**PRESS RELEASE**

**Authorities of Turkey show commitment to better protection of human rights**

ANKARA, 10 March 2020 – Authorities of Turkey are committed to better protection of human rights of the citizens of Turkey, as well of asylum seekers, migrants and victims of human trafficking, while further efforts will be put into fostering a comprehensive institutional response to violence against women and domestic violence. Three new actions, tailored and implemented with the support of the European Union and the Council of Europe, will be contributing to abovementioned continuous efforts within the upcoming two years.

This has been underlined in today’s first meeting of the Beneficiary Steering Committee of the joint EU/CoE programme “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2019-2022”.

In her introductory remarks, ***Çagrı Çakır***, Head of Department of Political Affairs in the Directorate for the European Union of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, focused on current priorities in the field of fundamental rights, the impact and complementary aspect of actions under the Horizontal Facility programme on Turkey’s accession process. Ms ***Çakır*** also presented an overview regarding current and future projects on fundamental rights.

***Verena Taylor***, Director of the Office of Council of Europe Directorate General of Programmes, underlined the longstanding co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union with Turkey. “*This co-operation has paved a way for changing the lives of citizens and I am pleased that Turkey is now benefiting fully from the Horizontal Facility programme. However, the ownership by the authorities, further commitment and the institutional follow up will be crucial for the sustainability of the results of our co-operation*”, said Ms Taylor. “*An important ingredient of the co-operation is the Expertise Co-ordination Mechanism seen as a flexible tool to enable the provision of legal and policy advise upon the request of authorities.* *I would like to encourage Turkish authorities to benefit from this instrument at their disposal*”, she concluded.

"*The areas covered by the Horizontal Facility address key issues of EU-Turkey relations and are at the heart of the Council of Europe mandate: rule of law, fundamental rights, and strengthening democratic institutions. A major added value of this instrument is its capacity to respond to specific needs in key areas of the EU - Turkey co-operation",* said on this occasion the Head of the EU Delegation to Turkey, ***Ambassador Christian Berger***.

***Additional information on the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2019-2022***

The second phase of [this programme](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/horizontal-facility/) to be conducted between 2019 and 2022 and worth €41 million, builds on the results of the first phase and will continue to develop important initiatives in the Western Balkans Beneficiaries including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia as well as Turkey. In Turkey, 5 million euros have been allocated for three actions, covering the key areas of the Horizontal Facility: supporting the Action plan on human rights in Turkey, strengthening the human rights protection of asylum seekers, migrants and victims of human trafficking and fostering a comprehensive institutional response to violence against women and domestic violence.

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