

Fact-finding mission to Turkey

Report and recommendation

Context

On 11 March 2026, the EGP Committee received an application from Yeşil Sol Parti (Green Left Party, YSP) to rejoin the EGP. YSP was a member of the EGP from 2014 to 2024, when its membership ceased for administrative reasons.

At its meeting on 18-19 April, the Committee decided to move ahead with a fact-finding mission to Turkey. The fact-finding mission took place in Ankara and Istanbul on 18-20 May, with an EGP delegation consisting of Co-Chair Vula Tsetsi and Committee member Joanna Kaminska. The delegation met with the applicant party as well as other Green partners in Turkey, other democratic political parties and civil society.

This report summarises the findings of the fact-finding mission.

Short overview of the political situation in the country

General

Since 2002, Turkey has been ruled by the Justice and Development Party (AKP; no EUPP) and its leader, current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Political repression has intensified since the Gezi protests in 2013 and a coup attempt in 2016. Constitutional changes have centralised power in the hands of President Erdoğan, and political opponents as well as other critical voices are frequently jailed. The V Dem Institute qualifies Turkey as an “electoral autocracy” and Freedom House as “not free”.

This is an extremely challenging environment for Green politics. Repression of ecological activists, feminists, the LGBTI community, civil society and other key Green allies is common. Independent academia and free media are frequently targeted by the authorities, making it difficult to put forward alternative narratives to the ones espoused by the government. Poor economic opportunities combined with an climate of fear has prompted mass emigration of young people. Green political structures and communication channels in Turkey are very fragile and some have virtually disappeared in recent years.

It is noteworthy that both European Union institutions and national governments have largely been silent regarding the most recent waves of repression in 2025 and 2026. The government has cracked down on elected mayors, such as Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, the opposition party the Republican People’s Party (CHP; PES), as well as the LGBTI community. The European Parliament remains a critical voice when it comes to democratic backsliding in EU candidate

member Turkey. The EGP has also been both vocal and present in supporting democratic voices in Turkey.

Green politics

There are two Green parties in Turkey, Yeşil Sol Parti (Green Left Party, YSP) and Yeşiller (Greens).

Yeşiller was founded in 2008, after a 6-year process. In 2012, it merged with a left-wing party called Equality and Democracy Party, forming the Greens and Left Future Party. It joined the EGP in 2014, and hosted an EGP Council in Istanbul that year. Due to political differences (affiliation with the main Kurdish party versus autonomous Green party), the party split in 2016. The people from the former left-wing party, who advocated for proximity with the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), stayed and the name was changed to Yeşil Sol Parti (Green Left Party, YSP). This party remained in the EGP. Yeşiller was re-founded in 2020 and expressed interest in joining the EGP. The party has since then not been able to officially register due to obstruction in the Ministry of Interior. Yeşiller won a court case in 2023 but the problems have persisted. The party does not have sustainable structures and activities due to its difficulties to register. FYEG associate member Genç Yeşiller (Young Greens) and GEF associate member Yeşil Düşünce Derneği (Green Thought Association) are affiliated with Yeşiller.

In the run-up to the 2023 general elections, there was a politically motivated court case that threatened to close HDP. Their leadership announced they would contest the elections under another umbrella, YSP (EGP's associate member at the time). Some months after the elections, HDP de facto became DEM Party – de jure it was YSP transforming into DEM Party. DEM Party is an associate member of PES. YSP was re-founded as a new party and held its founding congress in 2023. Due to these administrative changes, its membership in the EGP ceased in 2024. YSP currently has one member of parliament, İbrahim Akın, who sits in the DEM Party group.

Main political values of the party

YSP defines itself as “an ecologist, egalitarian, libertarian, peaceful, and democratic political party”. It has a holistic overview of ecological, military, democratic and social crises, two which it offers an alternative societal and political model. It calls for a stronger inclusion of various groups, such as workers, environmentalists, women, youth, LGBT people and others, into a political project that is pluralist, solidaristic and ecological. It has a strong emphasis on peace-building and minority rights in Turkey and its neighbouring countries – including but not limited to Kurdish rights.

YSP is critical towards Turkey's current political order and advocates for a society of high democratic participation, not limited to representative democracy, where different cultures can coexist without cultural imposition. It considers this struggle inseparable from the one for a healthy environment, access to water and food, and the rights of future generations. It considers capitalism responsible for a deepening climate crisis. It centers four types of justice in order to

overcome social and ecological destruction: economic, recognition, participatory, as well as environmental and climate justice.

YSP calls for a profound transformation of Turkey, starting from the democratisation of the country's Constitution. When it comes to the Kurdish question, the party demands dialogue and negotiation rather than military approaches. It wants stronger minority rights, including in education, public services and local government, for Kurdish people and other religious and ethnic groups. It endorses a secular state where all religious groups are equal.

In foreign policy, YSP wants a cooperating and peaceful Turkey. It supports closer relations with neighbouring countries, in particular Iraq and Syria, as well as an independent Palestinian State.

YSP wants to eliminate gender discrimination and male domination in politics, education and the labour market. It calls for the socialisation of care services. Moreover, YSP supports LGBTI rights and the full participation of LGBTI people in social life.

YSP considers that Turkey is highly threatened by the climate crisis due to floods, drought, water scarcity and agricultural decline. It calls for abandoning fossil fuels and investing in decentralised, renewable energy. It advocates for closing coal plants and opposes nuclear power. It wants to enhance natural protection, including in areas threatened by mining or mass tourism. It also calls for stronger animal rights.

In its economic policies, YSP emphasises workers' rights and strong social protection, including unions and collective bargaining, reduced working hours, free healthcare and education, and a minimum human income guarantee. It calls for policies that foster the inclusion of women and youth in the labour market. It considers urban planning as a tool to enhance democratic participation and reduce inequalities.

Overall, YSP has a vision of Turkey where everyone has their basic needs met and can enjoy fundamental freedoms. Its program covers both domestic and international priorities, and is not limited to the topics mentioned above (there are also sections on disability rights, culture, technology, rural life, elderly people, and more). Its program is ecologist with a strong social and anti-militarist dimension.

Existence of youth wing

YSP does not currently have a youth wing. One of the party's four assemblies is a youth assembly, which is represented in the party's structures.

List of organised meetings during the fact-finding mission

- Green Left Party (YSP)

- Central Executive Board
 - Representatives of Labour Assembly and Women's Assembly
 - MP İbrahim Akin
- DEM Party
 - Party Co-leader Tuncer Bakırhan
- Republican People's Party (CHP)
 - Party Leader Özgür Özel
- Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) Istanbul
- Yeşiller (Greens) - *as part of Green roundtable with YSP and HBF*
- GoFor (Youth Organisations Forum)

Findings from the above meetings

From discussions with the applicant party as well as other stakeholders, the EGP delegation learned the following:

- The current moment is critical for Turkey's democratic future, and many actors – political as well as civil society – are keen on strengthening their ties with European partners. Meanwhile, EU institutions have significantly lost credibility in Turkey due to the Commission's and the Council's silence on the democratic backsliding in a candidate member.
- There is no broadly recognised Green party in Turkey. The Green Left Party (YSP) is currently the closest to that. It is rather small, with recently renewed party structures, but with some name recognition due to its key role in the 2023 elections.
- YSP is in a process of expanding its territorial anchoring, with new local sections in different regions of Turkey. Simultaneously, it attempts to establish itself as a reference point for ecological struggles and LGBT rights.
- Turkey's media landscape is dominated by pro-government and pro-opposition media platforms. There has been considerable repression of free media in Turkey. YSP attempts to navigate this with its own social media channels and close relations with media that is open to their message.

- YSP has close relations with DEM Party. YSP's representatives are part of DEM Party's political structures, and the two parties cooperate both in the Turkish Parliament as well as outside. YSP is politically and financially autonomous from DEM Party. This relation is visible in the strong emphasis that YSP puts on the Kurdish question in its political work and communication.
- The relations between YSP and another Green party, Yeşiller, are complicated due to a shared history and a split in 2016. Both have been members of the EGP in the past. Yeşiller is currently in a particularly fragile position, which makes cooperation difficult.

- YSP is set on contesting the next general elections, foreseen in 2027 or 2028. It aims to be part of a broad coalition of democratic forces. YSP has electoral experience and a willingness to bring social and ecological struggles to the political agenda.

Conclusions and recommendation

Conclusions

The fact-finding mission provided very valuable insight into Turkey's current situation and the possibility for democratic, ecological and social politics in the country.

It is undeniable that parties advocating for changes to the ruling order in Turkey have significant challenges to pursue their political work. State-sanctioned repression, including persecution of political parties and imprisonment of opposition politicians, has increased over the last years.

At this moment, it is crucial for the European Green Party to maintain close relations with its partners in Turkey. YSP is a key partner, as a former member of the EGP and largely sharing the EGP's political vision.

YSP maintains close relations with DEM Party as well as its civil society partners, exemplified by its active role in co-organising the People's Climate Summit in Antalya this year. YSP is autonomous from DEM Party and an important ally as DEM Party's predecessors have faced strong repression in the past.

Turkey is currently ongoing a reshaping of its political landscape, with lawfare against opposition actors and unclarity around whether the next general elections will be free or fair. The elections will be of high European relevance and it is important that democratic actors in Turkey have political and institutional partnerships with EU actors, including with the EGP.

Recommendation

The Committee of the European Green Party believes that Yeşil Sol Parti meets EGP's membership criteria.

The Committee of the European Green Party sees the continued presence of the Green European family in Turkey as desirable.

Considering all the above, the EGP Committee recommends to the delegates of the 41st EGP Congress to accept Yeşil Sol Parti as an Associate Member.

