



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Annex to the :

**Communication from the Commission
on civil society dialogue between EU and Candidate countries**

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

{COM(2005)290 final}

I The enlargement process and impact assessments

Enlargement policy is outside the realm of the Commission's right of initiative and therefore not a policy which the Commission can strictly speaking propose on the basis of policy options and impact assessments.

However, an important impact assessment element is built into the enlargement process since its inception. In particular, the Treaty on the European Union and the Copenhagen criteria set the framework for the whole of the enlargement processes and narrow down the assessment criteria that can be used against forward and actual impacts of the implementation of this policy. Furthermore, the Commission opinions on each country's application explore, within the framework of the applicable criteria, the likely and foreseeable impacts for the country and the Union.

Therefore, accession processes are underpinned by a permanent impact assessment loop whereby the Commission identifies gaps, and evaluates commitments and measures taken by the country to fill them. In the run-up to the Accession Treaties this process culminates in the final Commission opinion, and Council decision, on the country's readiness for accession, including a date and any of transition measures and safeguard clauses.

II Problem definition

The Copenhagen European Council of June 1993 stated that those candidate countries who wish to become members of the Union should meet the following conditions:

- stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- the existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union;
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

In order to assess progress achieved by each country in preparing for accession, following the publication of the Commission's Opinions on the applications for membership of the candidate countries in 1997, the Commission submits Regular Reports to the Council. The reports serve as a basis for the Council to take decisions on the conduct of the negotiations or their extension to other candidates on the basis of the accession criteria.

III Setting the objectives

In October 2004 the Commission recommended¹ that a strategy consisting of three pillars should be followed with Turkey. The first pillar concerns the reinforcement of the reform process, in particular in relation to the continued fulfilment of the Copenhagen political criteria. The second pillar concerns the accession negotiations methodology. This communication concerns the implementation of the Third pillar, i.e. establishing a political and cultural dialogue involving civil society. The recommendation reads:

¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession, COM(2004) 656 final

“The third pillar entails a substantially strengthened political and cultural dialogue bringing people together from EU Member States and Turkey. There is a clear need to strengthen the dialogue on a number of issues relating to EU-Turkey relations. Several pertinent questions, which do not immediately relate to the EU as such, need to be addressed. A number of fora should be created, bringing people together from Member States and Turkey, where concerns and perceptions can be discussed in a frank and open manner. This includes a dialogue on difference of cultures, religion, issues relating to migration, concerns on minority rights and terrorism. Civil society should play the most important role in this dialogue, which should be facilitated by the EU. The Commission will present proposals on how to support such a dialogue in future”.

The communication on civil society dialogue addresses these objectives, and extends them to other Candidate countries about to start negotiations (Croatia), in light of the December 2004 Council conclusions.

IV Identifying the options

In Helsinki in December 1999, the European Council decided that Turkey is a candidate for accession to the EU. The Copenhagen European Council in December 2002 concluded that “if the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay”. These conclusions were reaffirmed by the European Council in Brussels in June 2004. The European Council in December 2004 decided that Turkey sufficiently fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria to open accession negotiations. The Commission will submit to the Council by October 2005 a framework for negotiations with Turkey.

V Assessing the impact

Alongside the Recommendation and the 2004 Regular Report on Turkey, a first evaluation by the Commission services of the impact of Turkish membership has been prepared². There are of course many uncertainties involved in any work of this kind. The working hypothesis has been to assess the possible effects on the basis of existing policies, assuming that Turkey’s accession would not take place before the end of the next financial perspective. Turkey’s accession would be different from previous enlargements (population, size, geography, economy, security and military potential, cultural characteristics).

Although this working paper primarily addresses the effects of Turkey’s integration on EU policies and is therefore mainly related to Copenhagen criteria on the capacity of the EU to absorb new members, it indirectly endorses the need for civil society dialogue. *“Turkey is at present going through a process of radical change, including a rapid evolution of mentalities. It is in the interest of all that the current transformation process continues. Turkey would be an important model of a country with a majority Muslim population adhering to such fundamental principles as liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law”.*

It was on these bases that the Commission recommended a civil society dialogue in its October recommendation, and the European Council endorsed it (see above).

² Commission Staff Working Document, Issues arising from Turkey’s Membership perspective, SEC(2004) 1202,

VI Consultation

To prepare the communication, the Commission has contacted a broad array of potential partners from both public institutions and civil society both in Turkey and in the EU, with a view to collecting ideas on what forms the dialogue could take, and how it could best be implemented. Round tables were held in Turkey with NGOs, business organisations and trade unions. Written contributions on ongoing activities were received from a few Member States (D, GR, F, I, NL, UK) and from the Turkish authorities.

VII Monitoring and evaluation

As explained in the communication, the Commission will ensure a regular follow up on the activities developed and results achieved. The regular reports on Turkey, published on a yearly basis, will feature a special section on the civil society dialogue, covering the main activities and results. In addition, a dedicated section within the EU Web-supported portal Europa will be devoted to the dissemination of information on ongoing projects and on initiatives related to the civil society dialogue. Furthermore, the Commission will establish a more effective regular monitoring of EU and Turkey civil societies and mutual attitudes, serving as guidance in view of the future policy evolution of the dialogue. Finally, as far as projects funded under pre-accession instruments are concerned, regular monitoring and auditing will take place according to applicable procedures.