Beat: Politics

European Union to restart accession talks with Turkey next month

-, 22.10.2013, 22:08 Time

USPA News - The European Union (EU) agreed on Tuesday to restart long-running membership talks with Turkey, ending a three-year-freeze despite previous protests from the 28-nation bloc after Ankara`s fierce crackdown on protesters earlier this year. At the monthly General Affairs Council of the Council of the European Union, foreign ministers agreed to convene an inter-governmental conference on Turkey`s accession on November 5 in Brussels.

They also agreed to open negotiations that focus on regional policy and the coordination of structural instruments. The General Affairs Council had already agreed to resume negotiations in late June, but they were eventually postponed in protest over Turkey`s crackdown on protesters. Each candidate country is required to close negotiations on 35 separate policy fields before they can join the European Union. Since the start of negotiations with Turkey in 2005, thirteen chapters have been opened, of which only one - chapter 25 on science and research - has been provisionally closed. Chapter 22 on regional policy and coordination of structural instruments is the fourteenth chapter to be opened and follows the opening of Chapter 12 on food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy in June 2010. "As underlined in the Commission`s 2013 enlargement package, recent developments in Turkey underline the importance of EU engagement and of the EU remaining the benchmark for reform in Turkey," EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele said on Tuesday. "To this end, accession negotiations need to regain momentum, respecting the EU`s commitments and established conditionality." Cyprus, which joined the 28-nation bloc in 2004, previously blocked eight chapters in Turkey`s accession talks because of Ankara`s refusal to open sea and air ports to Cyprus. The European Union considers Turkey-controlled Northern Cyprus to be part of the Republic of Cyprus, complicating the accession talks nearly 14 years after Turkey became a EU candidate country.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1514/european-union-to-restart-accession-talks-with-turkey-next-month.html

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619