

**TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION AND EUROPEAN UNION
MEMBERSHIP:
THE STATE OF THE ART IN PUBLIC OPINION STUDIES IN
TURKEY¹**

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Summary

This article presents the findings of a survey of the data collected on Turkish Public opinion and Turkey's bid for European Union membership from late 1990s until 2004. The aim of the study is to present the state of the art in public opinion studies in Turkey by looking at different sectors, namely academics, international and private research. In this essay it is argued that the collection of qualified data on Turkish public opinion and EU, and the study of Turkish public opinion is very disregarded compared with the studies of other aspects of Turkey-EU relations.

Keywords

Turkish Public Opinion, European Union membership, Public Opinion and European Integration, Survey

1. Public Opinion and European Integration

Judging from the massive amount of studies published on public opinion and European integration, one is safe to argue that the importance of the public opinion in European affairs is an established and recognized fact. Moreover, with the ever-growing impact of the EU on the daily lives of citizens of the EU member states and the candidate countries alike, one can argue that the importance of public opinion is growing in parallel. Scholars, and somewhat less reluctantly, the European and domestic elites

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of the EU member states, have come to realize the significant role of public opinion in shaping the scope and pace of European integration³.

The nature of public opinion toward the European Union in candidate countries is also crucial. Slomczynski and Shabad offer three reasons for this importance; first, although not constitutionally required, there have been and will be referendums about becoming a member or not once the negotiations are completed and closed. Second, as the case of new member states has demonstrated, EU membership becomes an integral part of partisan debates and electoral appeals. Third, for Central and Eastern European countries, EU membership is highly linked with the consolidation of the new democratic system and the market economy⁴.

Almost all of the three reasons for the importance of the public opinion toward the EU in the candidate countries hold true for the Turkish case.

Moreover, the importance of Turkish public opinion should not be limited to the concern about how it might side in the event of a referendum on membership in the future. Turkey's candidacy for EU membership requires an extensive set of policy adjustments and legal and institutional changes. Most of the issues involved are too technical and sophisticated for the average citizen to actually form an opinion about. However, they also constitute the basis of many highly "sensitive issues" that are debated on the public agenda, e.g. the abolishment of the death penalty and the use of languages other than Turkish.⁵ If Turkey is to deal with reforms in order to meet all the necessary criteria for membership to the EU, it will inevitably require active public support for such drastic political changes. However, as Inglehart argues, public opinion is more likely to challenge the elite lead when proposed changes involve deeply held values.⁶ Therefore, the public's support is especially crucial in the implementation of these political changes. This importance of public opinion places the related research high in the academic agenda, or at least it should do so.

³ Kazimierz Slomczynski and Goldie Shabad, "Dynamics of Support for European Integration in Post-Communist Poland", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 42, (2003), p.504.

⁴ *ibid*, pp.504-505.

⁵ Ali Çarkoğlu, "Who Wants Full membership? Characteristics of the Turkish Public Support for EU Membership", *Turkish Studies*, vol. 4 No. 1 (Spring, 2003), pp.171-194.

⁶ Ronald Inglehart, "Long Term Trends in Mass support for European Unification", *Government and Opposition*, No. 12 (1977), pp. 150-177.

Unfortunately, in the academic sphere, there exists a considerable lack of empirical studies investigating this sometimes paradoxical interaction between the Turkish political elite and public opinion on the process of Turkish membership to the EU. It is striking that too little, or no attention is given to disseminating information about available data and, more critically, to the collection of any systematic data on Turkish public opinion on the issue of the European Union.⁷ In fact, the lack and insufficiency of systematic studies on public opinion in general, may be considered as a strong indication that public opinion itself is not considered as an important political determinant. The major attention in Turkish academic circles has always been on the ‘real processes’ of the accession (fulfillment of the membership criteria, legal harmonization, accession negotiations, etc.).

In this study, it is argued that public opinion research is an important part of the study of Turkey-European Union relations. In order to explore this important issue, the nature and contents of the public opinion data available in the Turkish research circles are reviewed. By doing so, it is hoped that this article will contribute to drawing attention to the shortcomings of data collection on Turkish public opinion on the European Union. Finally, the reasons for the lack of systematic data collection in Turkey will be briefly discussed.

2. The Turkish Bid for Membership and the Turkish Public Opinion

The issue of Turkish membership to the European Union in major academic studies is pre-dominantly referred to as an ‘elite project’. Conventionally, the process of European integration at large is seen as being driven by elite actions. In Delanty’s argumentation, construction of a European identity and efforts for strengthening and dissemination of this identity have always been an elite and top-down process.⁸ This holds true for the candidate states within the enlargement process as well. The Turkish political elite, since the early years following the establishment of the Republic (even during the last period of the Ottoman Empire), have always identified their primary goal as ‘westernization’ with reference to becoming more integrated with the European political system by adopting certain values and practices. The membership to the European Union is considered

⁷ A striking example is that Turkey has only been part of Eurobarometer surveys since 2001

⁸ Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995.

as the final threshold of the ongoing ‘westernization’ project and as the final destination. The views of Lindberg and Scheingold on a “permissive consensus” provided by the European citizens to the elites for the European integration is seemingly adaptable to the enlargement and to the specific issue of Turkish membership.⁹

The Turkish political elite have always defended the discourse of ‘doing all that is necessary for the benefit of people’. The European Union, too, has often been presented and defended as the ultimate opportunity to improve the economic and socio-political well-being of the Turkish public. However, history has shown that the political elite have had to face the public on certain issues regarding the European Union membership process. In such cases, the permissive consensus was disturbed. The question of the death penalty is a striking example. The parliament passed a reform package in the summer of 2002 in which the death penalty was abolished. Meanwhile, a public survey carried out just before the bill was discussed in the parliament showed that only 38 % of the public supported the abolishment of death penalty.¹⁰ The political elite had to push it through against popular opinion. The discourse was, once again, that it was done for the benefit of the people, who had to make certain sacrifices for the achievement of the ultimate goal. This situation has brought to the forefront that the decision makers were willing to challenge Turkish public opinion in cases of conflict regarding the EU membership process.

In addition, the passage of the package in the parliament and the political debate surrounding it also marked the entry of the European debate into the Turkish politics. As Çarkoğlu also argues, prior to summer 2002, the Turkish political elite has been reluctant in adopting the necessary adjustments in the legal and political system for EU membership, despite the massive support for EU.¹¹ With the most comprehensive reform package in summer 2002 and the following improvement of relations with the EU after the elections in November 2002, EU membership gained further importance in Turkish politics. As European debate became

⁹ Leon N. Lindberg and Stuart A. Scheingold, *Europe's Would-be Polity: Patterns of Change in the European Community*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970.

¹⁰ Ali Çarkoğlu, “Who Wants Full membership? Characteristics of the Turkish Public Support for EU Membership”, *Turkish Studies*, vol. 4 No. 1 (Spring, 2003), pp.171-194.

¹¹ Ali Çarkoğlu, “Societal Perceptions of Turkey’s EU membership. Causes and Consequences of Support for EU membership”, in Nergis Canefe and Mehmet Uğur (eds.), *Turkey and European Integration. Accession Prospects and Issues*, Routledge, 2004, p.20.

important, the position of Turkish public opinion vis-à-vis the membership also came into the equation.

3. Studies on Turkish Public Opinion and European Union Membership

Despite heated public discussion on the issues of Turkish membership to the EU, as mentioned before, the studies dealing with Turkish public opinion are quite limited. The majority of the research is directed toward the ‘real processes’; focusing on the meeting of the criteria, economic and political capabilities, democratization and reform-making processes.

The main reason for the feeble literature on Turkish public opinion is the lack of quantitative research and almost non-existent collection of data. This shortcoming of data collection has led the creation of superficial and inadequate comments lacking statistical support that try to extrapolate what the opinion is.

In order to further demonstrate the lack of data, I have conducted a survey on the data collected on Turkish public opinion regarding European Union membership. The survey has been carried out at three levels: First, studies conducted in academic circles; second, data collection through private research companies in Turkey; and finally the works of the European Commission itself. Major data archives such as PEW and ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research) have also been scanned for any available data on Turkish public opinion concerning the European Union. In the next section the findings will be presented, however, I will not discuss in detail the results of each and every study, as the main aim of this study is to present the state of the art in public opinion studies. I will only briefly summarize the general indications of the academic studies and their methodological differences.

3.1. Academic initiatives

Under this title, the data collected by initiatives led by academics were examined. The results are presented in Table 1. The main criterion for this section was the presence of one or a team of academics leading the study for academic purposes.

At first glance, the difference between the studies presented here and the ones in the following section may appear ambiguous due to the role played by NGOs and/or foundations. However, it was believed necessary to make a distinction between studies that have been led by academics in cooperation with certain NGOs or foundations, and the ones that have been realized by academics on behalf of NGOs/foundations. The major difference stems from the fact that the studies presented here have been the source of numerous academic publications and the data and results have been mostly made available for academic purposes. On the other hand, even though the results of most of the studies in the second part have been presented to the public, a diffuse academic analysis or publications based on these data were not identified.

Table 1.
Academic data collection

Year	Initiator	Sample	N	Cooperation ¹²
1993	Y. Esmer	Istanbul	434	X
1994	Y. Esmer	Konya	364	X
1994	Y. Esmer	Istanbul	570	X
1996	N. Erder	Nationwide	2.396	TUSES
1998	N. Erder	Nationwide	1.800	TUSES
2001	M. Müftüler Baç, L. M. McLaren	Turkish Grand National Assembly	61 MPs	X
2002	N. Erder	Nationwide	1.850	TUSES
2002	A. Çarikoğlu, R. Erzan, H. Yılmaz, K. Kirişçi	Nationwide	3.060	TESEV
2002	A. Çarikoğlu, Ü. Ergüder, E. Kalaycıoğlu	Nationwide	1.984	Sabancı University
2003	A. Çarikoğlu, Ü. Ergüder, E. Kalaycıoğlu	Nationwide	2.039	Sabancı University
2003-2004	N. Erder	Nationwide	1.806	TUSES
2003	H. Yılmaz	Nationwide	2.500	Open Society Inst./ Boğaziçi U.

The pioneering studies that appeared first in the literature are the ones carried out by Yılmaz Esmer in 1993 and 1994. In his studies, despite the shortcomings in sampling, Esmer established the first practices of collecting data focusing on the European Union.¹³

¹² TUSES: Turkish Social Economic and Political Studies Foundation; TESEV: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation; DISK: Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, IKV: Economic Development Foundation.

¹³ Esmer's samples in his studies are not representative of the nation due to extremely limited geographic sampling focusing on one or two cities only.

Necat Erder on the other hand, used the practice of over time data collection. In cooperation with TUSES, data on EU was collected in 1996, 1998, 2002 and 2003/04, and he has produced several publications.

However, the survey by Çarkoğlu, Erzan, Kirişçi and Yılmaz in 2002 brought the issue of public opinion on the process of EU membership into the spotlight. Not only did the members of the research team produce numerous publications derived from the collected data, but the study has also been abundantly cited and its findings had a dominating effect in the field of public opinion studies in Turkey.

The academics who took part in this extensive research have continued in their data gathering efforts. Both Çarkoğlu, together with Ergüder, Kalaycıoğlu, and Yılmaz were engaged in research activities in 2003 and 2004, even though the number of publications from these data sets has been less than the previous study at the time of writing this article.

Among these studies, the survey by McLaren and Müftüler-Baç stands out because of its sample which is composed of the Members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA). They initiated a first by systematically collecting data on the legislators' perspectives on the membership issue. The perspectives of the current members of the TGNA, who may be considered as the most progressive on reforms adopted, are yet to be disclosed.

Overall, the academics have had greater opportunities to amass data over the past few years. However, until very recently, the data collected in Turkey has suffered from a major problem of sampling. As the number of telephones per household is not at scientifically satisfactory level, CATI (computer aided telephone interview) is not a plausible method, and all data in Turkey is collected via face to face interviews. However, as the household numbers at street levels were not available until very recently, the collected data have deficiencies. The random probability of the sample is disturbed at the neighborhood level, as the designers of the surveys did not have the information on the number of residences on each street and how many people are residing in each of them. This also creates problems with the control of the data after the interviews are completed. So, when dealing with public opinion data from Turkey dated prior to 2005, one should be aware of these deficiencies.

When looked at, the academic literature developed from the above mentioned data collections, we see Yılmaz Esmer's contributions, which were based on provincial surveys conducted in 1993 for Istanbul and 1994 for Konya and Istanbul.¹⁴ Even though neither of the sample sizes (N of 434; 364; 570, respectively) nor the geographical balances are satisfactorily representative, his study produced important initial analysis and academic interest. Following the pioneering research of Esmer; Necat Erder and associates initiated in 1994 a series of data collection efforts. Erder et.al. carried out a series of nationwide surveys in 1996, 1998, 2002 and 2003 with more representative sample sizes (N of 2,396; 1,800; 1,850 and 1,806 respectively).

The findings of both studies have led to the creation of a minimal portrait of the support for Turkish membership to the EU. They have both suggested that more educated, less religious, more leftist constituencies are supportive of EU membership. In a simple manner, the findings had the hint of a utilitarian mode of explanation of support, as they pointed out that the potential winners of transition were more supportive. However, as Çarkoğlu points out, "since all of these explanatory factors are correlated, it is unclear which one (or ones) constitutes the dominant and significant factor influencing the preference for EU membership."¹⁵ Such shortcoming brings up the necessity for well-designed and carefully conducted multivariate analysis.

The only exception to the lack of multivariate analysis is Ali Çarkoğlu's study, "Who wants full membership? Characteristics of Turkish Public Support for EU membership". In this study, Çarkoğlu has managed to produce multivariate statistical analysis on the recent trends and dynamics of public opinion toward EU membership. Çarkoğlu developed his analysis while taking part in the administering of public opinion surveys that took place all around Turkey in 2002 and in 2003. Thus, rather than conducting a secondary analysis, he managed to construct appropriate questionnaires and analyze the outcomes to reach conclusions. In short, Çarkoğlu's works are the first analysis that can be reviewed in a conceptual manner.

¹⁴ Yılmaz Esmer, "Türk Kamuoyu ve Avrupa", in *Türkiye Avrupa Birliği'nin Neresinde? Gümrük Birliği Anlaşmasının Düşündürdükleri*, Ayraç Yayınevi: İstanbul, 1997, pp. 124-135.

¹⁵ Ali Çarkoğlu, "Who Wants Full membership? Characteristics of the Turkish Public Support for EU Membership", *Turkish Studies*, vol. 4 No. 1 (Spring, 2003), pp.173.

The study of Ali Çarkoğlu produced reflections on the relationship between the demographic, socio-economic and political characteristics of individuals and their level of support for EU membership. The most important contribution is his analysis on the party politics, the constituency, and how it affects support for the EU. In addition, he provided analyses of the geographic distribution of opinion on the EU for the first time. Çarkoğlu also analyzed the notion of “sensitive issues”, which covers topics such as the abolishment of death penalty and use of languages other than Turkish, which are considered to create potential conflictual opposition within certain segments of the society.¹⁶

In his recent work, “Societal Perceptions of Turkey’s EU membership. Causes and Consequences of Support for EU membership”, Çarkoğlu has demonstrated that the individuals who believe that their lives will change in positive manner with membership are more likely to vote in favor of membership than others. His analysis also yields the result that age is inversely related with support, indicating that the older a citizen gets the odds of him or her to vote yes in a referendum decreases. As another indication, he also found that the Kurdish speakers are more likely to support EU membership.

3.2. Private companies

29 private research companies have been surveyed for this study. This was conducted through e-mail communication, literature and press reviews, and internet research. However, there is a high probability that more companies collected further data than the ones presented in the Table. Some of the companies, justifiably, have denied provision of information due to client privacy. In addition, some were reluctant to cooperate, while others requested payment for providing further information on their data. The results are presented in Table 2.¹⁷ The table presents the main information about the surveys conducted, i.e. the name of the company that has collected the data, the name of the partner NGO or think-tank (if there is one), the sample size and the sample.

¹⁶ *ibid*, pp.171-194, and Ali Çarkoğlu, “Societal Perceptions of Turkey’s EU membership. Causes and Consequences of Support for EU membership”, in Nergis Canefe and Mehmet Uğur (eds.), *Turkey and European Integration. Accession Prospects and Issues*, Routledge, 2004, pp.19-45

¹⁷ The research made for the European Commission as a part of Candidate Countries Eurobarometer have been omitted from the Table.

Table 2.
Data by private companies

Year	Company	NGO/think tank	Sample	N
1999	Bilesim TR &International Research Association (INRA)	IKV	Nationwide**	1.000
2002	Input	Center for Advanced Strategy	UrbanSampling-14 cities	2.007
1989	Makro	Istanbul Chamber of Commerce(ITO)	ITO members	2.400
2003	Makro	DISK	DISK member workers	?
2000- 2001- 2002- 2003	TNS PIAR	X	Countrywide**** (18 provinces)	2.000 cc. in each wave
2003- 2004	TNS GLOBAL- TREND POLL	X	Countrywide***, repeated each month	2.000 cc.
1994- 2002	Strateji-Mori “Turkey’s Pulse”	X	Countrywide Repeated regularly	1.250 cc. each

* This study has also been carried out in 10 other European countries.

** This study is a part of a multi-country survey conducted by a group of companies and coordinated by TNS FACTUM in 11 candidate countries (excluding Malta and Cyprus)

*** This is a monthly trend poll omnibus survey, which includes a question on support on EU membership

As seen in the Table, there seems to be an increase in the number of surveys carried out in the last few years. This trend is parallel to the initiatives in the academic circles. The findings of these data also point to a support of the EU membership by the Turkish public. Except for the study of DISK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey) workers, in all other surveys more than 50 % of the respondents indicated a positive attitude to membership. However, content-wise the data collected by the private companies in Turkey were not used efficiently for in depth analyses or for keeping a sound record of the Turkish public opinion and its changes over time. All these data were collected for private purposes rather than academic research, and it is almost impossible to find examples of any scientific work based on these studies. The results of these data were only

superficially presented in the media, and these analyses did not go further than a few cross tabulations and superficial polling.

3.3 The European Commission and the Eurobarometer

Even though the European Commission has been collecting data on public opinion all around Europe for some time, Turkey only became included in 2001. In October 2001, the European Commission began conducting opinion polls in Turkey through contracted local research companies, which carried out the work within the framework of the “Candidate Countries Eurobarometer”, which replaced the previous “Central and Eastern Eurobarometer”.

Since 2001, the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer has been collecting data twice a year in 13 countries, Turkey included. Following the accession of 10 countries starting in May 2004, the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer includes only Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania.

There appears to be three main problems with the Eurobarometer data on Turkey which hinders the production of in depth analysis by the researchers working on Turkish public opinion. First, it is related to the availability of the data. Despite the very late inclusion of Turkey into the Eurobarometer surveys, for some reason, the first part of the collected data on Turkey were made public only in late 2004, which is about 4 years after its collection. As Turkey’s relations with the EU have gone through very significant progress between 2001-2005 (with the adoption of the National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis in 2001 until the launch of the negotiations at the end of 2005), the data covering this period offers very interesting insights which is still yet to be analyzed. The second problem regarding the Eurobarometer data are the sampling problems which are due to the difficulties of data collection in Turkey. This is a shortcoming for all kinds of data collected in Turkey. The final problem with Eurobarometer data is the nature of questions. The questions are not designed meticulously enough to profoundly investigate Turkish public. One concrete example is the question on religiosity. The Eurobarometer aims to measure the concept by asking “attendance to religious services”, which may be considered sufficient enough for Christianity, but for Islam, there is a need for more in depth questions that ponder on the political dimension of Islam.

4. Brief comparison with Central and Eastern Europe

A comprehensive analysis of all the data collected in other candidate countries, especially the ones on Central and Eastern Europe is well beyond the limits of this study. However, it is possible to present some examples and draw some points in order to shed some light on the contrast with the Turkish case.

For European Union data collection in Central European Countries, the European Commission has been very scrutinizing through the use of the Eurobarometers, coordinated efforts, and by making use of the long practice of data collection in these countries. To implement and coordinate efforts, the Central European Opinion Research Group (CEORG) was developed. It is a research foundation consisting of three major public opinion research institutes in the Czech Republic (Centrum pro výzkum veyejerho mínení - Public Opinion Research Center of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, **CVVM**), Hungary (Társadalomkutató Intézet - Social Research Centre, **TÁRKI**) and Poland (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej – Public Opinion Research Center, **CBOS**). All these centers have been engaged in public opinion studies and data collection in their respective countries for some time, (CVVM since 1950s), and all of them are mainly publicly funded organizations. Their research provides the main stream of data for further and advanced analysis on public opinion studies in these countries. The presence of such a body in Turkey, unfortunately, is non-existent.

The CEORG takes the practice to an international – comparative level. It acts as an umbrella organization for “comparative surveys conducted by its member organizations and to unify public opinion research methodology and reporting standards in the three countries so that it can provide credible and comparative data concerning public opinion on important local as well as European social and political issues.”¹⁸

The European Commission itself also shows a specific interest in data collection in Central and Eastern European Countries starting immediately after the fall of the iron curtain. The European Commission started collecting data in the autumn of 1990, and annually thereafter, within the

¹⁸ Retrieved from Central European Opinion Research Group Foundation web page on 28/05/2004: www.ceorg-europe.org

frame of “Central and Eastern Eurobarometer”. While the newly joined EU member states (with the exceptions of Cyprus and Malta) have always been a part of CEEB, in some years its scope has extended to as many as 19 countries, including countries such as Armenia, Georgia or even Kazakhstan. The data sets from these studies are made available in archives for further analysis.¹⁹ A major part of the publications on public opinion studies regarding Central and Eastern European countries is, in fact, based on this data.

Considering the scope and level of public opinion studies in CEE countries, it comes as no surprise to note that governments of these countries lay a great deal of importance on the public opinion toward EU matters. The Hungarian government, for instance, launched its national communication strategy as early as 1995.²⁰ The aim of the strategy was to inform and prepare citizens for the opportunities and challenges of the process of EU accession. Needless to say, efficient collection of data and analysis of public opinion formed the backbone of the strategy and its implementation.

5. Conclusions

In the studies of Turkey’s bid for membership, it appears that the major attention of Turkish academic circles has always been on the ‘real processes’ of the accession and the studies of public opinion have been considered as secondary. In fact, the lack and insufficiency of systematic studies on the public opinion in general may be considered as a strong indication that the public opinion itself is not considered as an important political determinant.

Lacking a common set of data appropriate for testing different models, and lacking serious efforts to integrate data sets on different aspects of Turkish public opinion, we rarely see empirical analyses that seriously evaluate alternative hypothesis or replications studies on key findings.

¹⁹For more information see http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm

²⁰ Peter Balazs, “Internal Communication Strategy and Its Implementation: Public Opinion and EU Accession”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 3, (2002), pp.15-25.

The reasons for the lack of sufficient data collection and analysis are an issue that deserves further research. However, two main groups of reasons leading to such scarcity in the available data and the lack of practice in collecting of systematic public data seem to be apparent. The first one has to do with structural problems that are faced by all research communities all around the world. The second one has rather to do with the peculiar relations between Turkey and European Union.

To start with the structural reasons, one can identify a series of challenges. First of all, it is not a big secret or surprise for research communities to be limited by the funding agencies. The fund providers generally tend to constrain the focus and scope of data collection. Second, the researchers often value their intellectual property and act reluctant to share their resources and findings. This becomes especially true for Turkey where the available data is already scarce. The third reason is highly related with the previous one, there seems to be a lack of advanced and efficient coordination of Turkish research communities.

On the other hand, Turkey's turbulent relation with the European Union and the debate on its membership seems to be the other (and apparently stronger) variable affecting the quantity of research on Turkish public opinion and European Union membership.

When the available studies are viewed in chronological order, and as it is presented in this study, it becomes obvious that the quantity and scope of studies have significantly increased after 1999. This year represents a turning point with the December Helsinki summit, where Turkey was officially granted candidate status. Once the membership appeared to be a feasible target, the mood in all aspects of Turkey's relations with European Union changed. Public opinion started to gain further importance, as the socio-political reforms have been prepared and legislated one after another. Another important indicator for the impact of Turkey gaining official candidature is the inclusion of Turkey to the Candidate Countries Barometer of the European Commission. Apparently, what the Turkish public thinks became of interest for Brussels as well.

There is a need for extensive and well-designed data collection on public opinion in Turkey. These studies on public opinion should be extended over time in order to facilitate time series analysis. The possible ways of making existing data available for further analysis should also be explored. The studies on EU Turkish relations can only be advanced by expanding the amount of systematic public data and making scientific use of them.