

# TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY

*There is clear scope for Turkey and the EU to further develop cooperation and to intensify policy coordination in the Southern Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. The new Strategic Dialogue between the EU and Turkey will also play an important role in this regard. Closer policy coordination in this area will help bring Turkey and the EU even closer together and will improve the impact of our policies on our common neighborhood, to further our mutual interests.*

**Štefan Füle\***



\* Štefan Füle is the Commissioner responsible for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy.



The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) seeks to strengthen the partnership between the European Union and the countries and societies of the neighborhood and to promote stability, prosperity and security in the neighborhood. The ENP is based on the EU values of democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights.

As a country negotiating its accession to the European Union, Turkey shares EU's policy goals and values. Turkey is a close partner of the EU and an important regional player. I believe that Turkey and the EU can develop important synergies to create mutual benefits through their interactions with the neighborhood they have in common.

In 2010-2011, the EU carried out a review of the ENP, which became even more pertinent following the historical changes in the Southern Mediterranean this year, which has led to a new policy response to our changing neighborhood.

Overall, our new ENP approach aims for a new level of ambition and commitment, particularly as regards stronger partnership with societies, greater differentiation, and readiness to go further with our neighbors implementing ambitious political and economic reforms.

The new approach is based on the principle of “more for more”, i.e. more EU support for more reform and democratization in partner countries. EU action will be more focused on support for reform in key areas for our partners.

A key objective of the EU is to support deep and sustainable democracy in our neighborhood. By “deep democracy” we mean not only elections, but: genuinely free and fair elections; freedoms of assembly and of expression, including a free press and media; the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial; fight against corruption and democratic control over security and armed forces. These are the five benchmarks against which we will assess our partners' progress toward reform.

The ENP is also based on mutual accountability and conditionality which works both ways. If a partner country wishes to obtain greater support from the EU, to participate in the EU internal market, to ensure greater mobility for its citizens, then it will have to demonstrate clear commitments to a number of significant political reforms.

Conversely, the EU will be accountable to its partners for delivering on its offers of support for political and economic reform. This includes not only financial support, but also improved and better-managed mobility of people as well as trade

integration. Ultimately, the EU hopes to conclude with each partner Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, which will allow economic integration into the EU single market.

We will apply a much higher level of differentiation, allowing each partner to develop its links with the EU as far as its own aspirations, needs and practices allow. We will listen to our partners and we will adapt our offer, where possible, to their particular situation.

We will work not only with governments, but also with civil society and peoples. We will look at the creation of a new Civil Society Facility and of a European Endowment for Democracy, to support the development of a vibrant civil society and of working political parties as a solid foundation to democracy across our neighborhood.

We will adapt our instruments to make them more flexible and more focused, and we will allocate, in 2011-2013, up to 1.2 billion euros in grant money to support the new approach. This is in addition to funds already earmarked for our neighborhood in 2011-2013, which amount to 5.7 billion.

In June, the EU decided to appoint an *EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean*. The mandate of the new EUSR will be to enhance the European Union's effectiveness, presence and visibility in the region and in relevant international fora, including through a close coordination with relevant local partners and international organisations. The new EUSR will maintain close contact with all parties involved in the process of democratic transformation in the region.

Turkey has the potential to play an important part in the ongoing transformation in our common neighborhood. After the end of the Cold War, and particularly in the last couple of years, Turkey has become more active in the international scene with an assertive foreign policy, and greater involvement in conflict resolution efforts in its neighborhood and beyond.

Turkey's foreign policy principle is often described as a policy of "zero problems with neighbors". Its new regional vision is based on a common security zone, high level political dialogue, economic interdependence, and cultural cooperation. Like

*"Turkey will be a transit country for the new Southern Energy Corridor of the EU, which will need to rely on a steady supply of gas from our common neighbors."*

the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy, Turkey's foreign policy seeks to ensure the region's stability, prosperity and security, for the benefit of all.

Turkey's location makes it a natural bridge between the EU and Turkey's Eastern and Southern neighbors. Turkey is a candidate country negotiating accession to the EU; it is a country that has undergone wide transformation and continues the process of democratic and economic reforms.

Like the EU, Turkey needs stability in its neighborhood, including a secure supply of energy resources. Turkey will be a transit country for the new Southern Energy Corridor of the EU, which will need to rely on a steady supply of gas from our common neighbors.

Economically, Turkey is a success story. Thanks to its robust economic development, Turkey is expanding its trade and investment relations with its neighbors. Growing economic integration between the EU and Turkey –thanks in particular to the Customs Union– as well as between Turkey and its neighbors, will promote prosperity and stability across our common neighborhood.

*"Turkey could be an inspiration for the whole Middle East showing that a Muslim society can have a functioning democracy, with a vibrant domestic political debate, full transparency and accountability."*

Turkey could be an inspiration for the whole Middle East showing that a Muslim society can have a functioning democracy, with a vibrant domestic political debate, full transparency and accountability. All these characteristics, which are also a result of Turkey's accession process, make Turkey a positive example to follow in the Middle East.

Turkey is a country that has good relations with almost all of its neighbors; a country that could talk to almost all interlocutors and parties in this part of the world. Stronger relations between Turkey and its neighbors are also in the interest of the EU.

Turkish civil society organizations and political parties already have many contacts with their counterparts in neighboring countries. They can share with them their experience of democratic transition and of the workings of the "nuts and bolts" of democracy. This will reinforce and complement EU action on democracy promotion.

As an example, Turkey can have a hugely positive impact on Syria, a fellow Sunni Muslim country which shares a long border with Turkey. Turkey could be an important source of inspiration for Syria's future. Here EU and Turkish action in support of democracy and economic development could well be complementary and mutually reinforcing, in full respect of the particular needs and the will of the Syrian people.

In Libya, Turkey is playing a major role, including hosting the Contact Group meeting in Istanbul on 15 July and proposing a Road Map for the resolution of the conflict. It is important that EU and Turkey start working on the "day after" the fall of Gadhafi in coordination with the UN, other international organizations and the US. Turkey can play a very important role helping the new Libyan authorities set up an effective government and a working democracy.

As I see it, Turkey can also be a bridge between Israel and the Arab world. I hope the current difficulties in Turkish-Israeli relations can soon be overcome.

Furthermore, Turkey plays an important role for the stability and security of the South Caucasus region. The opening of all borders in that region would provide new business opportunities and enhance prosperity of all and should be our common endeavour.

There is clear scope for Turkey and the EU to further develop cooperation and to intensify policy coordination in the Southern Mediterranean and Black Sea regions, and I will seek every opportunity to discuss our policies with my Turkish counterpart. The new Strategic Dialogue between the EU and Turkey will also play an important role in this regard. Closer policy coordination in this area will help bring Turkey and the EU even closer together and will improve the impact of our policies on our common neighborhood, to further our mutual interests.