

Global Britain Briefing Note

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Accession of Turkey to the European Union

by Laura Bierer-Nielsen

*If Turkey joins it will be soon be
the most populous EU member-state*

**Her Majesty's Government (HMG) continues to support Turkish
accession to the European Union ("EU")**

That position is spelt out on the website of the British Embassy in Ankara¹
and by the following exchange in the House of Commons on 19th October 2015:

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): *The Prime Minister will recall that for over 20 years successive British Governments have quite eagerly supported Turkey's aim of eventually becoming a full member of the European Union, because of its strategic importance as an ally in its part of the world. Will he confirm that that remains the policy of the present Government, so long as Turkey adheres to the liberal, democratic political values that are key to the EU ?*

The Prime Minister: *I can confirm that the British Government's policy has not changed.....*¹¹

Support for Turkish accession in other EU Member States – and Brussels - appears to be heavily qualified

In **Germany**, in October 2015, Mrs Merkel said “*I have always been against....*” - though she appeared to contradict this by saying a few days later “*Germany is ready this year to open Chapter 17 (economic and monetary policy), and to make preparations for (chapters) 23 (judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (justice, freedom and security). We can talk about the details.*”ⁱⁱⁱ

In **France**, where a significant proportion of the French electorate is opposed to Turkish accession, support waxes and wanes depending on which president occupies the Elysee Palace. In March 2005, President Chirac “guaranteed” that any proposal for Turkish admission to the EU would be subject to a referendum of the French people. The written French constitution was changed accordingly. His successor President Sarkozy removed this clause from the French constitution in 2012. In 2015 the current French president, Hollande, stated that Turkish admission to the EU would be once again subject to a referendum of the French people.

In **Brussels**, in their final debate (May 2014) on German television ahead of elections to be President of the European Commission, the two leading candidates, Jean-Claude Juncker and Martin Schulz, promised that Turkey would not join the club under their watch.^{iv}

Turkey’s position on accession to the EU is, in contrast, clear:

“Turkey continues to take resolute steps towards full membership. Development of democracy and human rights, institutionalization of free market economy and establishment of modern life standards in every field are among the most fundamental dynamics of Turkey’s EU policy.” - Turkey’s official foreign affairs website as of January 2016^v

**The process of accession of Turkey to the EU began in 1963,
ten years before the UK joined the then EEC**

1963 - Ankara Association Agreement for the progressive establishment of a Customs Union with the then EEC

1987 - Turkey applied to join what was then the European Economic Community

1995 - Turkey-EU Association Council finalises agreement creating a customs union.

1997 - Luxembourg Council summit declares Turkey eligible to become EU member.

1999 - Helsinki European Council declares Turkey a Candidate Country

2001 - European Council adopts Accession Partnership for Turkey.

2004 - European Council declares that Turkey sufficiently fulfils the criteria for opening accession negotiations in 2005

2005 - European Council adopts negotiating framework, and negotiations are formally opened.^{vi}

**If Turkey accedes it will soon be
the EU's most populous member-state**

Table 1: Current & projected populations of Turkey, Germany, France, the UK¹			
Country	Population 2015: million	Population: 2035 million	Population: 2045 million
Turkey	79.4	88.3	89.6
Germany	80.7	76.6	73.3
France	66.6	70.1	69.9
UK	64.1	69.4	70.7

1 Wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_past_&_future_population_estimates

History of Turkey

The Ottoman Empire grew from territories seized from the Byzantine Empire and Crusader States by Turks from central Asia, culminating in the Fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The westward expansion of the Ottoman Empire was ultimately checked at the Battle of Vienna in 1683 and its European territories were confined to the Balkans. At its height the Ottoman Empire stretched from the Barbary States in western North Africa to Iraq in the east and Egypt in the south

The collapse and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire came after the end of the First World War. The modern Turkish state, led by its reforming leader and first president, Ataturk, was recognised in 1923. The capital was transferred from Istanbul (the former Constantinople) to Ankara from where a process of modernisation and secularisation was undertaken during the 1920s and 1930s.

Turkey remained neutral during the Second World War. It joined NATO in 1952. Turkey invaded northern Cyprus in July 1974 following the Cypriot coup d'état, which had been ordered by the military Junta in Greece and staged by the Cypriot National Guard. In February 1975, Turkey declared the occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus to be a "Federated Turkish State"; Turkish forces have remained there ever since.

Turkey has borders with Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, Georgia, Greece, Bulgaria and the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan.

Demographics of Turkey

Religion: Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christians and Jews)

Ethnicity: Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 18%, other minorities 7-12% ^{VII}

Turkey's main cities are Istanbul with a population of 14.2 million, and Ankara with a population of 4.8 million.

Table 1 on the previous page gives current and projected Turkish population data.

*Turkey's economy is roughly two-fifths the size of Germany's,
& roughly 60% of those of France & the UK:-*

Table 2: GDP @ ppp¹ : US dollars billion: 2014	
Turkey	1515
Germany	3748
France	2591
UK	2569
EU	18640
<i>1 Wikipedia.org/wiki/list of countries by GDP</i>	

*The prosperity of the average Turk is between 40% and 50% of
that of citizens of Germany, France & the UK:-*

Table 3: GDP @ ppp¹ in 2014: US dollars '000	
Turkey	19.7
Croatia	20.9
Germany	46.2
France	40.5
UK	39.8
<i>1 Wikipedia.org/wiki/List of IMF GDPs per capita</i>	

*Turkey's official minimum wage is between three & four times lower
than those of Germany, France or the UK:-*

Table 4: Minimum wages¹ in 2014: annual nominal US dollars	
Germany	23,750
France	23,350
United Kingdom	21,899
Turkey	6,588
<i>1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country</i>	

References

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- 5 Turkey's official foreign affairs website-
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- 6 European Commission website - Turkey's accession timeline
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/turkey/index_en.htm
- 7 World Atlas - Turkey's demographics
<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/turkey/trfacts.htm>

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