

PUBLIC PORTRAYAL OF TURKEY IN VISEGRAD  
COUNTRIES

THE VISEGRAD REPORT

January 2013

**Edited by Pelin Ayan Musil  
and Juraj Mahfoud**

Project Partners:



Supported By





PUBLIC PORTRAYAL OF TURKEY IN VISEGRAD  
COUNTRIES

THE VISEGRAD REPORT

**Edited by Pelin Ayan Musil  
and Juraj Mahfoud**

**January 2013**



## **FOREWORD**

**This report is the outcome of a one-year research project led by Anglo-American University and supported by International Visegrad Fund. It is a compilation of country reports prepared by the partner institutions in each Visegrad country: Central European University IRES Department in Hungary, Tischner European University in Poland, Comenius University Institute of Public Policy and Economics in Slovakia and Anglo-American University in Czech Republic. The Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) contributes to the research project through publicizing the report in Turkey.**

**The first draft of this report has been presented in a public symposium held at Anglo-American University in Prague on 9 November 2012. This final version of the report is to be presented in March 2013 in Turkey, with the kind contributions of the Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey. We also would like to thank Bogazici University Center for European Studies for hosting the presentation of this report in Istanbul, Turkey.**

**The views expressed in this report are solely the authors' and do not reflect the views of the supporters.**



## AUTHORS

**Konrad Pedziwiatr, PhD** is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for European Studies, Cracow University of Economics and Tischner European University. Alumnus of the Jagiellonian University, University of Exeter and University of Oxford specializing in sociology of migration, new social movements and sociology of religion (especially Islam), holding a PhD in Social Sciences from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium). Author of monographs 'The New Muslim Elites in European Cities: Religion and Active Social Citizenship Amongst Young Organized Muslims in Brussels and London' (VDM Verlag 2010) and 'From Islam of Immigrants to Islam of Citizens: Muslims in the Countries of Western Europe' (Nomos 2005, 2007) and numerous other scientific and non-scientific publications on Islam and Muslims in Europe and social movements in Europe and the Middle East. Member of the Centre of Migration Studies, University of Warsaw and the Committee on Migration Research of the Polish Academy of Science. (Contact:

**Emel Akçali, PhD** is an Assistant Professor at the International Relations and European Studies Department of Central European University in Budapest. She graduated in International Relations at both the American University (Paris, BA) and at the Université de Galatasaray (Istanbul, MA). She obtained her PhD in Political Geography at Paris IV-Sorbonne in France. She worked at the Political Science and International Studies Department of University of Birmingham as a visiting lecturer and taught at Franklin College, Lugano, Switzerland before joining IRES. Her current research interests span social movements, upheavals and (trans-)formation of collective identities in the age of globalisation and Europeanisation, the state, society and politics in the Middle East, EU democratisation efforts in its periphery, non-Western and alternative globalist geopolitical discourses and critical realist philosophy.

**Pelin Ayan Musil, PhD** is a faculty member and lecturer at the School of International Relations and Diplomacy of Anglo-American University in Prague. She obtained her MA degree from Central European University and PhD degree from Bilkent University in Political Science. During her PhD studies in 2007-2008, she has studied at the Department of Government of Georgetown University as a Fulbright Visiting Researcher. Her current research interests are comparative democratization, transitions from authoritarian regimes, political parties and party systems, politics of Turkey and Middle East as well as EU enlargement. Apart from the articles she wrote on these topics, she is the author of the book titled *Authoritarian Party Structures and Democratic Political Setting in Turkey* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

**Mgr. Juraj Mahfoud** is a researcher at the School of International Relations and Diplomacy as well as Operations Manager at Anglo-American University in Prague. He obtained his BA degree from Anglo-American University and continued his MA studies at Metropolitan University in Prague in the major of International relations and European studies. He acquired his MA degree at Metropolitan University, where he made a research on the topic “Geostrategic consequences of Turkish integration to the EU”. His current research interest is concentrated on the region of Middle East, namely the Levant countries and their influence on the Middle East as well as on the European Union.

**Ol'ga Gyarfasova, PhD** is an associate professor at the Institute of European Studies and International Relations, Comenius University in Bratislava, and senior researcher at the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), a public policy research think-tank. In her work she focuses on public opinion, voting behaviour, nationalism, and populism. She has served as a national co-ordinator of European Election Studies in 2004 and the PIREDEU project in 2009 as well as the principal investigator of CSES study. She is author, co-author and co-editor of dozens of expert publications, among them *Democracy and Populism in Central Europe: The Visegrad Elections and Their Aftermath* (2007) and *National Populism in Slovakia* (2009).

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION by Pelin Ayan Musil.....	5
I. POLAND by Konrad Pedziwiatr.....	10
II. HUNGARY by Emel Akcali.....	37
III. CZECH REPUBLIC by Pelin Ayan Musil and Juraj Mahfoud.....	61
IV. SLOVAKIA by Olga Gyarfasova.....	86
APPENDIX – Interview Questions.....	112



## INTRODUCTION

Among the candidate countries to the European Union, Turkey is known to have a distinctive cultural and historical identity with a large Muslim population. Thus, it has been one of the most disputable candidates for EU membership. Together with its rising role as a regional power in the Middle East nowadays, the issue of Turkey's accession to the EU deserves to be re-debated and put on public agenda again.

Directed by such an objective, this report brings together the findings of a research, which investigates the approach of each Visegrad country—Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia—toward Turkey's accession to the EU. The main research questions that are asked in this report are: How is Turkey publicly portrayed in each country? How does the public portrayal of Turkey correspond to the political and public opinion on its accession to the EU? What are the reasons for supporting or opposing Turkey's membership in each country?

The consensus among scholars and policy experts is that elite opinion should not be our only concern if we want to make predictions about the future of candidate countries because it is the public that has the power to halt accessions.<sup>1</sup> Thus, there is a need to understand the causal mechanisms for why people oppose or support candidate countries. This study partly achieves this goal by focusing on the portrayal of Turkey as an EU candidate in four Visegrad countries.<sup>2</sup>

Existing studies on the EU-Turkey debate do not particularly have a Visegrad focus.<sup>3</sup> Yet, a Visegrad focus should be of concern for two reasons. First, Turkey at

---

<sup>1</sup> Simon Hug. *Voices of Europe: Citizens, Referendums and European Integration* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). Dora Husz, "Perspectives: Public Opinion – A Stumbling Block to Enlargement?" *Perspectives: Central European Review of International Affairs* 20 (2003): 5–39.

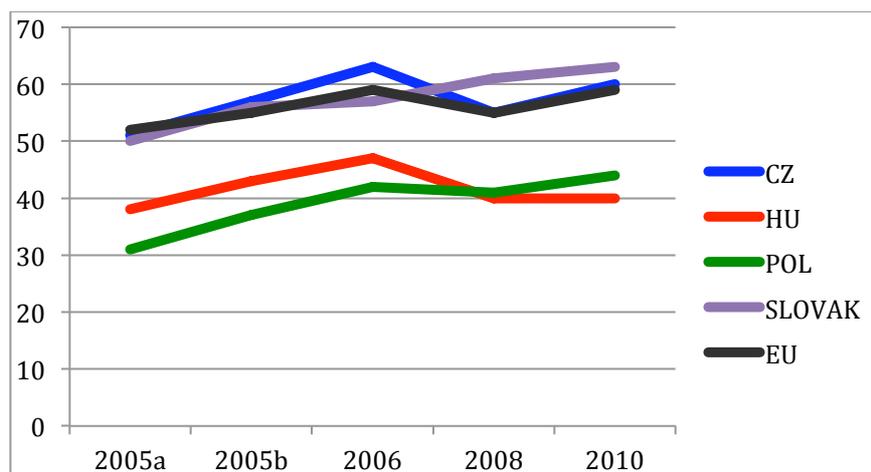
<sup>2</sup> A similar study on Turkey was also conducted in France. See EDAM Report. *Turquie-France - Dialogue de Sourds. Avec le Soutien de STRATIM* (2010), prepared by Nicole Pope.

<sup>3</sup> There is, yet, one exception which combines Turkish and Central European perspectives on the politics of EU accession in one volume: Lucie Tunkrova and Pavel Saradin (eds), *The Politics of EU Accession: Turkish challenges and Central European experiences* (Routledge: New York and London, 2010).

the political level receives the support of these countries even though the public opinion differs in each. The political support is contrary to the picture we are familiar with in West European countries such as France and Germany. Second, Visegrad countries share a similar cultural background and a similar experience in their accession to the EU. As a matter of this resemblance, one might conclude that it is reasonable to expect a similarity in their public opinion on Turkey's accession. In fact, the research findings show that the four countries show similarities in following aspects: It is observed in all four that Turkey-EU debate does not really occupy the public agenda, there is usually support for Turkey's membership at the political elite level, no big deal of Turkish immigration takes place to any of the four countries. Thus, it is the media's portrayal of Turkey that intuitively influences people's minds about their approach to its membership in the EU.

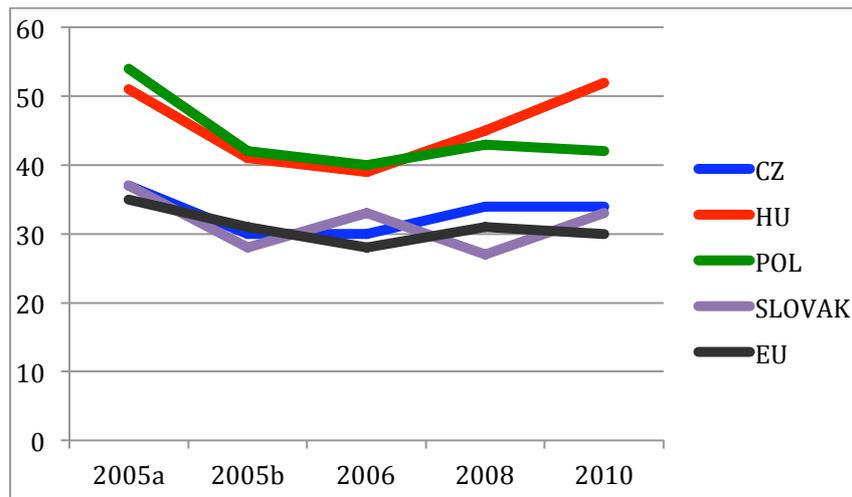
Yet, the Eurobarometer surveys conducted in the last seven years show that the public support for Turkey's membership in the Visegrad countries varies significantly, especially between Hungary-Poland and Czech Republic-Slovakia. According to the surveys, while Hungary and Poland are more supportive of Turkey; Czech Republic and Slovakia are closer to the public opinion observed in Western Europe, which is more skeptical and less supportive of Turkey's accession to EU (See Graph 1 and Graph 2). So, what causes such variance?

**GRAPH 1: PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST TURKEY'S ACCESSION TO THE EU (%)**



Source: Eurobarometer Standard Reports 63-64-65-69-73

**GRAPH 2: PUBLIC OPINION FOR TURKEY'S ACCESSION TO THE EU (%)**



Source: Eurobarometer Standard Reports 63-64-65-69-73

**In the chapter on Poland,** Pedziwiatr shows that the mainstream media describes Turkey in a highly balanced way or with hints of sympathy to Turkish EU ambitions. He further finds out that the articles presenting Turkey in overwhelmingly negative light are extremely rare. He notes that the antipathy against Turkey which existed as a result of associating the country with Islam in Poland is decreasing over the years.

**In the chapter on Hungary,** Akcali argues that the majority of Hungarian public opinion has been supportive of Turkey's accession to the EU as a result of the lack of a significant Muslim immigration to and in Hungary, historical and current cultural affinities between the two countries and Turkey's being a non-issue for Hungarian domestic politics. Her findings further show that because Turkey is perceived as a strong country in Hungary, it is believed to challenge the balance of power within the EU for the advantage of Visegrad states.

**In the chapter on Czech Republic,** Musil and Mahfoud explain the reasons for the negative public opinion toward Turkey's accession to EU. They argue that Czechs perceive Turkey as culturally distant from themselves. The non-existence of historical relations between the two states and the stereotypes of Muslims in Czech society shaped by a right-wing media bring such a perception. The word 'Islam' is overstressed in most of the news that relate to the politics and foreign policy of Turkey, which create a subconscious negative impact on people who do not know much about Turkey.

**In the chapter on Slovakia**, Gyarfasova explains that on Turkey's accession to the EU, the public opinion is less informed and many stereotypes and historical prejudices are observed within Slovak society. As for the media images, the analysis identifies patterns both supportive and against Turkey's accession to the EU and the opposing patterns are usually framed by cultural and religious differences.

The sources of data for this research are of two types: The first type is based on conducting a systematic content analysis of the media coverage in four countries starting from the beginning of 2005 until the year 2011. 3 October 2005 is the date when the official negotiation talks between Turkey and the EU started and thus it is expected that there is an intensity of public debate on Turkey's accession starting from 2005 on. Furthermore, all Visegrad countries became members of the EU in 2004; therefore the beginning of 2005 is an ideal point for these countries' self-identification as EU memberstates. The analysis for each country includes a detailed investigation of how Turkey was portrayed in the most influential, popular newspapers and magazines.

The second type of data collection is based on open-ended in-depth interviews with opinion leaders. The opinion leaders are selected from experts from the academic field, media professionals, policy analysts, party representatives, leaders of influential NGOs and think-tanks and the state officials. The interviewees were asked to give their opinion about the public perceptions of Turkey and its accession to EU in their country (See list of interview questions in Appendix).

**Pelin Ayan Musil**

## References

- EDAM Report. 2010. *Turquie-France - Dialogue de Sourds*. Avec le Soutien de STRATIM, prepared by Nicole Pope.
- European Commission. 2005sa. “Eurobarometer 63 – Standard Report” Accessed July 17, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_en.pdf)
- European Commission.2005b. “Eurobarometer 64 – Standard Report” Accessed July 18, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)
- European Commission.2006b. “Eurobarometer 65 – Standard Report” Accessed July 18, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)
- European Commission.2008a. “Eurobarometer 69 – Standard Report” Accessed July 18, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)
- European Commission.2010b. “Eurobarometer 73 – Standard Report” Accessed July 19, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)
- Hug, Simon. 2002. *Voices of Europe: Citizens, Referendums and European Integration*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Husz, Dora. 2003. “Perspectives: Public Opinion – A Stumbling Block to Enlargement?” *Perspectives: Central European Review of International Affairs* 20: 5–39.
- Tunkrova, Lucie and Pavel Saradin (eds). 2010. *The Politics of EU Accession: Turkish challenges and Central European experiences*. Routledge: New York and London.

## I. POLAND

**Konrad Pędziwiatr**

*Numerous surveys<sup>1</sup> have shown that Poland is one of the countries of the European Union that is most favorable to further enlargement of the EU structures and the accession of Turkey into the EU. This chapter sheds light on the main findings of the research project that systematically analyzed how Turkey has been portrayed in the Polish media since the beginning of the accession negotiations. It shows that the public portrayal of Turkey in Poland is very much in line with the opinions expressed by Polish respondents in international social surveys. The main quality newspapers (i.e. Gazeta Wyborcza and Rzeczpospolita) and the newsmagazine (Polityka) describe Turkey and Turkish issues usually in neutral way or with hints of sympathy to Turkish EU ambitions. In the last years one can also easily detect a tone of respect and admiration for the state of Turkish economy and its dynamic and flexible foreign policy especially with regards to the Arab Spring. The articles presenting Turkey in overwhelmingly negative light are extremely rare especially on the pages of Polityka and Gazeta Wyborcza. They are a little bit more frequent on the pages of Rzeczpospolita, but still the predominant character of reporting on Turkey and the portrayal of the country is well balanced with a numerous articles praising Turkish systemic transformations.*

### **Introduction**

*“Poland supports Turkey's efforts to become a member of the European Union. After fulfilling universal entry criteria all the barriers for Turkish accession into the EU should disappear” – said Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk during his visit to Turkey in 2010 and in this way he expressed the attitudes of a large section of the Polish society<sup>2</sup>. According to the Eurobarometer surveys<sup>3</sup> Poland is one of the countries of the European Union that is most favorable to further enlargement of the EU structures and the accession of Turkey to the EU. The Polish society's support for enlargement is significantly higher than the EU-27 average and it has not been too deeply affected by the general enlargement fatigue. The country tries to promote the*

---

<sup>1</sup> Eurobarometer, "Attitudes Towards European Union Enlargement," (Brussels: European Commission, 2006); "The European Today and Tomorrow," (Brussels: European Commission, 2010); "Standard Eurobarometer," (Brussels: European Commission, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> D. Tusk, "Wprost," (2010), <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/161297/Premier-Turcji-z-wizyta-w-Polsce/>.

<sup>3</sup> Eurobarometer, "Attitudes Towards European Union Enlargement."; "The European Today and Tomorrow."; "Standard Eurobarometer."

idea of EU enlargement also at the international level by being a member of the informal Tallinn Group uniting 11 EU states that are in favor of further enlargement and seeking ways of putting it back on the EU agenda.

The goal of this report is to shed light on some of the key reasons behind the Polish support for Turkish accession into the EU. The report is an outcome of a larger international research project that has sought roots of the pro-enlargement attitudes in the Visegrad Countries. The key assumption behind the research was that way media and opinion leaders in the country/region talk about Turkey and Turkish issues has a significant influence on the perception of Turkey by the wider public opinion. So far there has not been any research that would systematically analyze the media discourses on Turkey and Turkish issues in Poland.<sup>4</sup> The research of this type carried in France (one of the most anti-enlargement members of the EU) revealed that the discourse of the former president Sarkozy and *Le Monde's* played a key role in a popularization of a highly negative image of Turkey in the French public.<sup>5</sup>

The paper is based on research that involved systematic content analysis of how Turkey was portrayed in the most influential quality newspapers in Poland (i.e. *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*) and the newsmagazine (*Polityka*) over the period of 7 years, that is since the beginning of the official negotiation talks between Turkey and the EU in October 2005 till October 2012.<sup>6</sup> In the course of the fieldwork the author has conducted also 10 in-depth interviews with the opinion leaders from within the Turkish community in Poland (5 interviews) and the Polish society (5 interviews). The interviewees were inter alia scholars specializing in Turkish or European issues, former journalists and media professionals, policy analysts and leaders of influential NGOs and think-tanks.<sup>7</sup> Before the key findings of the research into the public portrayal of Turkey in Poland will be revealed it is worth at least briefly to depict the most important aspects of the Polish-Turkish historic, political,

---

<sup>4</sup> An attempt to deal with these issues was undertaken recently by Chomętowska-Kontkiewicz in a short (less than 6 pages) article on dualism of the presentation of Turkey in the Polish press, however, her article says very little about the methodology of the undertaken content analysis and the findings are presented in non-systematic manner without in-depth analysis - A. Chomętowska-Kontkiewicz, "Globalizacja kontra islamizacja: dwubiegunowy wizerunek Turcji w polskiej prasie opiniotwórczej" in *Zachód a świat islamu - zrozumieć* ed. I. Kończak, Woźniak, M. (Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> EDAM, "Turquie-France - Dialogue de Sourds," (Stambul: EDAM, 2010), 16.

<sup>6</sup> More detailed information about the methodology of the research are provided in the subchapter below analyzing the key findings of the project.

<sup>7</sup> Please see the full list of persons interviewed with their affiliations at the end of the paper.

economic, social and cultural relations that have impact on the way the discourse on Turkey is being constructed in the country.

### **Polish - Turkish Past and Present**

The official relations between the two countries go back to 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> In 2014 Poland and Turkey will celebrate 600 anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations. Ever since first Polish diplomats (Skarbek z Góry and Grzegorz Ormianin) came to Ottoman territories in 1414 the relations between the two countries have been quite intense and went through numerous ups and downs. Today some of the events that have made particularly strong imprint on the Polish collective memory are the wars and battles with the expanding Ottoman Empire and in particular the Battle of Varna in 1444, Battle of Cecora in 1620, Battle of Chocim in 1621 and Battle of Vienna in 1683. These events seem to fit well into the recently popular “clash of civilization” perception of relations between the two countries and revived by the Right wing activists idea of Poland as the Christian bulwark of Europe - *Polonia Antemurale Christianis*.<sup>9</sup> Much less attention has been paid to the history of peaceful relations and intense contacts in the fields of commerce and culture that have had inter alia a significant influence on the creation of Polish-Lithuanian Sarmatism<sup>10</sup> (interview with AB, PK, KK). However, due to intensification of economic, political and socio-cultural relations in the last decade some slow transformation of the collective memory seems to take place.

What is often forgotten by contemporary Poles is the fact that the Ottoman Empire was the only major country in the world, which did not recognize the Partitions of Poland, and that numerous Polish veterans of the November Uprising, January Uprising and Crimean War found a safe haven in Turkey. Many Polish officers (e.g. Józef Bem, Michał Czajkowski, Marian Langiewicz) fought for the Ottoman Army and some of them even died in Turkey. The most celebrated Polish

---

<sup>8</sup> Please see the full list of Polish diplomats serving in Turkey over the centuries on the website of the Polish embassy in Ankara - <http://www.ankara.polemb.net/index.php?document=123> (accessed 1.09.2012)

<sup>9</sup> J. Tazbir, *Szlachta i teologowie. Studia z dziejów polskiej kontrreformacji*. (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> A term designating the dominant lifestyle, culture and ideology of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility from the 16th to the 19th centuries. For more information about Sarmatism (please see T. Sulimirski, *The Sarmatians* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).) and for information about the rich Polish-Ottoman relations between 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries see D. Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century)* (Leiden: Brill, 1999)..

national poet Adam Mickiewicz also spent the last months of his life in Istanbul and died there. Part of the house in which he lived was transformed in 1955 (100 years after his death) into the Adam Mickiewicz Museum.<sup>11</sup>

After the WWI Poland was one of the first countries that recognized Turkish state built on the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. The next key moment in the history of the bilateral relations was the collapse of communism. The two countries, once in the opposing geopolitical blocs, found themselves in the same group of democratic countries undergoing deep transformations. What is particularly remembered in Poland from this period is that Polish aspiration to become a member of NATO has been strongly supported by Turkey (member of NATO since 1952). The Polish accession to NATO in 1999 meant that the two countries with friendly relations became de facto allies.

### **Polish Political Parties on Turkey and Bilateral Economic Relations<sup>12</sup>**

Current bilateral political relations between Poland and Turkey are good and since Poland became part of NATO and the EU their intensity has been growing. Yet, before Poland joined NATO the Polish-Turkish Presidential Committee, consisting of officials from key Polish and Turkish ministries was established in 1993. This committee has been meeting regularly once a year and discussing the key issues and barriers to even closer cooperation.<sup>13</sup>

The first visit of Turkish prime minister to Poland took place in May 2009. During this historic visit a strategic partnership declaration envisaging Polish-Turkish cooperation in Eurasia in numerous areas, including security and energy was signed.<sup>14</sup> In the following year Polish prime minister paid a visit to Turkey<sup>15</sup> and once again restated Polish support for the Turkish efforts to become a member of the EU. The presidential visits have been more frequent and since 1989 every Polish and

---

<sup>11</sup> For more information about the museum see the website of the Poland's Consulate General in Istanbul <http://www.stambulkg.polemb.net/?document=85> (accessed 1.09.2012)

<sup>12</sup> This part of the paper is based on the analysis of the Polish political parties' attitudes towards Turkish accession to the EU carried out by Zofia Sawicka and Michał Futyra from University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow, Poland.

<sup>13</sup> Poland has established such committees only with a few states, which shows the significance being paid to relations with Turkey.

<sup>14</sup> Adam. Balcer, "Poland and the Czech Republic: Advocates of the EU Enlargement?," (Warsaw: demosEUROPA, 2010), 13.

<sup>15</sup> This was the second visit of Polish prime minister to Turkey. The first was paid by Marek Belka in 2005.

Turkish president has visited Turkey and Poland respectively at least once. Regular consultation and contacts between departments of Polish and Turkish foreign ministries were even not withheld after a mini crisis in the bilateral relations in 2005 caused by the Polish Parliament's resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide.

There is a broad consensus across the political scene in Poland that the processes of EU enlargement should be continued. However, although all the major political parties officially support the accession of Turkey into the European Union, the public statements of their members often do not uphold this general policy. Moreover, there is minimal interest in Turkish issues amongst Polish politicians and very little enthusiasm for Turkish candidacy to the EU. One of the prominent Polish politician, Marek Siwiec, very aptly summarized this general trend by saying that Poland's policy towards Turkey is *"the policy of drifting" meaning that behind the declarations of support for Turkish accession into the EU very little is happening practically in order to implement this policy*".<sup>16</sup>

The author and his assistants have made numerous attempts to interview Polish politicians in the course of the fieldwork but with no success. The lack of responses from the political parties to requests of interviews is a good sign of the minimal interest Polish politicians have been paying to the issue of Turkish accession into the EU.<sup>17</sup> By and large, the issue is viewed in the political corridors as insignificant to Polish national interest and hence dismissed. One needs to wait yet some more time to evaluate the effectiveness of the Polish-Turkish Parliamentary Group formed in February 2012 in giving Poland's relations with Turkey higher priority.<sup>18</sup>

In spite of the official support for Turkish candidacy, the coalition parties that is the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska - PO) and the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe - PSL), do very little or almost nothing in order to promote it. For example, the issue was absent in the expose of the Minister of Foreign

---

<sup>16</sup> The politician mentioned this during the launch of the report by Towards Strategic Partnership of EU with Turkey Adam. Balcer, "W stronę strategicznego partnerstwa Unii Europejskiej i Turcji w polityce zagranicznej," (Warszawa: demosEUROPA, 2012).. Full account of the debate between Polish politicians and scholars on [http://www.demoseuropa.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=423%3Apartnerstwo-stragiczne-ue-turcja-w-polityce-zagranicznej-prezentacja-raportu&catid=102%3Az-ostatniego-rokuwydarzenia&Itemid=130&lang=pl](http://www.demoseuropa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=423%3Apartnerstwo-strategiczne-ue-turcja-w-polityce-zagranicznej-prezentacja-raportu&catid=102%3Az-ostatniego-rokuwydarzenia&Itemid=130&lang=pl) (accessed 1.09.2012)

<sup>17</sup> The requests of interview sent to the Turkish embassy in Warsaw remained also unanswered, so one may say that disinterest in the issues analyzed by the project prevailed on both sides.

<sup>18</sup> More information about the parliamentary group and its 31 members can be found on <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/SQL2.nsf/skladgr?OpenAgent&174&PL> (accessed 1.09.2012)

Affairs in front of the Polish Parliamentarians in March 2012. The Minister devoted a great deal of time to discuss Polish strategic partnership with Germany and elements of Polish Eastern Policy especially with regards to Ukraine and Belarus, but did not mention cooperation with Turkey even once.<sup>19</sup> The current policy of PO – PSL towards Turkey is highly ambiguous. On the one hand, vice Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak (PSL) during the meeting with Turkish Minister Zafer Caglayan in May 2012 declared that “*Poland supports Turkish efforts to join the EU*”<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, Member of European Parliament Artur Zasada (PO) calls in the European Parliament for protest and pressure on Turkey till it returns back to Cyprus part the city of Famagusta.<sup>21</sup>

The official position of the Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - PIS) with regards to the prospective Turkish accession into the EU is also positive, however some of the opinions of its individual members do not seem to take it into account. Yet, before the accession negotiations started PIS Member of Parliament Michał Ujazdowski warned that negotiations with Turkey would postpone integration with Ukraine<sup>22</sup>. Another politician of PIS, Member of the European Parliament, Konrad Szymański in the interview for “*Nasz Dziennik*” (Our Daily) newspaper linked to Radio Station Mary described Turkey as a candidate whose “*Europeanness is highly exaggerated*” and expressed worries about the “*Islamisation of Europe*”<sup>23</sup>. His opinions on the subject demonstrate clearly how religion has been brought silently to the negotiating table and became an unofficial criterion for accession. The process of making Islam a *de facto* criterion in the accession negotiations has been analyzed in-depth for example by Adam Szymański.<sup>24</sup>

The Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej) alike other parties in the Polish Parliament is in favor of the Turkish accession into the EU. Analyzing the party’s documents one may notice, however, that this support is not as

---

<sup>19</sup> IAR, “Smoleńsk, Niemcy, Unia. Expose Sikorskiego,” *Polskie Radio*(2012), [://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/575774,Smolensk-Niemcy-Unia-Expose-Sikorskiego](http://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/575774,Smolensk-Niemcy-Unia-Expose-Sikorskiego).

<sup>20</sup> A. Jarubas, “Polska i Turcja liderami wzrostu gospodarczego,” (2012), <http://adamjarubas.blog.onet.pl/Polska-i-Turcja-liderami-wzros,2,ID471548942,n>.

<sup>21</sup> A. Zasada, “Europosłowie apelują do Turcji o wycofanie się z Famagusty,” (2012), [http://www.poland-](http://www.poland-epp.eu/aktualnosc,1189,europoslowie_apeluja_do_turcji_o_wycofanie_sie_z_famagusty/pl)

[epp.eu/aktualnosc,1189,europoslowie\\_apeluja\\_do\\_turcji\\_o\\_wycofanie\\_sie\\_z\\_famagusty/pl](http://www.poland-epp.eu/aktualnosc,1189,europoslowie_apeluja_do_turcji_o_wycofanie_sie_z_famagusty/pl).

<sup>22</sup> PIS, “Proces rozszerzenia UE o Turcję odwraca uwagę Unii od Ukrainy,” (2004), <http://www.pis.org.pl/article.php?id=457>.

<sup>23</sup> “Członkostwo Turcji w UE nie jest potrzebne,” (2008), <http://www.pis.org.pl/article.php?id=13813>.

<sup>24</sup> A. Szymański, “Religia jako nieoficjalne kryterium członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej - przypadek Turcji,” in *Turcja i Europa: wyzwania i szanse*, ed. A. Szymański (Warszawa: PISM, 2011).

strong as with regards to the Balkan countries. Former chairmen of the party and party's candidate for president in 2010 Grzegorz Napieralski spoke frequently about the special role Poland could play as a bridge between Western European countries and Turkey.<sup>25</sup> The accession should take place according the SLD, however, only when all the criteria will be met.

One of the important ways of explaining little enthusiasm among the Polish political elites for Turkish accession and lack of frequent bilateral visits at the highest levels is to look at the economic cooperation between the two countries. Although it has been significantly intensifying in the last years Poland's share in Turkey's trade balance is less than 1.5 % and Turkey's share in the Polish trade balance is roughly the same. Given the economic potentials of each of the countries, the mutual foreign investments in Poland and Turkey is also quite limited.<sup>26</sup> Polish-Turkish economic relations have been particularly significant in tourism, textile and the building sector - Turkish firms (e.g. Gulermak) have been inter alia highly involved in the construction of the second metro line in Warsaw – but in other sectors this cooperation is still quite limited.<sup>27</sup>

### **Social and Cultural Relations between Poland and Turkey**

The Polish support for the EU enlargement and accession of Turkey into the EU so clearly visible in within the larger pan-European context in the Eurobarometer surveys<sup>28</sup> does not translate itself into the sympathy of Poles towards Turks. One of the major opinion polling institutes in Poland (CBOS) which has been analyzing the society's levels of sympathy and antipathy towards other nations since 1993 added Turks to the questionnaire in 2005. Since then the Turks have been scoring extremely low on the scale of sympathy and very high on the scale of antipathy (please see the tables 1 and 2 below). However, one may also clearly see a growing sympathy towards Turks in the last 8 years (from 14% sympathy in 2005 to 28% sympathy in 2012) and decreasing antipathy (from 53% to 37%).<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> TVN24, "Przyszłość Uni Europejskiej," (2010), <http://www.tvn24.pl/przyszlosc-unii-europejskiej,135428,s.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Balcer, "Poland and the Czech Republic: Advocates of the EU Enlargement?," 13-14.

<sup>27</sup> There were some chances the Turkish Airlines will acquire substantial part of the shares of Polish Airlines LOT and that this would revive bilateral economic relations, however, for the moment inter alia due to EU regulations these plans have been frozen.

<sup>28</sup> Eurobarometer, "Attitudes Towards European Union Enlargement.," "The European Today and Tomorrow."

<sup>29</sup> CBOS, "Stosunek Polaków do innych narodów," (Warszawa: CBOS, 2012).

**Table 1. Sympathy towards Turks (years 2005-2012 except 2009) and other nations**

Turcy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	17	18	28	28	29	28
Ukraińcy	12	9	14	16	15	13	16	19	22	19	29	23	24	25	34	34	32	32
Węgrzy	47	41	56	48	47	44	44	47	48	45	43	39	45	45	48	49	46	52
Wietnamczycy	-	-	-	-	-	20	21	23	24	19	17	15	18	18	28	29	30	29
Włosi	63	54	66	62	63	55	53	54	54	53	50	52	52	51	54	52	47	55
Żydzi	15	17	25	26	28	19	19	19	23	21	18	20	20	23	34	31	31	33

**Table 2. Antipathy towards Turks (years 2005-2012 except 2009) and other nations**

Turcy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	48	46	37	31	33	37
Ukraińcy	65	66	63	60	60	59	58	49	48	51	34	50	42	39	31	29	33	32
Węgrzy	18	21	14	16	16	20	15	15	14	19	13	25	18	16	13	10	12	13
Wietnamczycy	-	-	-	-	-	34	38	33	35	42	38	49	42	41	31	28	26	31
Włosi	6	12	8	7	8	11	11	8	10	12	11	15	14	13	12	10	13	11
Żydzi	51	47	45	41	41	48	49	47	46	47	45	50	45	40	32	27	31	29

Together with Arabs<sup>30</sup>, Libyans, Romanians and Roma people, Turks are to be found in the group of most disliked nations by Poles.<sup>31</sup> Antipathy towards these nations is expressed by Poles twice more often than sympathy. One of the major reasons behind such perceptions of Turks (as well as Arabs and Libyans) by Poles is an association made between Turkey and Islam within the context of quite widespread Islamophobia in the Polish society.<sup>32</sup> Although major victims of this anti-Muslim feelings within the Polish society are the Arabs (in 2012 only 23% of Poles expressed sympathy with them while 46% disliked them) who are most frequently associated with Islam<sup>33</sup> the Turks are also being viewed within the context of a stereotypical images of Muslims<sup>34</sup> popularized by the media.<sup>35</sup>

Surprisingly, quite negative perceptions of Turks within the Polish society do not have much impact on the holiday plans made by Poles. The number of Polish

<sup>30</sup> Of course Arabs are not a nation but that is how they are categorized in the CBOS survey.

<sup>31</sup> The most liked nations by Poles in 2012 were Czechs and Slovaks (58% and 57%) but equally high scores on the scale of sympathy achieved Italians, English, Spaniards, French, Norwegians, Swiss, Hungarians and Americans.

<sup>32</sup> For more information about Islamophobia in Poland please see Konrad. Pędziwiatr, "Muslims in the Polish Media - the New Folk Devil?," *Arches Quarterly* 4, no. 7 (2010)..

<sup>33</sup> OBOP, "Z czym kojarzy ci się Polakom słowo "islam"?," (Warszawa: TNS OBOP, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Konrad. Pędziwiatr, *Od Islamu imigrantów do islamu obywateli: muzułmanie w krajach Europy Zachodniej* (Kraków: Nomos, 2007); Runnymede-Trust, "Islamophobia: Challenge for Us All," (London: Runnymede Trust, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Interestingly though many Arab-owned bistro bars and restaurants brand themselves in Turkish style knowing probably that Turkishness is viewed by Poles in more positive way, as a form of "tamed Orient".

tourists who visit Turkey has been continuously growing over the last decade. While in 2003 there were slightly above 100 thousand Polish tourists who decided to come to Turkey, in 2011 there were 5 times more Polish holidaymakers in Turkish resorts<sup>36</sup>. Their holiday memories should have in the future influence on the perception of Turkey and Turkish society. Not without importance is the fact that they see *“the best parts of Turkey”* - as one of my Turkish informants has put it.<sup>37</sup>

As Gökhan Saz has shown in many other European countries one of the factors that has negative influence on the states and society's attitude towards Turkish EU aspirations is the number of Turks living in the country.<sup>38</sup> In Poland the Turkish diaspora is small and thus the Polish case seem to confirm Saz's thesis that a lower Turkish population share in the European host country corresponds to a lower disapproval rate of Turkish membership in the EU (Ibid). What seem to be important is not only the size of the Turkish community in Poland but also its character. As one of my informants argued *“the Turks living in Poland are more often employers than employees and hence the relations with the host society are of completely different type than in Western Europe. We have usually partnership relations.”*<sup>39</sup> The Turks who decided to settle temporarily or permanently in Poland belong usually to middle and upper class.

The community consist of around 5000 people and is very young<sup>40</sup> (Interviews with RA, DA, NH and SA). Initially their arrival to Poland was closely associated with meeting the demand of the Polish market for the textile products. In the 70s and 80s this market was supplied mainly by Polish traders who maintained close contacts with suppliers in Turkey. After the collapse of communism, many of the Turkish suppliers decided to supply the Polish market independently and decided to move to Poland. Later they were joined by businessmen from the construction industry and others sectors of the economy.<sup>41</sup> According to data provided by the Office for Foreigners there were 2281 Turks legally residing in Poland at the end of 2011

---

<sup>36</sup> TravelFan, "Polacy na 10. miejscu wśród Europejczyków odwiedzających Turcję," *TravelFan*(2012), <http://travel-fan.pl/news/polacy-na-10-miejscu-wsrod-narodow-europejskich-odwiedzajacych-turcje/>.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with DA

<sup>38</sup> Gökhan. Saz, "Turkophobia and Rising Islamophobia in Europe: A Quantification for the Negative Spillovers on the EU Membership Quest of Turkey," *European Journal of Social Sciences* 19, no. 4 (2011).

<sup>39</sup> Interview with RA

<sup>40</sup> Interviews with RA, DA, NH and SA

<sup>41</sup> I. Koryś, Żuchaj, O., "Turkish Migratory Flows To Poland: General Description," *Prace migracyjne - Working Paper* 37(2000).

(details in Table 3 below). The vast majority of them (1525 persons) had temporary residence permits, while approximately one fourth of them wanted to settle in Poland permanently.<sup>42</sup> As one may see on the table below the Turks make up an immigrant community that is more than 12 times smaller than the Ukrainian one and more than 4 times smaller than and the Vietnamese one.

**Table 3. Number of foreigners legally residing in Poland as for 31.12.2011 UDSC**

Citizenship	Supplementary protection	Settlement	Long-term residency	Tolerated residency	Refugee status	Short-term residency	Total
AFGHANISTAN	30	31	2	-	18	42	123
TUNISIA	1	181	8	1	-	503	694
TURKEY	12	508	223	1	12	1525	2281
UKRAINE	7	15919	2002	67	1	11750	29746
UZBEKISTAN	5	114	6	5	4	200	334
HUNGARY	-	309	-	-	-	-	309
GREAT BRITAIN	-	277	-	-	-	-	277
VIETNAM	1	4437	1032	252	3	3532	9257
ITALY	-	279	-	-	-	-	279
<b>Total</b>	<b>3012</b>	<b>47999</b>	<b>5732</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>1170</b>	<b>41647</b>	<b>100298</b>

In recent years one may also see an increasing number of Turkish students who decide to study in Poland. They actually constitute one of the largest groups of foreign students who decide to come to Poland within the scheme of the EU Erasmus exchange programme. In the academic year 2009/2010 there were 1156 Turkish Erasmus students at Polish universities and thus at that year Turks constituted the second largest group of Erasmus students in Poland just after Spaniards (1312 students) and ahead of Germans (676 students), who constituted the third largest group (please see the graph 1 below).<sup>43</sup> Over the last years more than 3500 Turkish Erasmus students stayed in Poland. If current Poland's popularity amongst Turkish students will be maintained they will soon become the largest group of foreign students at Polish universities.

<sup>42</sup> UDSC, "Dane liczbowe dotyczące postępowań prowadzonych wobec cudzoziemców w 2011," (Warsaw: Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców (Office for Foreigners), 2011).

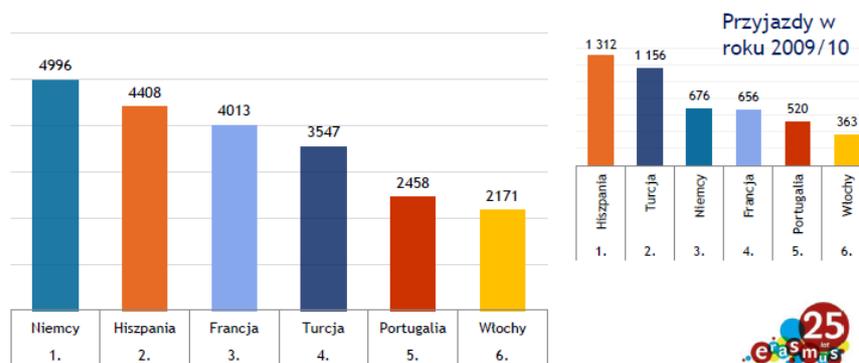
<sup>43</sup> M. Członkowska-Naumiuk, "Program Erasmus - przegląd statystyk," (Warszawa: FRSE, 2012).

## Graph 1. Mobility of students – arrivals to Poland

### Mobilność studentów - przyjazdy do Polski



Skąd przyjechało najwięcej stypendystów Erasmusa?  
Liczba przyjazdów ogółem w latach 1998 - 2010



Apart from Turkish Erasmus students who receive EU scholarships for their stays in Poland there are also many Turkish students who pay for their studies in Poland. According to GUS<sup>44</sup> in the academic year 2010/2011 there were 302 Turkish full time students in Poland (see the pie charts below). Taking into account a fact that at the Turkish-owned Vistula University<sup>45</sup> in Warsaw only there were more than 100 Turkish students in the last academic year<sup>46</sup> (interview with DA), the figure provided by GUS might be slightly lower than the actual number of Turkish students paying for their education in Poland. One of the important reasons behind Turkish decision to come to study at Polish universities is economic. The cost of studying in Poland is much cheaper than in Western Europe. My interviewees (RA, ED) also mentioned “curiosity in the post-communist country”, “rumors of good socializing and of general atmosphere of acceptance” as factors that influence their decisions. One of them for example argued that “In Germany I would be just another immigrant (...) here it is easier to get accepted”.<sup>47</sup> In contrast to for example Scandinavian students

<sup>44</sup> GUS, "Higher Education Institutions and their Finances in 2010," (Warsaw: Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Central Statistical Office) 2011).

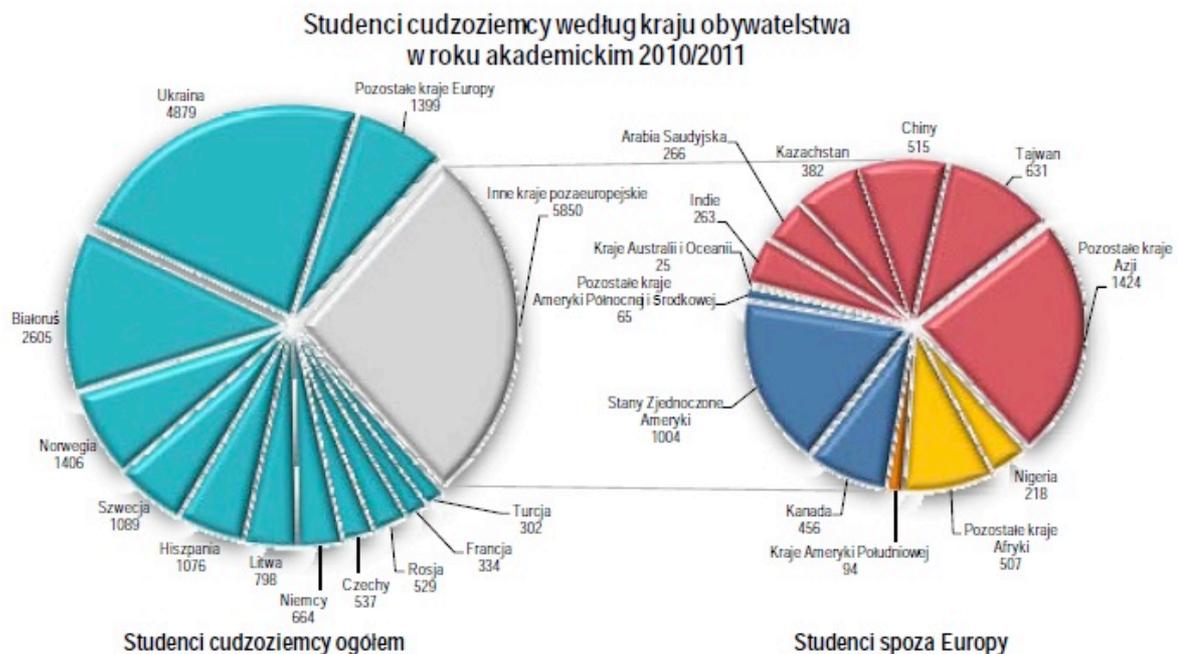
<sup>45</sup> Vistula University was bought in 2009 by a Turkish businessmen Fatih Baltaci. The University has currently circa 3.000 students of many nationalities. Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centre operates from within the premises of the university. There are 8 Turkish members of the faculty.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with DA

<sup>47</sup> There are also many internal Turkish reasons that encourage young Turks to study abroad. Conscription for males, difficulties of securing a place at Turkish universities, educational agencies as an important sector of Turkish economy are some of them.

who usually study medicine in Poland, Turkish students are to be found in all university departments with a significant proportion in economics and social sciences ones.

**Graph 2. Foreign students according to their citizenship in the academic year 2010/2011**



In the last decades Poles have had a chance to come into contact with Turks and Turkish culture not only during their travels to the country or on the street of the biggest Polish cities (mainly in the form of Turkish or disguised as Turkish kebab bars) but also through Turkish literature and film. Some of the most well know Turkish authors in Poland are Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak. Almost all of their books have been translated into Polish and published by major publishing houses. When Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk received the Nobel Prize for literature in 2006 one could even notice signs of ‘Pamukomania’ among the Polish middle class<sup>48</sup> (interview with AB). Polish national TV channel has been also screening films of Turkish directors including those by Fatih Akin and Nuri Bilge Ceylan<sup>49</sup> (interview with MH). Turkey has been also described by some contemporary Polish writers (e.g. Max Cegielski).

<sup>48</sup> Interview with AB

<sup>49</sup> Interview with MH

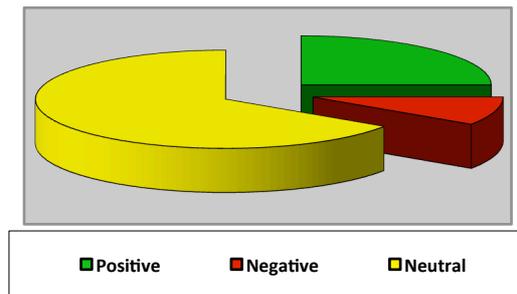
## **Turkey in the Polish Media**

As mentioned above, the key aspect of the research involved systematic analysis of the Polish media portrayal of Turkey and its aspirations to become a member of the European Union. The project concentrated on the portrayal of Turkey in one quality magazine and two newspapers. The choice of *Polityka* magazine and *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* newspapers was made above all on the basis of their importance in shaping the public debates in Poland – they are the most highly quoted news media in Poland with centre-left (*Polityka* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*) and centre-right (*Rzeczpospolita*) political profiles. Not without importance was also a fact that all of the selected media sources have comprehensive electronic archives which allow to find articles devoted to Turkey and Turkish issues from 2005 onwards. The key findings of the media analysis will be presented first with regards to each of the selected newspapers and magazine and then in general.

In the case of *Polityka* magazine which is the country's biggest selling weekly newsmagazine the database search with key words “Turkey” and “European Union” generated 45 hits in the period of 7 years between 1 September 2005 (a month before the beginning of the accession negotiations) and 1 September 2012 (month of analysis). The database searches over the same period of time with words “Turkey” and “Europe” generated 88 hits and with a word “Turkey” 261 hits. The content analysis was carried out on the basis of 45 articles generated with word search “Turkey and European Union” since it was assumed that they would most strictly relate to the issues of concern. 13 out of 45 articles had only coincidental or no relations to Turkey or Turkish issues. In 14 publications Turkey or Turkish issues constituted their major part and in 18 their minor part. 6 out of 32 articles were wholly devoted to the issue of Turkish accession to the European Union, while in 19 articles only partially concerned this issue and 7 of them did not mention the subject of Turkish EU accession at all. As far as the type of articles is concerned the vast majority (22) were at least 1000-words long opinion articles, 7 were short news articles and 3 were interviews. The thematic scope of these articles was very wide. While the largest number of them concerned some aspects of Turkish accession of to the EU, many dealt also with such barriers in the accession as divided Cyprus and Kurdish and Armenian issues. Less frequent were articles on Turkish internal affairs,

its relations with neighboring countries and Israel, Turkish diaspora in Europe and UE in crisis and in search of its identity. The economic ties between EU/Poland and Turkey, Eastern Partnership, Polish presidency in the EU and Turkey's foreign policy during the Arab Spring were yet other topics of the analyzed articles.

**Graph 3. Portrayal of Turkey (Polityka)**



As far as the character of the general portrayal of Turkey and Turkish issues in Polityka is concerned the majority of the articles were neutral, which means that their authors made an effort to balance their arguments and point out not only positive but also negative elements of the analyzed issues. There were more articles (8) that described Turkey, its transformation, economic condition, foreign policy and other issues overwhelmingly positively. One of them was by Patrycja Sasnal in which she inter alia mentions a survey of the Arab public opinion carried out by the University of Maryland according to which there are only two countries that play a constructive role today in the Middle East: France and Turkey.<sup>50</sup> Another one was by Ostrowski and Zalewski who argued that *“The EU strategy of keeping Turkey in the waiting room of the membership negotiations is quite irresponsible. It is better to have such a country (Turkey – KP) on our side, especially in the Middle East.”*<sup>51</sup> Only in a fraction of the Polityka's articles (3) the overall portrayal of Turkey was negative (please see graph 3 above).

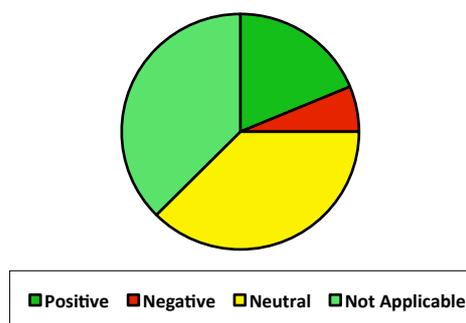
A similar situation could be seen with the Polityka's overall portrayal of the prospective membership of Turkey in the EU (please see graph 4 below). A significant number of the articles did not concern this subject at all or were neutral about it. 6 articles were overwhelmingly in favor of Turkey's membership in the EU

<sup>50</sup> P. Sasnal, "Wycieki z krainy ropy," *Polityka*, 15.01.2011 2011.

<sup>51</sup> M. Ostrowski, Zalewski, P., "Nie karać Ankary," *Polityka*, 30.01.2010 2010; *ibid.*; *ibid.*; *ibid.*

and only 2 were openly opposing it. Interestingly, the publications which did not make any efforts to balance their stand on the issue of Turkish accession to the EU and negatively portrayed Turkish chances of ever becoming EU member were interviews, in which the authors did not have the chance to present the subject objectively. Both of them were published in 2006. The first one was with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing who argued that „*With regards to Turkey the answer (to question on EU enlargement – KP) is negative. Turkey (if allowed to join the EU – KP) would be the largest country in the EU, nation of a different culture which should be respected but different. We should have with Turkey relations of close neighborhood, agreement of free trade, regional cooperation. This will be for Turkey more beneficial than EU membership*”.<sup>52</sup> The second one was with the Polish historian Krzysztof Pomian who pointed out that “*When President Chirac claims that we should allow Turkey to join the EU in order to show that the Union isn't a Christian club, I am asking why we should do this. The EU is a Christian club. What is more it is a club of Latin Christianity. (...) I am the last person who could be accused of ultra-Catholicism, but I am a believing and practising historian.*”<sup>53</sup> An example of the interview in which the chances of Turkish membership are presented in much brighter colors is the one with Barroso in which he claims that “*Negotiations with Turkey will take many years. I do not know how many, but we have to honest with Turkey. We started negotiation and we shouldn't add any new criteria.*”<sup>54</sup>

**Graph 4. Portrayal of the Prospective Membership of Turkey in the EU (Polityka)**



<sup>52</sup> M. Ostrowski, "Popychanie przywódców (interview with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing)," *Polityka*, 29.07.2006 2006.

<sup>53</sup> J. Żakowski, "Nikt nie rodzi się Europejczykiem (wywiad z profesorem Krzysztofem Pomianem)," *Polityka*, 30.09.2006 2006.

<sup>54</sup> J. Baczyński, Bedyk, E., Krzemiński, A., Ostrowski, M., Passent, D., Żakowski, J., "Oni to też wy (Interview with José Manuel Barroso)," *Polityka*, 26.10.2012 2006.

One of the conclusions one may draw from the analysis of the portrayal of Turkey and Turkish issues in Polityka magazine is that taking into account a period of analysis of 7 years there were relatively few articles on the subject. Turkey's EU accession negotiations and Turkish issues in general are clearly not preoccupying Polish public debates hence semi-silence about them in the most popular Polish newsmagazine. However, if these issues appear on the pages of Polityka they are usually dealt with in an objective manner with hints of sympathy to Turkish EU ambitions. Article opposing Turkish candidacy or presenting Turkey in the negative manner are a rarity and usually personal views of interviewed celebrities.

The first clearly visible difference between Gazeta Wyborcza's (hereafter GW) portrayal of Turkish issues and Polityka's one is the number of articles on the subject in the same period of time. In the case of the biggest selling quality newspaper in Poland the electronic archives search with key words "Turkey" and "European Union" generated almost 6 times more hits (260) than similar search in Polityka. The database searches over the same period of time (01.09.2005 – 01.09.2012) with words "Turkey" and "Europe" generated 1035 hits and with a word "Turkey" 1947 hits. Clearly, the content analysis was not feasible and not needed on such a large sample texts. Thus, the final analysis was carried out on the basis of the articles selected from one month periods in each year (since the opening of the negotiations in 2005) crucial either to the accession negotiations or related to them national or international issues. The electronic archives search with words "Turkey" and "European Union" in the period just before and after opening of the negotiations (15.09.2005 – 15.10.2005) generated 11 hits; in the period when the dispute over Cyprus led to freezing of 8 chapters within the negotiation talks and when Pope Benedict XVI paid a visit to Turkey (01.12.2006 – 31.12.2006) generated 9 hits; in the period covering the Turkish domestic elections (25.06.2007 – 25.07.2007) generated 5 articles, in the month preceding French Presidency in the EU (01.06.2008 – 30.06.2008) generated 3 hits; in the period covering the World Economic Forum in Davos with the diplomatic clash between the Turkish Prime Minister and the Israeli President (15.01.2009 – 15.02.2009) generated 1 hit; in the period covering the Freedom Flotilla raid and its consequences (15.05.2010 – 15.06.2010) generated 3 hits; in the period covering the Eastern Partnership Summit during Polish Presidency (01.09.2011 – 30.09. 2011) generated 1 articles and finally in the period covering the beginning

of the Cyprus's EU Presidency (15.06.2012 – 15.07.2012) which did not generate any hits.

All together the electronic archives of GW showed 34 articles with words "Turkey" and "European Union" in the selected periods, however 8 of these articles turned out to have none or only coincidental relation to Turkey or Turkish issue. The final in-depth analysis was thus carried out on 26 articles, of which 21 were devoted in their major part to Turkish issues. As far the relation to Turkish accession to the EU is concerned 12 articles were wholly devoted to the subject and 11 partially, while only 3 had no relation to the issue.

Similarly to Polityka the opinion articles were the major type of GW articles that were analyzed, however there was a higher diversity of articles, which included also interviews, news articles and reportages. The key topics of the articles also varied greatly. The largest number were devoted to Turkish accession to the EU and some of the accession obstacles (e.g. division of Cyprus, treatment of Kurdish minority, or very little progress in reconciliation with Armenia). Quite numerous were also articles on Turkish relations with other countries in the Middles East and Turkish internal affairs. Less numerous were articles on Turkish involvement in the Arab Spring, Eastern Partnership or Turkish economic ties with Europe/Poland.

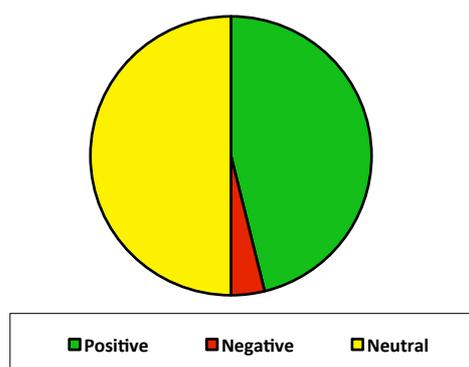
As far as the character of the overall portrayal of Turkey and Turkish issues in GW is concerned half of the articles were neutral, whereas almost the other half (with one exception) were painting overwhelmingly positive picture of Turkey (please see graph 5 below). Alike in the case of Polityka, the GW articles which portrayed Turkey in predominantly positive light dealt with economic and demographic potential of the prospective EU member, its rapid transformation and reforms as well as its sophisticated foreign policy. In the article from 2005 the newspaper's journalist argues, for example, that the Union with Turkey will be more diverse, economically poorer and less cohesive, but it will be also most certainly younger and stronger. He also quotes one of the Polish Members of the European Parliament who pointed out that "*The agreement to start negotiations with Turkey is a signal that the EU has overcome the enlargement fatigue.*"<sup>55</sup> Another contributor to GW (a person interviewed in the course of this research) argued that "*Due to high Turkish public support for country's membership in the EU the AKP has manager to implement a lot*

---

<sup>55</sup> Saryusz-Wolski quoted by J. Pawlicki, "Czemu "tak" dla Turcji w Europie " *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 05.10.2005 2005.

of difficult reforms.”<sup>56</sup> In 2008 the Chairman of Demos Europa think tank wrote for GW an opinion article with a significant title “Let’s Allow Turkey to Conquer Vienna”, in which he claimed among others that “Turkey is the only example of reasonable marriage of modernity with tradition in the region.”<sup>57</sup>

**Graph 5. Portrayal of Turkey (Gazeta Wyborcza)**



The overall portrayal of the prospective membership of Turkey in the EU was also predominantly positive in GW (please see graph 6 below). 6 of the analyzed articles did not mention this issue at all, while 10 were predominantly positive about it, 6 were neutral and one was openly opposing the prospective Turkish membership in the EU. The negative portrayal of Turkish chances of becoming a member of the EU concerns a lengthy presentation of French stand on the issue. In the article author inter alia quotes extensively President Sarkozy who as an MP spoke very critically about Turkey and continued to do so as a President. He is quoted saying that “*I do not understand how is it possible to have one opinion on the issue as a candidate and a different one as a president. I repeat: there is no place for Turkey in the Union and propose an alternative to Ankara – Union of the Mediterranean countries*”<sup>58</sup>. One of the articles presenting the chances of Turkish accession into the UE in much brighter light comes from 2005 and is based inter alia on the interview with Hrant Dink<sup>59</sup> who is quoted saying that “*Union is a catalyst of democracy. This process (of EU negotiations – KP) is even more important than the membership, however, if we do everything that we are asked to do, then there will not be any reasons not to accept us*

<sup>56</sup> Adam. Balcer, "Demokracja po turecku," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 02.12.2006 2006.

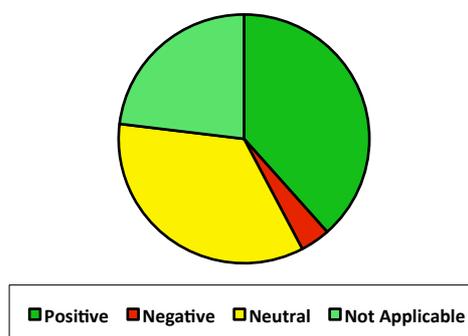
<sup>57</sup> P. Świeboda, "Pozwólmy Turcji zdobyć Wiedeń," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 07.06.2008 2008.

<sup>58</sup> P. Szczerkowski, "Francja wypycha Turcję z Unii," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26.06.2007 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Turkish journalist and columnist of Armenian descent, known for advocating Turkish-Armenian reconciliation and human and minority rights in Turkey assassinated in Istanbul in January 2007 by a Turkish nationalist.

(as a member of the EU – KP).”<sup>60</sup> Another article strongly in favor of the Turkish membership was arguing that allowing Turkey to join the EU was in Europe’s interest since without Turkey Europe will be poorer, weaker and less secured. Its author Margaret Becket, British Minister of Foreign Affairs, put it in the following way: *“Ask any European politician to make a list of challenges faced by their nations, and surely you will get more less this type of answer: growing global competition from Asia, insecurity in transfer of energy, supposedly difficult problems in the Middle East, growing extremism, ageing societies, desire to play by Europe more active role in international politics and urgent need to fight organized crime and illegal migration. And now imagine that there is a country which could play an important role in facing all of these challenges”*.<sup>61</sup> The importance of Turkey and planned Nabucco pipeline for the European energy security was for example mentioned by Konrad Niklewicz.<sup>62</sup> Yet, another article amongst those presenting Turkey in favorable light elaborated on the surprising endorsement of the Turkish EU candidacy by the Pope Benedict XVI during his papal visit to Turkey. Its author claimed that *“Benedict XVI decided to win Turkey over for Europe and to convince Muslims to build a united front against the dictatorship of relativism”*<sup>63</sup>. What is interesting the Rzeczpospolita’s authors accounted for this surprising change in the Pope’s attitude to Turkey in a fundamentally different way.<sup>64</sup>

**Graph 6. Portrayal of the Prospective Membership of Turkey in the EU (Gazeta Wyborcza)**



<sup>60</sup> K. Niklewicz, Pszczółkowska, D., "Zielone światło dla Turcji," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 04.10.2005 2005.

<sup>61</sup> M. Beckett, "Turcja: strategiczny wybór Europy," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14.12.2006 2006.

<sup>62</sup> K. Niklewicz, "Nie ma niezależności bez miłości... do Turcji?," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21.01.2009 2009.

<sup>63</sup> K. Wiśniewska, "Dlaczego papież chce Turcji w UE," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 04.12.2006 2006.

<sup>64</sup> It will be shown below.

One of the conclusions that could be drawn from the analysis of GW portrayal of Turkey and Turkish issues is that it is by and large positive or neutral. Most articles were either well balanced or presented Turkish prospective membership in the EU or Turkish issues in the favorable light. One of the rare articles showing Turkey in the negative light summarized French position with regards to the Turkish candidacy. What is interesting Turkish issues have been discussed in GW publications not only by journalist but also by many experts. Some of the frequent contributors to GW in the analyzed period of time were for example analysts from DemosEuropa think tank: Paweł Świeboda and Adam Balcer, presenting in their articles numerous advantages of possible Turkish membership in the EU.

On the pages of Rzeczpospolita (hereafter RP) daily, which is probably the most influential newspaper among Polish economic elites and political decision-makers<sup>65</sup>, Turkey and Turkish issues have been discussed even more often than in Gazeta Wyborcza. The searches of the electronic archives over the period of analysis (1.09.2005 – 01.09.2012) have generated in some categories even 3 times more hits than similar searches in GW.<sup>66</sup> Due to a large size of a data the final analysis similarly to GW was limited to the articles selected from one month periods in each year since 2005 crucial either to the accession negotiations or related to them national or international issues. The electronic archives search with words “Turkey” and “European Union” in the period 15.09.2005 – 15.10.2005 generated 33 hits, in the period 01.12.2006 – 31.12.2006 22 articles, between 25.06.2007 and 25.07.2007 9 hits, in the period 01.06.2008 – 30.06.2008 10 publications, between 15.01.2009 and 15.02.2009 10 articles, between 15.05.2010 and 15.06.2010 12 hits, in the period of 01.09.2011 – 30.09.2011 16 articles and finally between 15.06.2012 and 15.07.2012 6 articles. Thus, the electronic archives of the newspaper showed all together 118 articles with words “Turkey” and “European Union” in the selected periods.

In contrast to GW there was much lower rate of accuracy of the generated sample since 62 articles turned out to have none or only coincidental relation to Turkey or Turkish issue. The final analysis was thus carried out on the basis of 56 articles, half of which were wholly devoted to Turkish issues and the other half only partially. As far as the relation to the issue of Turkish candidacy to the EU is

---

<sup>65</sup> This is inter alia thanks to its large economic and legal sections.

<sup>66</sup> Database search over 7 years with words “Turkey + European Union” generated 776 hits, with words “Turkey + Europe” 1065 hits, and with a word “Turkey” 4458 hits.

concerned, there were only 16 articles wholly devoted to the issue. 28 publications addressed this problem only partially or mentioned it, whereas 12 did not relate to the issue at all. Amongst the different types of articles, the highest number made up relatively short news articles (22). However, opinion articles and reportages also constituted a significant number (respectively 18 and 3) of the analyzed publications. There were also a few interviews (7) and letters of readers to the editor (4). The last type of articles, which is difficult to find in GW and Polityka, played an important role in the overall portrayal of Turkey.

The range of topics dealt with in RP texts varied greatly. While the most numerous were articles discussing various aspects of Turkish accession negotiation (17), a significant number of texts dealt with economic ties between EU/Poland and Turkey (8), some analyzed such barriers in the accession as divided Cyprus, minority rights for Kurds and Armenian genocide issue (7) and yet another cluster of articles dealt with relations of Turkey with neighboring countries and Israel (5). The RP devoted also a substantial space on its pages to discuss various aspects of the Pope's Benedict XVI visit to Turkey (5). Other topics related to Turkey less often discussed on the pages of RP included situation of Turks in Europe, Christians in Turkey, Turkish internal affairs, EU in crisis and in search of new identity, and Eastern Partnership.

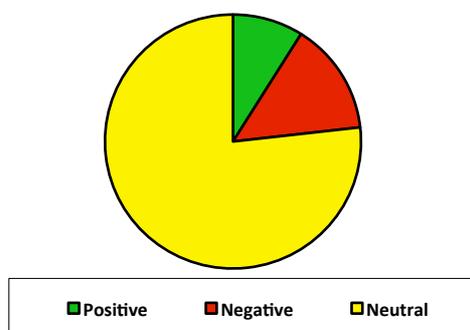
The predominant feature of the overall portrayal of Turkey in RP was that journalist and the newspaper contributors made an effort to paint an objective picture of the country and issues related to it. The vast majority of the articles (43) portrayed Turkish issues in neutral way (please see the graph 7 below). However, in contrast to GW and Polityka there were more articles that described Turkey in negative light. There were actually more articles in the analyzed periods that painted a picture of Turkey in overtly dark colors, than in bright colours. Here, particularly important role played short letters to the editor. In one of them its author argued that „*It is worrying that European politicians* (while taking decision on the start of negotiations with Turkey - KP) *did not take into account serious violation of human rights in the country.* (...). Then he went on to describe the trial against Orhan Pamuk who talked in the Swiss newspaper about the Armenian genocide.<sup>67</sup> In another one letter its author pointed out that „*There are numerous arguments against Turkish accession to*

---

<sup>67</sup> G. Sobczak, "Bezrefleksyjna konsekwencja," *Rzeczpospolita*, 16.09.2005 2005.

*the EU: crimes against Kurds, Armenians, violence against women, violations of human rights, support for Muslim extremists, problems with assimilation of Turkish immigrants in Germany, or rejection to recognize Cyprus*". In conclusion he argued that marriage between Turkey and EU will be *"typically Turkish, that is one in which husband harasses his wife."*<sup>68</sup> These type of voices from the beginning of the accession negotiations are difficult to find in the articles on Turkey from the last years. It seems that the tone of fear quite strong in the publications from 2005 till 2009 is being slowly overtaken by the tone of respect and admiration. One may easily discover in the article by Wojciech Lorenz who extensively quotes the Egyptian correspondent of Bloomberg saying that *"The Arabs are looking at Turkey with admiration and jealousy. They would also like to have such a standard of life and democracy in their own countries. Turkey has the chance to become a leader in the Muslim and Arab world."*<sup>69</sup> In another articles praising Turkish economic boom and presenting Turkey as an example to follow for Greece its author quotes bank expert from Credit Agricole Chevreux in Vienna who says that *"Turkey is today one of the most reliable fiscally countries in Europe."*<sup>70</sup>

**Graph 7. Portrayal of Turkey (Rzeczpospolita)**



As far as the overall portrayal of the prospective membership of Turkey in the EU is concerned here again the largest number of articles (26) demonstrated both advantages and disadvantages of such scenario. 16 of the analyzed articles did not concern the issue at all, while 9 presented it in predominantly negative light and 5 in largely positive light (please see the graph 8 below). One of the articles which portrayed Turkey as an unlikely member of the EU concerned Joseph Ratzinger's

<sup>68</sup> M. Raczkowski, "Turcja w Unii Europejskiej," *Rzeczpospolita*, 04.10.2012 2005.

<sup>69</sup> W. Lorenz, "Turcja budzi podziw i lęk," *Rzeczpospolita*, 17.09.2011 2011.

<sup>70</sup> A. Błaszczak, "Turecka lekcja wychodzenia z kryzysu," *Rzeczpospolita*, 11.06.2010 2010.

views on the subject. His author argued that *“Yet before becoming the Pope, cardinal Ratzinger frequently expressed his opposition to the plans of granting Turkey the membership. He viewed such an idea as gigantic mistake and decision against the logic of history.”*<sup>71</sup> In 2006 Benedict XVI went to Turkey and to the surprise of the world spoke positively about the prospective accession of Turkey to the EU. Interestingly, the journalists and contributors of RP did not try to explain the change in Pope’s opinion on the issue (like for example GW and Polityka journalists did) but instead tried prove with opinions of Turks and non-Turks that Pope did not say what he was supposed to say and even if he had supported Turkish EU ambitions, he did not mean it. Piotr Jendroszczyk did so for instance by quoting a newspaper vendor who said that *“This is propaganda. Pope did not change in Turkey.”*<sup>72</sup> Other RP journalists interviewed cardinal Walter Kasper who argued that *“I was not present during the discussion of Pope with prime minister Erdogan, however those who were there said that Pope had not directly supported the accession of Turkey into the EU. He only said as I do, that he would not like to talk about political matters.(...) His expression was wrongly understood and then abused”*<sup>73</sup> . Yet, another interview that appeared on the pages of RP over the analyzed period of time but showed Turkish aspirations in a completely different light was an interview with the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Adam Rodfeld, who claimed that *“anti-Turkish attitudes have depleted with king Jan III Sobieski.”*<sup>74</sup> *At that time Europe did not reciprocate. When 100 years latter Poland was being partitioned, Turkey was the only country that did not recognize it since the Turks believed that without strong Poland political equilibrium in Europe will be shaken. Now we are repaying to Turks this specific moral debt” (...)* *There is a space for Turkey in Europe.*<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> J. Moskwa, "Papież w zgodzie z rabinami," *Rzeczpospolita*, 16.09.2005 2005.

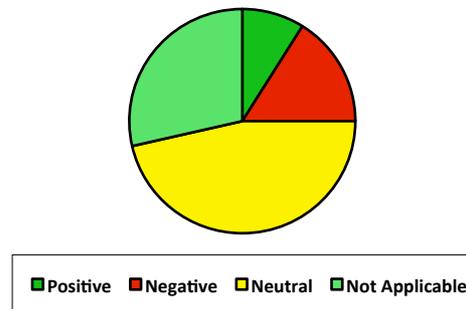
<sup>72</sup> P. Jendroszczyk, "Meczetny są naszymi koszarami," *Rzeczpospolita*, 02.12.2006 2006.

<sup>73</sup> J. Haszczyński, Rybińska, A., "Chrześcijanie muszą wreszcie się obudzić," *Rzeczpospolita*, 23.12.2006 2006.

<sup>74</sup> The Polish King who fought with Turks in Vienna in 1683.

<sup>75</sup> W. Grzędziński, "Traktujmy Turków poważnie," *Rzeczpospolita*, 04.10.2005 2005.

**Graph 8. Portrayal of the Prospective Membership of Turkey in the EU (Rzeczpospolita)**



### **Conclusions**

To sum up one may argue that the public portrayal of Turkey in Poland is very much in line with the opinions expressed by Polish respondents in social surveys (such as for instance Eurobarometer 2006 and 2010). The main quality newspapers that is Gazeta Wyborcza and Rzeczpospolita and the newsmagazine Polityka describe Turkey and Turkish issues usually in highly balanced way or with hints of sympathy to Turkish EU ambitions. In the last years one can also easily detect a prevailing tone of respect and admiration for the state of Turkish economy and its dynamic and flexible foreign policy especially with regards to the Arab Spring. The articles presenting Turkey in overwhelmingly negative light are extremely rare especially on the pages of Polityka and Gazeta Wyborcza. They are a little bit more frequent on the pages of Rzeczpospolita, but still the predominant character of reporting on Turkey and the portrayal of the country is neutral with a numerous articles praising Turkish systemic transformations.

At the same time it must be stressed that the Turkish EU accession negotiations and Turkish issues in general are not preoccupying Polish public debates and they are rarely catching the attention of the mainstream Polish media. The awareness that Turkey has a major impact on the Eastern direction of Polish foreign policy (e.g. balance of powers in the post-Soviet area, energy sector and the future of enlargement) is low not only in the wider society but also amongst the Polish political elite. Until this awareness is more **widespread** and Polish-Turkish political and

economic relations more tight, it is rather unlikely that that Polish media will devote more time to Turkey and Turkish issues.

## References

- Baczyński, J., Bandyk, E., Krzemiński, A., Ostrowski, M., Passent, D., Żakowski, J. "Oni to Też Wy (Interview with José Manuel Baroso)." *Polityka*, 26.10.2012 2006, 24-26.
- Balcer, Adam. "Demokracja Po Turecku." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 02.12.2006 2006, 22.
- . "Poland and the Czech Republic: Advocates of the Eu Enlargement?". Warsaw: demosEUROPA, 2010.
- . "W Stronę Strategicznego Partnerstwa Unii Europejskiej I Turcji W Polityce Zagranicznej." Warszawa: demosEUROPA, 2012.
- Beckett, M. "Turcja: Strategiczny Wybór Europy." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14.12.2006 2006, 12.
- Błaszczak, A. "Turecka Lekcja Wychodzenia Z Kryzysu." *Rzeczpospolita*, 11.06.2010 2010.
- CBOS. "Stosunek Polaków Do Innych Narodów." Warszawa: CBOS, 2012.
- Chomętowska-Kontkiewicz, A. "Globalizacja Kontra Islamizacja: Dwubiegunowy Wizerunek Turcji W Polskiej Prasie Opiniotwórczej ". In *Zachód a Świat Islamu - Zrozumieć* edited by I. Kończak, Woźniak, M. Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 2012.
- Członkowska-Naumiuk, M. "Program Erasmus - Przegląd Statystyk." Warszawa: FRSE, 2012.
- EDAM. "Turquie-France - Dialogue De Sourds." Sztambuł: EDAM, 2010.
- Eurobarometer. "Attitudes Towards European Union Enlargement." Brussels: European Commission, 2006.
- . "The European Today and Tomorrow." Brussels: European Commission, 2010.
- . "Standard Eurobarometer." Brussels: European Commission, 2012.
- Grzędziński, W. "Traktujmy Turków Poważnie." *Rzeczpospolita*, 04.10.2005 2005.
- GUS. "Higher Education Institutions and Their Finances in 2010." Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Central Statistical Office) 2011.
- Haszczyński, J., Rybińska, A. "Chrześcijanie Muszą Wreszcie Się Obudzić." *Rzeczpospolita*, 23.12.2006 2006.
- IAR. "Smoleńsk, Niemcy, Unia. Expose Sikorskiego." In, *Polskie Radio* (2012). [://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/575774,Smolensk-Niemcy-Unia-Expose-Sikorskiego](http://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/575774,Smolensk-Niemcy-Unia-Expose-Sikorskiego).
- Jarubas, A. "Polska I Turcja Liderami Wzrostu Gospodarczego." In, (2012). Published electronically 20.05.2012. <http://adamjarubas.blog.onet.pl/Polska-i-Turcja-liderami-wzros,2,ID471548942,n>.
- Jendroszczyk, P. "Meczety Są Naszymi Koszarami." *Rzeczpospolita*, 02.12.2006 2006.
- Kołodziejczyk, D. *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century)*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Koryś, I., Żuchaj, O., "Turkish Migratory Flows to Poland: General Description." In, *Prace migracyjne - Working Paper 37*, (2000).
- Lorenz, W. "Turcja Budzi Podziw I Lęk." *Rzeczpospolita*, 17.09.2011 2011.

- Moskwa, J. "Papież W Zgodzie Z Rabinami." *Rzeczpospolita*, 16.09.2005 2005.
- Niklewicz, K. "Nie Ma Niezależności Bez Miłości... Do Turcji?" *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21.01.2009 2009, 27.
- Niklewicz, K., Pszczółkowska, D. "Zielone Światło Dla Turcji." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 04.10.2005 2005, 8.
- OBOP. "Z Czym Kojarzy Ci Się Polakom Słowo "Islam"?. Warszawa: TNS OBOP, 2001.
- Ostrowski, M. "Popychanie Przywódców (Interview with Valéry Giscard D'estaing)." *Polityka*, 29.07.2006 2006, 48-50.
- Ostrowski, M., Zalewski, P. "Nie Karać Ankary." *Polityka*, 30.01.2010 2010.
- Pawlicki, J. "Czemu "Tak" Dla Turcji W Europie " *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 05.10.2005 2005, 17.
- Pędziwiatr, Konrad. "Muslims in the Polish Media - the New Folk Devil?". *Arches Quarterly* 4, no. 7 (Winter 2010): 89-95.
- . *Od Islamu Imigrantów Do Islamu Obywateli: Muzułmanie W Krajach Europy Zachodniej*. Kraków: Nomos, 2007.
- PIS. "Członkostwo Turcji W Ue Nie Jest Potrzebne." In, (2008). Published electronically 21.11.2012. <http://www.pis.org.pl/article.php?id=13813>.
- . "Proces Rozszerzenia Ue O Turcję Odwraca Uwagę Unii Od Ukrainy." In, (2004). Published electronically 17.12.2004. <http://www.pis.org.pl/article.php?id=457>.
- Raczkowski, M. "Turcja W Unii Europejskiej." *Rzeczpospolita*, 04.10.2012 2005.
- Runnymede-Trust. "Islamophobia: Challenge for Us All." London: Runnymede Trust, 1997.
- Sasnal, P. "Wycieki Z Krainy Ropy." *Polityka*, 15.01.2011 2011, 48-5-.
- Saz, Gökhan. "Turkophobia and Rising Islamophobia in Europe: A Quantification for the Negative Spillovers on the Eu Membership Quest of Turkey." *European Journal of Social Sciences* 19, no. 4 (2011): 479-91.
- Sobczak, G. "Bezrefleksyjna Konsekwencja." *Rzeczpospolita*, 16.09.2005 2005.
- Sulimirski, T. *The Sarmatians*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.
- Szczerkowski, P. "Francja Wypycha Turcję Z Unii." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26.06.2007 2007, 11.
- Szymański, A. "Religia Jako Nieoficjalne Kryterium Członkostwa W Unii Europejskiej - Przypadek Turcji." In *Turcja I Europa: Wyzwania I Szanse*, edited by A. Szymański. 89-104. Warszawa: PISM, 2011.
- Świeboda, P. "Pozwólmy Turcji Zdobyć Wiedeń." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 07.06.2008 2008.
- Tazbir, J. *Szlachta I Teologowie. Studia Z Dziejów Polskiej Kontrreformacji*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987.
- Tazbir, Janusz. *Szlachta I Teologowie. Studia Z Dziejów Polskiej Kontrreformacji*. . Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987.
- TravelFan. "Polacy Na 10. Miejscu Wśród Europejczyków Odwiedzających Turcję." In, *TravelFan* (2012). Published electronically 28.01.2012. <http://travel-fan.pl/news/polacy-na-10-miejscu-wsrod-narodow-europejskich-odwiedzajacych-turcje/>.
- Tusk, D. "Wprost." In, (2010). <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/161297/Premier-Turcji-z-wizyta-w-Polsce/>.
- TVN24. "Przyszłość Uni Europejskiej." In, (2010). Published electronically 30.05.2010. <http://www.tvn24.pl/przyszlosc-unii-europejskiej,135428,s.html>.

- UDSC. "Dane Liczbowe Dotyczące Postępowań Prowadzonych Wobec Cudzoziemców W 2011." Warsaw: Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców (Office for Foreigners), 2011.
- Wiśniewska, K. "Dlaczego Papież Chce Turcji W Ue." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 04.12.2006 2006.
- Zasada, A. "Europosłowie Apelują Do Turcji O Wycofanie Się Z Famagusty." In, (2012). Published electronically 14.02.2012. [http://www.poland-epp.eu/aktualnosc,1189,europoslowie\\_apeluja\\_do\\_turcji\\_o\\_wycofanie\\_sie\\_z\\_famagusty/pl](http://www.poland-epp.eu/aktualnosc,1189,europoslowie_apeluja_do_turcji_o_wycofanie_sie_z_famagusty/pl).
- Żakowski, J. "Nikt Nie Rodzi Się Europejczykiem (Wywiad Z Profesorem Krzysztofem Pomianem)." *Polityka*, 30.09.2006 2006, 3-10.

### **Interviews**

- Anonymous Representative (RA) of the Turkish Association based in Warsaw, Poland, 09.05.2012
- Anonymous Turkish Erasmus student (SA) at the Warsaw University, Warsaw, Poland, 16.05.2012
- Aslan, Davut. (DA) Turkish Assistant Professor at the Vistula University, Warsaw, Poland, 30.05.2012
- Balcer, Adam. (AB) Analyst at the Demos Europa think tank, Warsaw, Poland 18.04.2012
- Demir, Emre. (ED) Turkish employee of the international company based in Cracow, Poland, 28.06.2012
- Hark, Murat. (MH) Turkish businessman based in Warsaw, Poland, 23.05.2012
- Kochanowicz, Maciej. (MK) Former journalist at *Gazeta Wyborcza* and specialist at the Information Society Development Foundation, Warsaw, Poland, 04.04.2012
- Kugiel, Patryk. (PK) Analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, Poland, 18.04.2012
- Kujawa, Karol. (KK) Scholar and analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, Poland. 11.04.2012
- Wódka, Jakub. (JK) Scholar and analyst at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Warsaw, Poland, 11.04.2012

## **II. HUNGARY<sup>1</sup>**

**Emel Akçalı**

*This chapter is based on a six months long field-work carried out in February -July 2012 in Budapest, Hungary in order to solve the empirical puzzle why the majority of Hungarian public opinion according to the Eurobarometer surveys in 2005 and 2010 supports Turkey's European Union (EU) accession, given that EU27 is divided on the whole issue. To this end, fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted with opinion leaders and politicians in order to get a grasp of why they think the Hungarian public supports Turkey's entry to the EU and the ways in which they have been influential in shaping the Hungarian public opinion on this matter. In addition, a media research was carried out in order to observe how Turkey has been portrayed in the major Hungarian daily and weekly written press since 2005-the year of the opening of the negotiations between Turkey and the EU until 2010. In the aftermath of the data collection and analysis process, the report has concluded that due to the fact that almost all political formations in Hungary have thus far been supportive of Turkey's accession to the EU, the lack of a significant Muslim immigration to and in Hungary, Turkey of being a non-issue for Hungarian domestic politics and historical and cultural affinities between Hungary and Turkey have contributed to its positive image in Hungary and the majority of Hungarians supporting Turkey's accession to the EU.*

### **Introduction**

The fact that the majority of the public opinion in the new member states of the European Union (EU) supports the EU enlargement according to the Eurobarometer surveys, with Romania, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia being particularly favorable towards Turkey's EU accession is attention-grabbing since the reasons behind this phenomenon may give insights about why it is not easy to construct a common European foreign policy and challenge the commonly-held belief that Turkey is destined to be Europe's eternal other. In general, when asked for their views on the possibility of a number of countries joining the European Union in the future, Europeans support the accession of four of the twelve countries proposed only

---

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to all the respondents for agreeing to talk to me, their time and insightful answers, Mr. Daniel Bagameri for his assistance in the interviewing and media research process and Mr. Kemal Gür, the Turkish Ambassador in Budapest for facilitating the contacts with Hungarian parliamentarians and the Turkish Diaspora members.

(European Commission 2011, 62). The four countries are the same as those which respondents approved in the spring 2008 Eurobarometer (EB69): Switzerland (75%), Norway (74%), Iceland (60%) and to a lesser extent Croatia (47%) (Ibid). Hence, drawing upon the assumption that European societies are generally against a further enlargement, in particular against Turkey's membership, a number of Western European governments have even announced referenda to approve Turkish accession, "signaling the belated emergence of public opinion as a salient feature in influencing the pace and direction of EU enlargement"<sup>2</sup>. Thus far, the British governments have been fully in favor of Turkey's membership, mainly for strategic political reasons<sup>3</sup>, but this support has not been backed by a majority of the British public opinion. The group of strong EU member state supporters has also included Spain, Portugal and Italy who believe that Turkish membership would contribute to a strengthening of a "Mediterranean grouping" in an EU that tends to tilt towards a Central-East European orientation.<sup>4</sup> Ireland, Finland and Sweden have also been supportive of Turkey's aspirations.<sup>5</sup> When negotiations opened with Turkey in 2005, however, not only were support levels lower (29% of EU-15 citizens and 31% of EU-25 citizens), but more significantly there was a clear absolute majority (57% of EU-15 citizens and 55% of EU-25 citizens) opposed. Opposition was particularly high in Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Luxembourg and Greece where the level was greater than 70% (European Commission 2006, QA44.12). In 2008, support for Turkish accession averaged only 31%. Opposition in Austria (79%) was particularly high while in Luxembourg, Germany, France, Greece and Finland, it stood at more than 50% and Belgium and Cyprus recorded 49% opposition (European Commission 2008, point 4.1).

In fact, it is not clear whether this situation is due to the standpoint of certain EU governments to Turkey's adhesion or is an independent public matter. The evidence from Austria, Germany and France, where political leaders have further aggravated public skepticism towards Turkey's membership suggests that the political elite may very well be the main drive behind the formation of the public opinion, as the opposition voiced by some politicians has arguably legitimized and increased

---

<sup>2</sup> İçener E, Phinnemore D. and Papadimitriou D. 2010 "Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement: Turkey and Central and Eastern Europe compared", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10: 2: 216.

<sup>3</sup> Kramer Heinz, 2006 "Turkey and the EU: The EU's Perspective", *Insight Turkey* October-December 8:4: 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 26.

public opposition.<sup>6</sup> The Green MEP Joost Lagendijk pointed to the fact for example that since according to Eurobarometer, 40 per cent of people are undecided on the issue of enlargement, public support can be influenced through political leadership.<sup>7</sup> Bürgin has further informed that the development of public opinion in Austria points out the interplay of elite discourse and public attitudes, as up to 2002 there was very little difference between Austrian views towards Turkey and any other EU candidates according to a report of the European Stability Initiative (ESI).<sup>8</sup> However, the Finnish case proves the contrary. Although Finnish governments have not openly been against Turkey's membership to the EU thus far, or in Kramer's (2006) account been, instead, in favor, the Finnish public approaches quite negatively towards the issue according to the Eurobarometer surveys in 2008. This situation thus complicates the puzzle about what shapes the European public opinion, especially in relation to Turkish adhesion to the EU.

There is of course the issue of European contentions and fear against Islam and the negative historical perception of Turks and Turkey especially in Western Europe. The qualitative and quantitative research results of Gökhan Saz suggest for instance that the country image of Turkey is negatively influenced by the experience of the European population with Turkish immigrants.<sup>9</sup> It is a sheer fact that the new member states of the European Union, specifically the ones which are in favour of Turkey's entry to the EU do not have a significant number of Muslim, in particular Turkish immigrants, so this may partially explain the lack of a negative public opinion towards Turkey's entry to the EU in these countries. However, since it is never too simple to explain a social phenomenon, the reasons behind the positive public portrayal of Turkey in certain EU member states need to be scrutinized further and in depth, not only to be able to problematize the assumption that there exists a common European public opinion but also to comprehend that historical, cultural and social perceptions may deeply differ in EU member states, complicating further the prospects of establishing a common European identity and foreign policy.

---

<sup>6</sup> İçener et al, 2010: 217.

<sup>7</sup> Bürgin Alexander. 2010 "Ongoing opposition in the West, new options in the East: is Turkey's EU accession process reversible?" *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 12: 4: 422.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid: 423.

<sup>9</sup> Saz Gökhan, 2011. "Turkophobia and Rising Islamophobia in Europe: A Quantification for the Negative Spillovers on the EU Membership Quest of Turkey", *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 19: 4: 499.

The Hungarian society is an interesting European case, for instance, in which one can observe a positive public portrayal of Turkey both at the governmental and societal level, challenging thus the conventional wisdom that Europeans are collectively against Turkish membership to the EU. In order to scrutinize this diversity in the European public opinion and reasons behind this positive public portrayal of Turkey in Hungary, we departed from the assumption that the political elite, the opinion leaders and the media play significant roles in shaping the public opinion. To this end, we first conducted fourteen in-depth interviews with government officials, major NGO and think-tank experts, academics, journalists, parliamentarians from four major political parties in Hungary (FIDEZS- Hungarian Civic Union, MSZP- Hungarian Socialist Party, LMP-Hungarian Green Party and Jobbik-Movement for a Better Hungary) and members of the Turkish Diaspora in order to understand what the opinion leaders think about the issue and the ways in which they have been influential in shaping the public perceptions in view of their opinions. Second, in order to find out interesting and important news about Turkey's bid to join the EU and key themes identified during the interviews, a media archive research was carried by tracing the keyword "Turkey" in the 2005-2010 period in *Magyar Nemzet*, a conservative daily newspaper which has about 160 000 generally elderly or middle-aged readers per issue, in *HVG*, a weekly magazine with a liberal political stance with 335 000 intermediately or highly educated urban readers per issue and which is by far the most popular weekly magazine of this kind, in *Blikk* a daily tabloid with 1.04 million readers per issue and in *Népszabadság*, a leftist daily which attract 222 000 highly educated and elderly readers per issue.

### **How is Turkey Perceived in Hungary?**

According to *Gesta Hungarorum* (The Deeds of the Hungarians), a record of early Hungarian history written probably between 1196 and 1203 by an unknown author, *Anonymi Bele Regis Notarii* (the anonymous notary of King Béla), and the *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum* (The Deeds of the Huns and Hungarians), written mainly by around 1282-1285, Árpád, the grand prince of the Hungarians who settled his tribes in the Carpathian basin (today's Hungary) is a direct descendant of the

Hunnish King Attila<sup>10</sup>. This alleged historical origin creates a strong cultural as well as linguistic affinity between Hungarian and Turkish people as Turks also link their heritage to the Huns and the legendary Hun King Attila. Due to these alleged common roots, it is thus not a coincidence that Hungarians have always given a special importance to Turcology studies and Europe's first Turcology department was founded in 1870 in Budapest by a Hungarian scholar, Ármin Vámbéry.

In addition, although the 156 year old Ottoman rule during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Hungary is portrayed as a period of occupation in the official Hungarian historiography, it is also candidly emphasized in public discourses that the Ottoman rule brought benefits to Hungary.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, it is commonly acknowledged that Ottoman sultans supported Hungarian independence movements against the Habsburgs since 1686. In the second half of the seventeenth century, when Hungarian rebels fought against the Habsburg Empire for independence, for instance, Imre Thököly and his 1400 followers took refuge in the Ottoman Empire. The two most prominent Hungarian national heroes, Rakoczi Ferenc II and Kossuth Lajos together with some other rebels fled to the Ottoman Empire when escaping from the Austrian and Russian suppression of the independentist insurgencies that they led, the former in 1703-11 and the latter in 1848-49. In the case of Rakoczi Ferenc II, eventhough the Ottoman Empire signed the Peace Treaty of Passarowitz with Austria on 21 July 1718, and among the provisions of the Treaty was the extradition of the exiled Hungarians, the Sultan refused this provision as a matter of honor. Rákóczi and his entourage were thus settled in the town of Tekirdağ (Rodostó in Hungarian), relatively distant from the Ottoman capital, and a large Hungarian colony grew up around this town on the Sea of Marmara.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, according to Peter Balazs, Ambassador of Hungary in Denmark (1994-1996), Germany (1997-2000) and to the EU in Brussels (2003-2004), Minister of

---

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous notary of King Béla, 2010 *Gesta Hungarorum- The Deeds of the Hungarians* Budapest: Central European University Press.

<sup>11</sup> During a visit to Budapest on December 6, 2012, Turkish EU Minister and Chief Negotiator Egemen Bağış told the audience at Andrassy University that former Hungarian President Pal Schmitt confided to him in March 2011 that it was for the best that Hungarians remained under Ottoman rule for some 150 years. Schmidt even acknowledged that had his country remained under the rule of another nation, his country would have been forced to convert to another religion and speak another language and thus would ultimately have been assimilated.

<sup>12</sup> Köprülü, Fuat, 1972 "Türk Macar Münasebetlerine Dair" (On the Relations of Turks and Hungarians), Orhan Köprülü (Ed.), Köprülü'den Seçmeler, (Selections from Köprülü), Istanbul: 16-22 and Oba, Ali Engin. 1995 *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, (The Emergence of Turkish Nationalism) Ankara: Imge Kitabevi: 130.

Foreign Affairs in Hungary in 2009-2010 and currently Professor of European Enlargement at the prestigious Central European University in Budapest, bad memories have not remained towards the Ottoman Empire despite the fact that Hungarians fought against it for a long time. On the contrary, he argues that what has remained is the humoristic accounts of the Ottoman period and Turkish characters today are folkloristic elements in the Hungarian culture. An Ottoman pasha is often portrayed as a fat round figure confiscating every penny of the poor and with an ability to swallow sixty dogs at once, for example. That is why school teachers find it practical to tell to their pupils “to draw a Török (Turkish) pasha when they want them to draw a big circle”. Balazs also believes that there is not a negative feeling against the Turks because there is not a large amount of Turkish immigration and as a matter of fact, the actual image of Turkey in Hungary with its current high growth rate is that of a strong country.

Balazs is seconded in his views by Imre Kerestezs, journalist and foreign affairs columnist with a specialization on Turkey at the weekly liberal journal HVG. Kerestezs confirms that there are Hungarian TV series, fictions etc about “Turkish” [Ottoman] occupation, but all of them give the sense that these were very old times. There is thus not a vivid memory of Ottomans for Hungarians, no hate exists and historical factors do not play a negative role. On the contrary, Kerestezs argues, in the post-communist history of Hungary, Turkey seems to have quite a positive image. HVG and other major journals constantly cover Turkey, the Justice and Development Party, Turkish foreign minister Davutoğlu’s doctrine of good neighborhood policy and the hegemonic role that Turkey tends to play in its region. In terms of public support, Kerestezs posits that the opening of Turkish restaurants in Hungary and Hungarians travelling to Turkey for tourism have contributed largely to the development of a positive perception of Turkey in Hungary.

“Average Hungarians like to go to Turkey. They like the country and are astonished about how kind people are. Hungarian people have some stereotypes, but they come back from Turkey with pleasant memories. Turkish restaurants are very popular in Hungary. There is thus a difference between Eastern and Western Europe in terms of supporting Turkey. In Višegrad countries, there are no Muslim communities. There are three millions in Germany. Muslim immigration may be the reason why they [Western European societies] would not support Turkey. Plus, Turkey is not an issue in Hungary because there are no problems, no territorial disputes, etc. [Hungary has historical territorial issues with its neighbors which date back to the Trianon Treaty of 1920] The particularity of Turkey in Hungary is that even

the Hungarian neo-conservatives support Turkey because the problem of neoconservatives is the domestic politics”.

Turkey of having a positive image because of not being an issue of domestic or near abroad matters for Hungarians has also been highlighted by Erzsébet Kaponyi and Nejat Ali Shamil who are University Professors at the Institute of International Studies of Corvinus University, one of the top public Universities in Hungary which is especially strong in Economics and Business. According to Kaponyi, Hungarian politicians are not very interested in the Turkish accession because Turkey is not a neighboring country like Croatia or Serbia, so it is not a real problem to worry about. In her account, for the average Hungarian public, three things come to mind when Turkey is mentioned: Holidays, buying good stuff in the Grand Bazaar and the Kurdish terrorist attacks. According to Shamil, Hungary does not have a significant amount of Muslim minorities or migrant workers. There are perhaps about 5000 people that constitute the Muslim community in Hungary today and they are generally businessmen, people who are here through marriage, or converts, so politicians do not really worry about them.

Kaponyi draws attention to the fact however that Hungarians are xenophobic in general. She highlights for instance that five years ago, a poll was conducted asking Hungarians whom they would reject to be neighbors with and among the choices offered to the respondents, there was a headscarved woman, a Roma, a Jew and a fictional ethnic identity. Surprisingly, the majority of Hungarians in Kaponyi’s account responded by saying that they would reject to be neighbors with this fictional identity, showing their intolerance to difference or in the words of the Hungarian sociologist Endre Sik, due perhaps to the fact that “xenophobia in general is not based on any real knowledge”<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless, according to Kaponyi, this general xenophobic attitude of the Hungarian society is not directed towards Turks or Turkey as clearly revealed in annual surveys conducted by the Hungarian TÁRKI Social Research Institute on xenophobia since 1992. According to these surveys, 58 percent of Hungarians would pick and choose whom to live together with and the two extremes on the scale for the pick-and-choose group are Arabs (rejected by 83 percent) and Russians (rejected by 76s percent) on the one side and ethnic Hungarians

---

<sup>13</sup> Adopted from “Fictional minority again declared unwelcome by Hungarians” available at <http://observationalism.com/2008/10/02/fictional-minority-again-declared-unwelcome-by-hungarians> (15/12/2012).

from neighbouring countries (rejected by 7 percent) on the other.<sup>14</sup>

For Zoltan Garik, a senior research fellow in the Hungarian Institute of International Relations, financed by the Hungarian foreign ministry, Hungarian public is not that knowledgeable about foreign policy and are more concerned with the Hungarian minority issues in the neighboring countries, instead, so are not interested so much in others. He believes that people who acquire deep knowledge about Hungarian-Turkish relations may perhaps have a bit of romanticism about Turkey. Besides, people go to Turkey and like food, enjoy each other. In Turkey, people know about Hungary and Hungarians welcome this acknowledgement. The Hungarian governments have also always supported Turkey's accession but Turkey is not a distinguished case since Hungary supports all other EU candidates' aspiration to become part of the EU.

“Turkey does not so much appear in the media, is thus distant in the mind of people. People don't think accession can happen soon. They know that a customs union with Turkey and agriculture can perhaps be an issue at some point. Everybody is thus pro, but there is no promotion of this idea. People may think that then the issue comes closer, we can perhaps open a debate about it.”

The positive historical image of Turkey in Hungary has been balanced to a degree by the account of György Nemeth, professor of Ancient (Greek and Roman) History at the History Department of the prominent Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Nemeth mentions that Hungarians do not have a positive idea about Ottomans because they were taken from their lands by them and replaced by Croats, Slovaks and Serbs instead. “Then came the World War I and the Trianon Treaty which stripped Hungary off these lands claiming that they are not inhabited by Hungarians. Trianon has ever since been a big trauma for Hungarians and the “Turkish occupation” laid the basis for the deconstruction of Hungary”. That is why according to Nemeth, there are still Hungarian nursery rhymes which are not sympathetic towards Turks such as *Gólya, Gólya, Gilice, Mitől Vé-res a lá-bad Török Gyerek elvágta* (Turkish child cuts), *Magyar Gyerek gyógyítja* (Hungarian child heals).

In fact, one of the most popular Hungarian historical novels, *Stars of Eger* by Géza Gárdonyi is based on the famous siege of the Hungarian town of Eger by the Ottomans and its heroic defense by the Hungarians in 1552. However, one should also note that the Ottoman period in Hungary has not been constructed as the absolute

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

yoke as in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria or in certain Arab countries. As Kariko and Szabo notes for the Hungarian city of Szigetvar for example, the Ottoman authority is also remembered for creating “the special symbiosis of the Hungarian Christian and the Turkish as well as the Bosnian people” and Szigetvar “became a developing town, a flourishing community during the more than one hundred years of Turkish authority”.<sup>15</sup> “The Turks build djamis, baths, schools, they opened several handicraft shops and the intermarriages between the nations became more often. It is not astonishing that after the ultimate leave of the Turks, the town [Szigetvar] has preserved its Turkish past and cultural memories.”<sup>16</sup>

For the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the most influential Ottoman Sultans, Süleyman, the Magnificent who died on Hungarian soil, Turkey initiated and subsidized the building of a Turkish-Hungarian friendship park in the historical battlefield of Szigetvar. This friendship park which included Sultan Suleiman’s six and half meter tall statue was inaugurated in 1994 by the then President of Turkey Süleyman Demirel and the Hungarian Minister of Education Gabor Fodor. The establishment of this park was not welcomed however by certain intellectual circles in Budapest and elsewhere and a small group of 100-200 persons protested against the Hungarian state, the Turkish embassy and the local government of Szigetvar, “stating that the indulgence of the state and the town is unacceptable”<sup>17</sup>. The protesting actions were solved when the Turkish government asked the sculptor of Süleyman’s statue to create a statue of the Croatian viceroy, Miklos Zrinyi who defended the town against the Ottoman army, as well. The two statues built in the same style were then placed on the same plinth and they were erected not opposite of each other but beside each other in 1997. According to Kariko and Szabo (2009), these monumental and astonishing statues standing together and next to each other became widely accepted by Hungarians as they reflected the historical recognition that reconciliation, relief or even friendship could emerge between two nations which were once two enemies. “There is not many examples in the history that outstanding personalities of two hostile countries would appear together next to one another as a piece of art as a

---

<sup>15</sup> Kariko Sandor and Szabo Tibor 2009 “A Hungarian-Turkish Cultural Heritage: Scandal and Reconciliation” in Angelo Ferrai (ed) *Proceedings 4<sup>th</sup> International Congress on “Science and Technology for the Safeguard of Cultural Heritage in the Mediterranean Basin*, vol.1, Cairo, Egypt 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> December, p: 18: 18-20.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 19

shared cultural memorial place...As far as we know, there is nothing comparable to this in Europe”<sup>18</sup>.

Almost all Hungarian political parties have been supportive of Turkey’s memberships to the EU thus far although the official Hungarian view on Turkey’s accession to the EU was made public only when the Commission recommended the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey in 2004 and some political parties at the time did not have views on the possible impact of the Turkish accession on the institutional structure of the EU<sup>19</sup>. Yet, for Szabó Vilmos, the Socialist party parliamentarian, Hungarians view Turkey as a European country. They also find it sympathetic. Plus, Turkey is a member of NATO. He states therefore:

“In Hungarian society, there is nothing against Turkey...The Socialist party position is that Turkey’s entry is very important for Europe. Economically, politically, it would be good for Europe. Turkey’s economic, military and political influence in the Middle East can also be beneficial for Europe. We thus need to have a more serious consideration for Turkey. Europe would be stronger with Turkey, but this would not be immediate. Our position would not become weaker, economically, geopolitically or financially, Without Turkey, it would not be possible to solve the Middle Eastern conflicts. For Bosnia, this would be good, more influential, For Albania, it would be a positive thing...and this is good for Hungary since they are in our neighborhood. There would not be a direct influence of Turkish accession to Hungary, though”.

Benedek Javor, who is the leader of the parliament group of Green LMP, a new party which entered into elections in 2010 candidly communicates that his party does not have an official position for Turkey as it is not an issue for Hungarian politics. However, he certifies that LMP is mostly for Turkish accession and there is no resistance to Turkish accession in the Hungarian society. Javor seconds those who argue that Hungary is more interested in the accession of the Balkan countries and this is the priority for Hungary as many believe that the accession of these countries would bring stability to the region. He also considers that in Western Europe, the enlargement process is criticized and feared but this is not the case in Central and Eastern Europe and this is why accession is very much supported. Also, he believes that since there is no serious immigration problem in Eastern and Central Europe, the Turkish membership does not pose a particular challenge to the Višegrad countries.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Armagan Emre Cakir and Angelika Gergelova 2010 “Tug of War or Lifelining- Central European views on Turkey’s accession to the EU”, in Lucie Tunkrova and Pavel Saradin (eds) *The Politics of EU Accession – Turkish challenges and Central European experiences* Routledge: Oxon and New York, pp: 113-127, p. 124

Plus, historically, Turkey has a positive image in Hungary with the Ottoman Empire supporting the Hungarian nationalism and national heroes. Hungarians going on vacation in Turkey in the post-communist era, shopping and buying leather jackets have also contributed to the development of a positive perception of Turkey in Hungary. However, he also highlights that Turkey's entry to the EU would change the European mean level. Some Hungarian regions would thus fall out from EU funding to be replaced by poorer regions in Turkey. This may change the Hungarian positive feelings towards Turkey in the future, perhaps, but thus far there has not been any debate about it.

As it was emphasized by the HVG columnist and journalist Imre Kerestezs, one of the most fascinating dimensions behind the positive public portrayal of Turkey in Hungary today is that Hungarian neoconservatives and Christian democrats are particularly supportive of Turkish membership to the EU unlike their counterparts in most other EU member states. Peter G. Feher, the editor of the conservative weekly *HetiVálasz* which is closely and openly affiliated with FIDEZS reflects the positive Hungarian conservative stance on Turkey:

“Hungarian public is generally not engaged with Turkey. Ordinary people do not have much information about Turkey. Educated people, journalists, experts have opinions...My personal opinion is that I am very supportive. At present EU is dominated by Germans and France and by developed European countries. East Europe countries entered the EU in a handicapped position. Western Europeans consider Eastern European countries as a market, our economy is weaker. We don't have an ally in this situation. Turkey has a population of 75 million, has a strong economy. It's a developed country...I always explain to my colleagues...Turkey manufactures technology such F-16s sold to Egypt. In Eastern Europe, it's impossible to make such a thing. Western Turkey's economy is almost like Eastern Europe. East is not very developed but the country represents a very strong country politically and economically. Educated people know the close connections between Turkey and Hungary...There is a street in Istanbul called Turkish-Hungarian friendship (Macar Kardeşleri Bulvari) in Istanbul. There is also Bela Bartok. Turkey can be a potential ally in EU for Hungary with its strong army”.

As for the current Hungarian government's position about Turkey's entry to the EU, according the deputy state secretariat of EU issues in the ministry of foreign affairs, Ódor Balint, it is clear: It gives full support to the full membership of Turkey, acknowledging that this is a process which is not tomorrow. In Balint's account, the current Hungarian government supports this candidature because it has an open project of support for enlargement for the stability of the continent. Turkey is also

considered as a strategic country for Hungary, very important for the transportation energy supplies such as the case of Nabucco pipeline demonstrates and with Turkey in, Europeans would not depend only on Russia for gas and oil pipelines. Also, Turkey is considered by the current Hungarian government as a way to bring cultural diversity and richness to Europe. Balint elaborates on this stance as such:

“When Ottoman Empire was here, people did not have to convert, so they could maintain their identity, Turkish baths have remained to us...Turkish period is not viewed that negatively. Historical and cultural perception of Russians or Germans is very different... There is an interesting sympathy between Turkey and Hungary, in terms of cuisine, culture and mentally...a natural sympathy..I (personally) wanted to understand Atatürk. Sevres Treaty was a huge loss of territory to Turks, similar to Trianon to Hungarians. The difference is that Turkey could reverse that, but Hungary could not.”

Balint also brings up to date that during the Hungarian presidency to the EU (1 January- 30 June 2011), as the foreign ministry, they wanted to promote the Turkish membership before the Republic of Cyprus gets the presidency, but the primary task at that time was to support member states’ interests so they could not do much in this vein. Plus, he emphasizes that since there were national elections in Turkey, the Turkey government did not make concessions regarding the EU criteria and this further complicated the matter. Hence, in Balint’s account, nothing much is really happening in Turkish-EU relations at the moment because negotiations are not continuing and Hungarian press is not interested in this type of foreign policy issues, either:

“We can communicate and say Turkey is important for us, but this would not be in the newspapers...There are foreign issues perhaps for half an hour on TV. In the 80s, television was broadcasting Foreign Panorama News, during the communist time, but now nothing goes on about foreign affairs. Foreign policy is treated in the media like a tabloid. But if Turkey is not in the news, then this is good news. EU countries are playing with Turkish accession”

Without doubt, the most intriguing political formation in Hungary today is the far right Jobbik - Movement for a Better Hungary. Jobbik won three seats in the 2009 European Parliament elections and the 2010 national election elevated Jobbik to the third place with 47 seats in the Hungarian Parliament as a representor of 16.7% of those votes casted. Currently, it holds 45 seats in the Hungarian Parliament, and according to the latest polls, Jobbik reaches 22 percent support among the decided

voters even though the party pulls 10 percent support in the whole sample.<sup>20</sup> Yet, the number of seats and votes that Jobbik receives does not give an accurate account of the strength of the political camp that the party represents, but evidently Jobbik established a major-voter basis in counties where there is a significant Roma population<sup>21</sup>.

To demarcate the complexity of Jobbik from other far right formations in Europe who are anti-Roma or anti-immigrant, one should refer though to its recent adoption of a peculiar geopolitical imagination, Turanism<sup>22</sup> - the revival of a historical ideology that aspires for the unification of “Uralo-Altai” race, thus Turks of Turkey, Turkic people of Central Asia, Tatars, Hungarians, etc. Through such policy articulation, the party seeks to terminate Hungary’s alliance with the Euro-Atlantic community and replace it with an Eastward turn in order to empower the country that has been, allegedly, disempowered thanks to its aspirational Westernism<sup>23</sup>. Jobbik in this vein has thus a strong anti-EU attitude, as well. However, until recently, Jobbik used to be like any other far-right party in Europe, meaning that it was against Turks and any Islamic element in Europe. Batory listed the Jobbik in 2006, for instance, among the anti-Turkish representatives of the Hungarian civil society that demanded that the Hungarian foreign minister vetoed the accession of this “Muslim Asian country”.<sup>24</sup> However, the party went through a radical transformation and embraced Turanism during its December 2010 general assembly despite a strong opposition within the party. Tamas Hegedüs, MP from Jobbik and the Chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Group explains this transformation as a pragmatic move to respond to the growing popularity of the Turanic identity within the Hungarian society which has developed as a grassroots movement as “Hungarians

---

<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.politics.hu/20120723/socialists-almost-even-with-fidesz-in-new-ipsos-poll-as-none-of-the-above-nears-two-thirds-majority/> (12.08.2012).

<sup>21</sup> Index. “Holt volt eddig a 400 ezer Jobbik-szavazó? (Where have 400 thousand Jobbik voters been until now? (June 9, 2009) available at [http://index.hu/belfold/2009/06/09/uj\\_teruleti\\_elemzes/](http://index.hu/belfold/2009/06/09/uj_teruleti_elemzes/).

<sup>22</sup> Although not exactly defined anywhere, Turan is the Persian name given for Central Asia, the land of the Tûr. It is also an imagined geography, thus a political term developed by nationalist Turkish and Hungarian milieus at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Karatay 2003).

<sup>23</sup> For further details on the revival of Turanism in Hungary see Akçali, Emel, and Umut Korkut 2012 ‘Geographical Metanarratives in East-Central Europe : Neo-Turanism in Hungary.’ *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 53, no. 5: 596-614.

<sup>24</sup> Batory Agnes. 2006, *The European Future of Turkey and Ukraine: The Policy Debate in Hungary*, Budapest: Center for Policy Studies, Central European University cited in Pavel Šaradin, 2010, “The Support of East Central European countries for Turkey’s accession to the European Union” in Lucie Tunkrova and Pavel Saradin (eds) *The Politics of EU Accession – Turkish challenges and Central European experiences* Oxon and New York : Routledge, 128-146, p. 138.

feel that the alleged Finno-Ugric origins have been imposed on them against their own will and culture”. Hegedüs himself is convinced for example that Hungarians resemble Turks and Azeris and they are of Turanic descent and deep down in their hearts, they feel this connection.

In fact, there are several cultural events being organized in Hungary today which would somewhat support Hegedüs’ claims about Turanism. The Hungarian Turan Association webpage (See <http://kurultaj.com/magunkrol/>) for example skillfully offers both ideas and items for consumption directed toward those attracted by the Turanist ideology<sup>25</sup>. The Association recommends that analysis of ancient Hungarian history is one of the fundamental duties of Hungarian scholarship. The website also lists numerous advertisements about stores that sell ancient Asiatic clothes, advice family and action sports holidays at theme parks and hotels named after “Attila” or conceptualized around the subject of *Honfoglalás* (settlement of Hungarians in the Carpathian basin). Persuasive, esoteric remedies and traditional medicine feature in these sites, as well. Finally, the website publishes news about the annual *Kurultaj* in Hungary, a recent adaptation from the Turkish word *Kurultay*, meaning the gathering which turns into fair grounds, where people wear ancient Asiatic costumes and clothes congregate around the Flag of Árpád stripes which is conspicuously associated with Hungarian fascists of the interwar period, and buy and sell commodities. According to the 14<sup>th</sup> issue of the Turkish-Hungarian bilingual magazine, *Köprü/Híd* financed mainly by Turkish companies operating in Hungary such as the Turkish Airlines, Çelebi Ltd. and Eram Combustion Ltd., the Kurultaj gathering which took place in Bugac in July 2012 was inaugurated by the Vice president of the Hungarian Parliament Sándor Lezsák and hosted 21 participant countries and around 300 thousand visitors<sup>26</sup>.

Marton Gyöngyösi another MP from Jobbik, the chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Azeri-Hungarian Friendship Group and the vice president of the Committee on Foreign Relations of Jobbik also emphasizes that Hungarians possess the heritage of the Huns and are therefore the only Western nation in the world with Eastern roots. He points out that at public events and in the social media, they bring these issues to forth together with Turkey being a strategic ally and that an Eastern turn should replace the Euro-Atlanticist foreign policy in Hungary. He also underlines

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> IV. Török-Magyar Turáni Törzsi Gyűlés, Köprü/Híd, 14, évfolyam, 4. Szám p. 12-13.

that Jobbik is the only radical right party in Europe which has a close relationship with Islam and a pro-Turkey policy and finds it difficult to understand why Turkey would want to be a part of the EU in the first place. He notes:

“My subjective opinion is that if Turkey wishes to be a member of the EU and if they think that it’s good, then I would support it. To be honest with you, I do not understand why Turkey would want to be a part of the EU...Turkey is growing- EU has no future at all- high unemployment, terrible economic crises. Turkey is a model where Islam and modernization can be merged”.

The Jobbik parliamentarians visit Turkey regularly and have close relations with their Turkish counterpart, MHP- the Nationalist Movement Party. For instance, as the mayor of the Hungarian town Tiszavasvári is from Jobbik, this city has been twinned in May 2012 with Osmaniye, the birthplace of MHP’s leader Devlet Bahçeli in Turkey.

The views of a member of the Turkish Diaspora in Hungary and the Turkish Ambassador have also been extremely enlightening in order to get a good grasp of the positive public portrayal of Turkey in Hungary, as well. Kemal Gür, the Turkish Ambassador in Hungary argues that Hungary is a country where Turkey holds one of its best images in the world. He affirms that especially people in the Hungarian countryside such as in Mohacs and Szigetvar are very warm and hospitable towards Turks and in his long years of diplomatic profession, he has observed “a similar kind of love towards Turkey” only in Pakistan.

“The media is not as biased here as it is in Germany or in France. They write about the Kurdish problem, terror, but you don’t get hurt or disturbed while reading these news about Turkey since they do not give biased news or exaggerate. However, historiography has been constructed in a negative manner towards the Turks during the Habsburg time as the Habsburgs were rivals with the Ottoman Empire and even the tourist guides continue telling such negative stories”.

Mr. Gür brings up to date that as there are Hungarian families and rebels who found refuge in the Ottoman Empire and they stayed in Turkey ever since, many Turks stayed in Hungary after the retreat of the Ottoman Empire, converted to Christianity and become Hungarians by changing names.<sup>27</sup> In 2011, the Turkish Embassy opened an exhibition on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October (the Republic Day in Turkey) on Turkish-Hungarian relations in history and this event attracted a large number of Hungarian

---

<sup>27</sup> In line with this claim, it is perhaps not a coincidence that Török (Turk) is a very common last name in Hungary.

visitors. The exhibition was replicated in other cities in Hungary throughout the year and became equally popular. Every year, the Turkish Embassy celebrates the Republic Day of Turkey by giving a colossal reception which is attended by a large number of Hungarians. In addition to the public relation activities of the Turkish Embassy, the Turkish-Hungarian Women Association organizes a cultural event every month and is involved in fund raising activities for Hungarian public schools.

Despite mutual friendly relations, the Turkish Diaspora community and business is not that significant and very few important Turkish companies operate in Hungary. There is the example of Istanbul sited Çelebi Ground Handling Inc which has founded Çelebi Ground Handling Hungary Kft. on 26 October 2006 by purchasing the shares of Budapest Airport Handling Kft and by today, it has a significant market share on the ground handling market of Budapest Liszt Ferenc International Airport. Another major Turkish company operating in Hungary is Ege Seramik which works with eight different countries around Hungary and distributes Ege Seramik goods to chain stores such as Bauhaus and Praktiker. The director general of Ege Seramik, Suat Karakuş who has been living in Hungary since 1990 and whose spouse is Hungarian seconds the general view of almost all the previous interviewees on the positive image of Turkey in Hungary and that the Ottoman domination has not left an unpleasant legacy. Karakuş also emphasizes that Hungarians were involved in many technical development projects of the Ottoman Empire and the urbanization process during the early years of the Turkish Republic. A small painting of old Ankara which hangs on one of the walls of Karakuş' office, for example, was offered to him as a gift by a Hungarian school principal whose father bought it while working as an expert in the construction of Atatürk Forest Farm in Ankara in the 1920s. Karakuş also mentions that he has not read something negative about Turkey in the Hungarian media since 1992. More correctly, there are not many headlines about Turkey in the Hungarian media, but when there are, these are often "more positive than negative".

Suat Karakuş is a member of DEIK (Foreign Economic Relations Board) of Turkey which organizes art competitions in public schools in Hungary and finances a touristic trip of the winner student and his/her family to Turkey. DEIK also funds the painting of Hungarian schools and the treatment of children with leukemia and organizes informative seminars on the Turkish economy. For instance, on May 7, 2012, upon the proposition of the European Chamber of Commerce representative in

Hungary, DEIK along with the Turkish Embassy members and other representatives of the Turkish Business such as the Turkish Airlines organized a symposium about the latest developments in Turkish economy. As a DEIK member, Karakuş is also often invited to the Hungarian parliament to have lunch with the Turkish-Hungarian friendship Inter-parliamentary Group. Despite the hospitality that they receive from the Hungarian parliamentarians and the positive portrayal of Turkey in Hungary, Karakuş believes however that Hungary is a small country and as such it cannot do much to influence the EU decisions. Therefore, as DEIK, they are concentrating their lobbying efforts in the Hungarian parliament on increasing trade relations between Hungary and Turkey. There are not many big Turkish companies in Hungary and Hungarian investments in Turkey are not that significant for example. The trade balance between Turkey and Hungary has also developed in the advantage of Hungarian exports thus far, the main ones being tomato paste and chemical products. Karakuş also argues that main coalition partner FIDEZS in Hungary resembles very much the Justice and Development party in Turkey and the Hungarian PM Victor Orbán and the Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan are like-minded on many grounds. The current Hungarian government, in his account, would like to take Turkish economy as a model and use its Turkish links to expand its trade interests to Central Asia and Iran.

When it comes to the media search, in line with the data collected from the interviews, we can easily discern that the Hungarian newspapers and journals do not show a great interest towards Hungarian-Turkish or EU-Turkish relations. All together, 7881 news about Turkey were published in four major Hungarian newspapers and journals between 2005 (the year when negotiations opened between Turkey and the EU) and 2010, with the conservative *Magyar Nemzet* publishing the largest amount of news and *Blikk*- the tabloid, the minimum (See the table below). In 2005, the most mentioned topics in all four papers, were voices from Europe against Turkey's membership, reports about the accession negotiations' recent status, crime in relation to Turkey and natural disaster and major accidents in Turkey. The least mentioned topics in this particular year were interestingly Hungarian support for Turkish membership, Hungary sharing accession-related experience with Turkey and Hungarian improving economic ties with Turkey. In 2006, the most frequently published topics were Turkish foreign policy acts and declarations, energy related news, bird flu and terrorism. The least frequent ones were improving economic ties

between Hungary and Turkey, Hungarian support for Turkish membership, Hungarian Turkish relations and Hungarian expectations from Turkey's possible membership. In 2007, the Kurdish issue, energy-related matters and Turkish foreign policy acts and declarations were the most frequently published news whereas the least published were the expansion of Islam in Europe, Hungary sharing accession-related experience with Turkey, voices from Višegrad 3 in favor of Turkey's membership and Greece versus Turkey related news. In 2008, while energy related issues, Turkish foreign policy acts and declarations, Kurdish issues made the headlines the most, once again Hungarian politics in favor of Turkish membership, Hungarian Turkish relations and voices from Europe against Turkish membership were the least appeared headlines. In 2009, energy-related issues about Turkey skyrocketed together with Turkish foreign policy acts and declarations while improving economic ties between Turkey and Hungary, Hungarian support for Turkish membership and expansion of Islam in Europe were each mentioned only once throughout the whole year. Finally in 2010, there were around 237 news published about Turkish foreign policy acts and declarations while the total number of EU membership related news about Turkey was only 90 in all four papers.

On April 30, 2005, the conservative *Magyar Nemzet* published that Hungarians would prefer Turkey to Romania as a Member of the EU – according to a survey and asked the reasons behind this view to the then-president Ferenc Mád1. Mr Madl responded:

“Our approach to the two nations is totally different. Probably István Dobó defending the castle of Eger couldn't imagine that once we would regard the Turkish people as friends, very good friends, and this is not a “mandatory” diplomatic courtesy but it originates from the “bottom”, from the everyday experience of citizens. The Turkish occupation is history now, wounds have completely been healed. Those Hungarians who have been to Turkey could experience how welcoming, friendly, and nice the Turks are towards the Hungarians; they don't view us as former enemies either. I also have such personal experience”.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> *Magyar Nemzet*, April 30, 2005

Newspapers	Total no. of news about Turkey between 2005-2010	No. of news per year					
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Magyar Nemzet	3825	778	702	608	513	584	640
HVG	2148	322	358	331	338	341	459
Blikk	258	35	99	52	37	20	15
Népszabadság	1650	317	258	272	271	250	275
	<b>7881</b>	<b>1452</b>	<b>1417</b>	<b>1263</b>	<b>1159</b>	<b>1195</b>	<b>1389</b>

On October 8 2005, *Magyar Nemzet* published another commentary which is quite telling about the actual Hungarian government's Eastern-oriented foreign policy. It put forwards that due to its history Hungary is linked to the East in several ways, and nonetheless the 150-year occupation, majority of Hungarians think positively of Turks. "What is more children are taught in school that the two nations possess cousinhood and have always been good friends. In other words, Turkey is one of our best "allies" at the intellectual level".

On October 30, 2007, *Magyar Nemzet* further published the opinions of a Hungarian ethnographer who talked with high regard about the Hungarian folk culture bearing Turkish signs.

"Today nobody can deny this as it has been confirmed by comparative investigations. Our relationship with nowadays' Turks is very much influenced by the 150 years of occupation and by the book of Gárdonyi, the Stars of Eger.[...] Those who have not visited Turkey yet have a suspicious stance but those who have visited it are amazed. They may understand that Turkish culture has given a lot to Europe. [A set of examples are given about what Hungarians learnt from Turkey.] After the wars, the relationship between the two nations was friendly. The leaders of our failed wars of independence usually found security and shelter on Turkish soil. Turks were always welcoming and helpful towards them. Later, when the Ottoman Empire was at war with Russia, long list of Hungarian volunteers applied to the Turkish army. At the University of Ankara, in the Department of Hungarian Language, there is an excellent tuition of Hungarian. We can be really good partner for Turkey in improving their European relations. Partnership between the two

nations can certainly be much better, but it requires people to know each other better. The two countries could learn a lot from each other”.<sup>29</sup>

According to the media search, the left wing *Népszabadság* seems much less interested in Turkey related news than the conservative or liberal press and prefers to look at the issue from a more critical perspective. For instance, on May 13, 2005, it published that according to the then Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, 75% of Hungarians support Turkish membership in the EU. It took however a more critical stance mentioning that Turkey’s accession would immediately exclude Hungarians’ privileged status of development funds; meaning that less money would be available for infrastructure or agriculture. Plus, Hungarians would then have to compete according to *Népszabadság* with even cheaper labour in the markets of the rich.

### **What Influences Public Opinion: Analysis and Conclusion**

As the collected data demonstrates, Turkey generally gets a very positive press in Hungary. Alongside liberals and socialists, the conservative democrats and far-right both at the political elite and societal level have very supportive views towards Turkey and this may be a *sui generis* case in the European Union. As there has not been a serious political party opposition towards Turkey’s accession to the European Union, it is hence not a surprise that there is a strong popular support towards Turkey’s accession. As an experienced diplomat, our first interviewee Peter Balasz is right to point out that such positive image cannot be an elite construct only, since according to him elites only react to the public opinion, so this situation cannot only be explained by party politics. As HVG journalist Imre Kerestezs highlights, however, the definition of public perception is not easy in general, as fewer and fewer people are interested in politics.

In fact, there is a rising EU skepticism and a deep disillusionment with the European Union which creates a public apathy towards EU related matters in Hungary. The overall perception about the EU is that Hungarians receive money from the Union, but Hungarians pay back to the EU more that it receives since Western European countries are perceived to have absorbed the Hungarian economy, harming the domestic market. For many Hungarians, Hungary has thus become a market, but

---

<sup>29</sup> *Magyar Nemzet* October 30, 2007

not a partner within the EU. This current disillusionment with the EU is also often linked in both political and societal discourses with the Hungarian historical bitterness towards Western Europeans because of the Trianon Treaty imposed on Hungary at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It further cultivates the feeling that Hungarians are alone in Europe. The recognition and hospitality that Hungarians receive in Turkey during their holidays or other encounters because of historical affinities may thus have created the perception that Hungarian and Turkish societies can indeed become strong allies within the EU.

Moreover, Turkey's image in Hungary, as it can be observed both in the interviews and the media search, is in general that of a strong and successful country. The written press for example gives particular importance to Turkish foreign policy declarations and energy related matters, much more than Turkey-EU related matters. Plus, the fact that Turkey does not create a forthcoming or near problem for Hungary makes it a non-issue for the Hungarian public. However, this unproblematic and rather positive situation does not seem to have translated into a growing interest in Turkish-EU affairs in Hungary. On the contrary, there is a general apathy towards this matter in the Hungarian society and this can clearly be observed in the Hungarian written press, as well. Also, as it has come up in various interviews, Hungarians do not feel empowered by being an EU member state and they do not think that they can influence European decisions on any matter let alone support for Turkey. Therefore, as brilliantly put by the Turkish Ambassador Gür, this "platonic love affair" between Hungarians and Turks does not translate into something concrete be it giving support to Turkey at the EU level or signing bilateral agreements. Quite intriguingly the far right Jobbik seems to be taking more concrete steps at the European level, such as lobbying in the European Parliament for the international recognition of the Northern Cyprus, one of the most burning issues in EU-Turkish relations.

All in all, the fact that all major political formations in Hungary have thus far been fully supportive of Turkey's accession to the EU, the lack of a significant Muslim immigration to and in Hungary, Turkey of being a non-issue for Hungarian domestic politics, but most importantly the historical and current cultural affinities between Hungary and Turkey seem to have contributed to the positive image of Turkey in Hungary and the majority of the Hungarians supporting Turkey's accession to the EU. These conclusions draw attention to the necessity of scrutinizing further the ways in which collective memories and cultural affinities play significant roles in

shaping the European public opinion. As for the other Višegrad states, the data collected in Hungary reveal that enlargement towards Turkey may be a desirable process for them because Turkey which is perceived as a strong country can challenge the balance of power within the EU for the advantage of Višegrad states. Thus, as in Cakir and Gergelova's account, the rather optimistic perspective regarding Turkey in Višegrad countries is "based on a combination of rational calculations/expectations and constructions: those who prefer a more intergovernmental Europe reckon that Turkey's existence will be an impediment to the federalist tendencies in the EU"<sup>30</sup> Because of the lack of a significant immigration towards Central and Eastern Europe from the south, Islam does not seem to be a problem for Višegrad societies, either, thus once again being a non-issue seems to be contributing enormously to the positive portrayal of Turkey in this part of Europe. In the words of the LMP leader, Benedek Javor, Višegrad states may also believe that as the EU enlarges, they would then not stay in the periphery of the EU anymore, but can finally approach more towards the central and that is why they orient their public towards supporting EU enlargement. However, according to Zoltan Garik, the senior research fellow in the Hungarian Institute of International Relations, Višegrad countries cannot compete with France and/or Germany in the decision-making process for Turkey's accession and cannot be influential as a bloc on this matter, a rather down-to-earth view shared by Turkish diplomats and policy-makers alike.

## References

- Akçali, Emel, and Umut Korkut 2012 "Geographical Metanarratives in East-Central Europe : Neo-Turanism in Hungary" *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 53, no. 5: 596-614.
- Anonymous notary of King Béla, 2010 *Gesta Hungarorum- The Deeds of the Hungarians*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Armagan Emre Cakir and Angelika Gergelova 2010 "Tug of War or Lifelining- Central European views on Turkey's accession to the EU", in Lucie Tunkrova and Pavel Saradin (eds) *The Politics of EU Accession – Turkish challenges and Central European experiences* Routledge: Oxon and New York : 113-127, p. 124
- Batory Agnes 2006, *The European Future of Turkey and Ukraine: The Policy Debate in Hungary*, Budapest: Center for Policy Studies, Central European University.
- European Commission 2011. *Eurobarometer 74*. Brussels: European Commission

---

<sup>30</sup> Cakir and Gergelova 2010 p. 125.

- European Commission 2008. *Eurobarometer 69*. Brussels: European Commission.
- European Commission 2006. *Eurobarometer 64 – Annex*. Brussels: European Commission.
- European Stability Initiative, 2008 ‘A referendum on the unknown Turk? Anatomy of an Austrian debate’, Berlin–Istanbul 1.
- Bürgin Alexander. 2010 “Ongoing opposition in the West, new options in the East: is Turkey’s EU accession process reversible?” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 12: 4: 417-435.
- İçener E, Phinnemore D. and Papadimitriou D. 2010 “Continuity and change in the European Union’s approach to enlargement: Turkey and Central and Eastern Europe compared”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10: 2: 207-223.
- Karatay, Osman 2003 *Iran ile Turan- Hayali Milletler Çağında Avrasya ve Ortadoğu* (Iran and Turan- Eurasia and the Middle East in the age of imagined nations), Ankara: Karam.
- Kariko Sandor and Szabo Tibor (2009) “A Hungarian-Turkish Cultural Heritage: Scandal and Reconciliation” in Angelo Ferrai (ed) *Proceedings 4<sup>th</sup> International Congress on “Science and Technology for the Safeguard of Cultural Heritage in the Mediterranean Basin*, vol.1, Cairo, Egypt 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> December : 18-20.
- Kramer Heinz, 2006 “Turkey and the EU: The EU’s Perspective”, *Insight Turkey*, October-December 8:4: 24-32.
- Köprülü, Fuat, 1972 “Türk Macar Münasebetlerine Dair” (On the Relations of Turks and Hungarians), Orhan Köprülü (Ed.), *Köprülü’den Seçmeler*, (Selections from Koprulu), Istanbul: 16-22.
- Oba, Ali Engin. 1995 *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, (The Emergence of Turkish Nationalism). Ankara: Imge Kitabevi.
- Saz Gökhan, 2011. “Turkophobia and Rising Islamophobia in Europe: A Quantification for the Negative Spillovers on the EU Membership Quest of Turkey”, *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 19: 4: 479-491.
- Šaradin Pavel, 2010 “The Support of East Central European countries for Turkey’s accession to the European Union” in Lucie Tunkrova and Pavel Saradin (eds) *The Politics of EU Accession – Turkish challenges and Central European experiences* Oxon and New York : Routledge, 128-146.
- “IV. Török-Magyar Turáni Törzsi Gyűlés”, *Köprü/Híd*, 14, évfolyam, 4. Szám p. 12-13.

### Internet sites

- <http://observationalism.com/2008/10/02/fictional-minority-again-declared-unwelcome-by-hungarians>
- <http://www.politics.hu/20120723/socialists-almost-even-with-fidesz-in-new-ipsos-poll-as-none-of-the-above-nears-two-thirds-majority/>
- [http://index.hu/belfold/2009/06/09/uj\\_teruleti\\_elemzes/](http://index.hu/belfold/2009/06/09/uj_teruleti_elemzes/).
- <http://kurultaj.com/magunkrol/>

### Interviews

Balazs, Peter. Professor at Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Director of the Center for European Enlargement Studies at CEU, Ambassador of Hungary in

Denmark (1994-1996), Germany (1997-2000) and to the EU in Brussels (2003-2004), Minister of Foreign Affairs in Hungary in 2009-2010, 16 February 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Benedek, Javor. Member of the Parliament from LMP Green Party, 27 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary

Feher, Peter. Foreign Policy Editor of *Hetivalasz who lived in Turkey in the 1970s*, 30 March 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Garik, Zoltan. Professor of Social Policy, European Studies United Kingdom expert, senior research fellow in the Hungarian Institute of International Relations, financed by the Hungarian foreign ministry, 2 April 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Gür, Kemal. Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey, March 7 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Gyöngyösi, Marton. Member of the Parliament from Jobbik-Movement for a Better Hungary and vice president of the Committee on Foreign Relations of Jobbik Parliamentary Group, and the chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Azeri-Hungarian Friendship Group, 10 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

György, Nemeth. Professor of Ancient History, Eötvös Loránd University History Department, 27 February 2012, Budapest Hungary.

Hegedüs Tamás, Member of the Parliament from Jobbik - Movement for a Better Hungary, Hungarian National Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Group, Chairman, 17 May 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Kaponyi, Erzsébet. Professor of EU Affairs, Human rights, EU law, EU enlargement at Corvinus University, one of the best universities in Hungary, especially strong in Economics and Business, 6 March 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Karakuş, Suat, Turkish Businessman residing in Hungary more than twenty years, DEIK- Foreign Economic Relations Board member, World Turkish Business Council Europe Region Committee Member 12 April 2012, Dunakeszi, Alagi Major, Hungary.

Keresztes, Imre, journalist foreign affairs columnist, specialist of Turkey at weekly HVG journal, March 2, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Ódor Balint, Deputy state secretariat of EU issues in the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign affairs, March 23, 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Shamil Ali Najat. University Professor at Corvinus, specialist on the Middle East, originally a Turcoman from Iraq, living in Hungary for more than thirty years, 6 March 2012, Budapest, Hungary.

Vilmos, Szabó Member of the Hungarian Parliament from the Socialist Party, Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs- 16 June 2012, Budapest, Hungary

### III. CZECH REPUBLIC<sup>1</sup>

**Pelin Ayan Musil and Juraj Mahfoud**

*What shapes Czech people's perceptions on Turkey's candidacy to EU? To what extent does the portrayal of Turkey in the media and public realm correspond to the current perceptions that public opinion surveys show? In order to answer such questions, this chapter first explores the results of the public opinion surveys, which show that the opposition outweighs the support for Turkey's membership to EU in Czech Republic. In order to explain these results, second, it provides a content analysis of the selected news on Turkey published between 2005 and 2010 in the popular print-media (MF Dnes, Tyden and Respekt) and analyzes 14 interviews conducted among opinion leaders in Czech Republic. It is argued that the majority of Czechs are opposed to Turkey's accession to the EU because Czechs perceive Turkey as 'culturally distant' from themselves. The reasons for this cultural distance are based on 1) Turkey's portrayal as a country with a religious government and a Muslim population in the right-wing media, 2) the existing stereotypes of Muslims within the Czech society, 3) weak historical ties between the two countries. Yet, contrary to the public opinion, Turkey receives full support from the political elites in Czech Republic. This contradiction is explained by the fact that the politicians in Czech Republic expect the EU to function more as an economic body than as a political-cultural entity in the future and therefore welcome Turkey's integration with the EU.*

#### **Introduction**

In Czech Republic, Turkey has the full support of government as well as all major political parties for EU membership. But surprisingly, in terms of public opinion, Czech Republic is one of the least supportive countries for Turkey's accession to EU within the Visegrad group. The available data on public opinion surveys from the years 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2010 show that Czech Republic follows an almost steady line in its support for Turkey's membership, remaining at 34 per cent

---

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank all the interviewees for agreeing to respond to our questions during the implementation of this research project. We further thank the Embassy of Turkey in Prague for providing us the relevant contacts from Turkish diaspora living in Czech Republic. Finally, we are very grateful to our research assistant, Katarina Minaricova, for helping us with the media research and Czech-English translations in preparing this chapter.

in 2010.<sup>2</sup> This makes Czech Republic closer to the average support level in the EU27, which varies around 30-35 per cent over the last seven years.<sup>3</sup> Why, in Czech Republic, is there less support for Turkey's accession to EU than other Visegrad countries and what explains the difference between the political and public attitude toward the question of Turkey?

Directed by these questions, this chapter first shows the position of the Czech public opinion among other Visegrad countries and the EU27 on the question of Turkey. Second, analyzing three selected papers (*MF Dnes*, *Tyden* and *Respekt*), it seeks to find out the overlaps between the media's portrayal of Turkey and the public opinion. Combining the media analysis with expert opinions and viewpoints from the Turkish diaspora, the chapter concludes that media's portrayal of Turkey as a pro-Islamic country plays a partial role in shaping the negative public opinion on Turkey. Other factors include the long-lasting stereotypes within Czech society against Muslims and weak historical ties between the two countries. Last but not least, this chapter also explains some levels of positive image that Turkey has among the Czechs, with respect to the news that underline its growing economy, strengthening economic relations between the Czech and Turkish businessmen and increasing number of Czech tourists that visit Western Turkey.

### **How is Turkey's candidacy to EU membership perceived in Czech Republic?**

It is widely noted by the policy experts and politicians that the issues relating to the foreign policy of Czech Republic receive little consideration from the Czech society.<sup>4</sup> Therefore it is not surprising that Turkey's accession to the EU has not been a very topical issue for the Czechs. Since the country joined the EU club in 2004, the debate on Turkey has received the highest level of public attention during 2005s, following EU's decision to open negotiation-talks with Turkey. As Saradin has pointed out earlier, at that time, the issue was elaborated quite negatively in the country, i.e. it was brought to the agenda through the act of a non-governmental organization—*European Values Association*—to collect signatures from citizens for a

---

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, "Eurobarometer 63 – Standard Report," accessed July 17, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_en.pdf). See also introduction of this report.

<sup>3</sup> See the graphs comparing Visegrad countries in "Introduction," 8.

<sup>4</sup> Interviews with Vaclav Kubata, Irena Kalhousova, David Kral, Lenka Flipkova conducted by authors in Prague on various dates.

petition, which would prevent the opening of EU negotiations with Turkey.<sup>5</sup> Among the arguments against Turkey's accession to EU, the violation of human rights and the discrimination against women were stressed. On the other hand, in public forums and the media, the Czech politicians addressed Turkey's economic backwardness as well as the religious outlook of the Turkish government.<sup>6</sup>

These statements by the politicians almost followed what the Czech media emphasized in December 2004 when the EU decided to open the negotiation talks with Turkey. For instance, on 17 December 2004, one of the most popular newspaper in Czech Republic, *MF Dnes* had written that:

Until recently, what is observed in Turkey is the torture of prisoners, corruption of human rights, restriction of the rights of women and minorities or religious intolerance. The country is also, compared to Europe, extremely poor. Turkey's economy corresponds to only a quarter of what Europe produces on average.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, one of the most well-known magazines *Respekt*, which is followed mainly by people interested in politics, gave a more positive interpretation of the decision to open negotiation talks with Turkey, seeing it as a "major step in the history of the unifying continent, which will change its fate".<sup>8</sup>

Yet, above half of the Czech population in 2005 and 2006 were against Turkey's accession. A previous study points to the fact that a major reason for such a negative approach among Czech society was due to perceiving Turkey as an underdeveloped country in the aspects of economy and human rights.<sup>9</sup> According to the public opinion surveys in 2005, yet, Czech Republic was not alone on its opinion that Turkey should 'respect human rights' and 'improve its economy'. Table 1 shows the Czech public opinion in 2005 and 2006 on this issue, including a comparison with the EU and other Visegrad countries. According to this, the concerns on Turkey's

---

<sup>5</sup> Saradin, "The support of East Central European countries," 131.

<sup>6</sup> Pavel Saradin, "The support of East Central European countries for Turkey's accession to the European Union," in *The Politics of EU Accession: Turkish challenges and Central European experiences*, ed. Pavel Saradin and Lucie Tunkrova (London: Routledge, 2010), 131-132.

<sup>7</sup> Hana Lesenarova, "Evropa Se Pta: Patri K Nam Turecko?" in *MF DNES*, 17 December 2004, accessed online 20 June 2012, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/evropa-se-pta-patri-k-nam-turecko-d40-zahranicni.aspx?c=A041216\\_210105\\_zahranicni\\_pav](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/evropa-se-pta-patri-k-nam-turecko-d40-zahranicni.aspx?c=A041216_210105_zahranicni_pav)

<sup>8</sup> Katerina Safarikova, "Ankara Zamirila Do Bruselu," in *Respekt*. No: 19, December 2004, accessed online 20 June 2012, [http://respekt.ihned.cz/index.php?p=R00000\\_d](http://respekt.ihned.cz/index.php?p=R00000_d)

<sup>9</sup> The study shows that the Kurdish question, women's issues and economic problems in Turkey have received a lot of attention in Czech media between the years 1999-2003. See, Michal Stein, "Český mediální pohled na Turecko a na otázku jeho vstupu do EU v letech 1999-2006" Seminar Paper, Turkology Institute of Charles University (Prague 2011).

economy and human rights issues were stressed almost in an equivalent degree in all four Visegrad countries. Yet, Hungary and Poland had higher levels of support for Turkey's membership in 2005 and 2006 and a similar degree of concern on its human rights record and state of economy. Then it is plausible to consider that there must have been other reasons causing less support for Turkey's membership among Czechs (as well as Slovaks) other than the issues on human rights and economy.

In fact, Table 1 shows that Czech Republic differs from Hungary and Poland mostly on the issue of cultural and historical values. In 2005, 75 per cent respondents from Hungary and 68 per cent of respondents from Poland believed that Turkey partly belonged to Europe by its history whereas in 2006, the percentages fell down to 73 and 61 per cent respectively. Yet, the ratios for agreement on this question were only 42 and 40 per cent for Czechs in 2005 and 2006.

**TABLE 1. Czech Public Opinion on Turkey's Accession to EU (2005 and 2006) Compared with V4 Countries and the EU25**

	To join the EU in about ten years, Turkey will have to respect Human Rights	To join the EU in about ten years, Turkey will have to significantly improve the state of its economy	Turkey's joining could risk favouring immigration to more developed countries in the EU	Turkey partly belongs to Europe by its geography	The cultural differences between Turkey and the EU Member States are too significant to allow for this accession	Turkey partly belongs to Europe by its history	Turkey's accession to the EU would strengthen the security in this region
% Agree							
<b>Hungary</b>							
2005	87	80	67	73	48	75	43
2006	79	72	63	71	51	73	36
<b>Poland</b>							
2005	86	80	63	74	43	68	50
2006	85	81	69	73	56	61	42
<b>Czech Rep.</b>							
2005	88	78	69	67	55	42	37
2006	92	84	77	59	69	40	33
<b>Slovakia</b>							
2005	84	76	68	68	55	58	36
2006	88	78	74	70	64	57	31
<b>EU-25</b>							
2005	84	76	63	55	54	42	38
2006	85	84	77	59	61	40	33

Source: European Commission, Eurobarometer 63 and 65, Standard Reports 2005a and 2006b

In a similar vein, in 2006, 51 per cent in Hungary and 56 per cent in Poland believed that the cultural differences between Turkey and the EU member states were too significant to allow for this accession whereas the rate of agreement with this statement was much higher—69 per cent—in Czech Republic. In addition to the cultural and historical aspects of the issue, the security issue slightly mattered, especially compared with Poland: In 2005, only 37 per cent of the Czechs believed Turkey’s accession would strengthen the security of Europe, compared with a 50 per cent of Polish respondents. Yet, in 2006, the ratios on this question declined to 33 per cent in Czech Republic and 42 per cent in Poland.

In making Czech Republic different from Hungary and Poland in its approach to Turkey, the fear of immigration was not a determinant factor either. Existing research has shown that a lower Turkish population share in the European host country corresponds to a lower disapproval rate of Turkish membership in the EU.<sup>10</sup> In accordance with this thesis, the level of Turkish population or Muslim population in general is almost equally low in all Visegrad countries, as previous studies noted.<sup>11</sup> That is why, the agreement rates on the question about immigration differ vaguely among the public opinion.

The perceptions on whether Turkey geographically belongs to Europe, on the other hand, could have a slight effect, since in 2005, the rates of agreement with this statement in Hungary and Poland were about 6-7 per cent higher than in Czech Republic. Yet, geography is already an imagined concept that is usually shaped by the historical and cultural values of the society.

In brief, the survey results show that cultural and historical aspects mattered most for causing a negative opinion on Turkey’s accession to the EU among the Czechs. In a similar vein, the Eurobarometer national report of the Czech Republic in 2005 further stated that, “half of the Czech population believes that Turkey does not belong to Europe historically or culturally speaking and that this is a major obstacle to

---

<sup>10</sup> See Gökhan Saz, “Turkophobia and Rising Islamophobia in Europe: A Quantification for the Negative Spillovers on the EU Membership Quest of Turkey” in *European Journal of Social Sciences* 19 (2011).

<sup>11</sup> Pavel Saradin, “The support of East Central European countries for Turkey’s accession to the European Union,” in *The Politics of EU Accession: Turkish challenges and Central European experiences*, ed. Pavel Saradin and Lucie Tunkrova (London: Routledge, 2010), 129.

Turkey's accession.”<sup>12</sup>

In the year 2008, the Eurobarometer survey explored whether the EU citizens would be in favor of Turkey's accession once Turkey complies with all the conditions set by the European Union. The phrase ‘all conditions’, by no means, included a better record in human rights and a well-functioning market economy according to the Copenhagen criteria. Thus, the question is a good measure in showing whether “cultural differences” does matter among people's opinion on enlargement. In other words, it is expected that a citizen, who would not be in favor of Turkey's accession even though the country fulfills all its responsibilities regarding human rights and the state of economy, is someone who finds the country *culturally alien* or *insecure* in terms of borders with Middle Eastern countries and the probability of immigration. Table 2 shows the results from Visegrad countries and the EU-27 on this question. Even though it is observed that the support rates have declined in Hungary and Poland in 2008, Czech Republic (along with Slovakia) once again falls behind these countries.

**TABLE 2. Czech Public Opinion on Turkey's Accession to EU (2008)**  
Compared with EU-27 and Visegrad Countries

Once Turkey complies with all the conditions set by the European Union, would you be strongly or fairly in favor of Turkey's accession to the EU?

%	<u>Strongly in favor</u>	<u>Fairly in favor</u>	<u>Total in favor</u>
Hungary	10	43	53
Poland	13	44	57
Czech Republic	9	34	43
Slovakia	6	29	35
EU-27	11	34	44

Source: European Commission, Eurobarometer 69, Standard Report 2008a

According to Table 2, the ratio of those who would be in favor of Turkey's accession to EU despite the fact that the country fulfills all conditions set is 43 per cent in total in Czech Republic (and in Slovakia it is even lower, 35 per cent). In this way, Czech Republic is the closest country to the EU average and falls behind Hungary and Poland where the in-favor ratios are 53 and 57 per cent respectively.

In sum, the analysis of Eurobarometer public opinion surveys in Visegrad

<sup>12</sup> European Commission, “Eurobarometer 63 – National Report Czech Republic. Executive Summary,” accessed July 17, 2012.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63\\_exec\\_cz.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_exec_cz.pdf)

countries over the years show that the reasons for lower levels of support for Turkey in Czech Republic (as well as Slovakia) can be better explained with the fact that majority of Czechs perceive Turkey *historically and culturally different* than Hungary and Poland. In other words, Turkey is placed on the ‘thick component’ of public perceptions in Czech Republic; which identifies the EU more as a cultural entity.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, would a media analysis prove our notion retrieved from public opinion surveys that “the degree of support for Turkey’s accession to EU is lower in Czech Republic because Turkey is perceived as a ‘culturally and historically distinctive country’”? Why is Turkey perceived like that in Czech Republic, unlike in Hungary and Poland? Is it because it is portrayed *culturally and historically different* in the media? The next section will elaborate this question.

### ***Portrayal of Turkey in the Czech Media (2005-2010)***

The selection of the newspapers for the media research has been made according to two criteria in this study: 1) The popularity of the newspapers among public opinion, 2) the availability of online data for the years 2005-2010. Since 2005 is the year for the opening of negotiation talks between the EU and Turkey, one would expect to see a higher number of hits on the word ‘Turkey’ in this year. Yet, in *MF Dnes* as the most popular newspaper among the three, the number of news in which Turkey is addressed is less than the following years. In *Respekt*, which is a weekly magazine that focus more on political news, Turkey is addressed in the year 2005 almost as many as the years in 2008, 2009 and 2010. Table 3 shows the number of hits on Turkey from three popular daily and weekly papers (*MF Dnes*, *Tyden* and *Respekt*) even though the data for *Tyden* is unavailable for the years 2005 and 2006.

**TABLE 3. Number of Hits on Turkey per year**

<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
MF DNES	676	729	789	950	812	792
TYDEN	n/a	n/a	180	207	156	128
RESPEKT	105	81	82	105	109	108
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1051</b>	<b>1262</b>	<b>1077</b>	<b>1028</b>

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the thick and thin components of public perceptions on Turkey, see Petr Dostal et al. “Turkey’s Bid for European Union Membership: Between ‘Thick’ and ‘Thin’ Conceptions of Europe” in *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52 (2011), 196-218.

Since the numbers do not show any perspective in terms of when and how Turkey as a country has ever become popular in the news, the strategy to do the content analysis of the Czech media has been first to ask the policy experts, journalists and Turkish diaspora their opinion on the news in which Turkey has received a great deal of attention between 2005-2010. The respondents generally agreed that the important cornerstones of *Turkish domestic politics*—such as national elections, referendum on constitutional amendments—and *Turkey's foreign policy*—such as policy toward the Middle East, relations with Israel—are covered in the media. Apart from the political updates from Turkey, some respondents also mention that Turkey appears in the news related to its energy security and economy. In fact, it is through these agendas that Turkey's potential membership to the EU is reminded to the people.

“The mainstream media in Czech Republic is dominated by a right-wing ideology,” says Pavel Barsa, Professor of Politics at Charles University, which is a statement confirmed also by Benjamin Cunningham, the previous editor of *Prague Post* (2008-2012).<sup>14</sup> According to Barsa, “the left-wing has been weak for 20 years in Czech Republic as a result of the fall of communism. Being associated with the right-wing ideology has always been advantageous in Czech Republic, but now this mentality is withering away.”<sup>15</sup> The right-wing ideology means, apart from a support for market economy, a negative stance on immigration, discontent about Arabs and Muslims and a pro-Israeli approach on Middle East politics.

Keeping in mind the right-wing perspective of the media and the potential news that Turkey has been covered, at the second step, the research, directed by the interviews, focused on how Turkey was portrayed in its domestic politics, in its economy and foreign policy, especially with regard to relations with Israel.

### ***Portrayal of Turkish Domestic Politics in the Czech Media***

#### *Turkish National Elections*

In 2007, the Justice and Development Party (*AKP-Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) received 46.6 per cent of the votes and became the single party in government for the second the time in Turkey. Since the elections revealed that the AKP's role in Turkish

---

<sup>14</sup> Pavel Barsa and Benjamin Cunningham. Interviews conducted by authors on 19 April and 20 June 2012, Prague.

<sup>15</sup> Pavel Barsa. Interview by authors, 19 April 2012, Prague.

politics was continuous and solid, the discussions in the media regarding Turkey's place in the EU were revitalized between the dates 16—29 July 2007, this time focusing on what Turkey can mean and bring to EU under the AKP rule. One of the most popular newspapers in Czech Republic, *MF Dnes* had a special coverage of 12 articles on Turkish elections during these dates.

The identity of the AKP has always been a subject of debate in the international media: it was labeled as “center-right” or “Islamist”, yet the party defined itself as “conservative democrat”.<sup>16</sup> A part of the claims that underline the religious identity of the party is due to the fact that the AKP, founded in 2001, inherited the leadership and grassroots of an Islamic party—Welfare Party (RP-*Refah Partisi*). On the other hand, 2007 elections were held following a political crisis in the country, a crisis that polarized two groups in the Turkish parliament as well as in the society: one group who considered themselves as secularists and the other group comprised of AKP supporters. The crisis evoked when the AKP nominated Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül to be the president of the Republic since Gül had roots in Turkey's Islamic Welfare Party and his wife wore a headscarf, which some secularists considered as a symbol of Islamism.

Thus, within such a context, the landslide victory of the AKP in 2007 national elections led to a public debate in Turkey and abroad, asking whether Turkey was going through Islamization or not. In Czech Republic, *MF Dnes* included different viewpoints on this question, including both the critics and advocates of the AKP rule in Turkey. For instance, a few days before the elections, Pavel Novotny, in his article quoted a statement from a German businessman and a critic of the AKP, Hans-Peter Raddatz: “It is not a coincidence that the Islamist party that dominates Turkey has adopted a series of measures leading to the Islamization of the country.”<sup>17</sup> On the other side, the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's words appeared in Novotny's column, “I am the Prime Minister of a secular state and my party is not a religious organization.”<sup>18</sup> In this respect, it was stated that Turkey's AKP ideologically resembled what the Christian Democrats stood for the EU.

---

<sup>16</sup> Yalçın Akdoğan, *AK Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi* (Istanbul: Alfa, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Pavel Novotny, “Hrozi Turecku Puc? Vojaci Vyckavaji,” in *Mlada Fronta Dnes* 19 July 2007, accessed online 29 April 2012, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/hrozi-turecku-puc-vojaci-vyckavaji-duv-zahranicni.aspx?c=A070719\\_112030\\_zahranicni\\_ad](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/hrozi-turecku-puc-vojaci-vyckavaji-duv-zahranicni.aspx?c=A070719_112030_zahranicni_ad).

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

Even though the concerns for sharia in Turkey were exaggerated and proved to be a delusion, the national elections in 2007 portrayed Turkey as a country that has a conservative government and a society with Muslim values. In fact, *MF Dnes* quoted the results of a survey conducted in Turkey as follows:

According to the survey institute IRI, only three percent of the surveyed people identified themselves as "completely secular."... In the same survey, respondents stated that they did not want the implementation of Islamic sharia law, they see Muslim extremists as a threat, yet they do not mind that the state conveys religion to the private sphere. If schools educate more religious Turks, they would not be against it. In other words, nothing against modern and secular state, but we must therefore not be all atheists?<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, a few days before the election, an article written by Elif Shafak—a famous Turkish left-wing writer—appeared in *MF Dnes*. In her article, Elif Shafak was analyzing how a headscarf—i.e. the fact that the presidential candidate's wife was wearing a headscarf—could create polarization in Turkish society. In this way, the article portrayed Turkey as a country with many democratic dilemmas, pointing to the rigorous tension between the secularists and the religious people, especially among women. She noted the tendency among the secularist women to categorize the women with headscarves as “the other” and wrote that:

While walking through a crowded Istanbul street you will see how women with uncovered and covered heads effortlessly—almost naturally—mix. Why then is it not possible to achieve similar sisterhood in the realm of politics...? A recent poll shows that outside of their homes; around 60 per cent of women in Turkey cover their heads. Does this mean that those 60 percent wear veil? Does this mean that all of them support Islamic fundamentalism? The answer to both questions is negative.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the 2007 Turkish elections that appeared in the media once again generated the EU-Turkey debate. The arguments that support Turkey's accession to the EU were reminded by Johana Grohova in *MF Dnes* that:

The reasons [for supporting Turkey's accession to EU] are numerous. Turkey is a longtime candidate for accession; it submitted the application four years ago. It is an important secular state in the middle of the Muslim world, member of NATO bordering Iraq. The vision of the accession has operated in Turkey as an engine for democratic changes: the gradual removal of army from the political sphere, strengthening of women's rights or freedom of speech. Thanks to the reforms, two years ago the official accession talks between Turkey and EU have

---

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Elif Shafak, "Existuje Ideální Turecká Žena? Ne!" in *Mlada Fronta Dnes* 19 July 2007, accessed online 12 April 2012, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/existuje-idealni-turecka-zena-ne-dol-domaci.aspx?c=A070718\\_192542\\_nazory\\_ost](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/existuje-idealni-turecka-zena-ne-dol-domaci.aspx?c=A070718_192542_nazory_ost).

begun.<sup>21</sup>

In another column in *MF Dnes*, Marek Dvoracek reminded that the Prime Minister Erdogan was in favor of EU membership and it was under his leadership that Turkey managed to open negotiation-talks with the EU:

Even though ordinary Turks do not care much about the EU accession, under the leadership of Erdogan, they opened doors to Brussels negotiation talks. "His government has already led Turkey to the vicinity of Europe both politically and economically," commented Franco Frattini, European Commissioner for Security.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, in an interview with Sylvia Tiryaki, a Slovak native and a Turkish analyst working for an independent think-tank TESEV and lecturing at Istanbul Kültür University, it was also revealed that the issue of the EU membership played no more a significant role in election campaigns. She reported to *MF Dnes* that:

I do not exaggerate when I say that almost none of the 42.5 million voters want to hear about the Union. It is an incredible shame but the EU does not play any role in the campaign anymore... Europeans will probably claim that if the Turks want to join the EU, they should bear what will stay in their way. Turks, who were in the last forty years the most eager supporters of the accession to the EU, are now tired of persuading Europe about their Europeanism.<sup>23</sup>

Tiryaki also portrayed a more democratic image of Turkey in her interview, saying that the elections provided an open discussion about some of the taboo issues relating to religion. She pointed to the fact that women wearing headscarf had entered the public discussion and became noticeably active in society:

Many years ago, I would be willing to think that it is the religious conservatives who do not wish women wearing to be publically active. It is, however, the opposite: it is the secularists, who do not want to see them.<sup>24</sup>

These words briefly meant that religious conservatism and democracy could coexist, whereas secularist thought could be more intolerant: The news portrayed Turkey as an example for this case.

---

<sup>21</sup> Johana Grohova, "EU Resi, Jak Turky Nevzit a Zaroven Neztratit," in *Mlada Fronta Dnes* 22 July 2007, accessed online 28 April 2012, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/eu-resi-jak-turky-nevzit-a-zaroven-neztratit-fn2-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A070722\\_114929\\_zahranicni\\_ost](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/eu-resi-jak-turky-nevzit-a-zaroven-neztratit-fn2-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A070722_114929_zahranicni_ost).

<sup>22</sup> Marek Dvoracek, "Turecko Cekaji Po Volbach Zajimave Casy," in *Mlada Fronta Dnes*, 23 July 2007, accessed online 28 April 2012, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/turecko-cekaji-po-volbach-zajimave-casy-fci-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A070723\\_123008\\_zahranicni\\_kot](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/turecko-cekaji-po-volbach-zajimave-casy-fci-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A070723_123008_zahranicni_kot).

<sup>23</sup> Pavel Novotny, "Turci Ted O EU Nechteji Ani Slyset, Rika Analyticka," in *Mlada Fronta Dnes*, 21 July 2007, accessed online 30 April 2012, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/turci-ted-o-eu-nechteji-ani-slyset-rika-analyticka-fva-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A070720\\_160209\\_zahranicni\\_ad](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/turci-ted-o-eu-nechteji-ani-slyset-rika-analyticka-fva-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A070720_160209_zahranicni_ad).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

### *Portrayal of Turkish Constitutional Amendments in Czech Media*

On 12 September 2010, Turkish people went to the polls for a referendum to vote for or against the constitutional amendments proposed by the Turkish parliament, mainly by the AKP since the party held the majority of seats in the assembly. In fact, The constitutional amendments were based on reforming the state structure: First, it aimed to strengthen the democratically elected government's control over the military by making it possible that the coup plotters be tried in civilian courts. Second, it aimed to bring a complete restructuring of the judiciary, giving parliament and the president greater say in the composition of the Constitutional Court.

In the Czech media, the news on the constitutional amendments took place quite extensively: For instance, in *MF Dnes*, between the dates 5 -19 September 2010, covering the period one week before and one week after the referendum, there were 43 hits on the word “Turkey,” six of which were in the news section. On 12 September 2012, *MF Dnes* published the results of the referendum with the title “Turks voted for constitutional reform that can move the country closer to the EU.”<sup>25</sup> The newspaper reminded that the changes in the constitution were required by the EU, despite the fact that accession talks were progressing quite slowly since 2005.

The news on the referendum appearing in *Tyden*, *MF Dnes* and *Respekt*, in general, portrayed Turkey as a country, which was experiencing a major transformation not only in state structure but in all aspects, including its state of economy and foreign policy. Since the support for constitutional amendments in a way confirmed the popularity of the AKP rule in Turkey, the question of the AKP identity and Islam was re-stressed. For instance, *MF Dnes* mentioned the words of the critics who accused the AKP of undermining the independence of judiciary and designating the supreme judicial functions to its supporters as “a part of the long-term strategy for Islamizing Turkey.”<sup>26</sup>

*Tyden* underlined the consolidation of the AKP power by stating that the votes for the constitutional amendments meant great support for the Prime Minister

---

<sup>25</sup> “Turci Odhlasovali Ustavni Reformu, Ktera Ma Zemi Priblizit EU.” in *Mlada Fronta Dnes*, 12 September 2010, accessed online on 27 May 2012. [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/turci-odhlasovali-ustavni-reformu-ktera-ma-zemi-priblizit-eu-pu2-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A100912\\_184426\\_zahranicni\\_iky](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/turci-odhlasovali-ustavni-reformu-ktera-ma-zemi-priblizit-eu-pu2-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A100912_184426_zahranicni_iky).

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

Erdogan and his party, which, from the beginning supported liberal reforms despite being labeled with an Islamist vision by the secularist circles.<sup>27</sup>

In *Respekt*, an article written by Jiri Sobota was published with the title “Turks are modernizing their state and becoming a regional Islamic power.” In the article, he stressed that Turkey was undergoing a fundamental transformation and the number of Turks associating themselves with Islam was rising. He portrayed the AKP with an Islamism which did not have a form of populism, but was accompanied by the rise of a successful socially conservative middle class that was sometimes—because of the similar protestant moral of the Americans and Europeans—called ‘Islamic Calvinists.’<sup>28</sup> Yet, there was a positive stress on the economic success of the government:

...it has, unlike the previous governments did, tamed inflation and slashed the deficit. Turkey is becoming the economic center of the region with ties to neighboring countries. Export to Syria and Iraq is now bigger than the one to United States and New York Times has recently noted that Turkey would have met the criteria of the eurozone more easily than most of its members.<sup>29</sup>

The article also pointed to the fact that while the EU was hesitating to admit the populous Muslim country into its structure, Turkey itself was evidently becoming a central regional player in the Middle East. In this way, Turkey was portrayed as a country becoming economically and politically stronger, yet with an Islamist government.

### ***Portrayal of Turkish Foreign Policy in Czech Media***

Between the years 2004 and 2006, Turkey’s foreign policy was generally discussed concerning its relations with the EU. From 2007 on, Turkey became more visible on topics related to its rising economy and politics of the Middle East. The word “Islam” was noticed in almost every news related to the foreign affairs of Turkey.

On 13 December 2004, right after the EU decided to open negotiation talks with Turkey, *MF Dnes* quoted the words of the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, who

---

<sup>27</sup> “Turci v Referendu Podporili Ustavni Reformu.” in *TYDEN*, 12 September 2009, accessed 27 May 2012. [http://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/zahranici/asie-a-oceanie/turci-v-referendu-podporili-ustavni-reformu\\_181043.html](http://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/zahranici/asie-a-oceanie/turci-v-referendu-podporili-ustavni-reformu_181043.html)

<sup>28</sup> Jiri Sobota, "Turecky Pupek." In *Respekt*, 19 September 2010, accessed online 27 May 2012 <http://respekt.ihned.cz/c1-46492650-turecky-pupek>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

said that “accession of a country that has managed to combine Islam and democracy will bring harmony to EU, which will coexist with civilization.”<sup>30</sup> On 17 December 2004, in *Respekt*, Katerina Safarikova wrote that:

The European Union has opened its doors to Turkey. Upon the accession of the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it is another major step in history of the unifying continent, which will change its face. Union will expand welcoming a 70 million-citizen Muslim state with proud and young population and will stretch its borders to Iraq.<sup>31</sup>

On 3 October 2005, six chapters were opened in the negotiation talks between Turkey and the EU. The Czech newspapers addressed the issue through different perspectives. *MF Dnes* quoted the words of the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ursula Plassnik who stated that the European Union would not be able to accommodate “the vast, populous and poor Muslim country like Turkey.” Yet the news addressed the support of the Czech president Vaclav Klaus for Turkey’s accession.<sup>32</sup>

*Respekt* published several articles that examined the Turkish question during that period. One article discussed the Austrian approach to two candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, with the title “Danke Österreich! [Thank you Austria!].” The article discussed the Austrian policy, which aimed at promoting the EU as a group of states that stand on a common European cultural heritage, into which Croatia fit certainly better than Turkey.<sup>33</sup> Another article brought a different perspective in understanding the question of Turkey: Turkey deserved to have a chance with the EU because if not, “Turkey [could] replace its European ambitions with Asian or even Islamist ones.”<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Turkey-EU debate also appeared in the news with regard to the Cyprus question. Cyprus, as an island, has been divided into Greek and Turkish lands for about forty years. While the Greek land joined the EU, the Turkish land remained

---

<sup>30</sup> Zpravy IDNES.cz.in *MF Dnes*, 20 December 2004, accessed online on 20 June 2012.

<http://zpravy.idnes.cz/ankety.aspx?id=BSOUHLAST24>

<sup>31</sup> Katerina Safarikova. “Anakra Zamirila Do Bruselu,” in *Respekt*, December 2004, accessed online 20 June 2012. <http://respekt.ihned.cz/index.php?p=R00000>

<sup>32</sup> “EU Se Shodla S Ankarou, Vstupni Jednani Mohou Zacit.” in *MF Dnes*, 3 October 2005, accessed online 21 June 2012. [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/eu-se-shodla-s-ankarou-vstupni-jednani-mohou-zacit-fst-zahranicni.aspx?c=A051003\\_084134\\_zahranicni\\_miz](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/eu-se-shodla-s-ankarou-vstupni-jednani-mohou-zacit-fst-zahranicni.aspx?c=A051003_084134_zahranicni_miz)

<sup>33</sup> “Danke Osterreich!” in *Respekt* 9 October 2005, accessed online 21 June 2012. [http://respekt.ihned.cz/?p=R00000\\_d](http://respekt.ihned.cz/?p=R00000_d)

<sup>34</sup> Zbynek Petracek, “Startujeme S Tureckem,” in *Respekt*, 3 October 2005, accessed online 21 June 2012. <http://respekt.ihned.cz/c1-36248690-startujeme-s-tureckem>

internationally unrecognized. Turkey, on the other hand, did not recognize the Greek land. The problem was portrayed as an institutional paradox in the news, since “a candidate was refusing to recognize one of the members of the community that it applied for joining.”<sup>35</sup> It was set as a prerequisite for Turkey to open its ports and airports to Cyprus because Turks had committed to this act by signing the custom protocol.

In fact, on 11 December 2006, the dispute over Cyprus led to the freezing of eight chapters within the negotiation talks between the EU and Turkey. In *Mf Dnes*, six articles were published in this time period, covering the news on the freezing of the negotiation talks. The articles basically showed the insolubility of the issue and the division within the EU on their approach to this issue. The Czech position was portrayed as “similar to Sweden, Poland, Italy, Spain and Britain,” stating that Turkey was strategically important for European security and supply of raw materials.”<sup>36</sup> In addition, Czech political stance defended the view that Turkey should not be subject to any different condition than the ones Czech Republic and the other new member countries had to fulfill.<sup>37</sup> Yet, in general, it was observed in the media that following the admission of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU, the enlargement was going to slow down. *MF Dnes* announced on 15 December 2006 that “Bulgaria and Romania will remain, for a long time, the last new member states that have joined the European Union.”<sup>38</sup>

As the negotiation talks with the EU slowed down, from 2007 on, Turkish foreign policy appeared in Czech media with regard to its relations with its neighbors and its regional role in the Middle East. In January 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan’s dispute with the Israeli President Peres at the World Economic Forum in Davos took the attention of the Czech media. *Tyden* addressed the event as “Erdogan

---

<sup>35</sup> Radko Hokovsky, “Tureckou Maturitou Bude Kypr,” in *Respekt*, 3 October 2005, accessed online 21 June 2012. <http://respekt.ihned.cz/c1-36248630-tureckou-maturitou-bude-kypr>

<sup>36</sup> “Unie Dohodla Kompromis S Tureckem, Ceka Se Na Kypr.” in *MF DNES*, 11 December 2006, accessed online 23 June 2012. [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/unie-dohodla-kompromis-s-tureckem-ceka-se-na-kypr-f6y-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A061211\\_182627\\_zahranicni\\_dp](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/unie-dohodla-kompromis-s-tureckem-ceka-se-na-kypr-f6y-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A061211_182627_zahranicni_dp)

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> “Unie Si Da Po Bulharsku a Rumunsku Pauzu, Zpomali Rozsirovani.” in *MF DNES*, 15 December 2006, accessed online 23 June 2012. [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/unie-si-da-po-bulharsku-a-rumunsku-pauzu-zpomali-rozsirovani-pug-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A061215\\_153226\\_zahranicni\\_joh](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/unie-si-da-po-bulharsku-a-rumunsku-pauzu-zpomali-rozsirovani-pug-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A061215_153226_zahranicni_joh)

attacked Peres and left Davos.”<sup>39</sup> It was stated that Erdogan, “the leader of the government party based on political Islam,” had almost denounced Israel's offensive in Gaza Strip, which was a gesture appreciated by the Palestinian radical movement, Hamas.<sup>40</sup>

Some of the interviewees also agreed that the Davos incident, as portrayed in the Czech media, was a turning point in Czech people's approach toward Turkey.<sup>41</sup> Barsa stated that, “Czech Republic is one of the most pro-Israeli countries in Europe. Erdogan's intervention in Davos was striking, which created an effect in Czech Republic. It led to a discussion that ‘if Turkey wants to join the EU, it must acknowledge our pro-Israeli perspective.’”<sup>42</sup>

Another event that condensed this perspective toward Turkey happened on 31 May 2010: The tension between Turkey and Israel escalated as a result of the *Mavi Marmara* incident, which was also covered in the Czech media. Israel conducted a military operation against a flotilla organized by the Free Gaza Movement and Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH). On the Turkish ship, *Mavi Marmara*, the Israeli soldiers were confronted with resistance from the IHH activists. During the struggle eight Turkish citizens and one American citizen died. While the Turkish official stance argued that the Israeli army used excessive force in the event (and later on confirmed by the United Nations report), the Israeli position argued that their soldiers pursued nothing but a necessary self-defense act. While *MF Dnes* portrayed the whole event closer to the Israeli stance, there was also disappointment in the news about the deteriorating relations between Israel and Turkey.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from Turkey-Israel relations, the media also paid attention to the ties between Turkey and its neighbors in the Middle East. For instance, in *Respekt*, Ayaan Hirsi Ali commented on the strengthening relations between Turkey and Iran that:

The illusion of Turkey as a moderate friend of the West in the Muslim world

---

<sup>39</sup> “VIDEO: Erdogan Se Pustil Do Perese a Odjel Z Davosu” in *TYDEN* 30 January 2009, accessed online 25 May 2012. [http://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/zahranici/asia-a-oceanie/video-erdogan-se-pustil-do-perese-a-odjel-z-davosu\\_102996.html](http://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/zahranici/asia-a-oceanie/video-erdogan-se-pustil-do-perese-a-odjel-z-davosu_102996.html)

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Pavel Barsa and Lenka Filipkova. Interviews conducted by authors, 19 April and 25 April 2012, Prague.

<sup>42</sup> Pavel Barsa. Interview conducted by authors. 19 April 2012, Prague.

<sup>43</sup> “Vrat' se do Osvětími, křičeli prý propalestinští aktivisté na vojáky Izraele Zdroj” in *MF Dnes* 5 June 2010, accessed online 28 May 2012. [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/vratte-se-do-osvetimi-kriceli-pry-propalestinsti-aktiviste-na-vojaky-izraele-1h3-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A100605\\_160242\\_zahranicni\\_ip1](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/vratte-se-do-osvetimi-kriceli-pry-propalestinsti-aktiviste-na-vojaky-izraele-1h3-/zahranicni.aspx?c=A100605_160242_zahranicni_ip1)

has, however, collapsed. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan congratulated last year his Iranian colleague Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to re-election in obviously rigged elections.<sup>44</sup>

In short, the news on Turkey that appeared in media between 2005-2010, in discussions relating to EU accession, domestic politics and foreign policy of Turkey had a tendency to show it as a country that has a large Muslim population with a government led by religious Islamist values. In simplistic terms, the word “Islam” was overstressed in the media whenever any political news on Turkey was published, sometimes implying ‘political Islam,’ sometimes implying a more moderate meaning like the ‘conservative values of the government.’<sup>45</sup> As the negotiation talks faded between the EU and Turkey since 2006, Turkey also began to emerge more in its interactions with its neighbors and particularly fluctuating relations with Israel. In this way, Turkey’s portrayal looked quite unusual to Czech values and political norms, which are quite distant from religion and shaped more or less by a pro-Israeli perspective.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Why are Czechs FOR or AGAINST Turkey’s accession to EU?**

While the portrayal of Turkey in the media seems to correspond to the perceptions of the people who oppose Turkey’s accession as a result of cultural differences, it would nevertheless be an oversimplification to state that these perceptions are shaped purely by these news. After all, it is mentioned by most of the interviewed experts that Czech foreign policy and the news on Turkey’s accession to the EU receives little attention from the people. In other words, there is an underdeveloped public discourse on the issue and it remains as a discussion topic mainly among the political elite and the intellectuals.<sup>47</sup> What else then, other than the news in the media, explains the 34 per cent positive and 60 per cent negative attitude

---

<sup>44</sup> Ayaan Hirsi Ali, "Nepratele a Pratele," in *Respekt* 12 September 2010, accessed online 28 May 2012. <http://respekt.ihted.cz/c1-46381590-nepratele-a-pratele>

<sup>45</sup> Petr Kucera from the Turkology Institute in Prague also agrees that “Islam” is an overly stressed word that appears in media relating to Turkey. Interview conducted by authors, 20 March 2012, Prague.

<sup>46</sup> A general statement agreed by Pavel Barsa, Lenka Filipkova, Vit Dostal, Sadi Shanaah. Interviews by the authors. 19 April, 25 April, 4 May 2012, Prague.

<sup>47</sup> Stated by Irena Kalhousova, Vaclav Kubata, David Kral. Interview by the authors. 7 June, 20 June, 4 June 2012, Prague.

against Turkey in Czech society by the year 2010?<sup>48</sup>

### ***Further Reasons for Opposition***

According to Cunningham, the editor of *Prague Post* between the years 2008 and 2012, reasons for the negative attitude in society should not be limited only with the media image of Turkey. The Czechs are skeptical about EU enlargement in general. In fact, the accession of Romania and Bulgaria were equally criticized.<sup>49</sup> It is further acknowledged that in Czech Republic there is a general decline in the public support for EU enlargement and a growing skepticism toward the EU.<sup>50</sup> Yet, if we compare the ratios on opposition against EU enlargement and Turkey according to the available data, we easily note a gap between the two viewpoints, as shown in Table 4.

**TABLE 4: Czech Public Opinion on Turkey’s Accession to EU and EU enlargement**

	<b>2005a</b>	<b>2005b</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
% Against Turkey's accession	51	57	63	55	60
% Against EU Enlargement	23	25	28	33	34

Source: Eurobarometer Standard Reports 63-64-65-69-73

According to the Table, it is certain that the opposition against both the EU enlargement and Turkey’s accession is increasing, but it also shows that not all Czechs who are against EU enlargement oppose Turkey’s accession. As observed, the opposition rates against Turkey are twice as much as the opposition rates against enlargement. The reason for this gap is explained through the weakness of historical and cultural ties between the two countries by Bartovic and Kral who also state that Turkey, unlike Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, has not been a priority for the Czech foreign policy.<sup>51</sup> Besides, regardless of the media news, Turkey has usually been acknowledged as a country that belongs to the Arab world among average Czech

<sup>48</sup> European Commission, “Eurobarometer 73 – Standard Report,” accessed online 19 July 2012, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Cunningham. Interview by the authors. 20 June 2012, Prague.

<sup>50</sup> David Kral. Interview by authors, 4 June 2012, Prague.

<sup>51</sup> Vladimír Bartovic and David Král, “The Czech Republic and the EU enlargement: supportive but not enough?” in *Poland and the Czech Republic: Advocates of the EU Enlargement?*, ed. Adam Balcer (Warsaw: demosEUROPA 2010), 38.

citizens who are not specialized in political issues.<sup>52</sup> This perception indeed accompanies the historical image of Turkey's predecessor, Ottoman Empire, which was labeled as the 'Sick Man' of Europe.<sup>53</sup> In accordance with this, the conducted interviews point to the fact that there are stereotypes within Czech society such as labeling Muslims as the "other" or even in the most extreme form, as "terrorist." As remarked by some of our interviewees, when the news such as the explosion in Madrid appear in the media, they trigger a reaction against Muslims in Czech society and this could create a subconscious negative impact on the perceptions toward Turkey.<sup>54</sup> Such stereotypes can be more significant in affecting public opinion and people's perceptions than how Turkey itself appears in the media.<sup>55</sup> An anecdote by a Turkish citizen who lived in Czech Republic over 10 years further supports this stereotype claim:

Turkey was known to be an 'Islamist' country in the beginning of 2000s. I once opened an exhibition in Plzen based on a collection of my paintings. It was in 2002. They invited me for an interview in a radio program. They asked me the following question: 'Being from an Islamist state, wasn't it hard for you to make these paintings'? I was very surprised with the question. I told the interviewer that Turkey was not an Islamist country and had similar values with European countries. Likewise, in Plzen they were asking me why I wasn't wearing a headscarf or a burka.<sup>56</sup>

Yet some interviewed Turkish diaspora and the policy experts think that the image of Turkey as an 'Islamist country' is changing as people get to know the Turkish culture, travel to the country and be engaged with commercial relations. The reasons of support for Turkey derive from such interactions between the Turkish and Czech culture as analyzed below.

#### ***Reasons of Support for Turkey at the Public and Political Level***

*Public Support:* What explains the 34 per cent positive attitude for Turkey in Czech public opinion? When this question was presented to the interviewees, the most commonly received answer was that Turkey was known to be a popular destination for *tourism* among the Czechs. Even though its popularity as a touristic destination

---

<sup>52</sup> This argument has been made by many interviewees such as a class of fifteen MA Students from the course, "EU: Future Trends and Perspectives" at Anglo-American University and Sadi Shanaah. Interview by the authors, 18 and 19 April 2012, Prague.

<sup>53</sup> Ridvan Sen. Interview by the authors. 12 June 2012, Prague.

<sup>54</sup> Petr Kucera and Sadi Shanaah. Interview by the authors. 20 March and 19 April 2012, Prague.

<sup>55</sup> David Kral. Interview by the authors. 4 June 2012, Prague.

<sup>56</sup> Yurdanur Kocak. Interview by the authors. 12 June 2012, Prague.

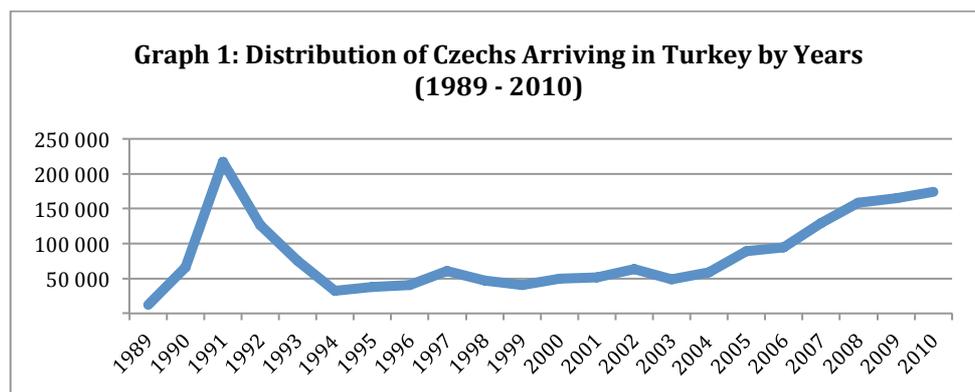
does not necessarily bring the EU-Turkey debate into people's mind, it is argued to bring a positive image about the country to the Czech people. The Alacam brothers with a Czech-Turkish origin and living in Prague for more than 15 years state that:

Tourism can be counted as a factor that influences people's minds. Czechs often visit the coasts of Turkey; they see the west of the country and this gives them a positive opinion about the development/modernization of Turkey.<sup>57</sup>

The head of the Czech-Turkish Friendship association, Mr. Candemir Kocak also argues that:

The Czechs, who have been to Turkey, approach the issue of Turkey's accession more positively. The ones who go there for touristic purposes, they get to know the culture, Turkish hospitality and traditions. They see how developed the country is. Thus, it is possible to say that, any Czech who has been to Turkey once, begins to advertise it when s/he is back.<sup>58</sup>

Dr. Petr Kucera of the Turkology Institute at Charles University in Prague further states that the applicants who would like to pursue studies in their Institute are usually the ones who have been to Turkey for touristic purposes and liked the country with its nature, culture and people. In fact, when the tourism statistics are examined in the past 20 years, it is easy to see that the number of Czech tourists has increased quite extensively since 1994. Graph 1 shows the level of increase over the years. Thus, tourism acts as an important factor, which develops the interest of Czech people toward Turkey.



Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

In addition to tourism, good commercial relations between Turkey and Czech Republic are stressed by the Turkish businessmen living in Prague. Even though to what extent these relations could shape the public opinion remain to be a question

<sup>57</sup> Tolga and Martin Alacam. Interview by the authors. 8 June 2012, Prague.

<sup>58</sup> Candemir Kocak. Interview by the authors. 12 June 2012, Prague.

mark, it surely does create an impact among the business circles, according to Ridvan Sen, the Secretary General of the Czech-Turkish Young Businessmen Association (CETIAD) and Ergin Tuncel, the Head of the Czech-Turkish Businessmen Association.<sup>59</sup> According to Sen, Turkey with its growing market, is becoming a star in Europe. For instance, CETIAD, since its establishment in 2008, works for the recognition of Turkish products in the Czech market, such as organizing expositions that present products from Turkey (furniture, textile, automotive industry) and improving the relations between Czech and Turkish firms in general through attending the TUSKON (World-Turkey Trade Bridge) forums.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, there are existing efforts to make the Turkish culture more recognized within Czech society: From time to time, cultural activities are organized by Turkish associations such as the one organized by Mosaic Dialogue Platform (*Mozaik Diyalog Platformu*) aimed at improving dialogue between religions. The Turkology Institute at Charles University in Prague further provides the opportunity for Czechs interested in Turkish language, culture and history to study Turkish and travel to Turkey. The publication of the second volume of the Czech-Turkish language dictionary by the famous publishing house Lingea also demonstrates such interest among Czechs toward Turkish language.<sup>61</sup> Yet, clearly these activities create impact only on the ones who have already developed a curiosity toward Turkish language and culture rather than on an average Czech citizen.

*Political Support:* Apart from public support for Turkey's accession to EU, the research finds out two main rationales for the support that Turkey receives from Czech political parties and elites: One is related to the reasons deriving from Turkey itself: No matter how it is portrayed in the media, Turkey is officially a secular, democratic country with a Muslim population and a rapidly growing economy. The official Czech position, including the president Vaclav Klaus, stresses this point and the need for Turkey's dynamism within the EU.<sup>62</sup> Vaclav Kubata, the chairman of the interparliamentary group of friends of Turkey in Chamber of Deputies, also explains that:

---

<sup>59</sup> Ridvan Sen. Interview by the authors. 12 June 2012, Prague.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> The dictionary is written by Tomas Lane, Turkologist and ex-ambassador of Czech Republic to Turkey (1994-1998).

<sup>62</sup> "Czech President Klaus backs Turkey's EU bid" in *Ceske Noviny*, 14 February 2012, accessed online 20 June 2012 <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-president-klaus-backs-turkey-s-eu-bid/755071>

Czech Republic, with its government and political parties, supports Turkey's membership to EU. Turkey, with its fast-growing economy and political power is needed in the EU. It is good for both sides, Turkey and EU. Especially in these times, when the crises occur in Portugal, Spain and Greece, we need a strong economy like Turkey in the club.

Second rationale for the support at political level is the one deriving from Czech Republic's own experience with EU accession: That is; "having encountered the difficulties of the accession process, Czech Republic, like the other new memberstates should be supportive of the candidate countries." In fact, when the EU-Turkey debate was still vigorous in 2006, Jan Zahradil, member of the EU-Turkey Committee in the European Parliament and the foreign affairs spokesman of the Civic Democrats stated that:

Enlargement as a general phenomenon is a good thing for the European Union. It should not stop, nor should it be stopped by some participants, and the Czech Republic as a new member state has declared several times that it will not be placing obstacles in the way of those who are just now applying for membership, but rather that it will help them, and that it would definitely be in favour of such membership. So, from both points of view, I think that we should have a positive approach to prospective Turkish membership in the EU.<sup>63</sup>

The statement by Zahradil finds its meaning in the explanations that the policy experts articulated during our interviews: That is, Czech political elite, along with other states from the Visegrad group, have a different understanding of the EU than the founder states: They wish to see the Union less as a political-cultural entity than an economic club. In a way, their approach resembles the British Conservative Party, which aspires a Union as diverse as possible in a way to avoid a future federation.<sup>64</sup> This viewpoint makes further sense when it is considered that the Czech president Vaclav Klaus has openly supported Turkey's accession to EU while he at the same time continuously acted as a Eurosceptic in public.<sup>65</sup>

In brief, despite some positive attitudes toward Turkey—as a result of its popularity in tourism as well as good economic and commercial relations between the two countries—the Czech public opinion on Turkey's accession to the EU is mainly negative due to people's picturing of the EU in cultural terms, over which religion has

---

<sup>63</sup> Linda Mastalir, "Czechs discuss Turkish membership in the EU" in *RadioPraha*, 20 April 2006, accessed online 13 June 2012. <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/czechs-discuss-turkish-membership-in-the-eu>

<sup>64</sup> Vit Dostal and Sadi Shanaah. Interviews by the authors. 4 May and 19 April 2012, Prague.

<sup>65</sup> We would like to thank Lucia Najslova for remarking this point in her comments on an earlier version of this report.

a paramount influence. Thus, the impact of cultural activities that aim to promote Turkish culture in Czech society is also limited with Czechs who already has some interest in Turkish culture and language. Yet, unlike the public opinion who is inclined to elaborate EU enlargement on the basis of cultural differences, the political elite in Czech Republic identifies the European Union more as an entity functioning on the basis of economic ends. Thus, such contradictory conceptions of the EU create the gap between the political and public attitude toward the Turkey question.

### **Conclusion and Analysis**

According to the conducted research—14 interviews with opinion leaders and a content analysis of the media—in Czech Republic, Turkey has had the image of a Muslim country with a very large population in the eye of an average Czech citizen, who has not particularly developed interest in learning the politics and culture of the country. It is even possible to see phrases such as an ‘Islamism of the government,’ or ‘a country that belongs to the Arab world’ which are attributed to Turkey. The portrayal of Turkey as a Muslim country in the media and stereotypes against Muslims in Czech society have contributed to such negative perceptions, creating a cultural distance and opposition against Turkey’s membership in the EU among Czechs. Yet, it is important to underline that the analysis in this study has been made for the years 2005-2010 in order to better understand the results of the public opinion surveys carried out between these years in Czech Republic. In other words, the research has not looked into the impact of Arab revolts starting from 2011 on the image of Turkey, which should be a second step in future studies.

On the other side, the growing economy of the country, commercial relations with the Czech business world and its portrayal as a popular touristic destination have created somewhat positive impact on Czech people. Besides, the political elite supports Turkey’s integration to EU since it will bring diversity to the Union and promote more of an economic unification than a political one.

If so, what can explain the fact that the negative perceptions are much superior to the positive ones in Czech public opinion (i.e. 60 per cent opposition and 34 per cent support in 2010)? To answer this question, the factors such as the indifference of Czechs to foreign policy issues and the weakness of historical ties between the two countries should be given due consideration: That is, the portrayal of Turkey in the

media together with an overly stressed word ‘Islam,’ creates a hearsay discourse about the country for an average Czech citizen who has no knowledge or interest on the country as a result of weak historical and cultural relations between the two countries. Besides, the indifference of such a person to foreign policy issues prevents him from analyzing and discussing the news on Turkey in details. What remains in his memories, rather, is an abstract and obscure information that Turkey is an Islamist country.

## References

- Akdoğan, Yalçın. AK Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi (Istanbul: Alfa, 2004).
- Bartovic, Vladimír and David Král, “The Czech Republic and the EU enlargement: supportive but not enough?” *In Poland and the Czech Republic: Advocates of the EU Enlargement?*, edited by Adam Balcer, 35-56 (Warsaw: demosEUROPA 2010).
- Dostal, Petr, Emel Akcali and Mark Antonsich. 2011. “Turkey’s Bid for European Union Membership: Between ‘Thick’ and ‘Thin’ Conceptions of Europe” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52, 196-218.
- European Commission. 2005a. “Eurobarometer 63 – National Report Czech Republic. Executive Summary.” Accessed July 17, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63\\_exec\\_cz.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_exec_cz.pdf).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2005a. “Eurobarometer 63 – Standard Report” Accessed July 17, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_en.pdf)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2005b. “Eurobarometer 64 – Standard Report” Accessed July 18, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006b. “Eurobarometer 65 – Standard Report” Accessed July 18, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008a. “Eurobarometer 69 – Standard Report” Accessed July 18, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010b. “Eurobarometer 73 – Standard Report” Accessed July 19, 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb64_en.pdf)
- Saradin, Pavel. 2010. “The support of East Central European countries for Turkey’s accession to the European Union.” In *The Politics of EU Accession: Turkish challenges and Central European experiences*, edited by Pavel Saradin and Lucie Tunkrova, 128-151. London: Routledge.

Saz, Gokhan. 2011. "Turkophobia and Rising Islamophobia in Europe: A Quantification for the Negative Spillovers on the EU Membership Quest of Turkey." *European Journal of Social Sciences* 19, 479-491.

### **Interviews**

Alacam, Tolga and Martin Alacam, Certified Translators of Turkish-Czech languages in Czech Republic. 8 June 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Barsa, Pavel. Professor of Politics at Charles University. 19 April 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Cunningham, Benjamin. Editor of Prague Post (2008-2012). 20 June 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Dostal, Vit. Analyst, Association for International Relations-AMO. 4 May 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Filipkova, Lenka. Junior Analyst, Association for International Relations-AMO. 25 April 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Kalhousova, Irena. Chief Analyst, National Security Studies Institute. 7 June 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Kocak, Candemir (and his wife Mrs. Yurdanur Kocak), President of the Czech-Turkish Friendship Association. 12 June 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Kral, David. Director of EUROPEUM, 4 June 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Kubata, Vaclav. TOP09 Parliamentarian and Head of the Czech-Turkish Interparliamentary Group in the Czech Parliament, 9 July 2012. Prague, Czech Republic

Kucera, Petr. Turkologist at Turkology Institute at Charles University. 20 March 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

MA students at Anglo-American University from the "EU Future Trends and Perspectives" class taught by Juraj Draxler, 18 April, 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Sen, Ridvan. Secretary General of CETIAD (Czech-Turkish Young Businessmen Association). 12 June 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Shanaah, Sadi. Founder and Director of Insaan: Czech-Arab Centre for Cultural Dialogue. 19 April 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Tuncel, Ergin. Head of the Czech-Turkish Businessmen Association. 20 June 2012, Prague, Czech Republic.

## IV. SLOVAKIA

**Olga Gyarfasova**

*This chapter analyzes the public portrayal of Turkey and the images related to the Turkish EU integration process in Slovakia. Based on two different approaches - individual in-depth interviews with stakeholders and print media analyses - the variability of opinions, positions and patterns of images is identified. The results show that Turkey and its potential EU membership is not high on the agenda in Slovakia; it does not represent a hot topic for public debate and political competition. Whereas the official position of the Slovak government is in the long run supportive for Turkish EU aspirations - using the arguments of security and economic benefits - the conservative party holds opposite attitudes arguing above all by potential security and cultural threats. Slovak public supports EU enlargement in general. As for Turkey, the opinions are less informed, many stereotypes and historical prejudices could be observed including a general "inward" looking perspective. As for the media images, the analyses identified several patterns ranging from supportive and educational stories to refusal of the Turkey's EU accession, framed by cultural and religious differences, such as "clash of civilizations". Slovak media also covers the EU-level controversies over Turkey's EU integration. However, this debate is portrayed as being something external to Slovakia's politics.*

### **Introduction**

**The objective of this country report** is to describe and analyze the public portrayal of Turkey in Slovakia - while the focus is on European integration of Turkey. The study is based on two different perspectives: we identify the variability of opinions and positions of the Slovak elite as well as the Turkish ambassador to Slovakia. The second perspective is based on the portrayal of Turkey in the Slovak print media.

The study draws upon data and information collected by two methods/methodological approaches:

1. Individual in-depth interviews with Slovak political leaders, journalists, and experts and the Turkish Ambassador to Slovakia. The interviews followed a prepared semi-structured questionnaire/scenario and were carried out in spring 2012. The selection of the interviewed personalities was determined by the criterion – they represent a parliamentary political party and they are in charge of foreign policy issues. As for the experts and journalists it was their expertise on the EU integration and Turkey.

2. Media analyses is based on qualitative analyses of main Slovak profile dailies – center- right liberal daily SME, and center–left daily Pravda. Other dailies have been analyzed as well: Nový čas, with the highest circulation, close to tabloid press, and Hospodárske noviny, with lower circulation and with focus on economy. As an additional source about the news coverage we have used also the news by press agency SITA. The analyzed period covered years 2005 - 2011.

### **Slovakia – Turkey: What are the ties?**

The bilateral relations between Slovakia and Turkey are good and constructive and on both sides perceived as without any problems or/and open questions. Turkey recognized Slovakia right after its independence, Slovak Embassy in Ankara was opened in 1993 and Turkish Embassy in Bratislava in spring 1994.

Slovakia’s position regarding Turkey’s EU membership is supportive and formally based on the resolution of the National Council of the Slovak Republic passed in 2004, which stipulates “supporting Turkey’s accession negotiations, as far as the conditions are fulfilled”.<sup>1</sup>

Slovakia’s political debate took place belatedly compared to most other EU member states, including those which joined on May 1, 2004, like Slovakia did. The first “real” political debate took place in November 2004 when the national parliament voted on the cabinet’s draft resolution on Turkey’s possible EU accession. The parliamentary discussion exposed differences in opinions between government parties. The Christian Democrats (KDH) advocated a negative standpoint, reasoning especially by Turkey’s cultural dissimilarity. However, this argument failed to gain a

---

<sup>1</sup> TSAFED [The Bridge between Turkey and Slovakia] <http://www.tsafed.org/ciele.html>

majority support in the assembly. At the same time, the parliament did adopt a resolution proposed by František Mikloško (KDH) regarding the 1915 genocide of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup>

The cabinet's position that was eventually endorsed by the assembly – namely to launch entry talks with Turkey but condition the final decision by “Turkey's irreversible progress in the reform and accession process”<sup>3</sup> – was based especially on strategic arguments. The issue on Armenian genocide is repeatedly coming into the debate, but without any significant impact on the government's position.<sup>4</sup>

The most recent high level visits between Turkey and Slovakia were President Mr. Abdullah Gül's visit to Slovakia in November 2009 and Prime Minister Mr. Robert Fico's visit to Turkey in October 2009. Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mikuláš Dzurinda have made bilateral meetings in the margins of the NATO Summit in Lisbon in November 2010. After the change of government (which followed the early election in March 2012) the visit at the level of Minister of Foreign Affairs was made by Miroslav Lajčák in May 2012.

The volume of bilateral trade is lower comparing to other CEE countries but has gradually increased in the course of the last decade - the volume which was about

---

<sup>2</sup> *Draft Position of the Slovak Republic Regarding Launching Accession Negotiations between the European Union and the Republic of Turkey* (print No. 962); voting on a draft resolution proposed by František Mikloško regarding the genocide of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in 1915, (Session No. 33 held on November 30, 2004; Vote No. 19; 128 present, 70 voted in favour, 51 abstained).

<sup>3</sup> A speech given by then Foreign Affairs Minister Eduard Kukan at the 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the National Council of the Slovak Republic held on November 30, 2004, regarding launching accession negotiations with Turkey. The *Draft Position of the Slovak Republic Regarding Launching Accession Negotiations between the European Union and the Republic of Turkey* (print No. 962) that took into account the cabinet's proposal was approved by 113 out of 133 deputies.

<sup>4</sup> For example, in 2012 the statement of the President of Slovakia's Supreme Council Štefan Harabin that “anyone, who denies the Armenian Genocide will be sentenced to five years of imprisonment” has led to some diplomatic frictions between Turkey and Slovakia. Upon the initiative of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Harabin stated earlier that he places a huge importance to Slovakia's Law on Criminalizing Armenian Genocide Denial, and reaffirmed that if any Turkish official—or anyone else – dares to deny in Slovakia the fact of the Armenian Genocide, he will be immediately sentenced to up to five years in prison. Je popieranie genocídy Arménov trestný čin? [Is Armenian genocide denial a crime?] SITA, 15. októbra 2012. : [http://spravy.pravda.sk/je-popieranie-genocidy-armenov-trestny-cin-rozhodne-zrejme-sud-ps7-/sk\\_domace.asp?c=A121015\\_122541\\_sk\\_domace\\_p12#ixzz2H8yC43Hj](http://spravy.pravda.sk/je-popieranie-genocidy-armenov-trestny-cin-rozhodne-zrejme-sud-ps7-/sk_domace.asp?c=A121015_122541_sk_domace_p12#ixzz2H8yC43Hj)

Another controversy over this issue raised in 2008 supposedly Turkish Embassy in Bratislava requested to remove the monument commemorating the Armenian genocide. Turecko žiada odstrániť pamätník v Petržalke [Turkey requests to remove the monument in Petržalka]. 22.2.2008, <http://aktualne.atlas.sk/turecko-ziada-odstranit-pamatnik-v-petrzalke/dnes/regiony/>

75 million USD in 2000, has surpassed 1 billion Euros in 2010.<sup>5</sup> Slovakia is in surplus of the bilateral foreign trade, exporting above all chemical products and importing machinery and automotive parts. However, Turkish investments in Slovakia constitute a modest figure. To boost mutual business Turkey established commercial counselor. Slovak Embassy in Ankara also has counselor at the Commercial & Economic Section.

The most dynamic area is tourism: whereas the number of Slovak tourists visiting Turkey was 35.000 in 2005, this number increased to 80.000 in 2009 and 130.000 in 2011. As for the educational and cultural relations it is worth to note that Turkish culture and language lecturers come often to the Comenius University in Bratislava and Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. There are around 300 Turkish citizens living in Slovakia what is much less than for example in Hungary where several thousands Turks are living.

The NGOs' contacts have been developed mostly thanks to the project *Finding Common Grounds* managed by the Bratislava-based think tank Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA) in co-operation with the Turkish Social and Economic Studies Foundation (TESEV). Within the projects several civil society fora, seminars and conferences took place, additionally an edited volume in format V4 + Turkey *Rediscovering the Common Narrative of Turkey and Europe* was published in 2009. The latest initiatives include founding of Turkish - Slovak Alliance for Education and Development (TSAFED)<sup>6</sup>, an international, non-governmental and non-profit organization registered in Slovakia, to develop friendly Turkish - Slovak relations and mutually beneficial exchange between Turkey and Slovakia. Another example of developing the dialogue is establishing an annual "Suna Roundtable Discussion" which is organized by the Global Political Trends Center based in Istanbul in collaboration with the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences (FSES) of the Comenius University in Bratislava. The event is to commemorate H.E. Suna Çokgür Ilıcak, who passed away while serving as the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Slovak Republic in 2006, but also to establish good academic, expert, and diplomatic cooperation. The inaugural discussion entitled "The Middle East on Rise: Turkey and the EU" took place in October 2012 in Bratislava.

---

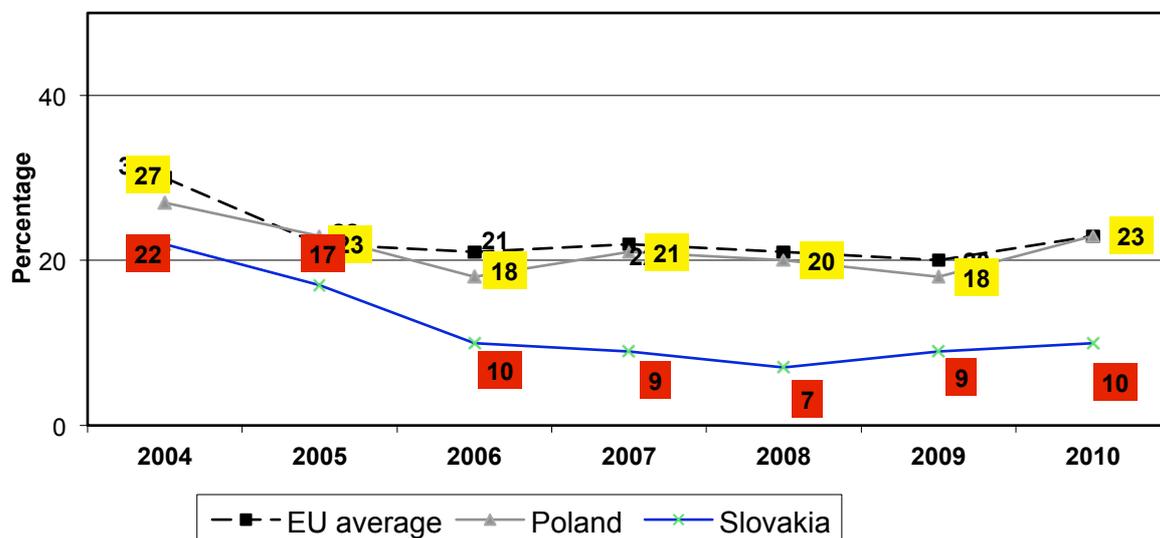
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> TSAFED [The Bridge between Turkey and Slovakia], <http://www.tsafed.org/ciele.html>

**Turkey as seen by Public and Politicians**  
***Public Perception in the Mirror of Public Opinion Surveys***

Public attitudes towards Turkey’s EU accession are frequently surveyed in the Eurobarometer public opinion polls. The EU-wide polling shows, that the CEE countries are in average more in favor of Turkish EU membership than the WE countries. For example the Eurobarometer 69 from 2008 showed that whereas the average EU-27 support (strongly+fairly in favor) for Turkey in EU<sup>7</sup> is 44 %, it reached over-average 57 % in Poland and 53 % in Hungary, but only 35 % in Slovakia. That indicates that the more favorable views are not common for all CEE countries. Similar results could be found in Transatlantic Trend project, annual surveys conducted by the German Marshal Fund and its partners.<sup>8</sup> In this project just two V4 countries –Poland and Slovakia – are included, but it shows similar trends like the Eurobarometer surveys – Poland’s public is by large in line with the EU average whereas the Slovakian public support for Turkey in the EU (“it would be a good thing”) is marginal (Graph 1).

**Graph 1: “Generally speaking, do you think that Turkey's membership of the EU would be a good thing?”**



Source: Transatlantic Trends.

<sup>7</sup> The wording of the question is: “Once Turkey complies all conditions set by the European Union, would you be strongly or fairly in favor of Turkey’s accession to the EU”. European Commission, Eurobarometers 69, Standard Report 2008a.

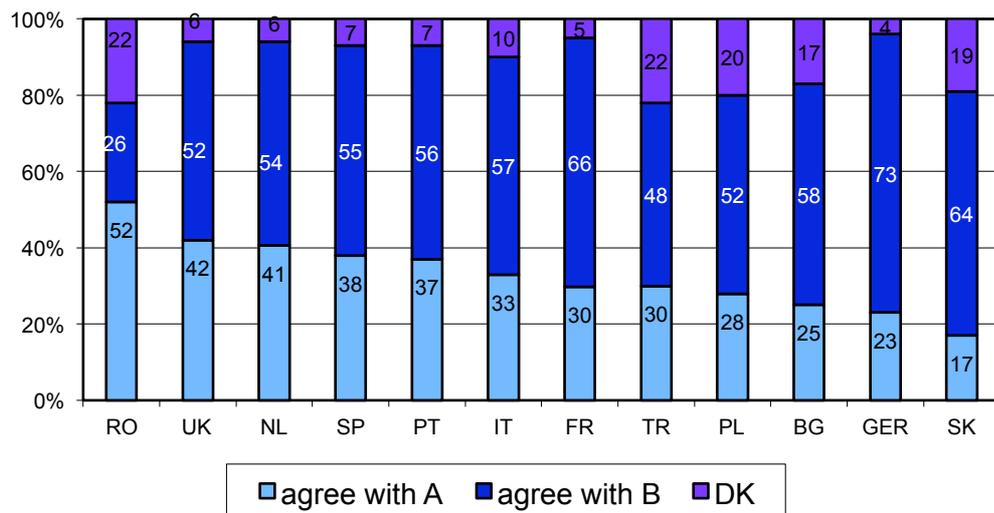
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_en.htm)

<sup>8</sup> For more details: [www.gmfus.org](http://www.gmfus.org) and [www.transatlantictrends.org](http://www.transatlantictrends.org).

Nevertheless, when it comes to foreign policy issues we have to look also on the proportion of ambiguous or “do not know” responses which are higher in CEE than in WE. Transatlantic trend surveys are also explaining why - the interest in politics is lower - in this part of Europe, there is the second largest proportion of those who never talk about the politics, while the proportion of those who frequently discuss the politics is the smallest one. It may be a consequence of being exhausted by politics following the period when the transforming societies were too politicized, also of the concentration on national problems resulting from too high costs of economic transformation and as a third factor we can identify the heritage of isolation behind the iron curtain and certain incompetence in foreign policy issues. All these must be taken into account when exploring the public views in regard of foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

The findings of TT are also revealing shared notion of value differences between EU members and Turkey. For our analyses the outlier position of Slovakia is worth to mention – only 17 % percent of respondents would say that Turkey has enough common values with the West, but again –Romania, Poland, Slovakia, and Bulgaria (together with Turkey – but here the reasons are different) have the higher share of ambivalent responses (Graph 2).

**Graph 2: “Some people say that Turkey has enough common values with the West (A). Other people say that Turkey has such different values that it is not really part of the West (B). Which view is closer to your own?”**



Source: Transatlantic Trends 2010

<sup>9</sup> Gyárfášová 2007.

Summing up: Based on comparative quantitative surveys from various sources we see that regarding the public views on Turkey's accession the V4 countries do not represent a homogenous group. Slovakia's public shows comparatively lower support than the other central Europeans. Following analysis aims at explaining why.

***Turkey and its accession to the EU – almost invisible issue in Slovakia***

There is an overall consensus that Turkey and its possible accession to the EU are almost invisible issues in Slovakia. The topic is not discussed politically neither publicly, as an issue—Turkey's EU membership is not salient and is not contested by the political parties. Moreover, it is only very marginally discussed by the Slovak experts. The debate about the pros and cons of Turkey's EU accession, which is so vivid (and hot) for example in Austria or Germany—is underdeveloped in Slovakia and Turkey is not high (or - is not at all) at the agenda.

There several reasons accountable for that situation. Interviewed politicians and experts agreed that Slovakia is too much preoccupied with economy and this is not characteristics just for the public but also the political elite. Furthermore, Slovakia is too much preoccupied by herself, by her own transformation problems. The society has to digest too many complex changes which occurred during very short period of time. More historical explanation says that it is also due certain “provincial” mentality; the country never ever in its history was an important international actor and with exception of a very tiny layer of experts very few are interested in the “outside” world.

The grounds for lower interest in matters which are beyond the local horizon are seen also in the fact, that recently the plans for further EU enlargement are delayed. Above all after there was an agreement about Croatia's entry, next enlargement wave is beyond any imaginable time limit. The topic is put aside due to the economic and debt crises but also due to enlargement fatigue; in other words - there are other topics in the focus. Although there is a support for enlargement at a very general level, when it comes to specific countries the attention is more focused on Western Balkans.

Other voices argue that the general public does not care about issues like this and the topic is discussed only within a very narrow circle of politicians and experts. Moreover, outcomes of such debates are not present in the everyday life of general

public. As an evidence one respondent gave his own experience: even among educated and politically sophisticated people – high school teachers and university students – the issue of Turkey’s integration has not been raised during the seminars on EU integration. This was mentioned by the representative of a NGO<sup>10</sup> which organizes lectures and seminars about broad variety of EU topics.

Some of the respondents expressed the expectation for the future – this invisibility and low salience of the Turkish issue “is unlikely to change”.

### ***Media coverage***

In general - media inform about the events related with Turkey if they have international outreach. For example the issue of divided Cyprus, the rights of the Kurdish minority, situation in the refugee camp at the Turkish border, most recently - developments in Syria and how it is related with Turkey.

According to one of our respondents Turkey-related news usually fall into the following categories: *“news related to EU accession negotiations (on this we have not heard much positive news recently); news related to Cyprus conflict; news related to human rights violations (Kurds, jailed journalists). With a bit of generalization/exaggeration we may say that news about Turkey do follow similar pattern as news about 'distant' and 'different' countries located outside Europe (Africa, Latin America, Asia, etc) i.e. what usually gets reported is natural disasters, political conflict, poverty and human rights violations.”* (Lucia Najšlová, policy analyst)

There are also issues which are not political - football (soccer Premiere league), tourism and – the TV serial Scheherazade, which was broadcasted by the private TV channel and got extremely popular in 2010-2011.

However, all these have only limited impact on the public opinion. As one expert precisely pointed out: *“Although the popular Turkish TV series combined with increased attractiveness of spending holiday in Turkey created a number of new and positive ties between SVK and TR, this does not necessarily mean that it would translate to bigger support for Turkey’s full membership. Many people become friends, few of them get married.”* (Lucia Najšlová, policy analyst)

---

<sup>10</sup> Center for European Politics (CEP).

The evaluation of H.E. Turkish Ambassador to Slovakia Ms. Gülhan Ulutekin of the media was as follows: *“Since December 2011 when I have arrived, I did not see any commentary on Turkey in Slovak print media, media coverage is very rare”*.

***What do the citizens think? How is the public opinion in Slovakia?***

All in all in Slovakia the general mood is pro-enlargement; however this support is not based on any structured and informed opinion. The phenomenon of wide-spread support for the EU enlargement could be explained by at least two factors:

- Slovakia’s inhabitants still remember how it was to be a candidate country. Consequently, the inhabitants of Slovakia are only for short period members of EU. Therefore they have higher empathy for potential next-comers;
- There are countries which are close to Slovakia (they are on the Slovakia’s mental map and they are culturally close) but they are not EU members yet. As for the Croatia it has changed already, but there still more countries either from Western Balkan of post-Soviet republics. These countries are perceived as closer to EU (and Slovakia) than Turkey is.

Furthermore, for the relative 'enlargement enthusiasm' in the Slovak society two other factors have been highlighted:

- *“Slovak society in general believes that 2004 big bang enlargement (when also Slovakia joined) was good for both the EU and Slovakia;”*
- *“Further EU enlargement has been repeatedly highlighted as a foreign policy priority by successive Slovak post-2004 governments, and framed as an issue that is good for the EU and good for Slovakia. Although in general, Slovaks are supportive of EU enlargement, Turkey is a bit of an exception – by many it is perceived simply as ‘too different’.”* (Lucia Najšlová, policy analyst).

Vast majority of public lacks information; moreover, public opinion on Turkey, similarly to other foreign policy issues is to a large extent not informed by facts. Very often we could find prejudices and stereotypes, which rooted either in history or recent xenophobic attitudes.

As for the Turkey the targeted support may decline once the Turkey’s accession would become a real issue – there will be a concrete date for entering, a

referendum, and more information about the impact on EU and/or Slovakia. So far the Turkey's accession is perceived as something virtual, the opinions are fluid, more inclining to yes-pole, but once it will be something what really could happen they will shift close to NO.

And how do the politicians view the public opinion? In general they assume that there is public support for the ongoing EU accession negotiations with Turkey. In some respect it is wishful thinking that the public understands the strategic priorities vis-à-vis Turkey's European integration: "*We are also convinced that the public opinion understands that it is in the interest of the Union as well as Slovakia that Turkey be as close to the European Union as possible.*" (representative of a political party) At more realistic glance it is clear that such support must be very shallow and uninformed once the issue has not yet been widely debated. For most citizens – there is indifference to it, but also as a consequence of lack of information and lack of debate.

In general no major turning points causing a change in public opinion on Turkey's accession could be found in public perception. More changes are seen on the side of Turkey, which is playing stronger and stronger role in the region. Above all after the Arab Spring events Turkey feels its chance to strengthen its position in the Arab world.

The public opinion in other Visegrad countries may be very similar to the Slovak. For the citizens of V4 countries, return to Europe after half a century of oppression was a positive achievement - politically, spiritually, morally and economically. Therefore, the EU enlargement is seen more in these terms both by the public and by national elites than in the terms of fears and threats.

In a more differentiate perspective there were considerations, that the Czech public may be influenced by the German views, which has a developed discourse. The Polish view may be influenced by strong Catholicism (means being anti-Turkey); no specific features have been mentioned for Hungary. However the Turkish Ambassador who served in Hungary before being appointed to Slovakia argued there the Turkey's accession was higher on the agenda and in general in CEE the public support is not overwhelming but higher than in Western Europe. When comparing situation in Slovakia (or in CEE countries in general) she said that less profiled

opinions offer the opportunity to have calm and objective discussion. On the other the debates in Western Europe are too emotional and just about the risks not about possible added values in time of economic crises, moreover, there is no vision, no visionary discussion. She argued that *“Turkey is a good issue when it when it comes to personal political profits – with being against Turkey, you can score some points. This is not the case in Slovakia”* (H.E. Gülhan Ulutekin).

### ***What influences public opinion on this issue most?***

The media are the most influential on public perception. People’s experiences from the holiday may have certain impact but it is very limited. The male respondents saw also soccer players and the Slovaks in Turkish soccer league as something what improves the image of Turkey. However, in spite of positive experiences people do not connect the success of Turkish TV series and growing tourism with Turkey’s EU integration, because the later is not visibly present in the public debate. It may change once there will be a date for accession and the following impact of this enlargement on Slovakia would be better known.

An assumption has been that the public follows or is close to party’s stance on this issue. More detailed survey which would explore this connection more precisely would be necessary. The experimental survey on framing effects on public support for Turkish EU membership proved that the impact of negatively framed news is greater than that of positive framing because “con arguments can indeed evoke fear, anger, and other emotions” (de Vreese et al., 2011, p. 194). As it will be illustrated later Slovak media are working also with negative framing.

## **Slovak Political Parties and Turkey**

### ***Positions of political parties and political elite***

Usually the first reaction on the question about the party’s position was – Turkey’s accession to the EU is not on the agenda, it is not an issue, definitely not a priority. However, political parties have some opinions, even if not very strong. The strongest and most consistent voice against the Turkey in the EU is that of the Christian democratic movement (KDH). They would favor the “privileged partnership” following the German CDU/CSU.

Slovak Democratic and Christian Union-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) - the party which led the center-right coalition governments (during two electoral periods between 1998 and 2006, + short period between 2010 – 2012) supported the opening of the accession talks with Turkey from the very outset of the debate. However – as the representative of this party said in an interview - the underlying principle must be conditionality. That means: the negotiation process is open-ended and its outcome cannot be guaranteed beforehand. Initiative of SDKU-DS – as a leading party in coalition when the accession talks started resulted in Slovakia's official support for the opening of the accession talks.<sup>11</sup> Though the party was very supportive for opening the accession talks later on it did not address the issue of Turkey's accession to the European Union in its programmatic documents.

Liberal party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) would also stand for privileged partnership, they also support the principle of conditionality, but recently there is obviously fading interest on the side of Turkey.

The representative of smaller-center right party, but he used to be member of party with a strong conservative stances, presented clear opposition to Turkey's EU accession. In an interview he raised more arguments that could be divided into four clusters:

1. Muslim religion is not compatible with the Western culture. Moreover, the developments in Turkey within last years (more precisely since the electoral victory of Recep Tayyip Erdogan) have clear signs of “creeping” islamization. It is manifested in growing impact of religious school and growing presence of Moslem practices in every day life. All in all the cultural patterns of Turkey is changing. Albeit the partnership with the West still exist and there is also a social strata backing this partnership (urban, secular middle class, people who studied at the Western universities), the “weight” of rural Turkey is getting stronger. Rural areas are those where the electoral support for Erdogan comes from. Its changing also in term of demographically developments and the outcome of this “creeping islamization” is that “Turkey is today closer to Teheran than Washington”. The cultural differences, even

---

<sup>11</sup> Rozhovor M. Dzurindu [Interview with M. Dzurinda], 2009.  
<http://www.vsetkooturecku.sk/sk/75/Rozhovor-mesiaca-december-2009>

antagonisms, and their deepening within last years are seen as the most relevant in refusing Turkey's accession;

2. conflict over Cyprus. EU cannot accept a new country which does not recognize a member state. Moreover, Turkey is in long-term conflict with another member country – Greece;

3. animosity towards Israel and anti-Semitic resentments in politics;

4. the facts that the Turkish government continues to protest against the formal recognition of the genocide of the Armenians in 1915. A country which such “skeleton in the closets” cannot enter the EU.

On the other hand Turkey should be treated fair – it is not fair to invite a country and then to find out excuses why it should NOT be accepted. According to our respondents the privileged partnership is a very “hypocritical” way how to back pedal from the initial invitation. *“This is what Turkey definitely does not deserve”* (MP, political representative).

Privileged partnership as a concept has been criticized also by the expert: *“Yet, it is justified to argue, that Slovak policymakers believe that state/national interest of the Slovak republic would be well served even if Turkey and EU arrived to an agreement, that talks on full accession can be replaced by partial integration and strategic partnership. In such case, the proposal for ‚downgrading‘ the talks would have to come from Turkey – Slovak foreign policy makers have refused ‚privileged partnership‘ proposed by some member states.”* (Najšlová, policy analyst)

The political consideration over Turkey's accession – at least at the theoretical level – is also about: it would be better to Turkey on “our” side, a strong country which is a gate way to the East and the Arab world should be our partner. However the pessimistic outlooks for Turkey's EU membership are often rationalized by the fact that “Turkey is not interested any more”.

Recent Slovak government composed by just one party Smer-Social Democracy, does not mention in this Program Declaration any details about future EU enlargement. The paragraph related to that is very very general: “The government will support future enlargement of the EU with countries which meet the condition for membership. Slovakia will actively support this process by transferring of its

transformation and integration experiences.”<sup>12</sup> Turkey is not mentioned by a single word.

Parties did not report any activities which would be devoted to Turkey. They do not deal with this issue because “it is not in political and debate”. They do not publish any commentaries neither organize any events. Practically no initiatives are carried on. Even not during the electoral campaigns. From outside the parties could be seen as actors who give no signs, no indication, no vocal opposition or support.

The position of the Slovak political parties may also be influenced by the European party families they are members of.

### *Views on Other Political Parties*

The politicians perceive other parties either indifferent or “intuitively” against. Christian democrats may be more sensitive than the others, also ethnic Hungarians may have more sensitivity because of their experiences with Turks (Ottoman Empire) which are not present in Slovakia. Most politicians are not very well informed about the background.

The salience of Turkey’s EU accession is low due to several reasons:

1. The political discussion is trying to cope with the most urgent problems of the member states, the European Union and its policy. The topic of Turkey being the candidate country thus evades the attention.
2. The topic of Turkey’s accession has neither the immediate impact nor relevance to the issues being widely publicly discussed that the EU and Slovakia are facing.
3. Turkey’s efforts and energy as of a candidate country in bringing its endeavors on the accession’s path to the attention of the public and major political parties in Slovakia seem to be subliminal.

*“In brief, it is too far, too distant, too difficult to grasp and translate it into a policy that can get wider support.”* (Political Party Representative)

---

<sup>12</sup> Programové vyhlásenie vlády SR na roky 2012-2016. Časť: “Posilnenie postavenia Slovenskej republiky v Európskej únii a vo svete”. [Government’s Program declaration. Part: “Strengthening the Position of the Slovak Republic in the EU and in the World”] <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/posilnenie-postavenia-slovenskej-republiky-v-europskej-unii-a-vo-svete/>

## **Effects of Turkey's EU accession on Slovakia**

Most responses argued that this is almost impossible to assess the impact of an event which could happen in a very distant future. It would be like to “predict future from the crystal ball”. There are too many unpredictable geopolitical factors, e.g. Iran, Palestine, Israel. Also the crises make the situation very unpredictable – before the crises – the response might be different as comparing to the recent situation.

The accession negotiations have not yet reached a point where we can realistically portray, predict and evaluate either the immediate or long term effects of Turkish accession.

The difficulties are stemming also from the fact that “the EU leaders presently do not have an idea how the EU will look even without Turkey. Will there be United States of Europe? Will the UK leave? Turkey as well is changing – in 5-10 years it will be a different country.”

In spite of the above-mentioned limitations, if we try to assess the impact, following possible effects should be mentioned:

- Positive effects on economic relations (Turkey is already today among the most popular holiday destinations, it may even improve),
- Changes within the EU institutions and subsidies distributions – redistributions of votes in EP and Council of EU, but also decline in financial support from the structural funds.
- The EU membership of Turkey would bring also changes as for the discussed topics, more debates about the value background of the EU. According to some opinions “different cultural and historical roots of Turkey could cause the serious problems in future”. And even more pessimistic forecast has been brought up: “*Turkey's membership could disrupt the EU institutionally and culturally*” (MP, political party representative).

## **Image of Turkey in print media**

The media analyses goes back in 2005 when the accession negotiations with Turkey started on October 3. An important milestone in Turkey-EU relations was in December 2002, when the Copenhagen European Council agreed on opening the

negotiations with Turkey 'without delay' if Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria.

### ***Outline of main topics and stories in Slovak print media 2005-2011***

During 2005 Slovak media informed about the political developments around opening the negotiations quite extensively. However, most of the coverage was about the controversies on the EU level, the “domestic based” debate was rather rare. Just two significant controversies occurred at the national political arena. Clear division line emerged between the representative of the Christian democratic movement (KDH) and its then coalition partner Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) which had the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as the State Secretary of this Ministry. The then vice-chairman of KDH Mr. Palko stated very clearly: “Turkey does not belong in the EU”. His arguments were mostly security related issues, not cultural ones (yet). He argued “by Turkey’s accession Europe would make the penetration of Islamic terrorism to her territory easier”.<sup>13</sup> The State Secretary, Ms. Vašaryová, argued that quite on contrary: the refusal of Turkey would be a security hazard for Europe”.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Mikolášek, the MEP for KDH, was completely in line with his party colleagues. He pointed at women’s torture and disgrace of Christian communities, which – according to his statements - are not allowed to build churches.<sup>15</sup> He gave attention also to conflicts with Cyprus and advocated the “privileged partnership”. On the other hand the MEPs for the center-left Smer party (Ms. Beňová and Mr. Maňka) expressed more open but still very cautious positions -Turkey has to fulfil the criteria).<sup>16</sup> At the occasion of opening the negotiations with Turkey and Croatia many Slovak politicians declared satisfaction with the EU prospects of Croatia which was portrayed as a very justified EU membership applicant vis-à-vis controversial Turkey (see cartoon in the Annex).

---

<sup>13</sup> Turecko nepatrí do EÚ, tvrdí Vladimír Palko [Turkey does not belong in the EU, Vladimir Palko claims]. 09.10.2005. SITA.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> EÚ: Začatie rozhovorov s Tureckom je podľa Mikolášika ústupkom [EU: Opening of the accession negotiations with Turkey is according to Mikolášik concession. BRATISLAVA 4. októbra 2005 (SITA).

<sup>16</sup> Podľa europoslanca a podpredsedu Smeru Vladimíra Maňku Turecko začatím prístupových rozhovorov dostáva šancu [According the MEP and vice chairman of Vladimír Maňka by opening the negotiations Turkey is getting a chance] 4.októbra 2005.

In June 2005 a very unusual demonstration took place in Bratislava<sup>17</sup> - a demonstration against Turkey accession to EU organised by an unknown NGO – civic initiative Hlas pre Európu (Voice for Europe). However, only about 30 activists – not only from Slovakia, but also from Austria, Hungary and the Czech republic – participated at this action. They held the slogans like “Don’t give Turkey the right to make decisions about us” or “Turkey is not Europe”.<sup>18</sup> The protest was evidently imported to Slovakia, the local organiser was an unknown person and the protest has no backing in any local initiatives and there were no follow up activities later.

In 2006 the coverage was less intense. The main actors in the debate remained on the con- side the KDH and on the pro-side the government. KDH consistently argued against the potential Turkey’s EU accession and supported the position of the German CDU/CSU – the privileged partnership. The main arguments were cultural and value differences. The government (following the 2006 general election social-democratic party Smer-SD built the coalition together with two smaller parties) expressed positive attitudes and officially supported the accession process, however, once the negotiation has been interrupted by the end of 2006 PM Robert Fico commented: „*This is an evidence that Turkey is not satisfactory prepared for the EU membership...*“ But at the same time he declared very explicitly that „*nobody disqualified Turkey on the basis of religious differences, but the unwillingness to cooperate with Cyprus is an example of the fact, that Turkey is not yet prepared to share the values which are in the background of the EU existence*“.<sup>19</sup> Slovak political support for Turkish European aspirations was proclaimed at the occasion of meeting between the Slovak minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Kubiš and the Turkish chief negotiator Mr. Alim Babacan.

In 2007 the news were mostly focused on Turkish domestic development (above all early election, conflicts with PKK) and bilateral relations with other countries (for example with Iraq).

In 2008 the bilateral relations with Armenia and Greece were in focus.

---

<sup>17</sup> V Bratislave demonštrácia proti integrácii Turecka do EÚ. [A demonstration against EU integration of Turkey]. BRATISLAVA 16. júla 2005 (SITA).

<sup>18</sup> The web page of this protest organization [www.voiceforeurope.org](http://www.voiceforeurope.org) is not active anymore.

<sup>19</sup> Zmrazenie rokovaní EÚ s Tureckom je pre SR neprijateľné [Freezing of negotiations with Turkey is unacceptable for Slovakia]. 1.12.2006.

Year 2009 was a year of intensive bilateral Slovak –Turkey relations: President Abdulláh Gül officially visited Slovakia. At this occasion his counter partner Mr. Gašparovič voiced the strong Slovak support for the full-fledged membership of Turkey in the EU. He declared, that from the very beginning Slovakia was supportive on the Turkey road to Brussels. According to him Turkey could be an asset for EU's future.<sup>20</sup>

Another high-profiled official visit took place in October when the Slovak PM Robert Fico visited Ankara and with his Turkish partner Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed an agreement about the investments protection, what should improve the investment environment between Slovak and Turkish companies. During his visit Slovak PM repeatedly supported the ambition of Turkey to join the EU.<sup>21</sup> The topic of visa requirements was discussed as well. A strong statement on behalf of bilateral relations was made: according to both PMs there are no open political controversies between the two countries. There were additional events promoting good bilateral relations and trade. Slovak PM Fico opened the Slovak-Turkey trade forum, attended the memorial of the first President of the Turkish republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and in a park which is named after Alexander Dubček presented a book „Dubček in Ankara“.<sup>22</sup> Both sides again and again stressed that there are no political obstacles, open frictions or what ever what could make burdens to the good relations.<sup>23</sup>

An important event in 2009 was the agreement signed between Turkey and Armenia.

In 2010 conflict with Israel and the attack on the humanitarian convoy made the headlines. By the end of 2010 the main story related to Turkey was a fiasco of drug operation when Turkey stopped a Slovak truck and jailed its Czech driver. Slovak Minister of Interior accused the Turkish side that ruined an important international police operation to stop drug trafficking. According to the Slovak

---

<sup>20</sup> GAŠPAROVIČ: Turecko podporíme ako plnohodnotného člena EÚ. [ GAŠPAROVIČ: We will support Turkey for a full-fledged EU member]. SITA, 02.11.2009.

<sup>21</sup> SR-TURECKO: Fico a Erdogan podpísali zmluvu o ochrane investícií [SR/Turkey: Fico and Erdogan signed the agreement about the investments' protection]. SITA.13.10.2009

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> FICO: Vzťahy s Tureckom nie sú zaťažené žiadnymi politickými otázkami. [FICO: Relations with Turkey are not burdened by any political questions]. SITA. 13.10.2009.

Minister of Interior the action should have to detect „big fishes“.<sup>24</sup> Since the minister was a KDH nominee the case opened the door to critical even unanimous statements.

In early 2011 the “truck case” continued, it turned out that the entire story was much more dubious than originally presented by the Slovak side. As for the other topics the conflicts with the separatists Kurds and Israel were high on the agenda. Also the earthquake attracted a lot of attention. Slovak media were reporting about providing aid for The EU accession has been thematized very marginally.

### *Media images of Turkey in Slovakia*

Over the years we could observe several patterns in portraying Turkey and Turkey-EU relations in Slovak print media. They can be categorised and labelled as follows:

1. We support Turkey, BUT...
2. Turkey does not belong to EU
3. Positive and educational framing: Who needs whom?
4. EU-level debate on Turkey does not matter to us

1. The official position of Slovak foreign policy is to support Turkish EU integration. The governments in Slovakia – regardless of their ideological position – voice political support to Turkey’s European aspirations. Primarily the security benefits are mentioned, including positive effects of the conditionality process which may bring Turkey closer to EU standards in protecting human and minority rights. There is also a “spill-over” effect assumption in regard of other Moslem countries in the region. However, after supportive official statements a „BUT“ is coming very frequently. The most frequent buts are: Turkey has to fulfill criteria, meet the expectations, be strict in line with the conditionality process... etc. The responsibility for not being in line is ascribed almost exclusively to Turkey and its political representation. It could be illustrated by headlines like “Turkey did not make any progress”<sup>25</sup>, “Turks closed the

---

<sup>24</sup> LIPŠIC: Akcia s českým kamiónom mala odkryť veľké ryby [The action with a truck should reveal big fishes]. 29.12.2010.

<sup>25</sup> Hospodárske noviny, 27.7. 2007.

sky”<sup>26</sup>, “Turkey is heading East”<sup>27</sup>, “Turks have chosen a Moslem for a road to Brussels” (with clear ironical subtext)<sup>28</sup>. These stories are framed in: firstly - Turkey as a troubled candidate, a complicated case (unlike for example Croatia which has been strongly advocated by Slovak political elite), the process is full of obstacles; secondly – if something does not work straight it is Turkey’s fault and responsibility. We could talk about a “buck passing” framing of the news.

2. As it was stated already Turkey is not high at the agenda in Slovakia and most of the political actors do not take positions on this issue. The exceptions are the KDH representatives who oppose Turkey’s EU membership consistently. The arguments are differently thematized but the common denominators are cultural differences and value and religious incompatibility of Turkey with the EU. KDH representative (MP František Mikloško) was the first one who brought to the political agenda the case of Armenian genocide. His initiative resulted in a resolution adopted by the Slovak parliament in 2004. The coverage of con-arguments is framed as “clash of cultures”, “clash of civilizations”<sup>29</sup> - substantive differences which cannot be removed or overcome.

3. In Slovak print media there are stories which advocate Turkey’s EU integration or at least question the positions of the opponent. They argue by benefits (economic, security) on both sides. For example an the rhetoric question – “who needs whom?” has been raised in center-left oriented daily Pravda. The story continues: „*Europe is in troubles with the debt crises and aged population, so a question is emerging: who in reality need whom more? The Turks the EU or the EU Turkey?*“<sup>30</sup> The author praises the reforms which were implemented and is very positive about the economic potential the country has. On the other hand he is also pointing at growing reluctance of Turks to adopt all conditions.

---

<sup>26</sup> Pravda, 29.6. 2010.

<sup>27</sup> SME, 23.6.2010.

<sup>28</sup> Hospodárske noviny, 24.7. 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Koenig et al. (2006) analysed the discourses about the Turkey’s EU accession in Europe and they came up with three different frames: 1. multiculturalists frame, which emphasizes the right to difference, this position is present mostly in UK; 2. clash of civilizations frame: sees a clash between Christianity and Islam; it uses the ethno-nationalistic argument that Turkey is incompatible with Europe, since it does not share common Christian roots; 3. economic-consequence frame is about the economic consequences of Turkish accession to the EU. It may have neutral, positive but negative connotations – rather stressing new entrepreneurial opportunities Turkey is presented as financial burden for the EU and unwanted competitor for EU funds. Hudec (2012) analysed Slovak, Czech and German key dailies and found out that the conservatives dailies are using the “clash” of civilization framing whereas the left leaning incline more to the multiculturalist frames.

<sup>30</sup> Turecko sa odvracia od únie. [Turkey is turning away from the EU] Pravda, 27.12. 2010.

As an attempt to frame the coverage as multicultural issue we can see a reportage published in weekend supplement of daily SME31 which published the reportage from Istanbul (European capital of culture 2010) and opened it with a statement „Europe needs Orient“arguing that the Orient culture would enrich Europe with a dimension which still has not solid roots in Europe. Unlike the Jewish culture which is deeply rooted in Europe, the culture of Orient is not, yet.<sup>32</sup>

Another story focused on cultural background and tracing the Slovak stereotypes and prejudices has been published under the head-line *Jajže, Bože, strach veľiký?*<sup>33</sup> The author is trying to find roots of a paradox –Turkey is one of the most popular holiday destinations of Slovaks, on the other hand they are not very supportive for potential Turkey’s EU membership. The story outlines the historical experiences of Slovaks with the Ottoman empire in 16th and 17th century, images of plundering soldiers. Although the Turks are not at our territory for centuries, the prejudices against them are persisting. The interviewed Turks living in Slovakia confirm that until today they meet people – even the youngster – who have biased images of Turkey. „*Those who did nit visited the country think that it is still an underdeveloped Arab country*“.<sup>34</sup> The story is educative and balanced, however, it makes a slightly simplifying conclusion that the prejudices are rooted mostly in the history and still influences the low support for Turkey’s EU integration.

4. It was already said that the Slovak debate on Turkey’s EU integration is of low salience and rather underdeveloped. There is not too much to report. On the other hand the media cover the EU level debate and use European politicians as external actors for reporting about the progress or stagnation in the Turkish European integration. Most frequently mentioned politicians are the German chancellor Angela Merkel who is very clear in her position: „...*we cannot accept any country to EU, we have to think about where the borders of Europe are.*“.<sup>35</sup> There is an agreement between German and French stances, President Sarkozy, who is an emotional

---

<sup>31</sup> Markaris, Petros: Západ vstúpil na scénu s klobúkom [West entered the scene with a hat]. SME/Forum, 6.2.2010.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Uličianska, Zuzana: Jajže, Bože, strach veľiký? SME, 10.4. 2010. The title is difficult to translate, it is taken from the 19<sup>th</sup> century poem, which is memorized by the pupils at elementary schools, and refers to the fears Slovaks had during the time of Ottomans presence in Central Europe.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Sarkozy: Turecko nepatrí do Európy [Sarkozy: Turkey does not belong to EU]. Nový čas, 21. 09. 2007.

opponent of the Turkey's accession proposed in 2007 "real partnership".<sup>36</sup> The most frequently quoted advocate is Great Britain and its political representation. The media image is also about the controversies at the EU level, however this is portrayed as something what is outside Slovakia, not touching upon our politics, our own matters. The headlines are very often saying „EU has problem with the Turkey's accession“ (SME, 12.10. 2007), or “Sarkozy: Turkey does not belong to Turkey“ (Nový čas, 21.09.2007) or “European Parliament: Turkey's accession is very distant“, „The Pope did not want Turkey in the EU (SME, 11.12. 2010), Wikileaks: Westerwelle argued that Turkey is too large and not modernized enough (SME, 12.12. 2010), The Pope struggled against Turkey's EU membership (Nový čas, 11.12. 2010). The EU level debate about Turkey's EU membership is portrayed as an external issue, something what is not connected to the domestic's politics. There are at least two reasons for that – the entire EU and the EU agenda is still perceived in a dichotomy “they” and “we”, the notion of „we are the EU“ is still not mentally rooted in the Slovak society. And this is even more true for the Turkey's possible membership – it is a distant issue and the way how media frame it is even strengthening these feelings.

### Conclusion

Based on the interviews and the print media analyses it can be said that Turkey and its accession to EU is almost invisible issue in Slovakia. The topic is not discussed politically neither publicly, as an issue – Turkey's EU membership is not salient and is not contested by the political parties. Moreover, it is only very marginally discussed by the Slovak experts.

In Slovakia general public mood is in favor of the further EU enlargement; however this support is not based on any structured and informed opinion and is more related to the countries of closer neighborhood (Western Balkans). Turkey is perceived as “*too far, too distant, and too difficult to grasp and translate into a policy that can get wider support.*” The relatively weak and unstructured narrative is based on “we” and “they”, Turkey and Turks are perceived as “the others”.

To assess the possible impact of Turkey's EU membership today is very difficult – there to many unknown factors.

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

As for the media images four patterns could be identified: 1. We support Turkey, BUT...; 2. Turkey does not belong to EU; 3. Positive and educational framing: Who needs whom? 4. EU-level debate on Turkey does not matter to us. They reflect the stage of political and public discourse in Slovakia.

### References

- de Vreese, Claes H. – Boomgaarden, H. G. – Semetko, H. A. 2011. (In)direct Framing Effects: The Effects of News Media Framing on Public Support for Turkish Membership in the European Union. *Communication Research* 38 (2), 179-205.
- Gyárfášová, O. 2007. Transatlantic Trends: What new democracies share, and don't. <http://blog.gmfus.org/2007/09/20/transatlantic-trends-what-new-democracies-share-and-dont/>
- Gyárfášová, O. 2008. Turecko a členstvo v EÚ – dve zrkadlá (Turkey and the EU membership – two mirrors). In: *Zahraničná politika*, No.5, pp: 6-7.
- Hudec, Š. 2012. Europeanization of Turkey: How the Slovak, Czech and German Newspapers Framed Turkey's Accession Process to EU in 2004 and 2010. *PhD Dissertation Thesis*. Comenius University.
- Koenig, T. – Mihelj, S - Downey, J. - Bek, M.G. 2007. Media Framings of the Issue of Turkish Accession to the EU. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* Vol. 10 (2), 149-169.
- Najšlová, L. (ed.). 2009. *Rediscovering the Common Narrative of Turkey and Europe*. Bratislava: RC SFPA.
- Transatlantic Trends. Topline Data. 2004-2012. German Marshal Fund of the U.S. [www.gmfus.org](http://www.gmfus.org).

### Interviews

- Droba, Juraj. MP for party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS), its foreign policy expert. 30 April 2012. Bratislava, Slovak Republic.
- Fronc, Martin. MP for the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH). 5 May 2012. Bratislava, Slovak Republic.
- Ježovica, Milan. State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010-2012, Slovak Democratic and Christian Movement - Democratic Party (SDKÚ-DS). 17 May 2012, Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

Macák, Tibor. Journalist for public broadcasting. 11 May 2012, Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

Najšlová, Lucia. Senior Research Fellow, Institute for European Policy EUROPEUM; editor-in-chief of bi-monthly *Zahraničná politika* (Foreign Policy), 3 July 2012, Prague, Czech Republic.

Sládek, Kamil. Director of Center for European Politics (CEP). 15 May 2012, Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

Šebej, František. MP for party Most-Híd, foreign policy expert. 10 May 2012, Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

Ulutekin, Gulhan. Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the Slovak Republic. 14 May 2012, Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

## Annex



Cartoon by one of the most popular political cartoonist and glossarist Shooty. SME daily, 5.10.2005 [“To my opinion only Croats should have place in the Union. They cut off the heads only in their own country and did not pull us into it like the Turks did”.]



## **APPENDIX**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Personal Questions:**

- Sex/Age/Location:
- Job / Title:
- How long have you been working in this job and position?

#### **Questions to ask for experts from the academia, NGOs, think-tanks**

- What is the public opinion on Turkey's accession to EU in this country? Is it a positive or a negative approach? Why do you think it is so?
- Has there been any fluctuations / changes in this approach toward Turkey's accession? Why, why not?
- Can you give examples of this support/approach? How is it shown in the public arena / media?
- How often does any news on Turkey appear in the media? Do you recall any significant news on Turkey in the past? What was it about?
- Have you observed any turning points in the last decade causing a change in public opinion on Turkey's accession?
- What do you think influences most the public opinion on this issue? Has there been any specific issues or events that affected the public opinion so far? (i.e. tourism, foreign policy shift, Turkish TV series, etc)
- According to the Eurobarometer 2010 results, the Czech/Slovak/Hungarian/Polish support for further EU enlargement is %57/%63/%55/%69 (respectively). Compared to the West European memberstates, this ratio of support is quite high. How do you evaluate this result for your country? How do you evaluate it for all Visegrad countries?

- What do you think would be the immediate effects of Turkish accession on this country?
- Is Turkish accession widely discussed in this country?

### **Questions for political parties**

- What is the position/policy of your party on the issue of Turkey's accession to EU? Is it positive or negative? Why do you adopt this position?
- Have you consistently adopted this policy as a party? Or, was there any different perspective regarding Turkey's accession before? If there was a difference, why did it change?
- Through what means do you publicize your position on Turkey? Or, in other words, how do you try to influence the public opinion on this issue?
- Have you held any public events / activities / speeches to this end?
- Regardless of your party's stance on this issue, what do you think is the public opinion on this issue in your country? Positive or negative? Why do you think this is so?
- According to the Eurobarometer 2010 results, the Czech/Slovak/Hungarian/Polish support for further EU enlargement is %57/%63/%55/%69 (respectively). Compared to the West European memberstates, this ratio of support is quite high. How do you evaluate this result for your country? How do you evaluate it for all Visegrad countries?
- What do you think would be the immediate effects of Turkish accession on this country?
- How do you think the major political parties in this country perceive the issue of Turkey being an EU candidate country?

### **Questions for the Turkish diaspora**

- How long have you been living in this country?
- What is the public opinion on Turkey's accession to EU in this country? Is it a positive or a negative approach? Why do you think it is so?
- Have you observed any fluctuations / changes in this approach toward Turkey's accession? Why, why not?
- Can you give examples of this support/approach? How is it shown in the public arena / media?

- Are you conducting any public activities or events to promote Turkey's perception in public opinion? Can you give examples?
- How often does any news on Turkey appear in the media? Do you recall any significant news on Turkey in the past? What was it about?
- Have you observed any turning points in the last decade causing a change in public opinion on Turkey's accession?
- What do you think influences most the public opinion on this issue? Has there been any specific issues or events that affected the public opinion so far? (i.e. tourism, foreign policy shift, Turkish TV series, etc)
- According to the Eurobarometer 2010 results, the Czech/Slovak/Hungarian/Polish support for further EU enlargement is %57/%63/%55/%69 (respectively). Compared to the West European memberstates, this ratio of support is quite high. How do you evaluate this result for your country? How do you evaluate it for all Visegrad countries?
- How do you see the relations between Turkey and this country in general?