

CPS

Corporate & Public Strategy
Advisory Group



EU Corridors

June
2008

- **Editorial**

This month's EU Corridors Editorial covers last month's Association Council and Joint Parliamentary Committee meeting between Turkey and the EU

- **News**

This month's significant events concerning the EU agenda...

- **Agenda**

Crucial dates and milestones of Turkey's EU journey...

Editorial

ANKARA'S JOURNEY TO BRUSSELS

Last month's meetings between the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee and the Association Council, the highest decision-making body governing the relations between Turkey and the European Union (EU), indicated once again that the EU is primarily focused on the Justice and Development Party closure case. Both the EU front and Foreign Minister Ali Babacan expressed they were waiting for further developments on the AK Party closure case. During the meetings the most interesting development was the sudden move by CHP to prove that it is a pro-EU party. On the other side, France, which will take over the EU term presidency in July, once again demonstrated its opposition to the Turkish accession process. However, a new crisis due to France in EU-Turkey relations has been overcome.

CHP and EU

It came as a surprise to many when CHP's Vice Chairman Onur Oymen, who attended the Joint Parliamentary Committee (which acts as a bridge between the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the European Parliament) began making efforts to show his party's support for EU accession. EU officials were especially surprised as CHP has been notoriously unsupportive of the reform process. Oymen's presence in Parliament, carrying with him a 630 page book prepared by CHP entitled 'Yes for full membership, no for a privileged status,' signals that the party has realized it has a serious image problem within the EU. According to CHP's Vice Chairman, the party's only problem with the EU is that of 'communication'. Oymen also stressed that the Turkish media falsely portrays CHP in order to appease the current Government. To solve this problem, CHP announced that it will open a representative office in the EU, which came as a major surprise to the European Parliament. Only time and CHP's actual activities will show if the initiative can erode the EP's doubts about the CHP.

France Persists with its Usual Attitude

Just before the Association Council, France created an 'accession crisis' to confirm that it will continue to try to halt Turkey's membership process. Nonetheless, in the past weeks, France expressed it would not interfere with Ankara's accession process during the next six months and would remain 'neutral'. The previous six months, however, tell another story. While the French constitution removed the need for a referendum for new EU member states for the Balkan states, it did not do so for Turkey. This shows that President Nicolas Sarkozy will continue to hold his position against Turkey's EU accession. The Commission, on the other hand, is not pleased with the French attitude on this matter. Olli Rehn, Member of the European Commission for Enlargement, mentioned the word 'accession' seven times in the Council meeting, giving a clear signal of his reaction to Paris. But due to the unanimity principle necessary for EU accession of a candidate country, it seems difficult to control such an influential member-state.

EU and Turkish Government on Hold

The European Council and Commission, which have pressured Turkey over the past years to speed up reforms, again listed the necessary reforms for Ankara to undertake. Nevertheless, Turkey received good news when it learned that two negotiation chapters, company law and intellectual property law, will be opened this month (June 17). Regarding the AK Party closure

case, the EU reiterated the rules set by the Council of Europe Venice Commission, urging the Turkish court to be 'impartial', 'effective' and 'independent'. Olli Rehn, who received a severe reaction from Turkey because he said 'if AK Party closes we will review negotiations with Turkey', chose his words more carefully this time. The EU signaled that they would wait for further development from Ankara and decide what to do accordingly. Foreign Minister Ali Babacan reiterated again EU warnings in regard to the closure case. Babacan, for the first time, reproached the EU, which has been complaining of the slow pace of the reforms, stating that Brussels is also causing the slowdown of the process. He blamed the EU for not completing the reports for 11 negotiation chapters. In order for the government to continue with reforms it needs to see its future Babacan indicated.

Duygu Leloğlu
Brussels

News

Association Council Convened

The Association Council -- the highest decision-making body governing Turkey and EU relations -- convened on May 27. The meeting was held in Brussels under the shadow of the Turkish membership crisis caused by France and was attended by the Slovenian EU term presidency and foreign ministers. Foreign Minister Ali Babacan expressed frustration at France, which caused a political crisis by trying to exclude the word 'membership' from the Common Position Paper. The EU mentioned to Ankara in the joint position text the need for freedom of expression and for Turkey's courts to be neutral, independent and effective. The text also mentions the need for further reforms, the need to bring Turkey's military-civil relationship up to Europe's standards and to adhere to the common laws of the European Court of Human Rights and Council of Europe Venice Commission in regard to banning political parties. The European Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn and the Slovenian EU term Presidency's Foreign Minister Dimitri Rupel underlined that they are following Turkey's political developments closely. At the same time Rupel mentioned they plan to open with Turkey two new negotiation chapters in June. Babacan, who came under criticism because of slowed reforms, stated the EU front showed a slowdown as well. The Foreign Minister expressed that the EU still did not prepare the reports on 11 new negotiation chapters which, he said, further delayed the process. On the other hand, The Committee of Permanent Representatives of EU Countries (COREPER) has recently approved, without a debate, the opening of the talks with Turkey on Company Law and Intellectual Property Rights chapters. The talks will officially begin in the Intergovernmental Conference which will be held on June 17, 2008 with the participation of EU Foreign Ministers and Turkey's Foreign Minister Ali Babacan.

EP Adopts Turkey Report

The European Parliament adopted the 'Turkey Report for the year 2007' as a non-binding resolution during its plenary session on May 21. The report warns the Turkish Government about adhering to 'secularism' and urges the Constitutional Court to 'respect the rule of law'. In addition, the report calls the police, which used excessive force against protestors on May 1, to 'protect civil rights'. Unlike its predecessors MEPs did not propose any amendment regarding 'privileged partnership with Turkey' during the adoption process of this year's report on Turkey, which was prepared by Dutch Christian democrat Ria Oomen-Ruijten. Although the political parties had proposed hundreds of amendments to the Turkey reports during the previous years, this year the number of amendment proposals was only 28. The amendment proposal drafted by a group of French MEPs, which calls on 'Turkey to recognize the Armenian genocide', was rejected. During the discussions at plenary session, the representatives of political groups focused on issues of AKP closure case and protecting the impartiality and independence of the judiciary. The report was amended at the last minute with new elements concerning a 'warning on the incidents of May 1st', 'abandoning of article 301 is the best solution' and 'changing the articles of the Turkish Constitution regarding the closure of political parties in accordance with European standards'. Four hundred sixty seven MEPs voted in favor of the report, while 62 voted against it, and 61 abstained. Although it is not legally binding, the report is important in terms of reflecting public opinion.

France Keeps Referendum Prerequisite for Turkey

France has abandoned the referendum prerequisite for new EU members from its constitution, which applies to the Balkan countries. However, the rule seems to be kept intact for Turkey

and Ukraine. The French National Parliament recently voted in favor of a bill that would require a referendum for the accession of new countries to the European Union, which have a population exceeding 5% of the EU. Following its acceptance by parliament, the package was sent to the Senate. If the bill is approved by the senate without amendment, it will be voted in the common session of the members of the Senate and the National Parliament on July 21 and will take effect as long as it receives a 3/5-majority vote.

Cyprus Negotiations to be delayed

Northern and Southern Cypriots, were preparing to start peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations on June 21, but delayed the launch of peace talks due to their failure to meet necessary conditions. Mehmet Ali Talat, leader of Northern Cyprus; and Dimitris Hristofyas, the Greek Cypriots leader met last week to review recent developments. The Turkish Cypriot side, which is demanding that negotiations start as soon as possible, is pleased with the efforts of working groups and technical committees started under the framework of the UN. The Greek Cypriots, who seem to be slowing down, do not find the work done so far sufficient to start the negotiations. On the other hand, the two parties have agreed to open three new gates in Yeşilirmak (Limnidi), Erenköy (Kokkina) and Pile. Meanwhile, Northern Cyprus is moving on the process of its integration to the EU. The adaptation efforts, started with Brussels on 12 chapters, are expected to finish on July 11. The second list, which is composed of 14 chapters, will be reviewed in the near future.

France Opens its Labor Market to Eastern Europe

France is preparing to open its labor market in the second half of this year to Central and Eastern European countries, which joined the EU in 2004. The French decision to open its labor gates to Poland, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Estonia, Slovakia and Slovenia came a year earlier than expected. However, Sarkozy's government will take precautions in case the labor migration influences the French market negatively, and plans to include a reversal in the law in case of such a scenario. Until now the only member states who did not yet open their doors to the new member states which joined the Union in 2004 are France, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Denmark. While Belgium is expected to lift restrictions by July or September, Germany and Austria plan to keep their restrictions until the end of 2011. Moreover, other than Finland and Sweden, no other EU member state has removed labor restrictions to Bulgaria and Romania, both of which joined the Union in 2007.

Change of Portfolios at European Commission

Jose Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, decided to give the 'justice and home affairs' portfolio to French Commissioner Jacques Barrot, who was responsible for Transportation. The portfolio of Justice and Home Affairs used to be held by Italian Commissioner Franco Frattini, who recently resigned. The new Italian Commissioner, who will replace Frattini will be responsible for Transportation. The decision of Jose Manuel Barroso to exchange the portfolios between French and Italian Commissioners was interpreted as a precaution against the possibility that the new Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi might suggest a strict policy on migration issues. Notably, the European Parliament had not given the assent for Rocco Buttiglione, who was again suggested by Berlusconi during his previous term of prime ministry. Buttiglione is known for his views on homosexuality, which he views as a sickness. The Italian government has recently suggested Antonio Tajani to replace Frattini.

Energy Cooperation to be strengthened

During the summit on May 5th in Brussels, the EU, Turkey, Mashreq countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) and Iraq decided to strengthen their cooperation on energy. The meeting

took place between Andris Piebalgs, Member of the European Commission Responsible for Energy; Benita Ferrero, External Relations Commissioner; Tomaz Jersic, the Economy Minister of Slovenia currently holding the EU Presidency; and the government representatives of the concerning countries. The participants decided to add Iraqi natural gas to the Arab Natural Gas Pipeline, which connects Egypt and Syria through Jordan. The pipeline will be connected to the Turkish network and will finally reach the EU. Moreover EU and countries in the region have announced their readiness for further cooperation on attaching the Arab Natural Gas Pipeline with Nabucco and connecting it with other pipelines in the EU. Andris Piebalgs, Energy Commissioner said this cooperation will provide a new source of energy and revitalize the Nabucco Pipeline. The Commissioner repeated his full support on the Nabucco Project.

EU Discusses 'Eastern Partnership' Project

Poland and Sweden proposed that the European Union establish a new coalition called 'Eastern Partnership' which would include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldavia, Georgia, Belarus and Ukraine. During the EU Foreign Ministers Meeting that took place last month, the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt explained the reason behind bringing this proposal to Brussels as "It's time to look to the East to see what we can do to strengthen democracy." Polish officials meanwhile see the 'Eastern Partnership' Project as a process that would prepare the countries in question for EU membership and as an initiative that is more important than the 'Mediterranean Union' which was recently agreed upon. Radoslaw Sikorski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, said "To the south, we have Europe as our neighbors. To the east, we have European neighbors..." While Romania and Bulgaria criticize the plan because, they say the 'Black Sea Cooperation' is being neglected, next year's EU presidency holder, Czech Republic's Deputy Prime Minister Alexandr Vondra, supported the initiative saying "...This year, it is a Mediterranean year. So, next year it will be the year of the East."

EU's Illegal Migration Legislation to be strengthened

The EU Committee of Permanent Representatives approved a new migration legislation sentencing illegal immigrants up to 18 months in prison. The legislation will not include asylum seekers and will give EU member states the right to either give a residence permit or expel illegal immigrants to their home countries. Those who refuse to return to their home country will be forced out of the member state and will not be able to enter the EU for five years. The regulation has caused strong reactions from human rights organizations. If the draft text is approved by the European Parliament and the EU ministers of justice and internal affairs, then the new legislation would also include families with children who will be held up to 18 months in lockup houses. Human rights organizations are appealing the legislation, arguing that it is excessive and targets illegal immigrants who did not break the law.

EU Imposes Penal Sanctions Against Polluters

During the plenary session on May 21, the European Parliament gave the green light for criminal sanctions for environmental law violations. Those who pollute the environment with radioactive substances or wastes, damage protected sites or the environment will be considered criminals. The report prepared by Christian Democrat rapporteur Hartmut Nassauer, which was recently adopted by the Parliament, calls on EU governments to apply 'effective, deterrent and balanced' penal sanctions against polluters. COREPER, composed of permanent representatives to the EU supports the report. However, the proposed legislation

needs to be approved by the Council in order to be enforced. Member States are to define their own criminal sanctions for polluters.

EU Bans Mercury Exports

The European Parliament has given the green light for the Council Decision on banning 'mercury exports' from the Union as of 2011 and improving the safety of surplus storage. The decision, which was accepted by the European Parliament, needs final approval from the Environment Council (which convenes June 5). The export ban also covers mercuric oxide and mercuric chloride, the two components of mercury. As for imports of mercury to the EU, there are no new restrictions.

Agenda

June 4

- European Parliament plenary – part session, Brussels
- COREPER I
- COREPER II

June 5

- EU Environment Council
- EU Justice and Home Affairs Council (5-6 June)
- Conference : "The Wider Black Sea Region in 21st Century" organized by CEPS www.ceps.be
- Conference : "The Beijing Olympics" organized by EPC www.epc.eu

June 6

- EU Political and Security Committee
- EU Troika-Brazil
- EU Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council

June 8

- Meeting of the European Judicial Network
- Euromed Committee Meeting

June 9

- EU Troika-China Meeting
- Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer affairs Council (EPSCO)

June 10

- EU-USA Summit
- Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use
- Conference on "The Agenda for sustainable and competitive European tourism"
- EU Political and Security Committee
- EU Neighborhood Forum meeting on the Karabakh Conflict at EPC www.epc.eu

June 11

- COREPER I
- COREPER II
- Informal Meeting of European Cultural Contact Points
- Breakfast Policy Briefing – Europe's Economy by Peter Sutherland, Chairman of BP, Chairman of Goldman Sachs at EPC www.epc.eu

June 12

- Symposium on Novelties in Textiles: "Research Priorities of the Slovene and European Textile Technological Platform related to the Seventh Framework Program"
- COREPER II
- Informal Meeting of Ministers of Labor and Social Affairs
- EU Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council

June 13

- EU Environmental Coordinators Meeting
- G8 Finance Ministers Meeting (June 13-14)
- Conference "What's happening on the EU border?" by CEPS www.ceps.be

June 14

- ASEM Finance Ministers' Meeting (June 14-17)

June 15

- 'Adriatic Sea – EU Sea' - 9th Meeting of the Joint Slovenian–Croatian–Italian Commission for the Protection of the Adriatic Sea and Coastal Areas against Pollution

June 16

- EU-Israel Association Council
- EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg
- European Forum for Architectural Policies

June 17

- EU Accession Conference with Turkey
- EU Accession Conference with Croatia
- EU Troika- African Union
- COREPER I
- EU Political and Security Committee

June 18

- Informal Meeting of Transport Attachés
- COREPER II

June 19

- European Council (June 19-20)

June 23

- EU-OPEC Energy Dialogue
- EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council
- Panel: Towards an EU Action Plan on Climate Change and International Security

June 24

- EU Political and Security Committee
- ECON Committee Meeting – Presentation of the Slovenian Presidency's achievements, Minister of Finance, Andrej Bajuk

June 25

- COREPER I
- COREPER II
- Conference: "European Union Fundamental Rights Agency: Priorities and Challenges" organized by CEPS www.ceps.be

June 26

- Permanent High-Level Group – Energy Community, Vienna.
- Informal Meeting of Directors – General for Fisheries, Portoroz. (June 26-28)
- Education Committee, Brdo

June 27

- Ministerial Energy Community, Vienna
- COREPER I
- EU Political and Security Committee Meeting

**CPS
Corporate & Public Strategy
Advisory Group**

Brussels, Istanbul, Washington

The information in this document was compiled from various EU information sources.