

Merkel Says EU Won't Decide on Turkey's Membership Bid at Upcoming Summit

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that European Union leaders meeting next week for a summit will discuss deteriorated relations with Turkey but fall short of making a decision on its EU membership bid.

"We definitely won't make a decision," the chancellor said in her weekly podcast ahead of the two-day meeting in Brussels that kicks off on Oct. 19. "Yet I want to hear the opinions of my colleagues, how they view bilateral relations with Turkey and what we can conclude from them."



Angela Merkel

Photographer: Krisztian Bocsi/Bloomberg

Appetite in Europe to formally end EU membership talks with Turkey may be lukewarm as the nation continues to help taper the influx of refugees into the European mainland. Merkel seeks consensus with trade-bloc allies over responding to Turkey's alleged human-rights abuses and has requested a status report from the European Commission.

The podcast comments suggest that Merkel and her European allies — with exceptions like Austria — may seek a more cautious approach to Turkey's EU membership bid. In a September television stand-off with her main German election rival Martin Schulz, Merkel said she would lobby EU leaders to formally end stalled accession talks.

“We have very many cases of people who in our opinion have been unjustly imprisoned,” Merkel said in Saturday’s Internet broadcast. Germany follows political developments in Turkey “with great concern.”

Trading Partners

Relations between Turkey and its largest trading partner plunged to new depths after Turkey arrested a German-Turkish journalist in February. Die Welt newspaper, the employer of jailed reporter Deniz Yucel, reports daily on his plight.

Human-rights activist and German national Peter Steudtner was arrested in Turkey in July and faces as long as 15 years in prison if convicted of terrorism offenses. The Turkish government in Ankara has parried calls from the German Foreign Office for Steudtner’s immediate release.

EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker last month gave an indication of what may appear in the report commissioned by Germany when condemning President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s crackdown on political opponents and tirades against EU leaders.

“Turkey has been moving away from the European Union in leaps and bounds,” Juncker said in the televised address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. “That rules out EU membership for Turkey in the foreseeable future.”

Turkey, which has been seeking to join the EU since the 1980s, began accession negotiations in 2005. A failed coup last year has sparked the removal of thousands of teachers, judges and soldiers on ideological grounds, as well as a wave of arrests of journalists and opposition politicians.

Some 600 senior members of the Turkish judiciary and executive branches have sought asylum in Germany since the coup, the Funke Mediengruppe reported today, citing the Interior Ministry in Berlin.

Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-14/merkel-sees-no-decision-at-eu-summit-on-turkey-s-membership-bid>

[Disclaimer]