



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Meeting with Prof. Dr. Aykan Erdemir, Turkish Deputy for Bursa, Member of the EU Harmonisation Committee and Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee, 27 May 2014

1. A Foreign Office official spoke to Prof. Dr. Erdemir on 27 May. The focus of the discussion was how EU Enlargement is perceived within Turkey, including an assessment of what needs to be done in order for Turkey to take up membership.

EU membership and popular opinion in Turkey

2. Prof. Dr. Erdemir began by noting that enthusiasm for the EU in Turkey has diminished recently. From a high of a 65% approval rating, recent polling shows now only 30% of those polled in Turkey are enthusiastic about EU membership; euroscepticism is on the rise.

EU and Security

3. Nevertheless, Prof. Dr. Erdemir felt that there were clear advantages to Turkey pursuing EU membership. The EU should play a central role in Turkey's future security and economic prosperity, and has the potential to play an important role in providing better safeguards for minorities.
4. On security matters, in particular, there was much that the EU had to offer. Not only can the EU help tackle the fallout and diplomatic repercussions of large scale security crises like Ukraine, Georgia, Syria or Iraq. It can also address transnational threats such as international terrorism, climate change and economic instability. In this way, the EU offers a comprehensive security framework for Turkey, the UK and other Member States. Through enlargement, the EU can be part of the liberal and democratic countermovement against transnational threats.

The importance of EU values

5. After the collapse of the USSR, there was a rush for EU and NATO membership as guarantors of good governance, market economies, and fundamental rights and freedoms. Populations in former Soviet countries recognised the clear benefits that the EU offered and enthusiasm was high.

6. The situation is different now and, without further enlargement, there is a risk that a vacuum will develop in Turkey and the Western Balkans, to be ultimately filled by a State Capitalist model, leading to poor governance, limited economic growth and neglect of rights and freedoms.
7. Prof. Dr. Erdemir felt that the EU needed to do more to export its values into its neighbourhood, offering a robust defence of its core principles where challenged. This, rather than a preoccupation with process and bureaucracy, should be the EU's focus.

Turkey's future in the EU

8. Given the risks associated with no further enlargement, Prof. Dr. Erdemir felt that there was a strong incentive to bring in new blood in order to secure its neighbours and help steer them on to a more prosperous path. In particular, Turkish membership of the EU would allow it to speak and act with greater authority on a range of regional issues including Iraq, Iran and Syria.
9. However, the EU needs to work hard to reverse the waning enthusiasm for enlargement in Turkey; the Euro crisis has undermined the EU's credibility, and alternative economic and governance models were now on offer in the BRIC countries. In addition, Turkey's lengthy and open-ended enlargement process has led to declining faith that the EU will honour its pledges. This is unfortunate, given Turkey's recent progress, including impressive economic growth and the firmly established civilian control of the military.
10. Prof. Dr. Erdemir felt that, while Turkey would ultimately join the EU, this would not happen in the next decade.