Contemporary Perspectives on Turkey's EU Accession Process

Contemporary Perspectives on Turkey's EU Accession Process:

A Reluctant European?

Edited by

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In loving memory of Professor Süheyla Artemel,
who always encouraged and inspired me.

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey's European Union (EU) accession process, which has its origins in its application to join the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959, has been likened to the myth of Sisyphus, who was condemned to the torture of repeatedly rolling a boulder up a hill only to watch it roll back down again (Çakır 2011, 166). Although it is by far the longest-standing candidate country, and has made considerable progress in adopting the EU *aquis* in many areas (European Commission 2016), Turkey arguably has few prospects of becoming a full member in the near or even medium future. As Müftüler-Baç notes, Turkey's accession process touches on some key questions for the EU on issues such as the cultural and geographical borders of Europe, the political future of the EU and the limits of the EU's institutional capacity (2017, 1).

Despite the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, relations between Turkey and the EU have soured considerably in recent years, with many European countries, particularly on the political right, increasingly reluctant to welcome a Muslim majority country into the EU, and with Turkey itself apparently increasingly Eurosceptic and de-Europeanising. It is in this context which the various essays in this volume, many of which originated as presentations at various Euroacademia conferences, attempt to explore the current state of Turkey's relations with the EU, primarily through the broad theoretical lens of Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation.

As discussed further below, the conception of Europeanisation in this volume is a broad one, and is understood as being potentially determined by external incentives, most notably the promise of eventual accession, but also by increased identification of actors in the candidate country with EU norms, values and identity. Within this broad theoretical context, then, while some of the chapters examine (de)Europeanisation in specific policy areas, several of the chapters explore Turkish accession from a broader identity or values perspective, focusing on discourse analysis and/or Euroscepticism in particular.

Following a theoretical discussion of Europeanisation in candidate countries, and specifically Turkey, this introduction proceeds with a historical overview of Turkey's long EU accession process, attempting to trace broader patterns of Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation over

time. It then concludes with a general overview of the book and a more specific, chapter-by-chapter, discussion of the various contributions.

Europeanisation and De-Europeanisation in Candidate Countries: A Theoretical Overview

Although there has been considerable debate on how to define Europeanisation (Sedelmeier 2011, 5) the term is generally used to refer to the domestic consequences of the process of European integration. More specifically, Europeanisation may refer to mechanisms primarily driven by the EU (*top-down* dynamics) or by domestic factors (*bottom-up* dynamics). As Radaelli points out, students of Europeanisation have searched for its effects on governance, institutionalisation or discourse; however, all three frameworks deal with domestic change, they are not mutually exclusive, and most authors consider them in combination (Radaelli 2004, 6-9).

While Europeanisation was originally conceived in relation to the Member States, the concept has frequently been applied to candidate countries; in this case, studies have frequently contrasted the use of conditionality as a strategy employed by rationalist institutionalist approaches with norm-based convergence as a result of social learning, based on sociological institutionalism (Sedelmeier 2011, 11). However, these two approaches, termed the External Incentives model and the Social Learning model, roughly corresponding with the concepts of strategic Europeanisation and normative Europeanisation respectively, are not necessarily contradictory, and may be complementary (Sedelmeier 2011, 11-12).

The *External Incentives model* focuses on the effects of conditionality in the accession process, and begins from the standpoint that the adoption of EU rules will be absent if the EU does not set them up as conditions or rewards. Compliance with EU demands is expected to occur when the government of the candidate country in question considers that the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs (Bürgin and Aşıkoğlu 2017, 3). Rule adoption on the part of the candidate countries is thus dependent both on the clarity and binding status of the rules and on the size and speed of the promised rewards. The credibility of conditionality is a particularly important factor according to this model; conditionality has most impact on rule adoption if the candidates are confident that they will receive the reward following their adoption of the required conditions, and they must also be convinced that the reward will be withheld if the conditions are not fulfilled (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier 2005, 13-16) (Sedelmeier 2011, 12-15). Finally, rule adoption is also determined by the size of

domestic adoption costs and their distribution among domestic actors. However, if conditionality is credible, adoption costs and veto players are likely to influence the timing of rule adoption rather than whether rules are adopted (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier 2005, 216).

From the perspective of the *social learning model*, the EU represents a European international community which is bound together by a specific collective identity and a set of values and norms. According to this view, then, whether a candidate country adopts EU rules or not depends if it views those rules as appropriate in terms of collective identity, values and norms; in contrast to the external incentives model, it is not dependent on conditionality. The EU may either persuade the government of its legitimacy or it may seek to convince social groups and organisations, which then lobby the government. Therefore, rules adopted through social learning are much less contested domestically than those adopted through conditionality (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier 2005, 219). However, if only some of the relevant actors are persuaded, these actors will seek to adopt and implement EU rules but may founder when faced with opposition from unpersuaded actors. Rule adoption is thus more likely if a policy area is new or if domestic rules have been delegitimised, or if domestic and EU belief in "good policy" and rules are compatible, and rule adoption decreases if domestic rules conflict with the EU *acquis* and if they enjoy high and consensual domestic legitimacy (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier 2005, 18-20).

Thus, rule adoption will increase the more the target government and society identifies with the EU and shares its norms and values. This is perhaps similar to Kaliber and Aydın Düzgit's definition of Europeanisation as 'a wider socio-political context' (Aydın Düzgit and Kaliber 2016, 4) "... from which varying ideas, norms and values can be extracted and used at sub-national, national and supra-national politics" (Kaliber 2014). Thus, for Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber, this more sociologically informed understanding of Europeanisation can be distinguished from "EU-isation", referring to a technical process of adjustment, and is defined as a "formal process of alignment with the EU's institutions, policies and legal structure" (2016, 4).

According to the *lesson-drawing model*, Europeanisation is primarily provoked by domestic factors (i.e. bottom-up dynamics) rather than originating from the EU, and may follow either a logic of consequence or a logic of appropriateness. In the former case, change is provoked by dissatisfaction with the *status quo* in the country while, in the second case, bottom-up Europeanisation is provoked by identity change or a broader change in policy paradigms. In this context, the EU may act as an 'external

ally' for those domestic actors with preferences in line with EU demands, and may offer legal, political or financial resources to pursue domestic change. Thus, according to this model, while the EU may influence reform, it does not induce it (Bürgin 2016, 107).

In addition, Buhari-Gülmez puts forward the concept of *ritualised Europeanisation,* which "contests the EU's depiction as a narrow set of official criteria or a normatively integrated system that represents a parochial identity". Instead, in ritualised Europeanisation, the universalistic nature of EU conditionality is emphasised, based on the EU's central location in a global system, and reforms are adopted when they fulfill the condition of good resonance with emerging global standards. Arguing that the three models of Europeanisation (strategic, normative and ritualised) can be seen as mutually reinforcing (Bühari-Gulmez 2016, 463), Buhari-Gülmez notes that, according to elite surveys and interviews, significant numbers of Turkish actors "consistently refer to global conditions, emphasize the universalistic character of the reform, and de-emphasize the EU conditionality" (2016, 473). However, as the candidate countries' primary motivation for reform is external legitimation rather than efficiency maximisation, implementation may prove problematic; as Buhari-Gülmez notes,"reforms are passed by national Parliaments, but no parliamentarian has much of an idea of how to put them into practice..." (2016, 463).

Finally, Europeanisation is not necessarily a one-way process: it may also be reversed. Building on their normative understanding of Europeanisation discussed above, Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber (2016, 6) define *de-Europeanisation* as "a loss or weakening of the EU/Europe as a normative political context and a reference point in domestic affairs and national political debates", a process which is accompanied by a "scepticism or indifference towards Europe", which adds to the EU's loss of influence and legitimacy, and which may result from domestic factors as well as from EU policies. According to Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber, then, de-Europeanisation denotes not only a lack of Europeanisation but also a turning away from Europe in many aspects of Turkish political life and society. In their view then, de-Europeanisation "involves cases where reforms are reversed as well as ones where reform is incurred without the need or obligation to attain alignment with the EU, or where actors deliberately refrain from referring to the EU in justification of the reforms undertaken" (2016, 6).

Turkey's EU Accession Process:
A Rocky Road to Brussels?

Turkey, together with Greece, was one of the first countries to show an interest in membership of the EEC following its foundation with the Treaty of Rome (Nas and Özer 2017, 1). Turkey's application to join the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959 can be understood in the broader context of the Turkish Republic's focus on both cultural and geopolitical Westernisation; its application resulted in the 1963 Ankara Agreement between Turkey and the EEC, which provided for the establishment of a customs union between the two parties to be set up in three stages: a preparatory stage, a transitional stage and a final stage (Yılmaz 2009, 2). It also included provisions for the realisation of the four basic freedoms of movement between the parties (Nas and Özer 2017, 1). Importantly, the agreement was seen as a potential step towards full membership; while the prospect of Turkey eventually becoming a member of the EEC is mentioned in the Agreement, however, no commitment is made in this respect (Diez 2011, 170).

The Turkish military coup in 1980 naturally postponed both the development of the customs union and Turkey's bid for full membership. Following the reinstatement of democracy, the EC formally lifted its suspension of relations with Turkey in 1986, and Turkey submitted another application for full membership the following year. Of the then Member States, its application was only formally opposed by Greece (Sümer 2009, 127), but, informed by the opinion of the European Commission, it was eventually rejected in 1990 on the grounds that neither Turkey nor the EC were yet ready to begin accession talks due to continuing political and economic instability in Turkey, and the adoption of the Single European Act in the EU (Yılmaz 2009, 3-4). However, in contrast to the case of Morocco, which applied in the same year as Turkey and was rejected on the grounds that it was geographically not part of Europe (Rumelili 2004, 42), it was at least established that Turkey was considered a European country from the point of view of EC accession, and was potentially eligible for membership. In this context, it was decided to revive the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU (Togan 2002, 2), while both parties agreed to develop an improved and intensified political dialogue on foreign policy issues of mutual interest (Sümer 2009, 128).

Meanwhile, the prospect of enlargement to the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), many of which were not notably more economically or politically developed than Turkey, made it difficult to

keep the Turkish application for membership on hold any longer (Togan 2002, 2). Despite this, Turkey was not granted candidate status at the 1997 Luxembourg Council, due to the opposition of Greece and Germany in particular, although several CEECs were recognised as official candidates during the summit. This resulted in a crisis in Turkey-EU relations, with Turkey announcing that it would cut off political dialogue with the EU (Sümer 2009, 128-129). Turkey was finally granted formal candidate status at the 1999 Helsinki Council, which was followed by an intensive period of reform, under the coalition government of the time and, from 2002, under the new AKP government (Cebeci 2016, 119). Notably, the early AKP years saw a particularly energetic period of Europeanising reform, including radical reforms in sensitive areas such as enhancing the rights of freedom of expression and assembly, the abolition of the death penalty, the abolition of the ban on teaching and broadcasting in languages other than Turkish, the narrowing of the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians, and the abolition of state security courts (Kaliber 2016, 59). In this context, Turkey was invited to open accession negotiations in October 2005 based on the positive assessment of the 2004 Commission Progress Report on Turkey.

However, following the opening of negotiations, Turkey's accession process remained controversial, with Austria, for instance, proposing a more limited "privileged partnership" to replace full membership, while even the Commission was divided on the issue. Notably, in contrast to the case of the CEECs, the Commission classified negotiations with Turkey as "open-ended", there was a new emphasis on the EU's "absorption capacity", the negotiations could be suspended with a significant breach of the political criteria on Turkey's part, and Turkey was required to sign customs agreements with all new members, including Cyprus (Casanova 2006, 234-235). In December 2006 the Council of Ministers decided to freeze 8 out of 35 of the negotiation chapters in response to Turkey's refusal to open its ports to Cyprus (Müftüler-Baç and Çiçek 2016, 192). In addition, further vetoes originated from Cyprus and France on a bilateral basis, and included some chapters on which Turkey's alignment was already advanced, or even complete. Cyprus vetoed six chapters in December 2009[1], while France vetoed five chapters on the basis that they would "prejudge accession as the final outcome of the negotiations" (Müftüler-Baç and Çiçek 2016, 192). In consequence, by 2012, Turkey had only opened 13 of the 35 chapters and closed just one, while 18

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[1] Education and culture, Energy, Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, Justice, Freedom and Society, Foreign and Security Policy and Freedom of Movement of Workers (Müftüler-Baç and Çiçek 2016, 190)

chapters remained frozen. In contrast, Croatia, which began accession negotiations at the same time as Turkey, became a full member in 2013.

On the Turkish side, important reforms did continue following the opening of the accession negotiations, most notably the 2009 Kurdish initiative, which sought to extend cultural and linguistic rights to the Kurdish minority (Avcı 2011, 417), or the 2010 Constitutional reform package, which focused on the judicial system and civil-military relations (Yılmaz 2016, 90). However, particularly since 2011, there has been notable "backsliding" and, more broadly, de-Europeanisation in many areas (Müftüler-Baç and Çiçek 2016, 192) including the rule of law (Saatçıoğlu 2016) and freedom of speech and of assembly, with the freedom of the press being particularly affected (Kemahlıoğlu 2015, 446) (İçöz 2016, 9). Moreover, de-Europeanisation has also been evident in an increasingly Eurosceptic AKP discourse on Europe and the EU (Aydın-Düzgit 2016) (MacMillan 2016). As Alpan emphasises, however, Europe has not lost its role as a reference point in Turkish political discourse completely. Thus, while Europe

> lost its central role within political debates, no longer being the lingua franca of politics …the political actors still spoke 'Europe' as what might be termed a second language, and made intense reference to it for different purposes within different contexts (Alpan 2016, 23).

In tandem with de-Europeanisation at the political level, support for EU accession among the Turkish population has also plummeted. According to a 2015 Eurobarometer survey, for instance, Turkey showed the lowest level of support for EU accession among all the candidate countries, with only 33% of Turkish respondents considering that EU accession would be "a good thing" (European Commission 2015, 96). In this context, Turkey's accession process has continued to progress at a snail's pace, with only 15 out of 35 chapters opened as of January 2016, and only one (science and research) provisionally closed (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber 2016, 3).

The Turkey-EU refugee agreement, agreed in late 2015, at first appeared to be a re-energising factor in Turkey's EU accession bid (Müftüler-Baç 2015), as well as in speeding up the visa liberalisation process between Turkey and the EU. In the context of the agreement, the EU hinted at the acceleration of accession negotiations, the immediate opening of chapter 17 and the imminent opening of further negotiation chapters. It also committed to the instigation of biannual summit meetings with Turkey, the establishment of a continual political dialogue, high-level dialogue formats on economic and energy policy and the renegotiation of the customs union

(Seufert 2016) (Nas and Özer 2017, 162). While the deal has been partially successful in stemming the flow of refugees to the Greek islands, and has appeared to undermine the people-smuggling networks active in the region (Monar 2017, 1-2) (Paul and Seyrek 2016), considerable difficulties remain.

As Bürgin argues, in the context of the readmission agreement between Turkey and the EU, and later the refugee deal, visa exemption replaced full membership as an external incentive, as full membership was no longer perceived as credible in terms of conditionality (Bürgin 2013, 8). However, visa facilitation itself has proved problematic, arguably putting the entire deal in jeopardy. Notably, while Turkey has fulfilled 65 of the 72 benchmarks required by the EU for visa liberalisation, the requirement to revise its anti-terror laws in particular[2] has faced opposition from the Turkish side in the context of the attempted coup of 2016 (Paul and Seyrek, 2016). This has been coupled with a lack of enthusiasm for visa exemption for Turkey on the part of several Member States (Paul and Seyrek, 2016). As a result, the readmission agreement is currently only partly functioning, and will be fully implemented by Ankara only once the dialogue on visa liberalisation is finally opened (Erkuş 2017).

In this context, then, Turkey/EU relations had arguably reached a complete standstill by 2017, compounded by the attempted coup of 15 July 2016 and the resulting crackdowns on organisations and individuals suspected of being involved with the Gülenist movement. Notably, the European Parliament (EP) voted in July 2017 in favour of suspending Turkey's accession process if the Turkish constitutional reform package is implemented unchanged (Toksabay and Karadeniz 2017). Moreover, the Commission's 2018 report on Turkey's progress towards accession is perhaps the most critical yet, particularly regarding the political criteria (European Commission 2018). Despite the March 2018 meeting between President Erdoğan with EP President Donald Tusk and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in Varna, which was intended to keep "channels of dialogue open" (Fırat 2018) and "to continue the dialogue in really difficult circumstances" (Associated Press 2018), then, the prospect of Turkish EU accession arguably appears to be as distant as ever.

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[2] The European Union has asked Turkey to align its legislation on terrorism with the EU *acquis,* Council of Europe standards and European Court of Human Rights jurisprudence on terrorism (Paul and Seyrek 2016).

Organisation of the Book

The book is divided into two broad sections. The first section offers an external perspective in that the five papers which comprise it either examine EU/European discourse on Turkey's accession or compare aspects of Turkey's accession process with those of other candidate countries or Member States. The second section of the book, comprised of the final four chapters, focuses primarily on (de)Europeanisation and Euroscepticism in Turkey.

Yurttaş and Şekercioglu's chapter examines the European Commission's eighteen progress reports on Turkey's candidate status after 1998 together with the EP's published resolutions regarding these reports. In this context, the study focuses on the EU's changing discourse regarding Turkish civil society and NGOs with the aim of showing the changes in the EU's perception of Turkey's accession process. Notably, Yurttaş and Şekercioglu highlight the increasingly negative criticism on the part of both the Commission and the EP regarding the state of Turkish civil society, as well as the increasing salience of this issue for Turkey's EU accession process.

In the second chapter, Karana and Kahraman explore the growing far right movements in the Netherlands as the basis of Euroscepticism there by focusing on right-wing attitudes towards Turkey's EU accession. The authors note that a rise in Euroscepticism at the national level has EU-wide implications, as an increase in domestic Euroscepticism triggers EU-level Euroscepticism and vice versa. The findings of the study verify that since 2004 Euroscepticism has increased not only in the Netherlands but all over Europe, and has been stimulated by the rise of extreme right or populist parties. Notably, given their Euroscepticism and their negative attitudes towards Turkish accession in particular, the rise of the extreme right has also affected the debate on Turkey's EU membership bid. On this basis, the authors argue that both hard and soft Euroscepticism are evident in Dutch right-wing discourse on Turkey's accession to the EU as Turkey is framed not only as a challenge to European identity, values and cultural/civilisational heritage, but also to the institutional structure, policies and polity of the Union.

In the third chapter, Baudner analyses the dynamics of party competition in the domestic debate on participating in the European integration project, comparing the post-war debate in Germany with the debate in the early 2000s in Turkey. Focusing on a comparison between two postconfessional parties, the AKP in the early 2000s and the post-war rise of the Christian democrats in Germany, the chapter notes a surprising

similarity in the stance of the two parties towards the European Community and Union respectively: both the AKP and the early Christian democrats advocated accession to "Europe". This support for European integration strongly reflected the ambition of the two postconfessional parties in question to develop into catch-all parties using "European leverage". In contrast, the dominant left-wing opposition parties – the CHP in the Turkish case and the SPD in postwar Germany – both adopted a Eurosceptic position. As Baudner argues, in contrast to the AKP and CDU, these parties refrained from competing as catch-all parties due to their belief in a superior legitimacy within the nation state.

Božić Miljiković's chapter also offers a comparative perspective on the Turkish accession process; in this case Turkey's trajectory is compared with those of the Western Balkan countries. Despite important historical and economic differences between them– the Turkish economy, for instance, is considerably larger and more dynamic than those of the much smaller, postcommunist Western Balkan countries–they have faced similar issues in their bids for EU accession. Perhaps most notable of these is their slow progress towards accession, the EU's so-called "carrot and stick" accession policy, and its lack of enthusiasm for further enlargement. Other factors which have dampened enthusiasm for EU membership in both Turkey and the Western Balkans include economic crisis and, more specifically, the Eurozone crisis. Notably, citizens in these candidate countries have tended to be less optimistic regarding their country's prospects for EU membership, while support for accession appears to be constantly decreasing. In this context, then, the paper discusses the Western Balkan countries' and Turkey's prospects for accession, and debates whether these candidate countries could achieve economic growth and stability if they remained outside the EU.

Tungul's chapter compares the effect of Europeanisation on education policies towards the Roma in Turkey and the Czech Republic, both of which have large Roma populations. Education has been a key focus of EU Roma inclusion policies in both countries, as the Roma have long suffered from poor access to education, which contributes to continued high levels of social exclusion among the community. Notably, poverty and, in the case of Turkey, nomadic lifestyles have often prevented Roma children from completing their education, while they often face discrimination and prejudice within the school system. Tungul argues that, although the EU accession process has helped to raise both awareness and funding for projects, the Roma continue to face prejudice and obstacles generally and, more specifically, in the area of education in both countries. The effectiveness of the EU's initiatives is limited as, in the context of EU

"double standards" in the area of minority rights, the Czech and Turkish governments have often seemed to be more interested in appeasing the EU than in actually improving the situation of the Roma, resulting in so-called "Potemkin Europeanisation". In any case, Tungul notes that the adoption of the EU legal framework is not sufficient for improving the situation of the Roma; it should be accompanied by much broader social change, led by governments and NGOs, in order to combat widespread discriminatory and racist attitudes towards the Roma. She suggests that the educated young Roma elite could be key players in this regard.

Based on a transnational governance approach, Altan's chapter argues that the efforts to build a European higher education area (EHEA) through the Bologna Process could pose remarkable implications for a closer study into the (neo)institutional dynamics of governance concerning the Europeanisation of education policies. In this context, the study aims to address the architecture of transnational governance in the restructuring process of higher education in Turkey, which has been engaged in the Bologna objectives as a signatory country since 2001. Particular attention is drawn to the changing dynamics and new challenges posed to multilayered governance sites in the transformation of higher education institutions as far as the Bologna implementations are concerned.

Nahya's chapter explores how Euroscepticism is [re]produced among a group of university students in the context of historical interpretations of European history and the image of the EU. Nahya argues that, from the students' perspective, Europe as a space and the EU as a union are not conceived of as separate from each other, or from Europeanness in general. In their "mental maps", "continental Europe" and "real Europe" are different; while England, Germany and France are considered "real Europe", some other countries are included in Europe stage by stage. The students relate the EU's current economic relations with the colonial past of the major European countries; thus the EU is associated with colonialism, imperialism and also socialism. These associations form the basis of distrust towards the EU. This chapter concludes, then, that the historical roots of Euroscepticism are derived not only from Europe's own history but also from the relations between Europe and Ottoman Empire, as well as with modern Turkey.

With a broadly constructivist focus, MacMillan's chapter uses Foreign Policy Discourse Analysis, a form of analysis based on Foucault's conception of discourse, in order to examine the discourse of the governing AKP on the Turkish accession process to the EU in the context of broader discourses on state and nation and on discourses of self and other *vis a vis* Europe. The chapter focuses on some fundamental

differences between Kemalist discourse and AKP discourse, and traces the evolution of AKP discourse on the EU since the party came into power in 2002. Notably, it argues that the AKP discursively constructs Turkey as being closer to fulfilling "European values" such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law than the EU itself.

Finally, in the context of increasing scepticism in both Turkey and the EU, Paksoy's chapter examines the discourse of the Turkish media on Turkey's accession process. Following a basically constructivist framework, Paksoy examines the discursive construction of Turkey's EU membership bid in Turkish newspapers, with a focus on how the EU and its relationship with Turkey are defined, labelled and referred to. The study is also placed in the context of a historical analysis of Turkish Euroscepticism. As a representative sample of the Turkish press, Aksoy chooses five newspapers according to their political orientations and market types. He argues that the attitudes of the newspapers vary considerably according to these factors; however, while Eurosceptic attitudes are strong overall in the Turkish press, a minority of articles continues to display a more positive view towards the EU and Turkey's accession bid, focusing on co-operation and togetherness between the two parties.

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PART ONE:

EXTERNAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

CHAPTER ONE

THE EU'S CHANGING DISCOURSE IN THE EU DOCUMENTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN TURKEY

ALPER YURTTAŞ AND SELMA ŞEKERCIOĞLU

Abstract Since their beginning in the late 1950s, the relations between Turkey and the European Union (EU) have always been characterised by ups and downs. In the context of Turkey's long-standing candidate status, its accession process has gained new dimensions and a higher profile as foreign policy choices have become more important besides the technical aspects of integration, especially as a consequence of the recent refugee crises. Since 1998, the European Commission (Commission hereafter) has published nineteen reports on Turkey's progress towards accession consisting of almost 1700 pages. In addition, the European Parliament (EP) has published different resolutions with regard to these reports. In these reports and resolutions the EU's wording regarding developments in civil society in Turkey has changed depending on the conditions of the period in question. It is well known that some civil society organisations (CSOs) have direct access to EU bodies, thus enabling them to affect decision-making process. Moreover, some of these CSOs may be funded via EU programmes through relationships with their counterpart organisations in Europe. Considering developments in democratisation, the position of civil society organisations and their ability to express themselves in Turkey, it is crucial to determine the situation of Turkish CSOs. In this regard, this study will focus on the EU's changing discourse about civil society in Turkey by analysing the Commission progress reports and the EP resolutions. By doing so, it aims to show the changes in the EU's perception on Turkey's accession process.

Keywords: Turkey, civil society, Commission, European Parliament, enlargement

Introduction

Turkey first applied for EU membership back in April 1987, and its accession process is still ongoing. It is possible to focus on different aspects of this process in order to understand why it has taken so long.