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Yes to Turkey visa liberalisation, but not at any price

Press release from EFA MEP Ernest Maragall

Greens/EFA MEP **Ernest Maragall**, a member of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Turkey, has spoken out in support of liberalising EU visa conditions for Turkish citizens to visit Europe.

But the Catalan MEP said that visa liberalisation should not be approved until the Turkish state complies with its obligations, in particular in respect of human rights, civil liberties, and freedom of expression.

MEPs in Strasbourg debated Turkey's progress in meeting its obligations as part of the EU / Turkey visa liberalisation roadmap designed to give Turkish citizens visa free access to the EU's Schengen area from later this year.

Ernest Maragall said:

"Turkish citizens, like those of any other country applying for EU membership, should be able to travel, study, and work for and within the EU.

"In the same way the Turkish state, also like any other, must meet the technical, legal and political obligations that are part of this process.

"But Turkey today is not fulfilling these obligations, to the detriment of Turkish citizens who'd like to exercise their rights.

"The facts are clear. In four key areas, Turkey is evidently failing to live up to its obligations.

"Firstly their Antiterrorist law creates an unacceptable situation whereby the executive can act against journalists, academics and politicians merely for doing their jobs.

"Secondly their data protection act does not comply with our standards and procedures.

"Thirdly, the lifting of parliamentary immunity for a quarter of Turkish MPs, mainly from the opposition, to be voted next Monday, fundamentally undermines the democratic system.

"Fourthly, the UN has raised concerns about the violent behaviour of Turkish security forces in the southeast of the country, including a fire that led to the deaths of over 100 people.

"In short, our message to Turkey must be 'yes' to visa liberalisation, but not now and not in these conditions.

"The European Parliament cannot and should not close its eyes and accept an agreement at any price.

"We say yes to Turkey and its citizens, but no to the threats and intimidation."

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Ernest Maragall

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