

Joint Statement by President Juncker, Prime Minister Rajoy and Prime Minister Costa on the agreement reached concerning the Almaraz case

Following our meeting in Malta on 3 February and the [amicable settlement of 21 February 2017](#), on the initiative of President **Juncker**, we have reached agreement on the Almaraz case. Our agreement relies solidly on a set of joint operational conclusions. These conclusions lay down the path for the implementation of the agreement and offer strong guarantees for all parties.

Thanks to the continued assistance and mediation by the European Commission in this process we have reached an agreement to the benefit of all of us. We commit to implement it faithfully.

In the spirit of good neighbourly relations all parties worked together constructively with the willingness to find pragmatic solutions. This is the European spirit of finding compromises for the smooth functioning of our common Union at its best.

We will make good on our shared endeavour to accelerate the work of the High-Level Group on Interconnections for the South West of Europe and we reiterate our strong will to further develop European interconnection projects linking our energy markets.

Background: The steps taken

Following a visit by the Portuguese authorities and senior representatives of the European Commission to the Almaraz site on 27 February 2017, the Spanish authorities shared a substantial amount of detailed information on the environmental and safety aspects of the project for a temporary spent fuel storage facility. The amount and the quality of the information allowed for the comprehensive evaluation of potential trans-boundary effects of the Almaraz temporary spent fuel storage facility.

On this basis, the Portuguese authorities organised a public consultation enabling the Portuguese public to access information on the project in the same way as the Spanish public.

The analysis by the Portuguese authorities resulted in a number of conclusions and recommendations in order to safeguard the concerns of Portugal regarding the potential transboundary effects of the temporary spent fuel storage facility in their territory. These recommendations were presented to the Spanish authorities and the European Commission services, which agreed with the issues raised.

On view of the Portuguese report, the Spanish independent nuclear safety

authority – the Nuclear Safety Council (CSN) – informed that the measures the CSN will require from the operator will fully deal with the recommendations made.

In a reinforced spirit of cooperation, the parties have also agreed to continue exchanging information on the Almaraz temporary spent fuel storage facility. To this end, the Spanish authorities invited the Portuguese authorities to nominate representatives who will attend the annual information meeting organised in the Almaraz municipality informing the public on questions related to the operation of the Almaraz nuclear power plant. This invitation was accepted by the Portuguese authorities.

In addition, the Spanish authorities agreed to share with the Portuguese authorities any other relevant information about the temporary spent fuel storage facility to ensure access to information by both the Spanish and the Portuguese public.

[Commission statement on the management of flows of persons at the borders between Slovenia and Croatia](#)

President **Juncker** met on 29 April in the margins of the European Council the Prime Ministers of Slovenia and Croatia, Miro Cerar and Andrej Plenković, on the management of flows of persons at the borders between Slovenia and Croatia and they stated the following:

“We had constructive talks in a solution-oriented spirit.

We agree that EU law reinforcing the controls at the Schengen borders and the security of our Union must be applied and implemented. In this context, we welcome the fact that Croatia will have full access to the Schengen Information System by 27 June 2017.

The Commission stands ready to and will assist Slovenia and Croatia in providing effective and non-bureaucratic short and long-term solutions for the implementation of the systematic checks at the borders. Slovenia and Croatia both consider the Commission’s technical guidelines as very helpful and as a very good basis for their further cooperation.

Slovenia and Croatia agree that they will notify the Commission – in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code – of the decision to carry out targeted checks whenever the waiting time at specified land border crossing points between the two countries is longer than 15 minutes.”

Commission welcomes Europol's new mandate and cooperation agreement with Denmark

Following the signature of the cooperation agreement between Europol and Denmark and ahead on the entry into force of the new mandate of Europol on 1 May, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship **Dimitris Avramopoulos** and Commissioner for the Security Union **Julian King** made the following statement:

"Today, we welcome the official signature of the cooperation agreement between Europol and Denmark. It comes a few days before Europol turns a new page in its history with the new legal framework which will apply as of 1 May. We live in volatile, unpredictable times for our security. Our citizens are understandably worried and demand action from the EU. We need the right tools to respond more quickly and effectively to these security threats. This is precisely what Europol offers. Today's agreements are significant in that respect and they come as a result of close cooperation between the European Parliament, Member States, Europol and the Commission.

The greatest efforts were made, led by President Juncker, to agree on operational arrangements minimising the negative impact of Denmark's departure from Europol on 1 May 2017. The solution agreed with Denmark is a tailor-made arrangement allowing for a sufficient level of cooperation, including the exchange of operational data and the deployment of liaison officers. Being fully in line with European data protection rules, Denmark will have a unique status which will allow for much closer ties with Europol without amounting to full membership.

The new Europol legal framework will enter into application on 1 May, significantly boosting our ability to tackle terrorism, cybercrime and other forms of cross-border serious and organised crime whilst ensuring strong data protection safeguards and parliament scrutiny. Europol will now truly become a hub of information exchange in Europe – connecting the dots across Member States and beyond.

The fight against cross-border and organised crime and terrorism has been one of the highest priorities of this Commission. Both the new Regulation as well as the agreement with Denmark demonstrate the Commission's commitment to tackling these challenges in the most pragmatic and effective way possible to ensure the security of all European citizens. The security of one Member State is the security of all."

Background

Following the Joint Declaration of the Presidents of the European Council and

the Commission and the Danish Prime Minister, utmost efforts were made to agree on operational arrangements minimising the negative impact of Denmark's departure from Europol on 1 May 2017.

Europol is the EU's law enforcement Agency, assisting national authorities by exchanging information, intelligence analyses and threats assessments. Originally established on the basis of a [Convention](#) signed by EU Member States in 1995, Europol gained the status of an EU Agency funded by the EU budget in January 2010, under [Council Decision 2009/371/JHA](#). The Agency deals with terrorism and international serious crime such as cybercrime, drug smuggling and people trafficking and currently has 1,000 staff members with its headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands.

To enhance Europol's mandate as the EU's central law enforcement agency and enable it to respond more rapidly to emerging international terrorist threats and serious and organised crime, the European Commission [proposed a new regulation](#) on 27 March 2013. In line with the Lisbon Treaty, the proposal aimed to place the Agency under a new legislative framework and enhance its role as the central hub for information exchange. The text of the proposal was agreed by the European Parliament and the Council on 26 November 2015. The final text was approved by the Council on 10 March 2016 and voted on by the European Parliament on 11 May 2016. The new Regulation entered into force on 13 June 2016 and will take effect in all EU Member States as of 1 May 2017.

For More Information

[Regulation](#) on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)

[Joint Declaration](#) by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk and the Prime Minister of Denmark, Lars Løkke Rasmussen

Europol [website](#)

[Remarks by High-Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini at the joint press conference with Minister for Foreign Affairs](#)

Valletta, 28 April 2017

Check against delivery!

Thank you very much George [Vella, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta]. I would like to start by thanking you personally for the dedication and the professionalism with which you have prepared this meeting and you are running the presidency; and all your team, really extremely dedicated. Indeed I am now enjoying my third day in Malta, leaving [tomorrow morning](#), for what I considered to be a very useful, fruitful, constructive and important sequence, yesterday the informal meeting of the Defence Ministers who took some important orientations and today, our exchanges were particularly important.

Thank you for leaving the content to me.

On Turkey in particular, we had a long and frank, open exchange with the Member States on the future of our relations with Turkey. I will summarise some common points, five points if I am not wrong on which we have common orientations. You know that informal ministerial meetings are not for taking formal decisions or for adopting conclusions but we shared a common ground that I will report now to you.

First, we respect and recognise the sovereign right of any country, including Turkey obviously, to decide its governance system as Turkey has done through the referendum on the constitutional amendments. So, we respect the result of the referendum even if we acknowledge that there are appeals ongoing or foreseen. We expect that the implementation of the constitutional amendments will be done first of all following the Venice Commission recommendations and the observation of the OSCE-ODIHR [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights], especially when the final report of the referendum observation mission will come out. And second, we expect its implementation seeking the highest degree of

national unity and inclusiveness, given especially the very divided picture of the country, as the result of the referendum has shown, with the maximum attention of the Turkish authorities side to respect all political positions, including those who supported the camp that has lost the referendum, and seeking for the maximum degree of unity within the Turkish society and the political spectrum.

Second point, the European Union has a clear interest in a stable, secure, economically successful and democratic Turkey which is – as George was saying – a relevant partner, a relevant player on many different issues. Our intention is not and will never be of doing anything that could damage Turkey or the Turkish people. On the contrary, we are seeking cooperation – constructive cooperation on many different things – for the benefits of our citizens respectively: all Turkish citizens, all European Union citizens.

The Turkish people, the Turkish citizens, all of them, are at the centre of our dialogue and cooperation; we will continue to support strongly the civil society in the country. And people from Turkey, the citizens for Turkey, are at the centre of our talks and work also when it comes to negotiations on accession process.

Then, the accession process continues, it is not suspended, nor ended but as you might know, we are currently not working on opening any new negotiation chapter. And second, the criteria for accession negotiations are extremely clear, are very well known to Turkey. If Turkey is interested in accession negotiations – as Foreign Minister [Mevlüt] Çavuşoğlu told us today and I understand President [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan expressed the same views in recent hours – if Turkey is interested in accession negotiations, it knows very well what it implies, especially in the field of human rights, rule of law, democracy, fundamental freedoms including media freedom, obviously the death penalty, and the respect of international law and the principle of good neighbourly relations. These are core principles to which Turkey is called as a candidate country to the European Union but also as a member of the Council of Europe. We are determined as the European Union, together with all the Member States,

to work very closely with the Council of Europe in the follow-up of the process.

We will discuss with our Turkish interlocutors the way forward, from our side in a very frank, open, constructive, serious, but serene manner. We have started today; I will have a proper – let's say full-fledged – bilateral meeting with Minister Çavuşoğlu just after this press conference, we will continue in the next weeks at different levels to exchange with our Turkish interlocutors on the way forward on this very clear basis.

We had, as George mentioned briefly, a working session with all the candidate countries' Foreign Ministers

on our Global Strategy [for the European Union's Foreign and Security Strategy], because it is a common field for common work especially when it comes to security but also stability in our region. I updated the Ministers also on the work of the Defence Ministers yesterday so that candidate countries can have a direct insight to what the process entails, because they will one day be part of this work from the inside. And also because enlargement – what we call enlargement, the accession process, is in itself an element both of European Union security, of the European Union strategy to increase resilience in our region especially with our support to reforms – be it economic, institutional, political reforms or the support to rule of law.

Obviously the exchange was also the opportunity to discuss openly, frankly, constructively I would say among ourselves about different issues that are of concern for most of us around the table and I am sure we will continue this conversation even more informally during the evening as we will continue our evening still with the candidate countries' Foreign Ministers.

As George was saying, we had a session on how the European Union can help Europeans to manage the effects of globalisation. It is indeed through the European Union that Europeans can have an impact on managing and shaping some of the aspects of globalisation; when it comes to maximising opportunities, when it comes to solving or managing challenges especially in the field of international free and fair trade, when it comes to some of the big global agendas that are in this moment currently put under question, I think of the

climate change agreement; of the overall approach to multilateralism and peacekeeping, the support to the UN system but also our strong and common commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, including our work on the G7 and G20 agenda, on financial regulations, on managing the outcome of the effects of the economic crisis of the last years, increasing competitiveness, reducing inequalities both in the world and inside the European Union. We have exchanged in details about that, sharing the view that we have to use even more our common Union, to bring the European interest and agenda and values also on the global scene, using our European Union to strengthen our impact on globalisation. And as you might know, I was already doing part of this work in the last week with my visit to China, India and Russia; I will continue visiting our major partners in the world on this agenda, also obviously on some bilateral issues but mainly on how the European Union and some global partners or interlocutors can strengthen rules based global order and a system of governance of globalisation that can defend our citizens better.

Thank you.

Q and A:

Q. The German Foreign Minister [Sigmar Gabriel] asked for a visa free travel for certain parts of the Turkish population – journalists, artists, intellectuals. Do you think that this would be possible and that this is a way to go? Is it your assessment that after implementing the constitutional changes, Turkey will be in a position to meet the Copenhagen criterion and eventually become a member of the European Union?

On your last question it depends very much on how the implementation will take place. When, first of all – I think that the calendar is not yet determined. We understand that some of the provisions might be taken in quite short time but others might take place during this year. It will depend on the way on which Turkey will implement amendments, when and how. That is why I stressed the fact that we agreed or we convened among ourselves that we see it as key that this is done in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and also with the observations of the OSCE/ODHIR mission. So it will depend very much on Turkey.

On the first question on visa liberalisation, we have an ongoing dialogue and negotiations with Turkey on visa liberalisation as such. We will have to see together with the Turkish interlocutors how we proceed on that, where we stand and I would leave this at that stage for the moment, also because you know the basic rule of any kind of dialogue and partnership is that you tend to get there with a very clear ideas on how you approach the table, but then you enter into a serious conversation and exchange with the other part and you bring that forward together.

Q. After this conversation today, knowing that there were no formal decisions and that it was just a discussion, do you have any clear sense of what a partnership with Turkey that was not oriented to membership at the EU would look like? Were there ideas floating of what a meaningful cooperation could look like without accession?

You know, I think I am on the record in the last couple of years saying that Turkey is not only a candidate country, that Turkey is also a strategic partner for the European Union on many different things. Turkey is essential from the European Union perspective when it comes to settling the Cyprus issue, Turkey is essential when it comes to counterterrorism cooperation, it is an essential partner when it comes to the crisis in Syria, it is a NATO ally, it is a member of G20, it is an economic partner. Actually, the European Union is the first economic and trade partner of Turkey. So our relation with Turkey goes beyond the accession negotiations and covers many other different fields relevant both for Turkey and the European Union. So when it comes to what type of relationship we have, this covers different fields, issues and can take different forms.

As I said, we today can say that on the European Union side the process of negotiation on accession continues. It is not suspended, it is not ended, but, as I said, at the moment there is no work ongoing to open new chapters. And there are, and this is always the case with all the candidate countries, extremely clear criteria, very well-known from the beginning to all our interlocutors – and especially those on the rule of law, human rights, democracy, freedoms are very well known to our Turkish counterparts.

So now it is on them to express their willingness to continue to be a candidate country, to continue to be interested or not to join our family. The rules of the club are clear, if you want to enter you know what you can expect. We would be happy to have them in, but a level of clarification is needed I would say on their side on this. On our side we are clear where we stand.

Q. Can you tell us exactly how frank and open the language was being used towards Turkey given that some EU countries felt deeply alienated by Nazi allegations President [of Turkey, Recep Tayyip] Erdogan made during the referendum campaign for example?

We had two different sessions. We had one session among us at 28 where we discussed the present and the future of our relations with Turkey, all very open and frank discussions but not particularly dramatic otherwise I would not have been in the position of presenting to you some common ground that is quite substantial.

But they were very frank, very open and this is exactly the spirit of the informal ministerial meetings which are not pressed to achieve a final communiqué, or agreeing on a wording or taking a formal decision. We have the luxury of taking our time, reflecting a little bit more in a strategic manner, listening to each other carefully and understanding what the sense of direction is, so extremely frank.

The afternoon session was not a EU-Turkey session. It was a session that we have regularly every time we have an informal meeting of foreign ministers together with all candidate countries. It would have been completely inappropriate for any of the candidate countries to somehow hijack or

monopolise the conversation over bilateral issues between the European Union and any of them. This is not the spirit of the exchange and this was not happening.

Obviously we also raised from time to time some issues not only regarding Turkey by the way, but also some other candidate countries present at the table that are of concern or that are on our agenda. This being an informal meeting and being clearly not my role to disclose single positions expressed around the table, I would not do it, but I can tell you that the overall spirit was frank, open, but very constructive and very positive. Things that needed to be said were said but this was not the first time. We meet often, not only with our Turkish interlocutors, also with other candidate countries. I would say that this is the added-value of being able to be clear among ourselves and with our partners.

Links to the videos:

SERA Conference Budapest

We thank all participants of the Single European Railway Area (SERA) Regional Conference East Mediterranean on 26 April in Budapest for their interest and their contributions.

Find all presentations here beside.

The conference series will reach a conclusion at the SERA Convention on 20 June in Brussels.