

## Vural ÖGER MEP

Born in Turkey - which to this day remains Mr. Vural Öger's emotional homeland - as a student he came to Germany, first to continue his education, and later to create his own company in Hamburg. Mr. Öger became not only a German citizen but also became European by conviction. That his party, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), entrusted him with a political office and that he became elected Member of the European Parliament (EP) in July 2004 fills him with pride. The Socialist Group in the European Parliament (PSE), which is the second largest political group, stands for creating jobs and prosperity, and defending human rights; it puts people first, promotes equality, protects environment and fights for a European constitution.

### "Turkey wishes to join the EU."

In his constituency Hamburg, Mr. Öger tries to bring the European idea and European politics closer to the people, and mainly works on topics such as integration of migrants living in Germany and Europe especially focusing on the need of a new approach in the German education systems.



He says that "Being a full member of the EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) since 2004, which is mainly responsible for the common foreign and security policy (CFSP), the European security and defence policy (ESDP) as well as the relations to other EU institutions and bodies, brings a wide range of topics to his desk every day. Personally, I focus my political work in the AFET on the strengthening of political relations with third countries, particularly those in the immediate neighborhood of the Union and the EU candidate countries such as Croatia, Macedonia and - of course - Turkey."

"Since beginning my work in Brussels and Strasbourg, however, Europeanizing Turkey stands in the centre of my thinking and acting. As a Member of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) I am engaged to facilitate the cooperation between the European Parliament and the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In accordance with EP's resolution it is the task of the JPC to deliberate on all matters relating to Turkey's relations

with the European Communities."

Since January 2007, Mr. Öger is also a full member of the Committee on International Trade (INTA). He added that "The Committee is responsible for matters relating to the establishment and implementation of the Union's common commercial policy and its external economic relations. For instance, I will follow in particular the "Renewable Energy Road Map" announced by the EU Commission from May 2007 on - focusing on international trade issues."

"In addition to the regular committee work in Brussels and the plenary sessions in Strasbourg, I am in regular contact with different stakeholders such as lobbyists, journalists, representatives of NGOs, delegations from third countries or academics and researchers. During the year, several groups of citizens from my constituency in Hamburg visit the EP in order to get a direct insight into my parliamentary work. As European citizens become more and more sceptical about the EU



project, I find it particularly important to support the direct dialogue with them. In addition I assume various press contacts through interviews or debates."

He stated about the reasons are for Turkey to join the European Union: "At the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the European Union, the Berlin Declaration points out that Europe has been an "idea holding out hope of peace and understanding" for centuries. That hope has been fulfilled via the process of European unification which has made peace and prosperity possible. The EU is striving for democracy and the rule of law, for mutual respect and shared responsibility, for security and tolerance, for justice and solidarity. Today the EU stands for a civilization project which is particularly interesting for neighbouring countries and attracts, among others, Turkey. Turkey's aims on its way to the EU are marked by more than 40 years of mutual relations. Since the Association Agreement ("Ankara Agreement") was signed between the Community and Turkey in 1963, Turkey's target was to be a full member of the EU. The Additional Protocol laid down the basic objectives of EU-Turkish relations. The continuous and balanced strengthening of trade as well as economic relations and the establishment of a Customs Union - which came into force on 31 December 1995 - are concrete proofs of Turkey's wishes to join the EU. Being a member of the Council of Europe since 1949, and joining NATO in 1952, Turkey continuously showed its conviction and interests in belonging to the "Western World" and Europe. Given these facts, it is very natural that Turkey wishes to join the EU."

"Given the current freezing of Turkish-EU relations - especially concerning the negotiation process - I have to admit that the promotion of Turkey in the European countries needs to be improved. In December 2006 EU foreign ministers decided to follow the Commission's recommendations and have suspended talks with Turkey on eight of the 35 negotiating chapters. The latest Euro barometer shows that 48% of Europeans do not want Turkey to join the EU even if Turkey fulfils all Copenhagen criteria. Turkey needs to improve its image among the European countries and its citizens. A new, or rethought, communication strategy seems to be necessary. In my opinion the promotion of Turkey in the European countries should be approached via three main aspects: an economic, a cultural and a political one. Taking the very active and dynamic economic relations between Turkey and the EU Member states or the influence of big business associations, I am convinced that Turkey is on the right way promoting itself in the European business world. Turkey's businessmen know how to promote its economic power and dynamism in Europe. So Turkey is for example the partner country at the Hannover Messe 2007- the worlds leading showcase for industrial technology. Concerning cultural aspects, I am convinced that initiatives like Turkey being special guest of the Frankfurter Book Fare 2008 or the EU Councils decision announcing Istanbul as European Capital of Cultural 2010 are some of the best signs of successful cultural promotion of Turkey in Europe."

He sent the following message to Turkish Community and Turkish born European Citizens: "I would like to suggest that the Turkish Community and Turkish born European Citizens to integrate themselves as well as possible in the society they live in and feel themselves to be equal citizens of that country. They should not be afraid of loosing their own culture by accepting the European way of life. Integration is not the same as assimilation!"

"It is important to engage their civic rights in terms of taking part actively in social and political life. These doors are open to everyone. Young and old should take the opportunity to have an impact on the countries' society while representing and defending the interests of their community on one hand and participate in general political debate on the other hand."

He added that "Uncertainties caused by linguistic barriers and cultural differences should not result in isolation of the other citizens. Citizens with migrant background have to be confident and should try to be politically active - through associative work for example - in order to influence the European citizens in a positive way by establishing understanding on both sides. Thereby prejudices, which exist on both sides, could be abolished. That is of significant importance while assisting and supporting Turkey on its way to the EU- Membership."

He also said that "It is of great significance that parents support their children in their education. The best sustainable way to integrate is through education, which is the only way to stay on a competitive basis in the professional world in Europe and Europe is our future!"

Lastly he said that "As a German MEP from Turkish origins I unfortunately was not fully aware of the input of the Turkish and Northern Cypriot community to the British business economy before seeing your product Turkish Business Directory. I am impressed by the importance of the Turkish Community in Britain and their impact on British Business. I would like to congratulate the Turkish Business Directory Team for providing details of politicians, businessmen and academics with Turkish origin and their interesting point of view towards Turkey's accession to the European Union."

