

Adopted Resolution

React to Turkish Government's hazardous infrastructural project(s)

As the member parties of the European Greens, we consider the Turkish government's mega infrastructure/building projects that have been blossoming all over the country for the past few years with serious concern as regards the environment both inside and outside Turkey's borders. Although these projects create some employment, often at the cost of worker's safety, they essentially generate huge profits for the ruling party's backers. The building industry has become the backbone of rapid development, often described as "impressive" by those foreign companies eager to be picked for these projects. Speed, on the other hand, is often synonymous with an unchecked, unbalanced, unaccountable way of working in regards to the environment as well as being unfriendly to workers. That is clearly the case with Turkey's large construction projects, which are officially exempt from Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) or Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA).

The third bridge on the Bosphorus, the third airport for Istanbul, the bridge on the Dardanelles, the Istanbul-Izmir motorway, the tunnel connecting central Anatolia with the Black Sea coast and the so-called Istanbul Channel – a waterway duplicating the Bosphorus – are among these large projects. The Istanbul Channel, by its magnitude and potentially multilayer impact requires special attention from all concerned, in Turkey and in Europe.

In this light,

A. the Turkish government has over years developed an unchecked, unbalanced and unaccountable system of granting public contracts for large infrastructural projects;

B. these contracts are exempt from any in-depth EIA and/or SEAs performed by independent experts;

C. according to scientific research¹ the hydrologic balance will be reversed between, on the one hand the cold and fresh waters of the Black Sea and on the other, the warm and salty waters flowing from the Mediterranean Sea across Marmara Sea into the Black Sea. The Black Sea is approximately 30 centimetres higher than the Marmara Sea, but there are two-way streams between the two through the natural channel, The Bosphorus (the one-way tap of the Channel) will force the Black Sea to constantly supply fresh water to Marmara Sea without the possibility of being fed by the reverse streams that exist in the Bosphorus to supply the Black Sea with warm and salty waters. That will be the beginning of an irreversible environmental disaster as the Black Sea will be emptied twice as fast by two taps while the flow rates and capacities of the Danube, the Dnieper, the Dniester and rivers of all riparian states that feed the Black Sea stay the same. The Marmara Sea will become an irreversibly putrefying mass of water, with devastating consequences for marine and urban life. The part of Thrace that lies between the new channel and the Bosphorus will become an island; its underground water sources will be replaced by seawater. Yet once built, the Istanbul Channel will be irreversible.

D. the recently published Progress Report of the European Commission points to this shortfall in following terms: "In October 2013, Turkey again amended its horizontal legislation on the

¹ Saydam, Cemal 2014. Canal Istanbul: A Scientific Counter-argument. Proceedings of the Pharaonic Projects Conference. Istanbul, Turkey.

Adopted Resolution

environment in a way that was not consistent with the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, by introducing additional exemptions to the EIA. Several large infrastructure projects are excluded from national EIA procedures, such as micro hydropower plants and the third bridge on the Bosphorus. (...) Procedures for trans-boundary consultations have not been aligned with the acquis and Turkey has not yet sent its draft for general bilateral agreements on EIA cooperation in a trans-boundary context to the relevant Member States. Changes to legislation on EIA and nature protection raise serious concerns. Strategic planning, substantial investments and stronger administrative capacity are required.” pp. 68-69.

E. relentless calls by Greens and Left Future Party of Turkey, Turkish civil and environmental activists, environmental lawyers as well as the Council of State’s ruling to stop some of the projects have yielded no result;

F as a negotiating candidate country Turkey’s record on adopting the environmental acquis remains unsatisfactory;

G. it is highly improper and against the EU’s environmental acquis to implement large infrastructure projects capable of having a serious impact on neighbouring EU or non-EU countries’ environment;

As the European Greens, we urge the government of Turkey to,

A. Urgently provide the European Union institutions, and the European Parliament in particular, with all relevant information pertaining to Istanbul Channel project;

B. Not go ahead with the project before an in-depth EIA and/or SEA’s is performed by independent expertise;

C. Apply the decisions of the Council of State regarding controversial mega-projects and so set a precedent in environmental case law;

We call on the EU to,

A. Urgently approach the Government of Turkey and remind it of its obligations regarding information sharing on large projects’ potential environmental and other impacts on its own soil, and on neighbouring EU and non-EU countries;

B. Remind the Government of Turkey that a democratic and prosperous society is based on an administration that is accountable and respectful of legally accepted checks and balances.

C. Insist on asking progress on chapter 27 (environment and climate change);

D. Re-visit the acquis chapters 23 (judiciary and fundamental rights), and 24 (justice, freedom and security).