

## **An Assessment of Turkey's Integration to European Union**

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### **Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği ile Bütünleşmesi Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme**

#### **Abstract**

The European Commission has released its report on Turkey, which assesses the accession of Turkey to the European Union. The European Commission recommended starting accession negotiations with Turkey provided that certain key legislation, which is in preparation, enters into force. While convinced that the accession process will be essential in guiding further reforms in Turkey, the Commission also underlined that accession negotiations are by its nature an open-ended process. Therefore, the prospect of accession, while challenging for the European Union and Turkey, is expected to offer important opportunities for both if it is well managed. Furthermore, the report also stated that the necessary preparations for accession would last into the next decade, thereby, also requiring that the European Union would evolve over this period, and Turkey should change even more radically. The *acquis communautaire*, i.e. the whole body of EU policies and legislation, will develop further and respond to the needs of European Union with 27 members or more. Its development may also induce even more challenges and opportunities for Turkey. This study therefore assesses these challenges and opportunities from the standpoint of the Union.

**Key Words** : European Commission, European Union, Accession, *Acquis Communautaire*.

**JEL Classification Codes** : F13, F33, F42.

#### **Özet**

Avrupa Komisyonu, çıkarmış olduğu raporda Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne katılımını değerlendirmiştir. Avrupa Komisyonu Türkiye ile katılım müzakerelerinin hazırlanmakta olan yasal düzenlemelerin yürürlüğe girmesi ile beraber başlamasını tavsiye etmektedir. Avrupa Komisyonu, katılım sürecinin Türkiye'de yapılacak diğer reformlara öncülük edeceğine inanıyor olmakla beraber doğası gereği katılım müzakerelerinin açık uçlu bir süreç olduğunun da altını çizmiştir. Bu nedenle, iyi değerlendirildiği takdirde, olası katılımın, her ne kadar zor olsa da, gerek Avrupa Birliği gerekse Türkiye için önemli fırsatlar sunması beklenmektedir. Buna ek olarak, raporda, katılım için gerekli hazırlıkların gelecek 10 yıl boyunca süreceği ve bu sebeple Avrupa Birliği için dönüşüm, Türkiye için ise kökten değişimlerin gerekeceği belirtilmiştir. *Acquis communautaire*, bir diğer deyişle Avrupa Birliği politikaları ve yasal düzenlemeler bütünü, 27 ya da daha fazla üyeden oluşacak Avrupa Birliği'nin ihtiyaçlarını karşılamaya yönelik olarak gelişecektir. Bu gelişim ise Türkiye için yeni fırsatlar olduğu kadar yeni zorluklar da doğuracaktır. Bu çalışma, söz konusu fırsat ve zorlukları Avrupa Birliği açısından değerlendirmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler** : Avrupa Komisyonu, Avrupa Birliği, Katılım, *Acquis Communautaire*.



## **1. Introduction**

The recently released European Commission (EC) report evaluates Turkey's accession to the European Union (EU). On the basis of this comprehensive report assessing the situation as regards human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the protection of minorities, the EC recommends to start accession negotiations with Turkey provided that certain key legislation, which is in preparation, enters into force.

This study will help to appraise the contributions of Turkey's membership to the European Union. To that aim, we will first give an overview on Turkey-EU relations, which will be followed by a discussion on the current macroeconomic stance of the Turkish economy. In the next section, a detailed assessment on the contributions of Turkey's membership to EU will be presented. Lastly, the study will conclude with final remarks.

## **2. An Overview On Turkey-EU Relations**

Turkey's "westernization" attempts on economic, political and social grounds date back to the 19th century. Following the First World War and the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, Western Europe has been a role model for Turkey's new secular structure. Turkey has ever since closely aligned itself with the West and has become a founding member of the United Nations, a member of NATO, the Council of Europe, the OECD and an associate member of the Western European Union. As a natural extension to westernization attempts of Turkey, it was only natural to apply for partnership in the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958. However, The EEC's response in 1959 was to suggest the establishment of an association until Turkey's circumstances permitted its accession. The consequent negotiations resulted in Ankara Agreement in 1963, which envisaged the progressive establishment of a Customs Union that would bring the EEC and Turkey closer in economic affairs. In the meantime, the EEC would offer financial assistance to Turkey. Ankara Agreement also envisaged the free circulation of natural persons, services and capital between the EEC and Turkey, but it excluded Turkey from the EEC decision-making mechanisms and precluded Turkey from recourse to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) for dispute settlement.

The Additional Protocol of 13 November 1970 set out in details of how the Customs Union would be established. It provided that the EEC would abolish tariff and quantitative barriers to its imports from Turkey (with some exceptions including fabrics) upon the entry into force of the Protocol, whereas Turkey would do the same in accordance with a timetable containing two calendars set for 12 and 22 years, and called for the harmonization of Turkish legislation with that of the EU in economic matters. Furthermore, the Additional Protocol envisaged the free circulation of natural persons

between the Parties in the next 12 to 22 years.

Turkey applied for full membership in 1987, on the basis of the EEC Treaty's article 237 that gave any European country the right to do so. Turkey's request for accession has reconfirmed Turkey's eligibility, yet deferred Turkey's application until a more favorable environment is fully established. The reply in 1989 also mentioned that Turkey's accession was prevented with regards to decisions for the consideration of no further enlargement. The decline decision also added that Customs Union should be completed in 1995 as envisaged.

Customs Union decisions were finalized on 6 March 1995 at the Turkey-EU Association Council by the decision 1/95 that envisage the completion of the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU on industrial and processed agricultural goods by 31 December 1995. As of January 1, 1996, Turkey abolished all duties and equivalent charges on imports of industrial goods from the EU. Furthermore, Turkey agreed to harmonize its tariffs and equivalent charges on the importation of industrial goods from third countries with the EU's Common External Tariff and progressively adapting itself to the EU's commercial policy and preferential trade arrangements with specific third countries within 5 years.

On April 29, 1997, EU reconfirmed Turkey's eligibility for membership and asked the EC to prepare recommendations to deepen Turkey-EU relations, while claiming that the development of this relationship was dependent on a number of factors relating to Greece, Cyprus and human rights. The Commission, however, excluded Turkey from the enlargement process in its report entitled "Agenda 2000" which was disclosed on 16 July 1997. While the report conceded that the Customs Union was functioning satisfactorily and that it had demonstrated Turkey's ability to adapt to the EU norms in many areas, it repeated the same political and economic arguments against Turkey and made no reference to Turkey's full membership objective. The Commission brought a number of recommendations ranging from liberalization of trade in services to consumer protection, but also stated political issues as pre-conditions for moving our relations forward.

Turkey's eligibility was reconfirmed at the Luxembourg Summit. Furthermore, EU decided to set up a strategy to prepare Turkey for accession by creating a special procedure to review the developments to be made. The development of Turkey-EU relations was made conditional on certain economic, political and foreign policy questions. However, Turkey did not participate in the inaugural meeting of the European Conference held in London on 12 March 1998 in order to show its discontent about EU's attitude about Turkey's accession.

The summit meeting held in Cardiff on 15-16 June 1998 requested the European Commission to find financial resources required for the implementation of the "European Strategy" which was published on 4 March 1998. At the Cologne European Council held on 3-4 June 1999, the initiative was taken by the German Presidency with a view to

ensuring the recognition of Turkey's candidate status on an equal footing with the others. Compared to the previous Government in Germany, the new Coalition Government, which came to power in October 1998, seemed to have taken a more positive line regarding Turkey's quest for EU membership. However, the objections of some EU Member States prevented this initiative from being realized. Consequently, EU refrained from taking a decision to include Turkey in the accession process.

The Helsinki European Council held on 10-11 December 1999, Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate state by envisaging an Accession Partnership and implementation of a National Program for the adoption of the *acquis*. EU Commission declared Accession Partnership for Turkey on March 8, 2001. Following the approval of the Accession Partnership by the Council and the adoption of the Framework Regulation, the Turkish Government announced the National Program for the Adoption of the EU *acquis communautaire* on March 19, 2001.

The Laeken European Council of 14-15 December 2001 had important implications for EU-Turkey relations since the possibility of opening accession negotiations with Turkey has been explicitly mentioned at the highest levels for the first time. The Brussels Summit on 24-25 October 2002 stated Turkey's convergence to start accession negotiations. On December 12-13, 2002 in Copenhagen Summit, it was decided that Turkey would start accession negotiations with no further delay in view of the EC's Progress Report for 2004 and the finalized decisions regarding Turkey to meet the Copenhagen criteria.

### **3. A Quick Glance At Turkey's Macroeconomic Stance**

As a consequence of the financial crisis in 2001, the Turkish economy suffered a serious contraction, which was further intensified by the increased uncertainties in the economy due to global economic developments. However, remedies in the form of structural reforms as well as macroeconomic policies, which were implemented in the aftermath of the financial crisis and later converted into a new three-year economic program, provided a considerable relief such that both GDP and GNP increased by 7.8 percent in 2002.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, Turkish economy has recorded a growth rate of 5.8% in 2003, compared to a growth rate of 7.9% in 2002, and a contraction by 9.5% in 2001. On the inflation front, the inflation rate based on consumer price index went down from 68.5% in 2001, to 29.7% in 2002, and 18.3% in 2003. As of June 2004, year-on-year inflation rate has been 8.9%.

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<sup>1</sup> The figures in this section are from the electronic data dissemination system of the Central Bank at <http://tcmbf40.tcmb.gov.tr/cbt.html>.

The fiscal stance shows that the ratio of primary surplus to GDP has been 6%, 7%, 4.6% and 5.2% in years 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003, respectively. The ratio of budget deficit to GDP, on the other hand, has been 10.3%, 16% 14% and 11% in years 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003, respectively.

The external trade figures show an annual increase of 44.3% in net imports and 21.7% in net exports in January-February 2004 period implying a decline in the ratio of exports to imports from 71.2% in January-February 2003 to 60% in the same period of 2004. The unfavorable balance of payments developments together with the expectation of an increase in FED rates when coupled with disputes over the proposal for Higher Education draft law resulted in Turkish lira to depreciate by 10% against US dollar during April 1-30, 2004, and another depreciation of 9% was recorded during May 1-24, 2004. As of October 2004, Turkish lira has depreciated by 13% against US dollar compared to April 1, 2004.

#### **4. Contributions of Turkey's Membership to EU**

After the brief overview of macroeconomic stance of the Turkish economy in the previous section, in this section, we will discuss the contributions of Turkey's full membership to EU. Besides the many economic gains that this membership will provide, Turkey's full membership to EU has potential benefits from political, social and cultural aspects (DPT; 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003). But above all, Turkey will provide a safeguarding role given its strategically significant location. Therefore, Turkey's contribution to the Union as a full member has also a security dimension that cannot be overlooked.<sup>2</sup>

Turkey's integration to EU will demonstrate the Union's intention to "unite in diversity" more bluntly than ever. Turkey, as a successor of a mosaic of nations of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, stands as a unique country in today's world where this diversity was peacefully melt and harmonized. Turkey will therefore contribute to EU by not only bringing this peaceful nature but also adding to the diversity of the Union as a whole. Most importantly, being a country predominantly populated with Muslim people, Turkey's EU membership will truly falsify beliefs about EU being a "Christian Club" and will confirm Union's *bona fide* about standing for common values and ideals rather than for common civilization and religion (Erçin, 2022: 118-119).

In addition to contributing to EU's goal of uniting in diversity, Turkey's membership will also bring strategic gains to EU. Having owned the second largest army in the NATO, Turkey is clearly perceived as a producer of security rather than being a consumer of security. Moreover, the aftershocks of September 11 evidently confirm Turkey being a "key state" due to its democratic and secular administration despite its

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<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.abgs.gov.tr>,<http://www.ikv.org.tr>).

religious background, inherent military capabilities and its geographical location near the Balkans, Middle East and the Caucasus (Aydın, 2002a: 7-8).

Turkey's central and unique position connecting the three continents will also provide benefits to EU. If Turkey joins as a full member to the Union, EU will increase its influence in international arena, especially in the Middle East, Balkans and the Caucasus given Turkey's proximity to these geographical locations. Turkey, as the closest member state to Middle East, Balkans and the Caucasus will provide a bridge that will enable EU to exert its influence in such a region of major conflicts, change and instability. By providing EU with a prominent role in the region, Turkey's membership, therefore, will assist in achieving not only regional stability, but also, will help to tie the Western interests with the interests of the region in general.

More specifically, EU will be able to perform more active role in the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict as well as Iraq issue. Additionally, Turkish influence on the Balkans pertaining to both cultural as well as historical bonds will bring cooperative action in the region especially considering that the memberships of Bulgaria and Romania are on the way. Finally, the membership of Turkey to EU will benefit the Union by the spread of the Union's ideals to Central Asian Republics via Turkey's ethnic as well business relations with the Caucasus region (Bolat, 1991: 74-79).

Concerning the strategic aspects of the contributions that Turkey's membership to the Union provides, Aegean Sea issue should not be disregarded. If Turkey joins EU as a full member, Aegean Sea will become an inland sea of the Union. Aegean Sea will then be fully utilized once Turkey becomes a full member since then the ongoing conflicts between Greece and Turkey over continental shelf will have ended. The Aegean Sea, once Turkey joins the Union, is expected to contribute to the Union's interests both in strategic and in economic terms such that new initiatives will be launched primarily in tourism sector as well as in new investment schemes. Removal of tension in the Aegean Sea by Turkey's becoming a full member will also enhance both the security and the stability of the Mediterranean as well Middle East and the Caucasus (Aydın, 2002b: 15-16).

New resources of energy are another contribution of Turkey's membership to EU. Energy constitutes one of the most significant items of the external trade of EU. Recent figures show that energy constitutes 14% of total imports in the Euro zone and 16% in the EU.<sup>3</sup> Another figure related to energy use is the electricity production in EU showing that except Austria, Norway, France and Greece, other member states of EU15

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<sup>3</sup> *The latest data on external trade of EU reveals that of the EUR 160.1 billion imports Euro zone has in January-February 2004, EUR 22.7 billion is energy imports, while EUR 25.1 billion energy imports have been recorded out of the EUR 153.4 billion of total imports in EU during the same period (Eurostat, 2004 News Release, May 19).*

(the first 15 member states of the Union) have been net importer of electricity in 2000.<sup>4</sup> Yet, another figure shows that only 6% of energy consumed in EU15 comes from renewable resources.<sup>5</sup> Except Denmark, France, Italy, Finland, Austria and Sweden, the share of renewable energy consumption in overall energy consumption is well below 6% in EU15 countries. Turkey, becoming a full member to EU will therefore provide new energy resources to the Union. More specifically, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan crude oil pipeline as well as the East-West natural gas pipeline is expected to supply Caspian basin crude oil and natural gas through Azerbaijan and Georgia to Turkey. Furthermore, the oil in Iran, Egypt and Syria are other major resources that will be transferred over Turkey to other regions especially Europe.<sup>6</sup> Hence membership of Turkey to EU is vital since by joining EU, Turkey will offer the Union new resources of energy.

New market opportunities are another benefit to EU if Turkey becomes a full member of the Union. Regarding the fact that more than half of Turkey's exports go to EU countries, and about half of imports come from Union countries, it is evident that becoming a full member to the Union will intensify Turkey-EU business relations.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, considerably large portion (10%) of Turkey's exports goes to Middle Eastern countries. This figure, in addition to the fact that about a quarter of imports come from non-OECD European countries and Asian countries, reinforce beliefs about Turkey being a potential new market for EU countries once full membership is approved. Clearly, Turkey's membership to EU will also enable Union countries to make business in Turkey's non-EU trading partners therefore opening even more new potential markets to EU.

Increased Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) is another potentially mutually beneficial contribution that Turkey's full membership may bring. Once Turkey becomes a full member to EU, implying that sustainable political and economic stability would then have been constituted, foreign firms in the Union as well as third country firms will find more incentives to make direct investments in such a large economy with a mostly young population. The recent figures show that as of June 2003, 69.1% of FDI is received from EU countries, which therefore indicate that Turkey's full membership will deepen the Turkey-EU relations in terms of attracting new foreign direct investment.<sup>8</sup> The current

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<sup>4</sup> Eurostat., 2002, News Release, September 26.

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat., 2002, News Release, August 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Iraqi oil resources will also be available once peace is fully settled in the region. This pre-condition also necessitates Turkey's membership to EU since the aforementioned political aspect of the approval of the membership is likely to bring stability in the region.*

<sup>7</sup> *According to recent Balance of Payments figures, the share of EU countries in Turkish exports and imports are 52.9% and 45.1% respectively. Imports from non-OECD European countries and other countries constitute 14.6% and 10.3% of total imports. Russia is the second biggest seller in Turkey after Germany by obtaining a share of 8.7% in Turkey's imports while imports from Germany amount to 13.4% of total imports (CBRT, Balance of Payments Report, January-February 2004).*

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.hazine.gov.tr/stat/yabser/ybskurulus\\_ulke.htm](http://www.hazine.gov.tr/stat/yabser/ybskurulus_ulke.htm)



estimates for Turkey show that as of 2002, nation's population is around 69.6 million with growing at an annual rate of 2% while the breakdown of population estimates reveal that 28% of population is between ages 0 and 14, while only 6 percent of population is above age 65.<sup>9</sup> Being such a young populated country, Turkey is not only a potentially large market for goods and services but also is likely to result in generation of new investments by foreign firms. Clearly, new investments create new markets for EU firms while also enabling more efficient allocation of resources by giving these firms access to cheaper Turkish labor. Another benefit to the Union of increased FDI is the easier access that EU firms will have to Middle Eastern and Central Asian markets over Turkey. More EU investment in Turkey will lead to more demand for EU goods and services in the aforementioned regions as well.

Another economic aspect of the contribution that Turkey's full membership will bring is with regards to the increased competitiveness as well as increased consumer awareness and higher purchasing power. Turkey, when joins the Union, will have adopted EU norms and standards implying that there will be more variety of Turkish goods and services that are produced in line with EU regulations than what is currently being produced. Therefore, there will be more competition against Turkish goods driving the quality of the goods that are in the EU market to higher levels. Additionally, the increased standards of living in Turkey by the time full membership takes place will imply both increased consumer consciousness as well as increased purchasing power that will force Turkish firms to produce better quality goods and services.

More competition in the domestic market as well in the EU market will result in more variety of higher quality goods that will also enhance the competitiveness of EU against third countries. Currently, the Union's main trading partners are the United States, China, Switzerland, Japan and Russia, having a share of 34.6%, 6.75, 11.1%, 6.9%, 5.6% in exports and 23.9%, 18.5%, 9.7%, 12%, and 11.1% in imports, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Turkey ranks as the 7<sup>th</sup> importer to the Union with a share of 4.2% in total EU imports. However, these figures are likely to change when Turkey enters the Union. Due to increased competitiveness, therefore, EU is expected to export more to third countries while less import from third countries to the Union is expected.

Another essential contribution of Turkey's membership is the abolition of technical and non-tariff barriers as well as custom duties on non-industrial goods. Since Turkey's full membership to EU will also imply that Turkey will by then have fulfilled EU's technical standards, standardization in production will be maintained. The elimination of technical standards and non-tariff barriers will facilitate trade while simultaneously maintaining quality of good and services. In the meantime, bureaucratic

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<sup>9</sup> <http://devdata.worldbank.org/dataonline/>

<sup>10</sup> Eurostat News Release, May 19, 2004.

burden in the form of paper work on the side of EU will be eased as physical restrictions are abolished (Rupp, 2001: 5-6).

The abolition of barriers on non-industrial goods will mostly affect the agricultural sector since then Turkish agricultural goods will be traded in EU without having to be subject to technical standards. According to the external trade figures in January-February 2004, EU has been net importer in food and drink by recording EUR 9 billion deficit.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, during the same period, Turkey has been net exporter in agriculture, including forestry and fishing.<sup>12</sup> However, even though agricultural activities constitute about 12% percent of total economic activities, the share of agriculture in exports only amount to 5%.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, only about 9% of agricultural products are being exported in contrary to Turkey's comparative advantage in agricultural production. In other words, Turkey's production of nearly EUR 24 billion agricultural goods suffices to meet Turkish as well as the Union's demand for these goods. Therefore, the abolition of non-tariff barriers with Turkey's membership to the Union will enhance the efficiency in agricultural sector by both exposing Turkish goods to more competition in the EU market while also supplying the Turkish goods to a more variety of tastes. Another contribution of the Turkey's membership to EU is trivially that the Union will be self-sufficient in agricultural sector by the entry of Turkish agricultural goods without being subject to barriers.

Turkey's membership to EU will also contribute to the services sector. The balance of payments figures reveal that even though Turkey has been net importer of goods during 1984-2003, during the same period, Turkey has been a net supplier of services to foreign countries.<sup>14</sup> The data indicate that on average, the services sector surplus compensated about 85% of the trade deficit. Both the dynamic nature of the Turkish population as well as the comparative advantage in services sector together with the liberalization of public procurement markets will enable Turkey to provide EU with relatively cheaper services at a higher quality. Significant gains will especially be maintained in tourism, transportation and construction sectors. Given the geographical advantage the Union will have over Mediterranean and Aegean Sea by Turkey's full membership, Turkey's contribution will be even more apparent in tourism sector in particular (Aydin, 2002b: 32-34).

Another contribution of Turkey's EU membership regards the labor market problems of the Union. Owing both to demographic factors, the "ageing" population problem to be more specific, and also due to changes in EU's economic structure, there is a

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<sup>11</sup> Eurostat News Release, May 19, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.tcmb.gov.tr/odemedenge>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.die.gov.tr/TURKISH/SONIST/GSMH/310304t.xls>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.tcmb.gov.tr/odemedenge/'4'!A1>

continuing increase in the need for labor force. Yet, many EU countries are unable to meet this need, and resort to immigrants from third countries. Additionally, ageing population of EU is a potential threat to fiscal balance and the sustainability of the Maastricht Criteria<sup>15</sup> since the burden of retired population on working population is expected to increase due to negative population growth, which therefore stands as a risk factor towards the efficient functioning of the Social Security system. Turkey's participation to the Union, however, is expected to bring dynamism with its growing young population and thus will be able to meet the labor shortage thereby increasing employment and output (Eurostat, 2001: 15-16).

## 5. Conclusion

Turkey's economy has been moving towards increased stability. Although this can be only indirectly linked to its EU accession ambitions, it has become more apparent that Turkey is opting for stability for the sake of lower and sustainable inflation rates compatible with a growth scheme. The efforts to meet the needs for stability also offer a favorable basis for accession negotiations. However, stability remains tentative. Vulnerabilities and obstacles to growth are still present although less prevalent.

It is trivial that continued success on the inflation front as well economic growth can only be maintained by enduring reform efforts. Fortunately, the Turkish economy is in a relatively solid position for European Union rapprochement. Most of the structural reforms have been completed. Nevertheless, the full utilization of these reforms may take longer than their adoption, which therefore necessitates the sincerity of the policymakers more than ever.

Turkey's European Union membership is a major project encompassing both the interests of Turkey and EU countries as well as of the third countries. Even though Turkey's desire to be a member of EU has been materialized with successful economic performance in addition to efforts of harmonization, continued efforts are another ingredient for a permanent growth.

Finally, Turkey is fully aware that the membership criteria should not be fulfilled only for EU integration process but primarily for conforming to the standards of a democratic welfare state. To this aim, successful economic performance as well as harmonization is main priorities. The recent economic performance shows that Turkey has been on the right track. The structural reforms that are completed are also signs of efforts to harmonize the economy with *acquis communautaire*. In consideration of the mutual

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<sup>15</sup> *Maastricht Criteria limit the ratio of fiscal deficit to GDP to be not more than 3% while it also limit the ratio of total debt stock to GDP to be not more than 60% in order for a member country to join the European Monetary Union (EMU).*

benefits that Turkey's full membership may bring therefore, the European Commission should evaluate Turkey not only on what it has achieved so far but also on the future's potential achievements based on genuine efforts of Turkey on the road to EU.

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