The Rights of the Kurdish Population in Turkey

The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, convening in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 24 September 2005,

- notes that Kurds in Turkey still face discrimination in education, cultural and political life, and are denied to express their national culture and that the Kurdish language is banned from use in media;

- welcomes the decision of the European Council in December 2004 on opening of negotiations with Turkey on accession to the European Union in October 2005;

- notes that the Commission is ready to suspend or end the negotiations if any breakdowns occur in the progress towards democracy, human rights, fundamental rights and the rule of law;

- supports the Commission’s double strategy, implying that Turkey needs to achieve more as regards the abolition of torture, promotion of women's rights, trade union rights, religious freedom and relations between civil and military authorities, and that the outcome of negotiations is not a foregone conclusion;

- regrets that Kurds are seen as a third party that is not consulted in EU-Turkey deliberations on Kurdish issues, and that EU Member States do not attach enough importance to the Kurdish issue and make the mistake of classifying the problems of Kurdish people and Northern Kurdistan as being restricted to human rights, cultural rights and a language problem;

- notes that torture and ill-treatment still continue in police stations and prisons around Turkey; points to the Turkish government’s zero tolerance policy on torture; stresses the need for continuous efforts to ensure a competent and independent judiciary to combat such human rights abuse;

- calls on the Turkish authorities to put more effort into the quick and thorough implementation of the legislative changes on cultural rights that allow the use of languages other than Turkish in the media;

- calls on the Turkish government to give the Kurdish language status as an official language, and adopt and implement relevant legal provisions in order to ensure that all citizens are guaranteed education in their mother tongue from primary education through to university; recommends that a special programme is launched to protect and improve the Kurdish language under the supervision of the EU;

- calls on the Turkish government to ensure that the right of expression and of association, the recognition of Kurdish identity as well as the right
to speak and protest using the Kurdish language be guaranteed under the Turkish Constitution.