



Brussels, 23 October 2015

Dear President Juncker,  
Dear HR/VP Mogherini,

Europe is facing an unprecedented refugee crisis, which necessitates that the international community acts in solidarity and cooperation. Turkey is currently hosting the largest refugee population in the world, with 2.2 million refugees in total. Turkey is also the main transit country on the way to the EU for Syrian refugees. We believe that it is highly essential that the EU and Turkey urgently cooperate in dealing with the refugee crisis and we support, in principle, the European Commission's initiative for an EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan.

However, we would like to voice our concern over the direct link that the European Commission is making between the EU accession process of Turkey and the common challenges we face in dealing with the large amount of refugees who are in need of protection.

The Commission's first "offer" to Turkey only consisted of relocating 1 billion euro from IPA-funds. Money that is meant to facilitate the accession process. Furthermore, a direct link with enlargement was also made when President Juncker said in his State of the Union address that a country cannot be a candidate country if it is not a 'safe country of origin'.

While we are in favour of advancing accession negotiations with Turkey, we are deeply concerned to see how they are being used as a bargaining chip for the Draft Action Plan. EU conditionality for enlargement should not be a political instrument to compensate for a failed strategy to tackle the refugee crisis. The same applies to visa-liberalisation which is secured by strict requirements. In both cases the clearly stated criteria must be met by Turkey. We also believe that the timing of Chancellor Merkel's recent trip was a very unfortunate one.

Furthermore, the postponement of this year's Progress Report signals a lack of willingness to speak up against the Turkish government's backtrack on reforms prior to the upcoming general election. This sets a bad precedent and creates the image that the EU is willing to soften its tone on internal developments in Turkey in exchange for cooperation on refugees. We would hereby like to call upon the European Commission to publish its progress report on Turkey ahead of the 1 November elections.

In light of the above, we hope you will consider our request, as it is important that the EU keeps up its values.

Yours sincerely,

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