

Memorandum of the European Senior Citizens Union (ESCU) on the question of the admission of Turkey to the European Union

Preamble:

The European Senior Citizens Union as a recognised association of the European People's Party, declares itself in support of:

- ◆ the Christian conception of man as a guide for standards of behaviour
- ◆ the harmony between ethical, economic and social demands
- ◆ freedom and solidarity
- ◆ fulfilment of the political union on the basis of the unanimous convention resolution of the European constitution.

Besides the safeguarding of the interests of older people in a process of solidarity between generations, the ESCU is equally concerned about the political, social, legal and economic development of the European Union. It strives for a world order that derives from the Christian western culture, and looks to preserve this. It appreciates the enlargement of the EU by ten new member States and - in a later future - by other European states. However, ESCU is concerned that in case of a process going beyond this through the association of States which are more and more distant, which can not - or can only partially – be classified as belonging geographically to Europe, the envisaged political Union can not be realised and, in the end, the EU will not be much more than an enlarged area of free trade. Taking these principles and aspects into consideration, the ESCU formulates its position on the question whether to admit Turkey in the European Union.

A) The background situation

The European Council decided on December 13th, 2002 in Copenhagen on the accession of ten new EU member States as of May 1st, 2004. It was agreed in form of a compromise with regard to Turkey, to open negotiations with Turkey "without any delay", if the Copenhagen criteria are adhered to in December 2004. During the intensive discussions in Copenhagen, wide-ranging opinions and positions were expressed; from the immediate fixing of a date for the start of accession negotiations with Turkey (behind the scenes the US propagated this with reference to the NATO Alliance), to the full rejection of Turkey's accession for fundamental reasons.

From the point of view of the European Seniors Citizens Union, criticism is justified that the European Council already on December 11th and 12th, 1999 granted Turkey the Status of a candidate country without thoroughly examining the question of whether, from the EU point of view, it is justifiable to admit Turkey.

This discussion has to be conducted now, prior to a decision being taken on the date of Turkey's accession and the preconditions for any accession. With the present Memorandum, the ESCU wants to make a contribution to this process.

B) Criteria for the judgement on the accession application of Turkey to the EU

- 1. Safeguarding of human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, democracy and rule of law*

Although the constitutional amendments adopted by the Turkish Parliament on October 3rd, 2001 were an important step towards the development of guarantees in the field of human rights and fundamental rights as well as to abolish capital punishment, these amendments have only been partially established and implemented.

- ◆ National minorities are neither recognised nor protected.
- ◆ The current human rights situation needs further improvement.
- ◆ Turkish women are still far from achieving truly equal rights in everyday life.
- ◆ The issue of civilian control over the armed forces remains unresolved, in reality.
- ◆ Christians are not unconditionally accepted as citizens with equal rights, in the light of a fusion of Turkish tradition and Sunnite Islam.
- ◆ In reality, the separation between state and religion is not genuinely implemented.
- ◆ Amnesty International's report on Turkey still documents cases of torture and maltreatment.
- ◆ To a large extent the system of political parties is unstable.

2. Turkey's economic and financial situation

With the support of the IMF and the World Bank, extensive economic reforms have been implemented, but there has not been made any real progress with regard to privatisation. The problems of the labour market are such that continuing pressure for emigration is probable. The economy's performance is about 22% of the EU average and the rate of inflation is about 50%. More than half of national income must be spent on payments of interests; half of the expenditure is financed by new loans. Due to the combination of demographic strength and economic weakness, colossal additional costs would be caused to the EU through Turkey's accession, because Turkey would become by far the largest net receiver of EU funds.

3. The relation of State and religion (Islam)

Islam is one of the great world religions, and has to be respected as such. It is understood as a comprehensive model of life based on the authority of God and his prophet and affects and regulates all spheres of personal, family, social and international life. Religion and State are particularly closely tied in the Islamic tradition. The execution of the religious law based on the revelation, the Sharia, is the main characteristic of the Islamicism of the State. All contemporary Islamic fundamentalists insist on the

application or the re-establishment of this religious law including capital punishment provided for in the Sharia.

Although Turkey is a laicistic State today, the separation of State and religion has not developed over centuries, but was decreed by constitution and implemented by force through state authority. According to the constitution, the armed forces have to stand guard to ensure that Turkey doesn't slip into Islamic fundamentalism.

However, the radical separation of state and religion (Laicism) is not at all reality in the everyday life. The State regards itself as responsible for the religious interests of Sunnite Islam. For non-Moslem minorities in Turkey, particularly the Christian churches, the question of their legal status is not clear and, thus, their everyday life is characterised by arbitrary use of power by the authorities. Consequently, Christians don't have access to higher jobs in the administration and the armed forces. Article 24 of the Turkish constitution guarantees no collective rights for religious communities but only single individual rights such as the right to participation in prayers and religious ceremonies.

4. Geographical preconditions for an EU membership

Turkey borders Europe, however, it is not part of Europe geographically with the exception of a small region. With its borders to Iraq, Iran and to Syria, Turkey is so distant from Central Europe that full membership of the EU is as conceivable as a membership of Russia or the north African countries bordering on the Mediterranean would be. A geographical over-stretching of the European Union in conjunction with serious cultural differences, would have the consequence that the EU would no longer be politically controllable. It would lose its political and economic integration strength and, in the end, disintegrate. Even the forthcoming eastern enlargement is already a show of strength – albeit desired - whose risks can be overcome only with difficulty.

5. Comparison of Turkey with the other candidate countries

Unlike Turkey, the ten candidate countries fulfil the Copenhagen criteria for admission in accordance with the strategy paper of the EU that sums up the progress reports of all candidate countries for full EU membership. Democracy, the rule of law and the protection of minorities are guaranteed everywhere. Therefore, in the comparison of the candidates Turkey comes off very badly. This is all the more regrettable as Turkey introduced a democratic system and free market economy already 40 years before most of the other candidate countries.

However, up to the present, Turkey has not been in a position to implement and to develop democracy and a market economy in a convincing way.

C) Conclusions

1. In compliance with the preamble and articles 1-5, the European Senior Citizens Union comes to the conclusion that Turkey, like the States emanated from the former Soviet Union or the southern neighbouring Mediterranean countries, cannot become a full member of the EU.
2. In consideration of the multiple existing ties on grounds of the association agreement of 1963, the implementation of a customs union EU – Turkey and Turkey's NATO membership, according to ESCU's opinion, the special relations between Turkey and the EU States and the EU itself should be further developed below the level of full membership to achieve a stable partnership at the cross-roads between the occident and the orient. This partnership would serve to facilitate the solution of Turkey's inner problems.