



# The EESC and Turkey

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Section



*European Economic and Social Committee*

# The EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)

On 16 November 1995 the EESC decided to create a **EU-Turkey Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)** based on the mandate given to it under the Ankara Agreement, where it is stated that:

“The Council of Association shall take all appropriate steps to promote the necessary cooperation and contacts between the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and other organs of the EU on the one hand and the Turkish Parliament and the corresponding organs in Turkey on the other.”

The JCC has since then functioned as an instrument promoting **interaction between the economic and social actors of organised civil society in the EU and Turkey**. Since 2005, it follows up the accession negotiations.

The EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee is composed of members from the EESC and members representing organised civil society in Turkey. The members are selected on an equal basis from three groups of civil society organisations: employer organisations, trade unions and various interest groups, such as consumer organisations, farmer organisations, academia, NGOs etc.

They meet on a rotating basis in Brussels and in Turkey to discuss different topics of mutual interest and relevance for civil society. **The main purpose is to ensure the involvement of organised civil society in the accession negotiation process.** The JCC members follow up the different chapters opened, analyse the economic and social consequences of the implementation of the EU acquis, meet with EU and Turkish authorities and make recommendations.



# The JCC: Promoter of the Civil Society Dialogue

Another task of the JCC is to **foster public debate and awareness in Turkey about EU membership rights and obligations** and to **facilitate the process of institution-building and the consolidation of civil society organisations there**. The JCC is also a platform to enable the EU representatives to familiarise themselves with the social structures and the economic and social impact of reforms in Turkey.

In the framework of its meetings, **the JCC also organises public hearings on different topics in order to include a wide range of opinions in its recommendations**.

The role of the JCC is also to enable Turkish representatives to become acquainted with the process of consultation taking place within the EU and more generally with the social and civil dialogue in the EU.

## The JCC: Common work and achievements

During the year, reports on different topics are drawn up and discussed jointly by the European and Turkish JCC members. A wide range of topics have been covered such as the cooperation between the EU and Turkey on research and development, the informal economy, youth employment, trade union rights in Turkey, women's rights, migration and the refugee crises, consumer and health policies, etc.

**There are some recurring topics on the agenda, such as EU-Turkey relations and the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement, the Turkish economy and EU-Turkey economic developments, and social issues and employment in Turkey.**

Recent discussions include rights and employment of women, the migration issue and the integration of the Syrian refugees in the labour market (based on the EESC fact-finding missions to 11 EU member states and Turkey on the situation of refugees) and labour rights.

Regarding **women's rights** and employment of women, the JCC considers that social and economic empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming are crucial, and also that the reconciliation of work and family life for women is an engine of growth. The JCC stresses that equal access to the labour market is a corner stone of women's economic independence and participation in public life. Access to digital and financial inclusion should be facilitated and increased while support for women's entrepreneurship should be scaled up.

On the **migration** issue, the JCC members have commended the efforts made by Turkey, and expressed the point of view that the migration challenge in the Eastern Mediterranean has to be addressed jointly by the EU and Turkey. Improving integration policies for all persons who have applied for legal protection in Turkey relies on ensuring labour-market access.

On **labour rights**, the JCC underlined at its meeting in July 2017 that measures and policies should be implemented to promote fundamental labour rights and decent work, in compliance with ILO fundamental conventions. The importance of facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy was also stressed. Topics for discussion in 2018 included the refugee crisis, a possible modernisation of the Customs Union and Trade Union Rights in the public sector.



**During each meeting a joint declaration is drawn up** in order to underline the views of civil society on crucial economic and social issues. **This declaration is sent to the authorities in Turkey and in the EU.** Representatives from the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, the Committee of the Regions and Turkish authorities are also invited to the meetings in order to keep them informed about the work of the JCC.

## Reports related to Turkey

- The role of Turkey in the refugee crisis (2018)
- Enhancement of EU-Turkey bilateral trade relations and modernisation of the Customs Union (2016)
- The integration of the Syrian refugees in the labour market (2016)
- Joint consultation note on the Draft Bill on the Establishment and Tasks of the Economic and Social Council in Turkey (2015)

The reports on the different topics as well as the joint declarations of the JCC are available on the EESC's website:

[www.eesc.europa.eu/en/tags/turkey](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/tags/turkey)





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