

Turkey: lift the state of emergency as soon as possible!

Ongoing negotiations on enlargement, visa liberalisation, customs union can only progress in an atmosphere of respect of civil liberties, EU and turkey organisations say

The 36th meeting of the EU-Turkey JCC took place at the EESC in Brussels on 18 and 19 July 2017. At the opening session EESC President **Georges Dassis** welcomed the Turkish Minister of European Affairs Mr. **Ömer Çelik** and the participants by saying that: *"Despite the existing tensions, dialogue is absolutely essential especially on difficult times as these"*, and he stated his concerns about the current situation in Turkey regarding the respect for fundamental rights. *"EESC expresses its solidarity with the Turkish people and gives its full support for the organizations of Turkish civil society which defend democracy. We hope we will once again see a Turkey that is totally democratic, open to the future and respectful of all freedoms, the rule of law and the separation of powers"*, concluded Mr. Dassis.

Mr. **Ömer Çelik** stated clearly that Turkey is aiming for full EU membership: *"We are committed to the EU process, our objective is to become a full member, any other form of cooperation does not interest us"*.

While reiterating its strong condemnation of the coup attempt one year ago, the JCC stressed that the right to fair trial and due process should be respected and that all measures taken should further strengthen democracy, civil rights and social cohesion, respecting universal fundamental rights, the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law.

The JCC expressed great concern at the arrest and mass dismissals of public servants, and asked that Turkey lifts the state of emergency as soon as possible.

On the **EU-Turkey relations** the JCC members commended the efforts that are being made by Turkey on the migration issue, and considered that the migration challenge in the Eastern Mediterranean has to be addressed jointly by the EU and Turkey.

On the **state of the economy in Turkey** the JCC welcomed the European Commission's proposal for the modernisation of the Customs Union Agreement but reminded of the need for the agreement to be provided with a sustainability chapter on labour, social and environmental standards.

On the **state of social issues and employment in Turkey** the JCC underlined that further measures and policies should be implemented to promote fundamental labour rights and decent work, in compliance with ILO fundamental conventions. The importance of facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy was also stressed.

On the topic of **rights and employment of women**, the JCC members considered that the social and economic empowerment and gender mainstreaming of women are both crucial to achieving real gender equality. They also underlined that the reconciliation of work and family life for women is an engine of growth and welcomed initiatives such as the extension of the incentives for the employment of women.

The EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), established in 1995, is a body that brings together representatives of organised civil society from the EU and Turkey. It complements the other bodies set up within the framework of the Association Agreement between the EU and Turkey and enables civil society organisations from both sides to monitor the accession negotiations and initiate debates on issues of common interest. Its members come from various economic and social interest groups.