



TURKEY'S COMMITMENT TO REFORM TENDS TOWARDS ZERO

"Cancel accession negotiations with Turkey and re-assess pre-accession assistance!" said EAF Member MEP Georg Mayer. Under the rule of Prime Minister Erdogan, Turkey, is strengthening its anti-democratic nature. Dr. Georg Mayer went on to explain how "this afternoon the European Parliament spoke out against the recent wave of arrests of journalists and media representatives in Turkey. This agenda item once again shows the absurdity of pre-payments to Turkey which last year amounted to 902.9 million Euros. Turkey received these funds to be used for projects to promote the rule of law, gender equality and the implementation of human rights on its territory. However, in this regard progress is not visible at all."

"Turkey under the Prime



Georg Mayer (MEP)

Minister Erdogan reinforced its anti-democratic character while pre-accession assistance of the European Union is neither shortened nor frozen or deleted. It has instead increased annually since 2007 by an average of eleven percent," criticised Mayer.

Waves of arrests dominate the news titles coming from Turkey. The general regression of the Turkish society reached the stage of repression that was visible in

years before Kemal Ataturk. All these developments in Turkey are clear violations of the Country Strategy Paper. This paper lays down the changes that need to be made in various areas of the country. "Turkey's commitment to reform tends towards zero, the aspirations to European values and democracy in the country on the Bosphorus are stagnating," said Mayer.

Mayer called for consequences when he held that "The payment of pre-accession aid to Turkey must be set and the accession negotiations should finally be terminated." He went on to conclude by explaining how Europeans were losing their patience, since the current procedure and the hypocritical approach of the EU-nomenclatura is betraying the trust of its own people!"

ICELAND to withdraw EU application

The Prime Minister of Iceland Gunnlaugsson is planning to officially withdraw the country's application for the EU. In January the PM spoke on the radio (Bylgjan radio station on Sunday 4 January) and

stated that this was the intention of the Government. The first steps in removing capitals controls which have been in place since 2008 when Iceland was first hit by the financial crisis should also be lifted.



BULGARIA CORRUPTION – COMMISSION REPORT

Bulgaria joined the EU seven years ago yet within this time it has not done much to reduce the corruption and organized crime which threatens its sovereignty and that of the European unity.

In a monitoring report on the 28 January the European Commission held that this country the poorest in the EU with over seven million people is trying to adopt preventive measures against corruption, yet these measures are still “in their infancy” while there is a “serious” problem with the high level of corruption. This is not the only problem as organized crime is also high and there exists little protection for witnesses while convictions and asset seizures were “very low”. The report went on to state how the lack of independence in the Judiciary together with the political instability are in fact making matters worse. “The fact that the period covered by this report [since January 2014] saw three different governments and a deadlocked parliamentary situation has clearly contributed to a lack of resolve to reform”. On a positive note, the report did applaud Sofia for drawing up an

“honest assessment” of the problems faced in the anti-corruption field. It went on to state that it was a positive sign that a top anti-corruption official was forced to resign from the position due to the official’s involvement in “trading in influence”. However the same report termed the efforts in cleaning up the administration as a “piecemeal” and “uncoordinated”, giving “the impression that decisions ... are being taken on political grounds” this together with very few high-level prosecutions “despite the scale of the problem”.

The Commission held that “pressures at a local level” hinder the fight against mafia in Bulgaria as do the “burdensome” and “formalistic” criminal code which in turn slow down the courts. The use of experts from outside court appointed to investigate these cases also raise the “questions of impartiality”.

The report by the European Commission stated clearly that Bulgaria requires “more transparency and objectivity” when it comes to the appointment of the Judiciary as well as the fact that a new system should



be set on how cases are allocated to prosecution since there still exists abuse in this matter.

Romanian media on the other hand have claimed that there is in fact another Commission report about Romania which shows how the neighboring country has actually achieved more reform in comparison to Bulgaria. However this report does accuse the Romanian parliament of not respecting the Constitutional Court Judgements and also of not acting with expediency when lifting MPs immunity in case of criminal accusations. Again as with the report about Bulgaria the Commission commends the increase in cases of corruption against Judges and Prosecutors however the problem still lies with the conviction and asset confiscation rates which remain low. The report then explains the problem with the corruption in education and healthcare systems as these too are causing serious concern.

The election of the reformist President in Romania last year was a very good sign of the progress to be expected however the so-called cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) reports provide for a sad reading of these two countries politicians who are hoping to join the Schengen travel zone after many

delays. This together with the increase of Schengen vigilance after the murders of the Charlie Hebdo in Paris do not provide much optimism for these Baltic countries possibility of joining this passport-free travel zone.

The high-level of corruption in Bulgaria was in fact recently identified as a threat to the sovereignty of the State as well as to its ability to tow EU lines when it comes to foreign and energy policy.

Due to the EU legal objections, last year, Bulgaria abandoned the construction of Russia's South Stream gas pipeline, however this decision caused a backlash by some Bulgarian elite who are also pro-Russian, prompting a political crisis. The US secretary of state John Kerry held that the fight against graft is "about providing the climate for investment and shielding the country from those who exploit the situation to gain undue influence over your choices as a sovereign nation", after his visit to Sofia on 16 January. Kerry also held that the US shall help Bulgaria, since it is 100% dependent on Russia to get its gas and so this will enable Bulgaria to be less dependent on just the one State "we stand ready ... to be supportive of Bulgaria in this time of economic and security challenge".

EAF President Obermayr Proposal for FTAs with Russia: “Why now Mrs. Merkel?”

"This offer we would have welcomed much earlier," commented the EAF deputy in the European Parliament, Mag Franz Obermayr in relation to the statements Mrs Merkel made in Davos when she proposed a free trade agreement between the EU and Russia. In fact, the idea came first by President Putin in 2010 who at the time talked about a "harmonious economic community from Lisbon to Vladivostok".

Obermayr said: "Mrs Merkel has partnered with the Brussels mainstream massively and supported the anti-Russian



Franz Obermayr

forces in Ukraine for some time and in doing so encouraged the conflicts between the two countries. A free trade agreement seems to be less of a concern for peace and rather more of a concern for export."

Fuelled conflict between Ukraine and Russia from the outside

By constantly adding new cash payments and the conclusion of an Association Agreement with Ukraine Brussels has attempted in recent months to bind Ukraine to itself. The damage to the traditionally close ties between Kiev and Moscow is non salvageable. "And if Mrs. Merkel calls today for us to build bridges between the EU and Russia, I agree with this demand fully, but wonder at the same time, why did we need to tear down the bridges in the first place."

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