

**Brussels, 18.03.2010**

During the last session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, MEPs from the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and the ECR founded the informal group "**Friends of Turkey**". Forty-seven MEPs have already joined.

Alojz Peterle (EPP) was elected chairman of the group and Fatih Aydogan, assistant of Ismail Ertug (S&D), has been elected the secretary.

The main interest of the informal group is to closely follow the negotiation process between the EU and Turkey through a critical but constructive approach. Members are committed to provide an added value in the negotiation process by an open and frank dialogue. The aim is also to provide a platform for the MEPs to play an active role in improving EU-Turkey relations.

The group will organize formal and informal meetings with European and Turkish officials and will be in touch with the JPC and the rapporteur of Turkey's Progress Report and will try to enhance dialogue with civil society representatives, scholars and business associations in Turkey.

Chairman Alojz Peterle said he was very pleased with the participation of numerous MEPs from many different countries: "The informal group is amongst the most enthusiastic groups in parliament. Nobody is against open dialogue and I am proud to say that we can be friends despite our differences." All MEPs are invited to join the group and share their ideas with the members.

**The members of the group are**

Alojz Peterle, Anna Corazza-Bildt, Sandra Kalniete, Jaroslaw Walesa, Birgit Schnieber-Jastram, Georg Bach, Alf Svensson from the EPP,

Metin Kazak, Jelko Kacin, Graham Watson, Marietje Schaake, Ivo Vajgl, Andrew Duff, Sophie in't Veld, Michael Theurer, Sara Ludford, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, from the ALDE,

Franziska Keller, Jan Philipp Albrecht, Hélène Flautre, Raül Romeva i Rueda, Indrek Tarand, Karima Delli Catherine Greze, Heidi Hautala, Judith Sargentini, Werner Schulz from the Greens/AFE,

Richard Howitt, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Emine Bozkurt, Michael Cashman, Jutta Steinruck, Ismail Ertug, Tanja Fajon, Ioan Enciu, Knut Fleckenstein, Liberadzki Bogusław, , El-Khadraoui Said, Boris Zala, Peter Simon, Evgeni Kirilov, Raimon Obiols i Germa, Claude Moraes, Victor Bostinaru from the S&D and Sajjad Karim from the ECR.

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