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**EUROPEAN TURKS
"Education and Integration"**

Volume II

Editors

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A RESEARCH ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Introduction

Nowadays nations have lost their autonomy in economy, law, culture and education (Özyurt 2008). It is been seen that in practice, seeking global and local integration has taken the place of national unity and integrity. Since Turkey has tried to become integrated in the European Union, Turkey's government legal policy has been to make effort to perform according to the Union's criteria. According to Acar (2001) the EU, which has economic and political goals, appeared after World War II and a successful regional integration project. In 1957, the European Union was established as AEC (European Economic Community) with the Rome Treaty. Our membership process legally started with the Ankara Treaty in 1963. With the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria, sufficiency for integration into the Union for a member of the nations was determined, followed by the Turkey Participation Partnership Certificate. During and after this process, discussions of the advantages and disadvantages for joining the European Union and threats for the future of Turkey still continue.

Research Aim and Importance

Membership in the European Union is a common issue in Turkey in the past and nowadays. Actually, the idea of joining the Union has a long history. Turkey's membership in the European Union has a long history over a half century. The process started with the signing of the Ankara Partnership Treaty on 12 September 1963. However, half century passed, and Turkey has not gained the desired results from the Union. This research aims to investigate Turkish university students' opinions and evaluations regarding membership of the European Union, who will be the future of Turkey as educators, bureaucrats, politicians and theologians from a sociological point of view. On this point, university students' opinions were determined with nearly six open-ended questions. The obtained data from the survey were then analyzed by content.

Method

This research aims to determine the opinions of university senior students in different faculties on the European Union and some common discussions on

the European Union. The method used in this survey is a descriptive study. A qualitative method was used to achieve the research aims. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2005) describe the qualitative method as "research which uses qualitative data collection methods, such as observation, interview and document analysis, so that perception and events are evaluated in their natural setting in a realistic and total way." During the process of analyzing data, the content analysis method is used in addition to descriptive and discourse analysis methods. Descriptive analysis is an approach that summarizes and comments on data according to re-determined shapes. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005, p. 224-7). The main aim of content analysis is to find connections and concepts in order to explain the collected data. According to Lemke (Yapıcı, 2006) expression analysis is used for explaining small group interaction, developing and changing of the students' usage of technical language and concepts, and finding similarities and differences between school and society.

Research Group:

The research group consisted of 10 senior students who studied in each faculty of political science, communication, law, education and theology in the 2008-2009 spring terms for a total of 50 students.

Data Collection Tool:

In order to determine the senior students' points of view on the European Union, semi-structured "interview form" which formed before was used. Meetings were carried out with the 50 senior students. After presenting an expert opinion, a questionnaire was provided. The questions are:

1. What is your opinion on being a full member of the European Union? When does this come true?
2. What are the advantages for Turkey being a member of the EU?
3. Do you feel that the EU is sincere about accepting Turkey as a member? Why?
4. How does the EU affect Turkey's Unified system?
5. Is the EU is a threat for national identity?
6. Is it possible that understanding can be formed about rights and freedoms between European mutually?

(These questions asked in Turkish)

Analyzing Data and Coding:

The answers given by the students in the semi-structured interview form were written exactly by Microsoft Office Word word processor programme without changing any words. Student's opinions were coded by a theme coding method. In addition, a qualitative content analysis and comment analysis method were used. While coding the students' answers, students' names were not used; instead abbreviations of faculty names were used and then numbered from 1 to 10. For example, when a theology faculty student's opinion was given, it is shown as (T.3) Theology Faculty student's opinion that is numbered as 3.

Findings and Comments

Findings obtained from research were organized in four categories. The four categories of opinions are:

- a. Opinions on an being exact member or not,
- b. Opinions on advantages of being a member of the Union,
- c. Opinions on member countries accepting Turkey as an EU member,
- d. Opinions on European citizenship, national identity and rights and freedoms.

University Students' Opinions on Being an Exact Member of the European Union

Data that is collected from the "Interview Form" on university students' opinions on being full member of the European Union was analyzed by qualitative and content analysis method. The question "What is your opinion on Turkey's being an exact member of the European Union?" was asked to the participants in order to determine their understanding about the European Union. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Opinions on Being Exact Member of the EU

Faculty	Yes	No	Open ended process
Political Science	2	6	2
Law Faculty	4	5	1
Theology Faculty	2	7	1
Communication Faculty	7	2	1
Education Faculty	8	1	1
Total	23	21	6

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the participants stated that Turkey will be member of the EU although it is an open-ended process; 42% of them gave a negative opinion on this question. Students who gave a negative opinion stated that:

- a. the EU countries have a negative manner to Turkey
- b. Turkey has not got the conditions that Union desires.

Examples of students' opinions on this question are:

(T.2): "I would like to be an exact member of the European Union, but it is not possible under these circumstances. Turkey has been trying to get into this union for years, but still we cannot be the member of the EU. However, some good steps are taken nowadays. So, unite unity is agree with Turkey's membership. Yet, being an exact member is still far possibility..."

(P.5): "Despite these whole desire and effort, exact membership is a total dream work if we consider our conditions."

(L.4): "Turkey's being a member of the European Union will still remain desire as utopia. West Societies are getting time just, because they do not want to gain Turkey's hostility, because in new world, we cannot dream a world without Turkey. Exact membership of Turkey can never come true, but Turkey cannot

leave from this axis.”

(T.8): “Turkey’s exact membership of the EU will come true when Turkey become democratic country.”

Students who have a positive opinion on being a member of the European Union stated that Turkey’s membership will not be possible in the near future. Some examples are:

(C.1): “As evaluated on world politics, even though Turkey has a strategic location and unknown wealth, because of some factors such as Greek-Turkey argument, Muslim-Christian secret struggle, this membership will not come true. Then this membership will be on hand for years. In my opinion, if Turkey becomes the biggest power of the world, this membership comes true, So I do not know that time Turkey desire to be the member of the EU or not. That is a mystery...”

(P.1): “Turkey the EU membership will be in a long time because these consultation processes has open ending. This will take a long time. My own opinion is this will not be before 50 years. Even if this time passes, Turkey will have negative location.”

Participants’ Opinions on Advantages of Being Member of the Union

In the global world, human rights sensitivity--there are still arguments on this topic--that members of the Unions have is an important issue on getting members in the Union. To get opinions on this subject, the question “What are the advantages of being member of the Union?” was asked to the participants. The content analysis of the participants’ responses are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' Opinion on Advantages of Turkey's being the European Union Member

Coding						Reached Claim	Total
	Theology	Communi- cation	Law	Education	Political Science		
Development in Law System (distinction of law)	1		3			Estimation, Fundamental Rights and Freedoms	15
Human Rights		2			1		
Freedoms (freedom of speech and idea, etc.)	2		1				
End of the taboo	1						
Increasing tolerance among people	1	1					
Democratic Built			1		1		
TOTAL	5	3	5		2		
Free Movement	1	1	2	1	3	Freedom of movement between countries	8
Increasing Job Opportunities	1			1		Economical and social development	19
Improving Life Standards				2			
Country's Economical Development	2	3	1	1	2		
Improving Basic Institutions (Education, Health, etc.)	1			2			
Social Development		1	1		1		
TOTAL	4	4	2	6	3		
Effective Power in the Region		1				Turkey's Importance	2
Increasing Esteem of Country			1				
TOTAL		1	1				
Harness will be more than benefit				1		Negative Ideas	4
There will be no difference		1		1	1		
TOTAL		1		2	1		
No respond				1	1	-----	2

Having analyzed university students' opinions, benefits that the European Union can supply to a member country are categorized as:

1. Improving basic rights and freedoms
2. Free circulation that means free movement between countries
3. Improvement in economy and social areas
4. Increasing Turkey's importance in its region
5. Negative opinions on joining the Union

As shown in Table 2, 19 students stated that if Turkey joins the Union, there will be economic and social development. Six of these students were from an education faculty, 4 of them were from communication, 4 of them were from theology, 2 of them were from political science and 2 of them were from law. Half of the students, responding to the questionnaire according to above coding, believed that being in the European Union will be more beneficial. Other advantages about being a member of the Union show that students think that Turkey will have more advantages being a member of the Union.

Disadvantages of being a member of the European Union:

Opinions on the disadvantages of being member of the European Union were:

- a. Improving in judgment, basic rights and freedoms (Total of 15 students, 5 in theology, 5 in law, 3 in communication and 2 in political science faculties answered this question but the students in the education faculty did not give a suitable answer to this question.),
- b. free circulation (total 8 students),
- c. Increasing Turkey's importance in the region (total 2 students).

In addition, 3 students predicted that being member of the Union would make no difference; one student stated that being a member of the Union would be more harmful than beneficial. Examples of some of the students' ideas are:

(P.2): "It is thought that being member of the EU will not be beneficial to Turkey "on the paper." I have some doubts on this issue. Turkey is the only one country that is a member of Customs Union but not a member for the EU. So it cannot use the right of free circulation, free circulation of property and service, and other rights that agriculture and customs politics foresee. Being a member of the Union can supply many benefits to Turkey, but Turkey can be thrown into more democratic building process in order to adapt the EU criteria such as cultural and political rights. Moreover, Turkey can get more advantages in some areas such as agriculture, environment, science and technology by putting some standardization."

(E. 5): "Visiting Europe without visa problem, seeing different cultures and reaching many cultural societies..."

(C.1): "I think that there will be some expansions for example freedoms, human rights, bringing up people who have self esteem, freedom of speech, etc ..."

One student states a negative idea:

(E.6): "If we accept the whole conditions as they are during consolidation process, exact membership will bring more loss than benefits ..."

Participants' Opinions on the EU Member Countries Accept Turkey as a Member After Sarkozy stated that "Turkey should be on the border of Europe, Turkey is not expected to be in the Union" (<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/24964221/>), there were some opinions that the EU members will not accept Turkey as a member although Turkey has carried out some of the reforms to get into the Union. On this point, to clarify students' ideas this question was asked to the participants: "Do you feel that the EU is sincere about accepting Turkey as a member?" The response analysis and theme analysis that was obtained from the results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Participants' Opinions on whether they find the EU sincere about accepting Turkey as a member or not.

	Yes	No	Depends
Political Science	1	6	3
Law Faculty	-	9	1
Theology Faculty	1	7	2
Communication Faculty	1	8	1
Education Faculty	1	9	
Total	4	39	7

As seen in Table 3, most of the participants did not find the EU sincere in accepting Turkey as a member. Their reasons according to faculties are:

- Political Science students did not find the EU sincere in accepting membership because they are gaining time (5 students) and because of Turkey's Muslim identity (one student). One student who finds the EU sincere in accepting membership (P.6) stated that "For the EU, accepting Turkey to membership is a benefit to the Union. Thus, if Turkey fulfills the necessary criteria, they will be more sincere."
- Law students did not find the EU sincere. They stated that the EU is gaining time (6 students), self-interest relations (2 students), plus the EU countries have some doubts about Turkey (one student).
- Theology students expressed why they find the EU not sincere as gaining time (one student), the EU accepts Turkey as an enemy because of the past events in history (one student), being a Christian union, so their religion's sincere handicap (2 students), being a long complex process that cannot be explained with only one reason (3 students).
- Communication students commented that Turkey has a Muslim structure (2 students), being seen as a Middle East country (2 students), gaining time (3 students), not being ready to join the Union (one student).
- Education students did not find the EU sincere in accepting Turkey as a member of the Union because of benefits for the EU.

Examples of students' opinions whose ideas are categorized as "Depends" are:

(L. 4): "There is a sincerity depending on Turkey's geographical and strategically location..."

(P. 3): "I find reasonable the EU manner from some countries point of view. France, Germany and Greece have a negative manner in every situation. In the past, some statesmen of the member countries explanations (Turkey will never be a member of the EU.) decrease Turkey's hope. Besides, the EU is not a whole in its inside, thus they show a reserved manner in accepting Turkey."

(C.7): "I estimate that there is a sincerity which depends on interests."

Participants' Opinions on European Citizenship, National Identity Discussions and Rights Freedoms Issues

The minority issue was another point discussed, claiming that the EU tries to apply for exact equality. For this reason, instead of a government that has a single culture adopting a multicultural society model and forming "Türkiyelilik" top identity instead of "Turks" issues are on the agenda. There were some opinions that Türkiyelilik which claimed as multicultural society can be harmful for Turkey's Unified structure. On this issue, this question "What do you think about the effect of the EU on Turkey's Unified structure?" was asked to the university senior students. Participants' responses are categorized in Table 4.

Table 4. Opinions on whether being member of the Union affects the Unified structure or not.

	Affects negatively	Do not affect	No Comment
Political Science	5	4	1
Law Faculty	5	3	2
Theology Faculty	5	4	1
Communication Faculty	4	5	1
Education Faculty	4	4	2
Total	23	20	7

When participants' opinions' were examined, it is seen that they had different perceptions on the "Unitarian structure". Some students' opinions about this question are:

(T.1): "By any chance, we can be accepted to the Union (!), it will not be effective in a short period. But it demolishes taboos in long period. We can see what results yield after joining the union and reaching the results. May be we will be a free person in a real meaning. People who are not accepted as a son of the country will have to be accepted as a group."

(P.5): "Even if the EU is not point at issue, there are some splits in Turkey's Unitarian structure. the EU accelerates this process. Possibility of being given political and cultural societies in a collective manner and "Twins Law" that Turkish Grand National Assembly became law in 2003 are the beginning the corrosion of the Unitarian structure. However, idea of the EU strengthen Unitarian structure

overbalance, we should not ignore the reverse effect of it. Consequently, the EU is supranational association, thus whole member countries have to turn over some or most part of their sovereignty. It is not possible to think that this will not affect Unitarian structure."

(L.4): "the EU empties Turkey's Unitarian structure and desires to throw into a different structure. In addition, there will be no big difference apparent; frame's inside is being emptied."

(C.4): "I have relativity idea on this point. We have to interrogate Unitarian government structure."

Adaptation of a traditional nationalistic idea and a European idea is the matter at hand. To identify university students' ideas on this issue, this question was directed to them: "What is your opinion on whether the EU is a threat to national identity?" Participants' answers are categorized in Table 5.

Table 5. Ideas on whether the EU is a threat to national identity

Coding	Theology	Communication	Law	Education	Political Science	Total
Threat for national identity	5	3	3	4	3	18
No thread for national identity	3	4	4	2	4	17
It is important for estimating differences.		1			1	2
It is a wearing discussion for the country.	1		3	1	1	6
Depends on citizens' manner.		1		2	1	4
No comment.	1	1		1		3

As the results are examined to determine participants' ideas on whether the EU is a threat to national identity, it is seen that the results are equal. Students who thought that the EU is a threat to national identity emphasized national and moral values and they stated that the identity discussion wears out the national government structure. Students who thought that the EU is not a threat to national identity determined that differences in the country will make wealth and globalization neutralize national identity; the EU structure is a political structure, thus, it does not affect cultural elements. However, this subject that the EU tries especially to start a discussion and this will wear out the country; its effects can be seen in cities are other additional ideas. Some students' ideas are:

(L.3): "the EU tries to pull the event to sub and upper identity discussions, but identity discussion is not important because this is a political discussion ..."

(L.4): "The more identity discussion there is, the more disquiet will be. Some people desire this kind of discussions in place different people live together."

(S.4): "There is a parallelism between Unitarian structure and national identity. It affects Unitarian structure, national identity and nation-government corrosion. If the EU files national culture just by its integration, there will not be more problem. But if they accept this as an integration part for international capital and system, thread dimensions will increase."

The Copenhagen criteria require that Turkey should have a structure that depends on human rights and freedoms. Some discussion has been made about rights, freedom, justice, equality, and more during the EU exact membership process. On the one hand, it is claimed that the adaptation process is started by these discussions. On the other hand, these developments are not found sincere. To get students ideas on this question "Can mutual understanding be developed on developing rights and freedoms among Europeans? And how does this affect European Harmony?" were asked. The content analysis of the students' answers is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Opinions whether mutual understanding can be formed about rights and freedoms with Europe

Coding	Theology	Communication	Law	Education	Political Science	Total
Yes, it can be developed.	4	4	6	1	6	21
No, it cannot be developed.	2	2	1	3	1	9
It can be developed in some measure.	1	3	1	3	2	10
Low possibility than can come true.	2	1		2	1	6
I would like to believe in this.				1		1
the EU is guarantee of rights and freedoms.	1		2			3

It is seen in the table that mutual understanding can be formed regarding rights and freedoms with Europe is shared by half of the students. "The EU guarantees rights and freedoms" is another point of view on this topic. Some students whose response is categorized as "Yes, it can be developed" are:

(C.2): "It can be developed. Because we as human beings have the same rights so we can handle this."

(S.2): "Why not. Not only in Europe but also in all region of the world mutual understanding can be developed on the point that developing rights and freedoms. But we have to prepare that environment and we have to avoid seeing people as a means of politics and earning money."

One student whose response is categorized as "No, it cannot be developed" stated:

(E.3): "Each the EU citizen cannot be seen as European from West European mentality such as in the sample of England and France. Image of a Czech and French do not unite in the same European fact."

One student responded to this question from a Turkish point of view.

(P.4): "No, I don't think so. They insist on this kind of situation in existing membership process. I do not find the EU sincere on this subject."

One student whose answer is that it can be developed in the same measure stated:

(P.1): "European developed this understanding thanks to their historical accumulation. On rights and freedoms point, the EU has some missing and wrong parts. This understanding is settled down in West Europe clearly and permanently. But we cannot say the same thing for East Europe and the Balkans."

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

European Union member country citizens have some rights such as free circulation, living, working, voting in local government election and the European Parliament, applying their religious practices, preserving local culture. In the meantime, European Union citizens take up references different languages, cultures, beliefs and life styles and they respect these differences, and then act in concurrence. This is explained in a romantic level for university students such as "like, dislike, want, and do not want". However, some of them have radical beliefs, such as a person should have more freedom, democratic life and unity in the country's development. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the participants believed that Turkey will be a member of the EU, but this will take a long time. Forty-two percent (42%) of them thought that exact membership will never come true. Hayır (2004) made research with 104 university students. He found 46% of the participants supported memberships of Turkey and 16% of them disagreed with the membership. The Social Participation and Development Fund carried out research with 24,571 high school students. They found that 70.5% of them supported Turkey's EU membership, but 16% of them did not support the membership. (www.ari.org.tr/dosyalar/arastirmalar/turk-gencligi-ab.ppt).

According to results of the research, for people who did not support membership of the EU membership not being accepted to the Union because of language and cultural differences, and Turkey's not being ready for the membership were the main points of their claim. According to Akyüz (2009:428), if Turkey completes all the conditions and requests, it will not to be accepted to the Union. This claim is stated in official EU documents. According to Evsile (1999), although the Union does not wish to accept Turkey as a member of the Union, joining the Union guarantees Turkey's political existence and country integrity. Some participants share this idea because they state that this membership will be a guarantee for "rights and freedoms" in the country. Participants who expressed negative opinions on membership stressed national and moral demoralization. On these points, Yılmaz (2007) stressed that we should put importance on Sufism discipline in order to keep our national and moral values.

One of the benefits of the membership was seen as development of the economy. Participants' faculties were different; thus, the results were different, too. The education students predicted economic development. Theology and law students stated that there will be development in legal judgments and basic rights and freedoms. The idea of free movement was used by communication students. According to Acar (2001), the EU is not a magic stick for Turkey, but there will be

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