

Article – MEPs call for de-escalation of migration situation with Turkey



Thousands of migrants and asylum seekers have entered Greece via the Turkish borders since a little more than a week ago Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan broke a 2016 migration pact with the EU by opening his country's frontiers with Europe. Under the deal, the EU promised to pay Turkey €6 billion in return for the country curbing migration flows.

MEPs debated the situation at the Greek-Turkish border and the EU's common response to it with Ylva Johansson, the commissioner responsible for home affairs, and Nikolina Brnjac, representing the Croatian presidency, on Tuesday afternoon in Brussels.

"Over the last few days, we have seen the very dangerous attitude of the president of Turkey using vulnerable people in order to benefit himself and his politics," said Spanish S&D member Iratxe García Pérez .

German EPP member Manfred Weber called for a dialogue to start with Turkey to "de-escalate the situation at the Turkish-Greek border".

Commissioner Johansson agreed: "We must continue our dialogue. We must de-escalate the rhetoric and the increased tension. That involves finding a path forward with Turkey. The lines of communication with Turkey remain open and active."

Some Parliament members said the EU should use the current situation to put a [reform of the common rules on asylum](#) back on the EU's agenda. Others wanted to revise the deal with Turkey.

While acknowledging that "the current situation at our external borders is not acceptable," Council representative Brnjac said: "Our expectation is that Turkey will continue the full implementation of the 2016 joint statement."

Johansson also emphasised that the current EU-Turkey statement remains valid.

"The situation at the European external border towards Turkey is worrying, but I also must say that this is not 2015," the commissioner said, referring to the year [when more than one million asylum seekers and migrants arrived in Europe](#).

"We are much, much better prepared now to manage the situation because we know better what to expect," she said, noting that the EU has reinforced its agencies such as the coast guard agency Frontex, the [European Asylum Support Office](#) and that she sees more willingness to cooperate among member states.

In November 2017 the Parliament adopted a resolution calling for an overhaul of the common rules of asylum, in order to increase the EU's preparedness for receiving migrants and asylum seekers and to ensure greater solidarity and a fairer sharing of responsibility among EU countries.

Last year MEPs also approved a new law [to strengthen the European Border and Coast Guard](#) to ensure a better protection of the EU's external borders.