



Keynote Speech at the Conference:

*“Turkey`s Neighbourhood and European Security – A Turkish German Dialogue”*

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope you will forgive the fact that my English is not perfect.

But this is something you will notice very soon anyway.

First of all I would like to say how happy I am to be here.

Thank you for the invitation to speak on this very interesting and current topic.

## **I. Personally involved in this issue**

I have personally been involved in the issue of Turkey for many years now. My involvement is not only theoretical but also practical as I have spent some time working in a textile company in Izmir and therefore I have gotten to know not only the Turkish government officials but also the everyday workers.

In the German Bundestag I'm a member of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union. In the European Committee I report on all Turkish issues for CDU/CSU-Party

Four weeks ago I was in Turkey and spoke with colleagues from the Turkish Parliament and also with Prime Minister Erdogan. On Friday I will go to Istanbul for the 10th anniversary of the European College, one of the German speaking schools in Istanbul.

As a result of my interactions with different levels of society I believe my insight into Turkey is quite comprehensive.

## **II. Traditionally close relationship**

Traditionally there has been a very close relationship between the EU, especially Germany, and Turkey for many decades.

One of the major milestones of this relationship is the so called “Ankara agreement” of 1964. The objective of this agreement was the continuous balanced reinforcement of the trade and business relations between both parties.



The core objective of the agreement was the establishment of the customs union in three stages. The idea of this customs union was the harmonization of the Turkish and EU economic policies. That meant not only removing the trade barriers for industrial goods, but also free trade for agricultural products and free movement of labour.

The Turkish officially applied for full European Union membership in 1987.

The reaction of the European Union Commission was a basic interest in strengthening the relationship to Turkey and in supporting the process of political and economic modernisation as soon as possible.

The customs union turned out to be a practical but not an easy step to take. Nevertheless this important step was managed and since the first of January 1996 the customs union between EU and Turkey has been in existence. There are three main elements:

1. that of free movement of goods,
2. the acceptance of EU trade tariffs and
3. the common trade policies.

However: Complete freedom of movement of labour and the agriculture sector is not included in this customs agreement.

### **III. German, European and Turkish interests**

This agreement is not just of interest to the accession candidates. It has had a very positive influence on the trade relations on both sides.

The Turkish economy is booming: Turkey is now the seventh biggest export market in the EU. At the same time for Turkey the EU has turned out to be the most important trade partner for Turkey. By the way, Germany is after Russia the most important trade partner. And as you know Russia has only recently exceeded Germany because of its enormous energy sources to Turkey.

Germany as one of Turkey`s most important trade partners, has an export quote of 12 percent of the total Turkish exports. The import quote of German goods is 13 percent. The German economy supplies mostly machines. That is: cars and parts for the automobile industry.

The enormous growth of the Turkish economy has also meant a large increase in direct foreign investment.

In this connection, it is appropriate, and necessary, to speak of common interests of Germany, Turkey and the EU. Close political and economic relations with Turkey are in line with the EU`s own interests.



From a geopolitical perspective, Europe lies in a sensitive and turbulent neighbourhood. In order to better confront or cope with the current dangers, the EU's security depends on an effective multilateral system. Turkey is an important partner for the EU in this respect; it is fundamentally conducive to our security. The quest for peace and stability in the neighbouring Middle East and the Gulf region is the greatest security challenge Europe is facing.

Already in 1952 Turkey became a member of the NATO and since 1963 associated member of the European Union. Since then Turkey plays an important role as a partner for the NATO and the EU. Turkey has proved that it can take responsibility within the NATO: Turkey has the third biggest army of the world and can react as a self-confident in military crises. Recently Turkey has taken command of the NATO-peacekeeping force in Prizrin/Kosovo. Since end of May Turkey is responsible in the south of Kosovo for 4.000 NATO-Soldiers from eight countries. Turkey itself holds a contingent of 800 soldiers there.

Another important aspect is the energy sector: Turkey's strategic location makes it a natural "energy bridge" between major oil producing areas in the Middle East and Caspian Sea regions on the one hand, and Europe on the other. Turkey will become even more important for Europe in this respect – especially as an alternative to the Russian energy resources.

Based on these examples, you can see that a close relationship to Turkey is of great importance to both – Turkey and the EU.

#### **IV. Political development and problems**

But let us now have a closer look on the political development:

Since 2001, Turkey has carried out a number of reforms in order to improve human rights and basic freedom including abolishing capital punishment.

In November 2001 the parliament passed a new civil code. In the summer of 2002 further reforms were passed, including the permission of radio and TV broadcasts in the Kurdish language and the extension of rights of freedom of speech and rights granted to Non-Muslim minorities.

In the summer of 2003 the Turkish parliament decided to limit the rights of the military branch. And because of this I was able to speak to the general secretary to the Turkish Military. Although he is a General Secretary of the Turkish Military, he is not a member of the military, wears no uniform - but instead has civil servant status. Still, we have to realize that the power of the general secretary is restricted.

We must appreciate that, Turkey has made some progress in certain areas in the last few years and that the political leadership has fulfilled the requirements of the EU to improve the human rights situation.



We see that, a first step in the right direction has been taken, but still - in my opinion – and there I'm not alone – this new laws still need to be implemented into reality. It's not sufficient to change the laws - you actually have to change the attitude of the political leaders.

There is nothing more difficult and protracted than recognizing religious and ethnic minorities in a society. Resistance still exists in the national administration and in the Turkish public.

In this respect there are, however, doubts about the orientation of the conservative AK-Party. The AKP has been criticized for its nationalistic and islamistic orientation. Political parties seem to use more and more nationalistic rhetoric. A public-opinion poll in a Turkish newspaper has confirmed that: 51 percent of the Turkish population think that, in Turkey, nationalism is increasing. The newspaper draws the conclusion that the accession process, the development in Iraq and the murder of Hrant Dink led to those nationalistic reflexes.

There are still great deficits in the process of reforming the society, as Turkish basic rights and values are unfortunately still not comparable to standards applied to EU members. Basic human rights which for Germany and the EU are still not guaranteed in Turkey. This is something which we definitely cannot accept!

Freedom of opinion: You know that the paragraph 301 is still in existence. This paragraph does not allow public "denigration of Turkishness". That means: the Republic, the parliament, the courts, the military or the security forces. Freedom of opinion and press has in fact recently been greatly reduced.

In the past two years, journalists, writers and intellectuals have been put on trial based on paragraph 301. For example the journalist Hrant Dink, who was murdered in January or the persecution of the noble prize winner Orhan Pamuk.

Despite repeated requests by the EU the Turkish government has until now refused to abolish or alter paragraph 301.

During a recent meeting with Turkish politicians and advisers in Berlin it once again became clear to me, that to a certain extent Turkey has very different standards with respect to freedom of press. During this meeting we discussed the issue of the Mohammed cartoons in the Netherlands which brought about a great number of protests around the world.

The Turkish participants were of the opinion that the Dutch government should have had more influence on what the press publishes. They even believed that the government should have the right to forbid such cartoons. I tried to explain to them, that for us freedom of press is one of the basic rights we expect even if they provoke political or religious protests.



Also important is the protection of religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey: Recent examples are the murders of three employees of a Christian publisher on the 18th of April in eastern Turkey. Christians are frequently victims of violence. There have also been protests and threats made against the publisher Zirve. As a result I expect the Turkish government to actively take a stand against violence towards Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities.

In addition I find Turkey is a land full of contradictions. For example: the influence of the military. On the one hand the military has the role of maintaining the separation of religion and state, and on the other hand it has enormous influence on the government.

Another example is the role of the presidency of religious Affairs and the head Prof. Dr. Ali Bardakoglu. A few months ago I discussed the following topic with him. This institution strictly controls what the worshippers are allowed to pray during the Friday services. This guarantees that Islam is kept under control and the separation of state and religion is maintained. For me this is also a contradiction since the state controls the Islam so that the Islam has no control over the state. It's a very unique policy found in no other nation, but we must say that there are no other Islamic nations where the separation between state and religion works as well as it does in Turkey.

It is difficult for me to judge whether this is a positive aspect for Turkey. But I can say this is not a model for us in the EU. And this is one of the main issues which we should consider with respect to Turkish EU membership.

Let me respond to another important aspect: We also need progress on the issue of Cyprus! On the one hand Turkey must fulfil its obligations under the Ankara Protocol and apply the customs union with the EU to Cyprus too. But on the other hand: in this conflict the European Union has also reacted wrong. In my opinion the EU should not accept countries with this kind of domestically problems! I think: it is essential that they are solved before the accession.

## **V. Conclusion**

As you know, since two years Turkey has the status as an EU membership candidate. But based on what I have been describing to you, I believe that Turkey has a long way to go before it is ready for full membership status. And I'm not sure if Turkey would in the end be happy with the changes necessary to become a full member. I'm especially concerned about the overregulation and restrictions which Turkey would be subject to and which other EU members themselves are also not very happy at the moment.

Beside this, I personally think that Turkish membership would overstretch the EU politically and economically.



The European Union should not and cannot determine a date of entry, as Prime Minister Erdogan is demanding. He has requested membership for 2014 – this is completely unrealistic.

There are some politicians in Germany who say that Turkey will be able to join the European Union in 2014. I doubt this: In my opinion we must be honest to Turkey. If the date can not be adhered, Turkey will be badly disappointed. I therefore think it is wrong to determine a date of entry in 2014.

Turkey needs to make reforms to develop itself into a strong independent democracy. And thereafter we can discuss EU membership or other forms of cooperation with Turkey.

The EU is happy to support Turkey on its way to becoming a reformed state closer to European standards of society. I personally believe and stand behind the idea that this is a process which we need to undertake together. I am convinced that Europe needs Turkey as much as Turkey needs Europe.

Because I believe our goal should be a closer relationship to Turkey on the one hand and on the other I know that Turkey still needs a lot of time for its reforms, we need other options for our common future. I think – and this is also the CDU position – we need an alternative relationship status for Turkey. Unfortunately the term: “privileged partnership” has negative connotations. But it doesn’t in its actual sense: “We believe this is the best possible route for a closer cooperation with Turkey”.

Thank you very much!