judiciary by the government. MEPs have today underlined these concerns, especially on the new internet law and the counter-reform on judiciary.

"However, the report also reaffirms the need to reactivate EU accession negotiations, which still provide the best means for EU to exert influence on the Turkish government and to ensure democratic reforms continue in Turkey. The European Parliament has called on EU member states to open the negotiating chapters 23 and 24 on judiciary and fundamental rights. The unilateral blocking of negotiations chapters by some member states has seriously weakened the influence of those supporting European reforms in Turkey and this must stop. This is all the more pertinent in this period of crisis.

"The report expresses support for the Kurdish peace process. It also recognises the commendable reception by Turkey of almost one million refugees from Syria and encourages it to continue this approach.

"The Turkish government must do all in its power to ensure the local elections on 30 March proceed smoothly and to ensure the attacks against the office of the pro-Kurdish HDP party stop."

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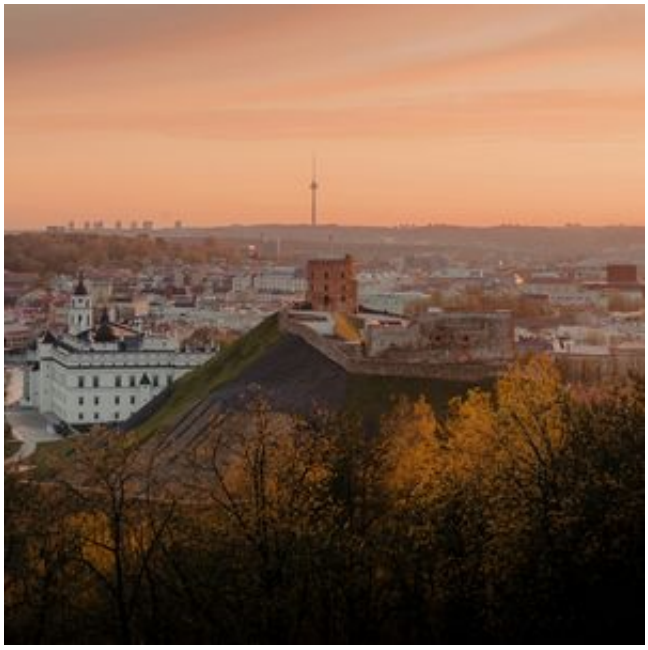
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