



FRANS TIMMERMANS
First Vice-President

Brussels,

Honorable Presidents,

Thank you for your letter of 3 July 2018, in which you explain the situation of your associations following the establishment of "the Fund" to support Turkish judges and prosecutors and their families in need. The European Commission fully shares your worries with regard to the broad scale, collective nature, and the disproportionality of the measures taken under the State of Emergency. I read your letter with deep concern.

The European Commission recognises and appreciates the valuable work of the European Association of Judges and the International Association of Judges and thanks you for your invaluable efforts to preserve the independence of the judiciary within the European Union and beyond.

The European Union attaches utmost importance to the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and has repeatedly called on Turkey to stand by its international obligations on the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The European Union is following developments in Turkey with the highest level of scrutiny. The latest annual report on Turkey by the European Commission¹ reflects the worrying developments in the country and calls on Turkey to reinstate the necessary conditions to ensure the independence, accountability, quality, efficiency and professionalism of the judiciary. This was reiterated by the Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and the Association Process of 26 June 2018² which call on the Turkish authorities to urgently address the serious shortcomings identified in the Commission's report as well as stepping up cooperation with the Council of Europe to address its key recommendations and implement all judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in line with Article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

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¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-turkey-report.pdf>

² <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35863/st10555-en18.pdf>

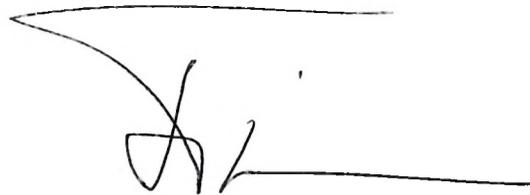
Mr Christophe REGNARD
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Turkey has been taking strides away from the European Union. The criteria for accession negotiations are clearly laid out, particularly in the areas of human rights, the rule of law, democracy and fundamental freedoms. In the past year, we have seen a backsliding in all these areas in Turkey, in particular with regard to the independence of the judiciary. However, so far the negative trend has not been reversed and the newly introduced presidential system, as underlined by the Venice Commission, is lacking sufficient checks and balances and endangering the separation of powers.

Please rest assured that the European Commission will continue to closely monitor the situation in Turkey, including the developments regarding your associations. We will continue to raise our serious concerns at all levels as part of our dialogue with Turkey. The European Commission once again lauds your work on the separation of powers and helping peers in Turkey.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'F' followed by a smaller 'T' and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Frans Timmermans