POLICY | brief

New Prospects in Turkey-EU Relations: How to Fix a Weakened Relationship through Cultural Diplomacy

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Executive Summary

Turkey's accession process within the European Union (EU) is a highly controversial issue. Throughout the last 50 years, Turkey's engagement with the European integration project has faced various barriers and problems, despite the significant reform undergone by Turkey in line with EU policies and Copenhagen criteria. Since the failed coup attempt of July 2016, EU-Turkey relations have confronted additional challenges and conflicts of interests.

In June 2016, the European Commission presented the 'Strategy for International Cultural Relations' with the aim of encouraging cultural cooperation between the EU and its partner countries to promote a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values[1]. Turkey has distinct importance in EU external policies; nevertheless, cultural misunderstanding, misinterpreted perceptions, ethnocentrism and axiological nihilism between Turkey and the EU remain strong sources of tension for Turkey's putative accession to the EU.

Culture is a recurring theme in European policies. In times of both euphoria and turmoil, the 'artisans of Europe' have often engaged in a quest for the cultural foundations of the continent's unity, the essence of its identity and the limits of diversity. Culture is a major determinant of perception and negotiation and it is indeed at the heart of issues of peace and war in the world.

The 'Europeanness' of Turkey's cultural identity has always been a divisive subject. Due to its geopolitical position and cultural identity as a Muslim secular state, Turkey is a cultural bridge between the West and Muslim countries, in theory making it particularly important in cultural diplomacy for EU foreign policy. Nevertheless, the diplomatic tension between Turkey and the EU over the accession question reflects the difficulty of integrating Muslim immigrant populations whose customs or beliefs render them far removed from traditional European lifestyles. As emphasized by Hurd, "even if economic and political obstacles to Turkey's accession are lifted, even if Turkey is deemed to be in unambiguous conformity with the Copenhagen criteria, European opposition to Turkish membership will persist ... the Turkish case is controversial in cultural and religious terms, as it involves the potential accession of a Muslim-majority country to an arguably, at least historically Christian Europe"[2].

Cultural issues have been barriers to the integration of certain states into the EU as is in part the case in Turkey's 55-year wait for entry. The EU's indecisiveness regarding this accession has underlined its continued uncertainty regarding which axiological path it will take. Europe is currently experiencing an identity crisis and is divided by its ethnocentric conservatism and its utopian political ambition of cosmopolitanism, as well as the rise nationalist populist movements in some member states. This policy brief analyses the key shortcomings of EU cultural diplomacy and cooperation with Turkey, identifies the key opportunities and constraints and proposes recommendations for an effective strategic cooperation.

Turkey EU's Accession Process – Opportunity for Societal Transformation

The EU accession process is a significant reform project that simplifies the adoption of European standards and best practices in Turkey. The process requires fundamental changes in all areas of daily life, from production to consumption, justice to security, health to education, agriculture to

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[1] European Commission Press Release (2016), "A new strategy to put culture at the heart of EU international relations". Brussels. Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/4038/Mogherini%20and%20Commission%20aim%20to%20put%20culture%20at%20the%20heart%20of%20EU%20international%20relations

[2] Hurd, E. S. (2006), "Negotiation Europe: the politics of religion and the prospects for Turkish accession". Review of International Studies 32, pp.401-418.

industry and energy to environment. The EU accession process not only contributes to socioeconomic transformation, but also redefines the relationship between the state and citizens of Turkey.

On the other hand, the Turkish Ministry of European Affairs official communication, which must be considered with caution, mentioned that "as a result of the EU accession process, the concept of citizenship, which was previously defined by responsibilities to the state, is now redefined based on the rights of individuals. The reforms have sealed indispensable aspects of democracy, such as transparency, accountability and participation, as a part of daily life"[3].

According to the survey we conducted in Turkey, 'The Perception of EU Cultural and Science Diplomacy in Turkey'[4], all respondents agreed that participation in the EU programs has translated into a broad shift in understanding of European values in Turkey. Thanks to EU projects, some respondents also saw a positive change in the attitudes and understanding of EU values within the Turkish society and among decision makers.

Despite the EU's incomplete cultural diplomacy initiative in Turkey, the EU recognises the progress of Turkey in the areas of science, research and education to projects related to the process of accession. Turkey's remarkable development in these areas, compared to others, helps to establish an effective foundation for cultural diplomacy with the EU.

The community programmes supported by the EU – such as Horizon 2020, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Life Learning Programme, Comenius, Youth in Action, Grundtvig, Transversal and Jean Monnet Programmes – are designed to increase knowledge on European values and to attract youth and people within educational institutions. According to the 'Information Note on the Community Programmes' in the Youth in Action programme, more than 140,000 young people participated from Turkey in 2004-2009. The mobility is supported by Erasmus and more than 100,000 people had an exchange experience during 2004-2009 between Turkey and the EU[5].

EU-Turkey cooperation in the fields of science, research and innovation creates a ground for further mutually beneficial cooperation. In 2002, Turkey was accepted as an associated member in the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Development, and in 2014 Turkey signed the Association Agreement to Horizon 2020. As former European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Maire Geoghegan-Quinn noted, "Turkey is a much valued partner. Its dynamic business environment is a perfect test bed for the development of innovative products and services – making cooperation a win-win for researchers and enterprises on both sides"[6].

According to the EU Directorate General Research and Innovation's Seventh FP7 Monitoring Report, Turkish scientists have strong participation, with 1,122 applicants and funding of 165 million Euros in EU research projects. The success rate of Turkish researchers was around 16.1%, which is below the EU average (21.6%)[7].

[3] Turkey's New European Union Strategy: "Determination in the Political Reform Process, Continuity in Socio-Economic Trasnformation, Effectiveness in Communication" (2014) Available at:
http://www.ab.gov.tr/files/5%20Ekim/turkeys_new_eu_strategy.pdf

[4] Senocak, N.S. (2018), "The Perception of EU Cultural and Science Diplomacy in Turkey". Centre d'Etudes Diplomatiques et Stratégiques Türkiye. EL-CSID Working-Paper. 14 (4), 2018.
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/0bc3be_dfed8243400548158259ff2835929ea0.pdf

[5] Sohtorikoğlu, Beyza (2016), "Public Diplomacy of the European Union in Turkey: Goals, Features and Prospects", Tallinn

University of Technology. Available at: https://digi.lib.ttu.ee/i/file.php?DLID=6030&t=1.

[6] European Commission (2014), "Turkey joins Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme", Press release, European Commission. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-631_en.htm

[7] European Commission (2015), Seventh FP7 Monitoring Report, Monitoring Report 2013, Brussels, European Commission, DG for Research and Innovation.

Throughout the survey 'The Perception of the EU Cultural and Science Diplomacy in Turkey'[8], respondents indicated that the increased exchange programs for students and teachers, such as Erasmus or Leonardo, have a crucial role in cross-cultural understanding. When respondents were asked in which ways the Turkish population and Europeans could be helped to know each other better, the most frequently given answer mentioned by over half (59%) of respondents was to increase exchange programs for students and teachers, such as Erasmus or Leonardo. The desire for cultural exchange is also an important aspect to develop the teaching of foreign languages at school. Fifty six percent of respondents shared that they would like to improve in another language at least in part to be able to better understand people from other cultures. Education was reported as the key to furthering understanding across borders, with the teaching of languages at school the second most popular answer. The implementation of programs allowing infrequent travelers to meet each other was chosen by 54% of respondents and supporting town twinning schemes was favoured by 46%.

Meanwhile, the arts were reported to play a slightly less important role in increasing cultural understanding. For example, 34% of respondents supported the touring of exhibitions and live performances beyond their national borders, while 14% said that supporting the production of TV documentaries about other EU member states would increase understanding. One reason for this lack of emphasis on the arts is that the perception of artistic events such as contemporary art exhibitions, film festivals and contemporary art performance can be abstract and ambiguous and can clash with the cultural and religious sensibilities of the local population. Turkey's decision to leave Creative Europe is a concrete example of this sensitivity and the cultural red line.

There are many reasons why the EU should improve its cooperation with Turkey, especially in the area of cultural diplomacy. In addition to the changing global environment, the regional political issues and Turkey's increasing role as an energy corridor, its geopolitical situation, its economic potential and its role in the current migration flows and in counterterrorism can all be considered as key denominators influencing the distinct importance of Turkey for EU interests.

Constraints for Effective Cultural Diplomacy by the EU

Cultural identity as a source of discrimination

Turkish membership to the EU must be analysed through the perspective of culture and identity, as the ongoing debate on Turkey's Europeanness plays a key role in the debate on accession to the EU. Turkey's cultural ambiguity as a Muslim majority country which has been shaped by a forced marriage between the model of the Eastern State and the Western Republic significantly complicates its accession to the EU, where a European cultural identity is still undefined.

The public opinion in the EU towards Turkish accession reveals that the membership of the secular Turkish Republic with its Muslim majority population is perceived as a threat to 'European identity'. According to a Eurobarometer survey on public opinion in the EU published in 2005, out of all of the candidate and potential candidate countries to the EU, the accession of Turkey generates the most disapproval. 48% (Standard 64: 55%) of those polled were opposed to Turkey's entry, while 39% (Standard 64: 31%) were in favour, provided it complies with all of the conditions set by the EU. Furthermore, survey data indicates that 55% of the public believe that "the cultural differences between Turkey and the EU are too significant to allow for this accession", and that 63% have a strong fear that accession would cause a large influx of Muslim immigrants[9].

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[8] Senocak, N.S. (2018), ibid.
[9] European Commission (2005), Standard Eurobarometer 63, Public Opinion in the European Union. Brussels, DG press and Communication. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ eb/eb61/eb61_en.pdf

In order to provide the converse perspective, we polled Turkish public opinion in order to understand how Turkish people describe their cultural identity and cultural belonging. Firstly, the large majority of respondents (77%) shared that they feel very attached to their country. Secondly, it is particularly interesting to note the proportion of respondents who reported less attachment to Europe, through responses of 'Not at all' (45%), 'Not very' (26%) and 'Don't' (17%). Despite the westernization of the Turkish socio-political system with the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the European influence on Turkish modus vivendi, the sense of belonging or not belonging to Europe is considered a paradox to the Turkish identity. One of the most important reasons for this result is the non-accession to the EU despite 55 years of waiting, which has created a sense of frustration and withdrawal. In addition, the elements of Turkish identity that contrast most with Europe, namely religion and traditional culture, are also determinant reasons for such detachment[10]. Paradoxically, since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) swept to power in 2002, conservative Muslims are becoming more liberal and secular, and thereby more oriented to the Western way of life.

From these dueling perspectives in public opinion, it is clear that both sides share reciprocal cultural reservations. The rejection and restriction of Islamic symbols in the European public sphere and the challenges of integration of the Muslim community in Europe, 25.8 million people (4,9% Europe's population) [11], who are considered culturally undesirable after the events of 9/11 and recent terrorist attacks in Europe, are the main sources of this mutual rejection.

Islam is a part of cultural diversity of Europe; therefore, it is a necessity to promote cultural/religious dialogue and integration of the Muslim community in the European public sphere. As stated by the first European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans, "the Commission is strongly committed to promoting diversity in Europe. Islam is part of our history, Islam is part of our present and Islam will be part of our future"[12]. It is critical to note that the core values of Islam are not different and antithetical to European values. Rather, this is an imaginary fracture which is intensified by the speeches of certain far-right politicians and the media[13]. As stated by the European Commission Department for Communication, "the main threat comes from an abusive interpretation of Islam exploiting grievances abusing religious narratives and symbols providing justifications for acts of violence"[14].

The Limits of EU Cultural Diplomacy in Competing Nation Branding

Over the last decade, the development of transnational terrorism, the political instability of certain regions, economic crises, inter-ethnic violence, the refugee crisis and intercultural misunderstandings have led societies to hold more obscure perceptions of both their futures and their pasts. Cultural diplomacy, which is commonly defined as "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understandings"[15] has gained importance since the September 11 attacks. The 'Strategy for International Cultural Relations' launched by the European Commission in 2016 is a part of this spirit.

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[10] Senocak, N.S. (2017), "The Axiology of EU Cultural Diplomacy in Muslim Majority Countries: The Paradox of Turkey". Centre d'Etudes Diplomatiques et Stratégiques Türkiye. EL-CSID Working-Paper. 3 (6), 2017.
[11] Pew Research Center survey (2017), "5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe". Available at: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/29/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/
[12] See Dailytrust (2018)," EU: Islam is part of our history, present, future". Available at: https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/eu-islam-is-part-of-our-history-present-future.html
[13] Senocak, N.S. (2017), "Cultural Integration of Muslims in Europe: Prevention of Cultural Misunderstanding and Radicalism, EL-CSID Working-Paper.5 (7), 2017.
[14] The EU Commission's Communication on Supporting the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism, June 24, 2016. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DA/ TXT/?uri=uriserv:l14501 and http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_ culture/repository/education/library/publications/2016/communication-preventing-radicalisation_en.pdf
[15] Cummings, M. (2003), "Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey". Washington D.C., Center for Arts and Culture.

However, the strategy of maximising the impact of European cultural diplomacy in many ways conflicts with Europe itself, which is characterised by contradictions: the non-existence of a European cultural model, the equilibrium between European and national identities, the positioning of Europe vis-à-vis global security problems and the migrant crisis. A 'Europeanness' in the response to global problems appears to be non-existent. The variation in the social, economic and political structures of European countries and their bonds to national interests will likely remain an obstacle for the creation of the 'European mind'[16].

Globalisation has brought rapid economic and social change and has made societies more multicultural and diverse; however, it has also created demands for recognition of cultural identity. In many countries, particularly in developed countries, the volume of goods, money, and people moving from one place to another has brought upsetting changes. Many multinational companies have moved their manufacturers from EU to regions with low labour costs and limited constraints. New economic powers have emerged, such as China, South Korea and India. In parallel, the Arab uprisings and civil wars in 2011 in Libya, Iraq, Syria, and North Africa have created a climate of insecurity and instability in the region, and the refugee crisis in Europe has occurred as a consequence of these human tragedies.

Furthermore, these changes, along with the global financial crisis and the Euro crisis in 2009, slowed the spread of liberal economy, giving rise to a nationalist populist movement in the world, which has gained ground in EU member states. The Brexit is one consequence of this new trend.

It is important to underline the notion of 'solving the problem of common interest in Europe'. While globalisation increases cross-cultural exchanges with a strategic dimension, the 'competition of cultures' is more focused on market share of ideas and values. Each European country has its own cultural diplomacy strategy comprised of self-interested foreign policy approaches, which have been chosen with regard to the nation's cultural interests.

Indeed, the impacts of globalisation have made the role of culture in international relations more significant. The information age has formed a new economy through new communication, and the cultural resources of nations have become one of the key elements to this new economy. The role of national culture, which is broadly defined as the values, beliefs, norms and behavioral patterns of a national group, has become increasingly important, as it significantly impacts major economic activities. The market is more open and competitive than ever; countries are therefore more conscious about the need and importance of attracting investors, tourists, consumers and students by establishing strategies on nation branding and cultural diplomacy. The international community has become a 'vast market', and competitive identity goes beyond the simple management of the brand through communication, advertising, design, logo and slogan.

Cultural imperialism, the idea that local cultures are helpless to face the cultural domination of great powers, causes resentment in many parts of the world. Indeed, the subject can engender a passionate atmosphere in which 'national pride' or 'ethnic authenticity' have more impact than the economic means. The results of the survey 'The Perception of the EU Cultural and Science Diplomacy in Turkey' affirm this apprehension of cultural colonialism. The EU's scientific actions in Turkey were viewed by over half of the respondents (58%) as an interference in Turkish internal affairs. Thirty three percent of respondents expressed that "the level of the EU's intervention is acceptable, but I have some reservations about the implementations", 7% said that "the EU's actions are appropriate and good" and 2% do not know[17].

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[16] Senocak, N.S. (2017), "The Axiology of EU Cultural Diplomacy in Muslim Majority Countries: The Paradox of Turkey". Centre d'Etudes Diplomatiques et Stratégiques Türkiye. EL-CSID Working-Paper. 3 (6), 2017.

[17] Senocak, N.S. (2018), p.8.

The challenge of the great powers which suffer from their own cultural imperialism is that they need to exploit their nation branding by creating a new inoffensive reputation. Nations are in direct and overt competition with each other, including between EU member states, despite the EU Commission's willingness to develop a strategy for cultural policy initiatives such as The European External Action Service (EEAS), More Europe, European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) and the Cultural Diplomacy Platform (CDP). The battle of values and ideas that previously dominated international environment has evolved into a competition in the sphere of soft power, where new actors are more influential than historical ones. The reputation of each nation depends to a very considerable extent on the clarity and enthusiasm with which it represents its national brand through its national cultural agency.

EU's Introverted Communication to Complex Bureaucracy

The European Union is a supranational entity that is relatively complex compared to the nation state. This organisational and bureaucratic complexity creates a feeling of distance with the European population. In addition, the lack of proximity and lack of information regarding the political actions carried out by the Commission lead to incomprehension among the target audience. Furthermore, there is a serious coordination problem between the main cultural institutions, the member states and the Commission. The primary difficulty remains that member states maintain control of their cultural relations as a principal source of influence. Therefore, the most important challenge for the EU is to unify diverse national cultures around a common interest.

The EU funding programmes constitute the core instrument of European cultural diplomacy strategy. However, the effectiveness of these projects remains immeasurable and inaccessible by the general public. The results of the survey 'The Perception of the EU Cultural and Science Diplomacy in Turkey' reveal that the high bureaucratisation of EU-funded projects and the lack of exchanges between the separate projects are real barriers to effective EU cultural diplomacy and cultural cooperation. Such critiques are largely based on a lack of information about the new EU-funded projects and the complicated application procedure. The survey results highlighted several common challenges, such as the visa problem – which limits the mobility of scholars in the EU – the complexity of legal and financial rules and administrative requirements.

Furthermore, the role of the European Delegation in partner countries and its effectiveness in establishing the European policies are questionable. The challenges and obstacles mentioned above are not isolated cases and a specific problem for Turkey; rather, many partner countries suffer the same ordeal, demonstrating that the European Delegation is characterised by weakness in coordination and assistance with local partners. The general public in the target countries also has no idea about the actions carried out by the European Delegation, which creates a feeling of disinterest and negative perceptions of Europe. In conclusion, we can assume that the lack of communication and information around the EU and Turkey's cultural and science cooperation is the strong source of the cultural misunderstanding, and should be resolved in order to improve their diplomatic, cultural and scientific relations.

Conclusion

The EU accession process has created many benefits for citizens of the Republic of Turkey: a modern, dynamic and inclusive market economy with regulated cooperation; social welfare; healthcare and labour standards; a predictable justice system; participation in European education; technology and social development programs; greatly increased exports; high-standard food and industrial products; consumer rights and environmental regulations due to the customs union[18]. As such, tensions between Europe and Turkey are likely to result in a 'lose-lose' situation. Any solutions to this tension should employ a new form of cooperation in terms of cultural relativism, taking into consideration Turkey's cultural diversity and wealth.

'Axiological nihilism' due to blind ethnocentrism is a leading source of cultural misunderstanding and the primary reason for the escalation of tensions between the EU and Turkey. Certain cultural differences have been exaggerated and have led to the common misperception that Turkey's cultural values are irreconcilable with European civilisation. This general misperception can be easily traced to the broad lack of knowledge among EU citizens about Turkish society, and vice-versa.

Europe should therefore develop a new axiology that is adapted to 21st century challenges, acknowledging both the parameters of other cultures and the failures of the past. Its relation with Turkey can constitute a basis for creating a new approach with Muslim countries. Cultural diversity remains a major force for European integration, and represents a wide-ranging resource for innovation, growth and local economic, social and cultural development, making possible an opening up to other cultures and an inflow of new knowledge, methodologies, skills and ideas which increase a society's creativity and make it better able to face up to new situations, crises and challenges. The success of European cultural diplomacy in Muslim majority countries will depend on the success of its public diplomatic efforts with the European Muslim community and their integration into the European secular public sphere[19].

Policy Recommendations for effective EU Cultural Diplomacy in Turkey

- ***Define a specific European cultural Identity***

The EU must define the concept of a European cultural identity, which will direct the branding of the EU and constitute a solid base for effective cultural diplomacy. Despite the rise of populist-nationalist movements, the EU must create its 'inner spirit' in acknowledgement of the cultural diversity of its member states in order to consolidate its positioning in world politics.

- ***Create a common governance for a coherent European cultural diplomacy***

All European cultural institutions and stakeholders should be brought together in a centralized institution to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of cultural actions. Each institution/stakeholder currently acts as a free electron without any coordination with other European cultural institutions, which creates confusion within the general public and reduces the impact of the European cultural diplomacy strategy. Therefore, a new governance should supervise and coordinate the roles, distribution of responsibilities, cooperation, actions and promotion of European policies among the various stakeholders, including EUNIC, More Europe, CDP, EEAS and Creative Europe. Through this effort, the EU Commission should develop a culture of measurement and a common set of core performance indicators in order to provide coherence across agencies and stakeholders' collective efforts.

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[18] TUSIAD (2017), "The European Union at 60 and the importance of the EU-Turkey relations". Available at: http://tusiad.org/en/press-releases/item/9651-the-european-union-at-60-and-its-importance-to-turkey#sthash.ddypKWNW.dpuf.

[19] Senocak, N.S. (2017), "The Axiology of EU Cultural Diplomacy in Muslim Majority Countries: The Paradox of Turkey". Centre d'Etudes Diplomatiques et Stratégiques Türkiye. EL-CSID Working-Paper. 3 (6), 2017.

- ***Transform EU Delegation from its passive status to a dynamic representation***

Establishing strategies and policies will never be effective without proper implementation. Our field research demonstrated that the local population concerned by the cooperation policies are not informed of current European projects. Interested persons face administrative barriers and a complex application procedure. Therefore, the European Delegation should be much more active and present in order to assist local authorities in the communication and implementation of ongoing cooperation projects. To do so, the EU Delegation should work closely not only with the European Affairs Division attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also with the governorships that are responsible for the establishment of domestic policy in order to facilitate involvement in EU projects. The main objective of the domestic communication strategy is to increase public support within Turkey for accession to the EU, as it is the major catalyst behind the reform efforts. In addition, the strategy seeks to strengthen public opinion that the EU is a modernisation and democratisation project for Turkey.

- ***Develop tailored cultural exchange projects not as cultural imposition, but as a cultural dialogue***

Culture is a very sensitive topic, which can create a feeling of hostility and can deeply hurt individuals when offending cultural and religious sensitivities, beliefs and tradition. The approach of European cultural institutions has most often been to impose their cultural point of view without acknowledging the sensibilities of the local culture, especially in Muslim countries. Rather than creating a reciprocal cultural exchange, institutions have focused their actions on the transmission of their own truth, without trying to understand and establish a common ground with the local culture. This stance is perceived by local cultures as cultural imposition and post-colonial imperialist ambition. On the other hand, EU funding programmes such as Erasmus, Horizon 2020, Leonardo and twinning projects are highly appreciated by the local culture and are perceived as an important means for the socio-economical transformation of the society.

- ***Reinforce domestic public diplomacy for the integration of Muslim minorities in Europe through cultural diplomacy***
  a) Establish a Center of cultural diversity in EU capitals

To better consolidate its multicultural wealth and foster mutual understanding and tolerance between its different cultural and religious minorities, the EU should establish a symbolic place, such as 'the house of cultural diversity', to allow each culture to share its knowledge and cultural wealth. This place should not be intended for an elite group to host intellectual discussions behind closed doors, but rather as an open space for exchange of different cultural backgrounds within the general public. The main objective of such a space should be to share stories, competencies and experience in order to foster mutual understanding.

  b) Develop 'The Islam and Citizenship Education in Europe' Programme

The United Kingdom has launched an effective educational programme for integrating young Muslims into active citizenship involvement: 'The Islam and Citizenship Education Project' (ICE)[20] which can serve as an inspiration for a similar EU project. The lessons of the UK programme are broadly clustered in four areas: the skills of citizenship and Islamic inquiry, rights and responsibilities, identity and diversity and democracy and justice. The template lessons follow a simple three-part format, in which pupils discuss essential citizenship and Islamic values. All lessons have Qur'anic guidance and most have supportive hadiths, or stories. They are available online and can be downloaded and used immediately. These lessons are accompanied by teacher guidance notes and frequently asked questions, and have been enthusiastically endorsed by a wide range of Islamic scholars and organisations representing most of the major Sunni and Shia schools of thought[21]. This education programme can be developed and coordinated by the EU Commission Directorate-General of Education, Youth,

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[20] See the Islam and Citizenship Education Project (ICE). Available at: http://www.theiceproject.com/index.php.
[21] Islam and Citizenship Education (ICE): A project for our times: http:// www.realhistories.org.uk/articles/archive/islam-and-citizenship-education-ice-a-project-for-our-times.html

Sport and Culture (DG EAC) and National Ministries of Education of EU member states and EU Muslim partner countries. As a multicultural, secular and Muslim majority state, Turkey can importantly contribute to establishing and supporting this initiative.

- ***Establish a Plan B for Turkey's accession process to the European Union***

After an over-half-century accession bid rife with ups and downs, the EU should propose a new strategic relation that prioritises deeper cooperation in specific areas in order to prevent the disappointment and remoteness of Turkey. The EU must openly clarify, without reversing its position, its decision to allow or disallow Turkey's accession. The more that time passes without clarification, the more that Turkey moves away from Europe, creating a sense of hatred and frustration among the Turkish people. All efforts to improve relations carried out through cultural diplomacy will remain ineffective until a plan B is proposed to Turkey by the European Union.

About the author

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