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**Accession Conference at Ministerial level opens negotiations  
with Turkey on Chapter 22 - Regional Policy and Coordination  
of Structural instruments**

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The tenth meeting of the Accession Conference with Turkey at Ministerial level was held today in Brussels. The European Union delegation was headed by Linas Linkevičius, Lithuania's Minister of Foreign Affairs. The European Commission was represented by Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy. The Turkish delegation was lead by Egemen Bağış, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator, and Dr Cevdet Yılmaz, Minister of Development of Turkey.

The Conference opened negotiations on Chapter 22 - Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments. This chapter covers one of the core EU policies, supporting job creation, competitiveness, innovation, economic growth, improved quality of life and sustainable development.

During the Conference, the EU reiterated the importance it attaches to the negotiation process and to the close relations between the EU and Turkey. The EU also underlined that it was in the interest of both parties that the accession negotiations regain momentum so the full potential of EU-Turkey relations can be achieved. In addition, the EU noted that Turkey can accelerate the pace of negotiations by advancing in the fulfilment of benchmarks, by meeting the requirements of the Negotiating Framework and by respecting its contractual obligations towards the EU.

**P R E S S**

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Since the start of the accession negotiations on 3 October 2005, fourteen chapters have been opened, of which one has been provisionally closed.

### **Opening of Chapter 22 - Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural instruments**

For this chapter, the Union has closely examined Turkey's general state of preparedness. Taking into account Turkey's present state of preparations, and in line with the Council conclusions on 11 December 2006 - as well as on the understanding that Turkey will continue to make progress in alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* - the EU communicated the main issues related to the closing benchmarks which need to be met by Turkey, including that:

- Turkey has to fulfill its obligation of the full non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement towards all Member States;
- Turkey demonstrates a satisfactory performance of the indirect management system under IPA in the regional development and human resources policy areas;
- Turkey adopts an institutional set-up for the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy, including the formal designation of the Managing Authorities, the Certifying Authority and the Audit Authority as well as the Intermediate Bodies, ensuring adequate separation of functions;
- Turkey submits to the Commission a capacity building plan for EU Cohesion Policy covering actions at national, regional and local levels;
- Turkey designs and demonstrates the effective functioning of its national policy leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion in line with Articles 174 and 175 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU and the EU Cohesion Policy requirements;
- Turkey submits to the Commission drafts of a national strategic planning document and Operational Programmes under EU Cohesion Policy which complement Turkey's own policy in this field. Turkey demonstrates its ability and readiness to address and implement programmes under all objectives of EU Cohesion Policy for which it would be eligible, and;
- Turkey designs and completes the set-up of its Management Information System based on a thorough needs assessment and an analysis of good practice across the European Union.

The EU also underlined that it would devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned in its position with a view to ensuring timely and high-quality programming as well as efficient and effective implementation of EU Cohesion Policy programmes.