Bridging the European Union and Turkey: The Turkish Diaspora in Europe

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Migrant and diaspora communities are increasingly getting engaged in transnational politics and trans-border communication across cultures and nations in the global world. Such communities are empowered by their considerable social and cultural capital that is mobilised to consolidate national interests. The Turkish diaspora in Europe which emerged after a wave of labour migration and their settlement since the late 1950s has a large network, civil capital and political capacity to bridge European Union and Turkey. Turks whose hearts and minds are divided between Europe and Turkey are not only willing to act as a bridge but also equipped with the instruments to do so if acknowledged and mobilised by both sides.

This article addresses the potential impact of the Turkish diaspora in Europe on the relations between Turkey and the European Union (EU).[1] The role of more than 4.5 million Turks scattered all over Europe in bringing Turkey and the European Union closer is an underresearched subject despite the fact that Turks in many European countries can make positive contributions to the relations between the two sides. The Turkish diaspora has an advantage compared to other ethnic and immigrant communities because Turks are resident in almost all European countries, whereas groups such as Pakistanis, Indians, Arabs, and Chinese are concentrated only in one or two countries.

The demographic disparity and concentration of Turks in such a wide political and public domain has the potential to establish closer communication between Turkey and many nations and peoples throughout Europe. In addition to their demographic position, Turks in Europe are increasingly becoming citizens of their host countries, participating in the social, political and economic life of the societies of which they have become an integral part. Based on a survey and field research among Turks in Holland, this article

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The young generations are increasingly involved in the establishment and administration of civil associations to widen their social and political networks throughout Europe

explores how Turks see their own and European identities on the one hand and their views of Turkey's full membership in the EU on the other. Drawing upon the research findings, strategies of mobilizing the Turkish diaspora as human capital to bridge Europe and Turkey, and engaging them in improving relations as a foreign policy instrument will also be discussed. Given the challenges Turkey faces, such as claims over the mass killing of Armenians by Turks, Turkey's cross-border operations in northern Iraq, the Cyprus issue, and its perceived cultural and religious identity justify a discussion on the potential impact of the Turkish diaspora as social capital in the debate over Turkish EU membership.

Based on a case study focusing on Turkish civil organizations in Holland, this article not also examines the views of the representatives of these organizations on Turkish-EU relations and the perceived identity of the EU, but also an overview of the range of contributions that they can make to Turkish-EU relations in the ongoing process of negotiations. The Turkish diaspora in Europe constitutes a major social capital as far as its demographic size, human resources, networks, economic investments, political participation and spatial dispersion are concerned.[2] Social capital is defined as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network"[3]. From a sociological perspective, social capital points to the totality of collective values created by the involvement of all social networks, and a tendency towards doing positive things for one another within these networks.[4] It is observed that civil initiatives and civil organizations constitute a powerful social capital in many countries.[5] Immigrant communities have also developed such a potential power.[6] In this context, the Turkish diaspora in Europe has represented a potential social capital since the 1960s.

A Diaspora in the Making: Turkish Migration to Europe

Turkish migration to Western European countries started in the late 1950s and early 1960s and continued thereafter. Although an interruption in the wave of migration occurred during the 1973 oil crisis, migration from Turkey to Europe continued in the form of family unification. Many labour migrants had plans to return to Turkey after saving enough money in the beginning of the migration. However, only a handful of people returned to Turkey despite incentives on the part of many host governments to send them back. The idea of returning to Turkey turned out to be only a myth and Turkish migrant population in Europe increased year by year through family unions, marriages and undocumented

migration.[7] Currently it is estimated that there are more than 4.5 million Turks living in Europe. The majority of Turks in Europe have now settled and become naturalized citizens in their countries of residence. They are no longer migrants but an integral part of the wider society either as citizens or permanent residents.[8]

The number of second and third generation Turkish children is constantly growing. The young Turks who were born and brought up in European countries are being educated and socialized in the culture of their host countries and internalising the civic values of these societies through inculcation and intercultural relations.[9] As a consequence of these processes, young Turks are developing a better understanding of civil society organizations and their value as important components of democratic governance. Therefore the young generations are increasingly involved in the establishment and administration of civil associations to widen their social and political networks throughout Europe. As seen in Figure 1, more than 4.5 million Turks live in various European countries, and are largely concentrated in Germany, France and the Netherlands.

Figure 1. Distribution of Turks in European Countries

	1973	1984	1995	2003
Germany	615,827	1,552,328	1,965,577	2,653,600
Bulgaria				750,000
France	33,892	144,790	254,000	311,356
Netherlands	30,091	154,201	252,450	299,909
Austria	30,527	75,000	150,000	134.229
Greece				150,000
Belgium	14,029	63,587	90,425	70,701
Denmark	6,250	17,240	34,700	35,232
Britain	2,011	28,480	65,000	79,000
Norway	–	3,086	5,577	10,000
Sweden	5,061	20,900	36,001	38,844
Switzerland	19,710	48,485	76,662	79,476
Italy	–	–	–	10,000
Spain	–	–	–	1,000
Finland	–		–	3,325
Romania				35,000
Total	777,727	2,108,097	2,930,392	4,660,691

Sources: *SOPEMI, 1995; Beauftragte der Bundesregierung fur die Belange der Auslander, 1995; Annual Report, Turkish Ministry of Employment and Social Security, 1984, 1992, 1993; 2003 Statistics on Turkish Migrant: Online report of the Turkish Ministry of Employment and Social Security.*

One of the salient features of these organizations is their flexibility and dynamism, which yields a capacity to adapt to new circumstances

Following World War Two, Holland invited workers from various countries, including Turkey, to aid in the process of restructuring its industry and economy. An increased workforce was needed mainly in the textile and metal industries during this period. The geographical distribution and settlement of Turkish workers reflect each sectors' needs and employment patterns. First, immigrant workers from Turkey were employed in textile, construction, ship-building, and other industries concentrated in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and the Twente and Midden-Brabant regions. Those who came later settled in other towns and cities. By 2004, the number of Turks in Holland has already reached 400,000, and almost half of them had acquired Dutch citizenship. As far as the patterns and dimensions of involvement of Turks in Holland are concerned, an impressive picture emerges. Turks are involved in local and national politics; they are represented in the Dutch as well as in the European Parliaments. Furthermore, Turks tend to be more entrepreneurial in spirit compared to other ethnic groups. They have become one of the most active ethnic investment communities by establishing local, national and international companies and networks. Nevertheless, Turks in Holland see themselves as part of the Dutch society. After four decades of migration to Holland, the third generation of Turks have emerged learning the civic values of Dutch society and expanding social networks, businesses and civil society organizations.[10]

The Emergence of Turkish Social Capital

Turkish civil associations started to emerge after almost ten years of migration of Turks to Holland. These organizations have varied according to the needs of the community during the migration, settlement, and post-settlement processes. According to one study, the number of civil institutions reached 1125 by 1998. It is estimated that since then the number has increased considerably especially due to the efforts of a better-educated young generation.[11]

Profile of Turkish Civil Society Organizations

Research findings indicate that the foundational aims, target groups, and priorities of the Turkish civil associations that participated in the survey vary. There is no monolithic and one-dimensional characteristic regarding objectives, clientele, or focus of the organizations. Their aims range from promoting Turkish culture to integrating Turks into Dutch society to organizing events for both Turkish and Dutch audiences. One of the salient features of these organizations is their flexibility and dynamism, which yields a capacity to adapt to new circumstances.

The general picture of Turkish organizations indicates that there is diversity in terms of self-definition and identity perception. Perception of institutional identity varies, reflecting the non-monolithic nature of the Turkish community and the ways in which it engages in the social world. As seen in Table 1, 25.9 percent of Turkish organizations in the survey place more emphasis on Turkish (national/ethnic) collective identity and define themselves as "Turkish" civil society organization whereas 11,1 percent place a primary emphasis on religio-national/ethnic identity describing themselves as "Muslim-Turkish" associations. It appears that for Muslim-Turkish associations, both national belonging and religious faith form an important basis for their institutional identity.

Table 1. Perception of Institutional Identity

How do you define your Institutional Identity?	**(%)**
Turkish Civil Society Organization	25,9
Dutch Civil Society Organization	3,7
Dutch-Turkish Civil Society Organization	37,0
Muslim-Turkish Civil Society Organization	11,1
Dutch-Turkish-Muslim Civil Society Organization	13,0
Other	5,6
All of the above	3,7
Total	**100.0**

Research findings also indicate that the majority of Turkish organizations define their institutional identity with hyphenated terms. Table 1 shows, for example, that 37 percent of these associations define themselves as Dutch-Turkish, while 13 percent perceive themselves as comprising a Dutch-Muslim-Turkish organization. These findings clearly indicate that Turks are developing hybrid identities in Holland because they not only see themselves as Turks but also as Dutch, harmonizing Turkish and Dutch identities. Half of the Turkish organisations (50 percent) in the sample don not see any conflict and contradiction between being Turkish and being Dutch and thus internalise values of both communities. This emerging trend among Turks show that they want to preserve their identity on the one hand and add a new dimension to it by seeing themselves as Dutch on the other hand. Such hybridization strongly indicates that Turks in Holland are not against integration but are instead trying to become a part of the dominant society.

Research findings show that the majority of Turkish civil organizations (90,7 percent) not only cooperate with similar Dutch organizations but also establish relations with local and national media, political parties and trade unions. These are seen as additional indicators which confirm the fact that the current emphasis of Turkish organizations is on Dutch-based issues. As Table 2 shows, more than half (57,4 percent) of Turkish civil associations in Holland work closely with local and national media as well as political parties in order

to publicize their projects and to inform a larger audience. They make an effort to have close links with the Dutch institutions in order to raise their concerns and expectations through the media and their political representatives. For the same purposes, 33,3 percent of Turkish associations have limited connections with the Dutch media and political parties.

Table 2. Relations with the Dutch Media and Political Parties.

How do you describe your relations with the Dutch media and political parties?	**(%)**
We have close and fruitful relations with these establishments	57,4
We have no relations with these establishments	9,3
We have limited relations with these establishments	33,3
Total	**100.0**

As mentioned above, 90,7 percent of Turkish associations in the survey state that that they have either very close or limited relations with the Dutch media and political parties. This is a significant finding demonstrating that Turkish civil associations are active political agents which try to link with the larger society and raise issues of common interest on local and national levels.

The active participation of Turkish civil organizations in civil and political life on the one hand, and their use of opportunities provided by the media and political parties on the other, should be seen as positive signals and developments for the process of integration. As seen in Table 2, Turkish associations having no relations with political parties and the media remain only a small minority. They are either not well-equipped to build up such communication or remain unaware of the importance of working within a larger network.

Integration into European Society and Culture

A significant finding of this study has to do with the views of Turkish civil organizations on the integration of Turks in the Dutch society. As stated above, the majority of Turkish civil associations define themselves as Dutch-Turkish institutions and try to build up closer relations with a larger audience through the media, political parties and civil society institutions. These are the indices of an affirmative approach to the integration of Turks in Dutch society. Findings shown in Table 3 confirm these observations.

Table 3. Integration of Turks in the Dutch society.

Do you support the integration of Turks in the Dutch society?	**(%)**
Yes, we support the process of integration	94,4
No, we do not support the process of integration	5,6
Total	**100.0**

As Table 3 indicates, an overwhelming majority (94,4 percent) of the Turkish civil organizations that participated in the survey support the integration of Turks into Dutch society. A number of reasons are cited behind the positive approach to social and political integration. Integration is supported because it is believed that such a process will contribute to the solution of many problems in Holland where Turks have permanently settled and acquired Dutch citizenship. It is also believed that finding sustainable solutions to multifaceted problems requires living in harmony with the dominant society rather than in conflict.

Turkish organizations supporting integration believe that tension and conflict between majority and minority communities damage peaceful co-existence in society. Of the Turkish associations concerned, only 5,6 percent oppose integration; for these groups, integration means assimilation and loss of cultural authenticity and identity. However, Turkish civil organizations in general do not see integration of Turks in the mainstream Dutch society as an assimilation or as a rupture in cultural identity, because for them integration means fostering a harmonious social co-existence with the majority community while preserving elements of Turkish cultural identity.

Turkey's European Union Membership

The majority of Turkish civil organizations that participated in this research see themselves as Dutch-Turkish associations and try to build up a hybrid identity by harmonizing different cultures. These organizations also show interest in Turkey's EU membership process not only because Turkey is seen as a county of origin and culturally important site, but also because of the interests of the Turkish community in Holland and in Europe. Therefore they open up discussions on various and problems concerning Turkey in various venues and circles.

Table 4. Turkey's Membership in the European Union.

Do you support Turkey's EU membership? Why	**(%)**
Yes, because it is in the interest of Turkey	88,9
No, because it is not in the interest of Turkey	3,7
Undecided	7,4
Total	**100.0**

There is no doubt that both in Turkey and among Turks in Europe, Turkish membership in the EU is among the most frequently debated issues. Turks in Holland also seem to have engaged in these discussions. As seen in Table 4, a great majority of Turkish civil organizations (88,9 percent) support Turkey's EU membership and see this process as being in the interest of Turkey. Research on Turks in France and Germany also indicate that Turks in Europe, on the whole, are in favor of Turkey's membership in the EU.[12]

One of the administrators of a Turkish civil association explained the reasons behind their support for Turkey's EU membership as follows:

> "We support Turkey's membership only on the basis of equal rights and conditions with other members. There are two main reasons and aims for our support. First, if Turkey becomes a full member, the problems that Turks face in Europe and Holland will come on the agenda of member states more frequently and with their contributions 80-90 percent of our problems will be solved. This will be our first expectation. The second reason for our support is the following: Turkey defended Western values for many years and stood by them while Turkish society tried to lead a Western life style. Turkey deserves to be an EU member. She should reach that aim. The people of Turkey would like to achieve the standards of living which Europeans have. If Turkey becomes a member, we hope that the people of Turkey will achieve the economic welfare level of Europeans. Moreover, Turkey has a great economic potential but is not able to explore it either inside or outside its borders. EU membership will facilitate the use of this potential. For these reasons, we support Turkey's EU membership."

While this view seems prevalent, there is a small scale of opposition to Turkey's EU membership. Only 3,7 percent of the Turkish civil associations surveyed oppose Turkey's membership because they think that this will have negative consequences for Turkey. 7,4 percent, on the other hand, are still undecided on this issue. However, opposition in mainland Turkey is on the rise in recent years for several reasons. Similarly, there are some circles in Europe that voice anti-Turkish views. Opponents of Turkey's EU membership emphasize cultural differences and the size of the young population in the country. They argue that many would come to Europe if Turkey were to become a full member. However, the Turkish civil associations that participated in this study do not generally share the views and fears of such Turcosceptics.

Many Europeans today have come into contact with Turkey and Turkish culture through Turks living among themselves in Europe. This means that either voluntarily or involuntarily, diaspora Turks act as a link and bridge between Turkey and Europe. Given the historical role that they played as carriers of Turkish culture and unofficial representatives of Turkey, it is noteworthy to discuss whether Turks in Europe in general and Holland in particular can act as a bridge between the two sides in the process of determining the fate of Turkish EU membership.

Table 5. Role of Turks in Europe and Holland in Turkey's EU Membership Process.

Do you think that Turks in Europe and Holland are a bridge or an obstacle between Turkey and EU?	**(%)**
Turks in Europe are an obstacle between Turkey and EU	5,6
Turks in Europe are a bridge between Turkey and EU	72,2
Turks in Europe have no effect Turkey-EU relations	22,2
Total	**100.0**

Diaspora Turks act as a link and bridge between Turkey and Europe

As seen in Table 5, 72,2 percent of the Turkish civil associations that participated in the study believe that Euro-Turks and Turks in Holland are a bridge between the EU and Turkey, and that, as such, they can make positive contributions to the membership negotiation process. Those who defend this view argue that Turks in Europe have reached a good capacity in terms of financial capital and human resources and that they have now a potential to influence the media, public opinion, and the decision-makers in the countries in which they live. In short, members of these organizations think that Turks in Europe can act as unofficial representatives of Turkey. If their potential is used effectively and mobilized strategically, Turks with their resources and networks can become a bridge between Turkey and the EU.

As these findings suggest, Turks in Europe are largely seen as a bridge which can bring Turkey and the EU closer in many respects. A sociologist of Turkish origin living in Holland and doing research on Turkey gave the following answer when asked if Turks in Europe can function as a bridge between the two sides:

> "There is no doubt that Turks living here miss Turkey a lot but it is not rational or realistic to argue that they would return. Turks are settled citizens here and would like to lead a social life in harmony and closer contact with the rest of the society. We witness here that there is a new generation emerging who admire and love both Turkey and Holland and feel ready to be a strong bridge between the two. Moreover, young and well-educated Dutch-Turks whose numbers may not yet be on a sufficient level are conducting systematic activities, which could prove to be effective. These young Turks are benefiting from the experience of Dutch institutions in public opinion making and voicing their concerns. They are the healthiest and strongest bridge between Turkey and Holland and are representing the image of Turkey well. These young people don't reject their cultural roots. They constitute a cultural identity bridge with two dimensions. They say, "We are Turks and at the same time we are Dutch". With such a bridging understanding they engage in projects which are in the interest of both countries. In this regard, they are a real and a true bridge between two societies."

Similarly, an administrator of a Turkish civil organization argues that Turks living in Europe and Holland have a potential for strengthening links between Turkey and Europe, and that their experience and resources can benefit Turkey while it is trying to harmonize its system with that of the EU. He articulates his views as follows:

> "Turks can play an important role as a bridge between the two sides if utilized well. It should be emphasized here that four million Turks living here have learned and internalised values of democracy by experience. Yet, there is still discussion on the shortcomings of democracy in Turkey. Although Turkey passes laws as good as the ones in Europe, some problems occur in the process of implementation. Some argue that Turkish people in this regard can't enjoy democracy at the Western standards. Turks in Europe can be seen as a good opportunity for

> Turkey because they can transfer their understanding of democracy. Exchanges of democratisation experiences through Turks in Europe can bring both sides closer. In this sense they are both an opportunity for Turkey and a bridge. The Turkish press has been debating brain-drain in recent times. Well-educated and qualified young people are leaving Turkey to find jobs elsewhere. If Turkey makes a good assessment of the present situation of Turks and their human capital, it will see that there are a lot of experts of Turkish origin in today's Europe. There are many Turks who are studying at or graduates of European universities. Turkey can receive these brains and benefit from their expertise. In this way, these people can become an intellectual bridge and an information exchange link between the EU and Turkey."

Research findings suggest that there is a widespread view that Turks in Europe should be seen as social capital and that their potential to contribute to the Turkey-EU relations with their resources should be acknowledged. In this context it must be concluded that Turkish civil associations in Holland and elsewhere in Europe could constitute an important dimension of social capital.

Defining the European Union: A Christian Club or not?

Turkey's membership negotiation in the EU as a country with a predominantly Muslim population has led to numerous discussions focusing on issues of identity. EU identity is frequently discussed in the European public square, the media and political circles in relation to Turkey's membership because Turkey is sometimes portrayed as a country that does not belong to the European family. France seems to have started discussions on the cultural identity of the EU and some other countries followed suit, reducing the identity of Europe to cultural codes only.[13] This approach tends to essentialize the EU identity by references to cultural dimensions on the one hand and serves to polarize the EU and Turkey on civilizational dimensions on the other.

Research findings suggest that there is a widespread view that Turks in Europe should be seen as social capital and that their potential to contribute to the Turkey-EU relations with their resources should be acknowledged

The findings presented in this article indicate that the Turkish civil associations that participated in the study do not describe the EU identity in cultural terms only. This means that their approach to the EU identity is not one-dimensional, as seen in the French discourse, but rather multidimensional, taking various elements into consideration in perceiving EU identity. As seen in Table 6, 79,6 percent of Turkish associations in Holland do not ascribe a cultural or religious identity to the EU, but see it instead as a political and economic union. There is a similar understanding of the identity of European Union among Turks in France and Germany. 21 per cent of Turks in Germany and 11 per cent of Turks in France regard the EU as a Christian Club whereas 48 percent of Turks in

Germany and 64 percent of Turks in France see the EU as an economic integration. The rest regard it as a common cultural project, a democracy project, a political and military power.[14]

Table 6. Descriptions of European Union.

How do you define the European Union?	(%)
The EU is an economic and political union	79,6
The EU is a cultural and religious (Christian) union	11,1
The EU is a military and security union	5,6
The EU is a union of economic and military colonialism	1,9
Other	1,8
Total	**100.0**

When the EU leaders and politicians emphasize the cultural dimension of the EU identity, Turks react strongly to such reductionism in identity constructing, which leaves out various processes, and dimensions of collective belonging. Turks in Europe assert that opposition to Turkey's EU membership on cultural and religious grounds is unacceptable. Therefore, Turkish organizations follow meetings and seminars and analyse reports and other publications pertaining to identity discussions. They make counter-claims that culture is just one dimension of a heterogeneous Europe. A Dutch citizen of Turkish origin living in Holland for 23 years who is involved in such debates makes the following observation:

> "Generally speaking, Social Democrats support Turkey's entry into the EU whereas Christian Democrats are against this. Christian Democrats do not want Turkey to be in the EU because it is not a Christian country. We totally disagree with this view because the EU is not a religious institution. The EU is both an economic and a humanist organization with a democratic soul. If Turkey is accepted in the Customs Union with EU, remained as a member of NATO for fifty years and proved that it is a democratic country, then we see no reason to deny Turkey the full membership status."

Given the history and cultural heterogeneity of Europe, it seems to be very difficult to define what "European identity" means. No consensus has been reached on the definition and meaning of European identity until now.[15] The following statement of an interviewee confirms these observations and suggests adopting a multidimensional approach to the EU identity.

> "Defining the identity of EU is difficult. The EU has diverse identities within itself. It is at the same a political and economic union based on common interests and a partnership. It doesn't have a single monolithic identity. Therefore it is not easy to understand why its cultural character is primarily emphasized on and on again. As far as the membership of many other countries is concerned, the issue of cultural identity was not raised at all. Problems surrounding

> human rights issues were raised concerning the membership of other countries as well. However, for the first time in EU history, the cultural identity of a country, that of Turkey, is raised. This is a strange approach. However, we should try to understand it because history if full of such mistakes.

As seen in Table 6, 11,1 percent of Turkish organizations share the views of those Europeans who describe the identity of EU in culturalist terms and see it as a Christian union. Moreover 5,6 percent of Turkish organizations define the EU as a security and military union while only a small portion (1,9 percent) see Europe as a colonial power. Turkey's identity, its cultural and religious dimensions, and whether Turkey has a place in the EU despite its differences, are all popular topics for discussion in Europe and will remain so throughout the negotiation process. However, the majority of Turkish civil organizations in Holland perceive the EU as an economic and political union as opposed to the view of some Europeans who consider culture as the basic and dominant determinant of the EU identity.

The persistent description of the EU in culturalist terms and the constant portrayal of Turkish society's identity as Muslim is regarded as a problem for membership by some European leaders who influence the perception of EU identity as far as the Turks are concerned. Such discourses also influence Turkish civil associations in Holland to a degree. Findings in Table 7 partly support this observation. Although almost half of (48,1 percent) of the Turkish organizations that participated in the research do not agree with the description, which sees Europe as a Christian Club, 37 percent agree with this definition of Europe. It may be argued that if the culturalist description of Europe is defended by leading figures, and the EU identity is discussed in reference to cultural codes and differences, then this group may also join those who regard the EU as a Christian Club.

Table 7. Views on the Definition of EU as a "Christian Club".

Do you agree with those who de define the EU as a "Christian Club"?	**(%)**
Yes	37,0
No	48,1
No idea	14,8
Total	**100.0**

A number of the subjects who were interviewed during this study argue that some circles in the EU oppose Turkey's full membership because the majority of Turkish population are Muslim. One observer, for example, states that the religious characteristics of Turkish society are emphasized time after time, and that the modern achievements of Turkey are not noticed as much as they deserve. He observes:

> "The cultural and religious identity of the Turkish people is mentioned clearly in discussions on Turkey's membership. Some people argue that Europe is a Christian Union and [point out

> that] Turkey has a population of 70 million of which the majority are Muslims. Turkey is not an Islamic state; indeed it is a secular country with a majority Muslim population. How far does that constitute a problem for the EU? Compared to other Muslim countries, Turkey is more modern; however, this aspect of Turkey has not been promoted. Turks who came to Europe first mostly originated from social classes who were more active in particular industrial and economic sectors. Therefore, when they started to work and settle here, they did not have much contact with the bureaucratic, intellectual, scholarly and educated circles of the host society. Only the recent comers and young generations have started to establish communication with the larger society. Although Turkey is a democratic country where there are many good scholars and scientists, [and although Turkish] authors are translated into many other languages including Dutch and English, these facts are known only to a small number of people."

Clearly there is an ongoing debate on the nature of EU identity, its sources, elements, factors and determinants, which have an impact on the construction of the EU.[16] Although there is no consensus regarding the definition of the EU identity and its dominant characteristics, cultural and religious arguments enter into debate when Turkey is at the centre of discussions.

Conclusions

Drawing upon in-depth interviews and survey research, this article argues that Turks in Europe have a potentially effective stock of social capital stemming from their population size, economic power, political participation and civil organizations. This social capital can be mobilized to bridge Turkey and the European Union if proper strategies and mechanisms are employed.

As far as the civil organizations are concerned, Turkish civil organizations support the integration of Turks in Europe. Their growing interest in issues such as political participation and representation in Europe, and their desire to live harmoniously with the social majority should be seen as an indicator of developing hybrid identities.

The findings presented in this article indicate that an overwhelming majority (88,9 percent) of Turkish organizations support Turkey's EU membership bid, and believe that the membership will benefit Turkey. Turkish organizations send a message to Europeans by stating that the young and dynamic population of Turkey should not be seen as a source of fear and threat in the EU countries.

As stated by the representatives of Turkish organizations, Turkey is failing to effectively promote its reforms, economic progress and social changes to the world outside.

The majority of Turkish civil organizations in Holland perceive the EU as an economic and political union as opposed to the view of some Europeans who consider culture as the basic and dominant determinant of the EU identity

It emerges as a common view that Turkey needs to launch a public diplomacy project, which can present Turkey as a brand. If such a project is implemented well, it will be easier for Turks in Europe to improve Turkey's image. To this end, Turkey needs to launch and execute long-term projects through institutions such as the Goethe Institute of Germany, The British Council of Great Britain, and The French Institute of France. There is no doubt that Turkey would benefit greatly if it were to establish Turkish Institutes and Turkish Cultural Centres in the major European cities. It is also observed that before launching a project to improve the image of Turkey and eliminate misconceptions on Turkish culture and identity, a comprehensive study of how Europeans perceive Turkey and sources of their perception should be carried out.

The cultural and religious identity of the European Union became a more visible issue when full the membership of Turkey emerged as a strong possibility. Despite the rise of culturalist rhetoric, Turkish civil society organizations in Europe do not define the EU on the basis of cultural values. An overwhelming majority of Turks in Holland think that the EU is not a Christian Club.

Findings in this article suggest that the potential power of Turkish civil society organizations in Europe is not, at present, being effectively utilized in projects contributing to improved Turkey-EU relations. In conclusion, Turkish social capital and the networks of Turks in Europe should be more effectively mobilized in the process of EU membership negotiations.

Endnotes:

1. Findings in this article draw upon a survey and field research carried out in Holland to assess the position of Turkish civil society organizations as sources of social capital. Ninety associations out of one hundred responded to the research positively. Additionally, more than twenty people from the Turkish community either working within civil organizations or having an in-depth knowledge of Turks in Holland are interviewed. I would like to thank V. Güngör and H. Kocabıyık for their contributions during the data collection period of the research.
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3. Nahapiet, J. & Ghoshal, S. (1998) "Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage", *Academy of Management Review*, 23 (2). p.242
4. See Lesser, E. (ed.) (2000) *Knowledge and Social Capital: Foundations and Applications*, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann; Francis, F. (1995) *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity,* New York: Free Press.
5. See Rotberg, R. I. (2000) "Social Capital and political Culture in Africa, America, Australasia and Europe", in *Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Historical Perspective* (ed. Robert I. Rotberg), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.1-18.
6. *See* Portes, A. (ed.) (1995) *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
7. Turkish migration to Europe is studied from many perspectives. On this issue, see Abadan-Unat, N. (ed.) (1976), *Turkish Workers in Europe 1960-1975, A Socio-Economic Appraisal*, Leiden: E.J. Brill; Beeley, B. (1983), *Migration, The Turkish Case*, Third World Studies, Case Study 8, Milton Keynes: The Open University Pres; Paine, S. (1974), *Exporting Workers: The Turkish Case*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Martin, P. L. (1991), *The Unfinished*

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