



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Meeting with Haluk Nuray (Economic Development Foundation) and Nilgün Arisan Eralp (Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey), 27 May 2014

1. A Foreign Office official spoke to Haluk Nuray and Nilgün Arisan Eralp on 27 May. The focus of the discussion was an assessment of the current enlargement process in Turkey, and future membership options.

The effectiveness of the current enlargement process

2. The discussion began by noting that the previous 'big bang' enlargement process of 2004 had been very successful in reintegrating ex-Soviet states back into Europe. There had also been qualified successes in the Balkans, though there were still many problems to overcome. In Turkey, on the other hand, it was felt that the current process had effectively failed; Turkish membership prospects were currently dead.
3. There were several reasons for this:
 - a. **Outcome, not process.** There was a sense that the accession process had lost its way, and was far too focussed on process than outcome. The opening of chapters, and the resultant meetings and reports supported bureaucratic integration, but not democratic integration. Attention was currently on the opening and closing of chapters, when it should be about changing Turkey into a prospective EU Member State.
 - b. **Outdated process.** The current enlargement process and conditionality was designed for the post-Soviet enlargement round, not Turkey. It was arguably easier to reintegrate Eastern European countries back into Europe and assist them to reassert their identities than it was to take incremental steps to fundamentally change the political, economic and social frameworks of Turkey.
 - c. **Outstanding bilateral issues.** Turkey's position on the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement, and its relationship with Cyprus had produced political blockages which were not easy to resolve. The admission of Cyprus into the EU before Turkey was a foreseeable problem, but one which was not addressed at the time.

An alternative approach

4. There were several options now open to Turkey: Either full accession, a negotiated associate membership, a suspension of negotiations, or the status quo of open-ended negotiations that had little likelihood of achieving their objective. It was clear that the status quo approach was not fit for purpose. The current conditionality requirements did not work because there was no clear path set out either by Brussels or Turkey. The lengths of time involved meant political will and enthusiasm for accession was impossible to sustain indefinitely.
5. For further movement, Turkey needed to accept reform requirements and become more engaged in the future of European issues. The Turkish government's attitude towards the EU also had an impact on progress. It could be argued that, in order to appeal to domestic audiences, the Turkish government did not wish to look over-reliant on EU membership. However, this had arguably given rise to an impression that Turkey remained ambivalent on the subject of membership, particularly to outsiders.
6. The Commission also had to accept changes to the enlargement process, too. Particularly, there needed to be a restructuring of benchmarks, linked to clearly defined timeframes to ensure Member States were not able to hold up the process indefinitely for political/bilateral purposes. The EU would also need to be more decisive when assessing whether Turkey was meeting its conditions under fundamental freedoms.

Turkey and the UK

7. Given that Turkey would likely consider an amended form of membership to the EU, and that the UK Prime Minister had committed to renegotiate the UK's relationship with the EU, there was some discussion regarding the potential synergies between the two countries, which could help draw the UK and Turkey closer together in the future when considering EU reform.