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TITLE: Assessment of the Civil Society Dialogue Program between European Union and Turkey as a Public Diplomacy Implementation

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PAGES: 912-926

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/381754>

# Assessment of the Civil Society Dialogue Program between European Union and Turkey as a Public Di- plomacy Implementation

DOI: 10.26466/opus.348548

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## Abstract

*The European Union promotes the internal and external interaction of the Union with the help of its public diplomacy implementations. The European Union, which has carried out various public diplomacy implementations towards Turkey within the framework of European Union-Turkey relationships, runs the Civil Society Dialogue Program based on democracy and acquis. This article evaluates the Civil Society Dialogue Program, an important public diplomacy implementation for the European Union and it focuses on how the implementation operates and what it aims for Turkey's change and transformation.*

**Keywords:** Public diplomacy, civil society dialogue program, European Union, Turkey

## Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye Arasında Bir Kamu Diplomasisi Uygulaması Olarak Sivil Toplum Diyalogu Programı'nın Değerlendirilmesi

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### Öz

*Avrupa Birliği kamu diplomasisi uygulamaları ile Birlik içi ve Birlik dışında etkileşimi teşvik etmektedir. Avrupa Birliği-Türkiye ilişkileri çerçevesinde Türkiye'ye yönelik çeşitli kamu diplomasisi uygulamaları yürüten Avrupa Birliği, Sivil Toplum Diyalogu Programı'nı demokrasi ve müktesebat temelli yürütmektedir. Bu makale Avrupa Birliği açısından önemli bir kamu diplomasisi uygulaması olan Sivil Toplum Diyalogu Programı'nı değerlendirmekte ve uygulamanın Türkiye'nin değişim ve dönüşümü için nasıl faaliyet gösterdiği ve neleri amaçladığı üzerinde durmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Kamu diplomasisi, sivil toplum diyalogu programı, Avrupa Birliği, Türkiye*

## Introduction

Turkey's European Union (EU) accession perspective has emerged as a product of the Cold War (Oktay, 2004, p. 99). The security threat posed by the expansionist policies of the USSR in Eastern Europe and the ultimate aim of "political cooperation and integration" of Turkey, which has taken its place in important economic, political and military institutions (European Council and NATO) of Western Europe, was a reason for participation to the EEC (European Economic Community) which was formed in 1957, and acted in order to show its Western identity to the whole world once again. In addition, Turkey's desire to develop foreign trade with the community countries and the expectation of external funding can be provided through partnership relationship has caused to make an application in order to establish a partnership bond with the EEC (Tecer, 2007, pp. 163-164).

After the NATO alliance, Turkey's EU adventure began with the first application to the EEC in 1959 (Tecer, 2007, pp.163-164). The relationships established with Ankara Agreement in 1963 and Additional Protocol forcing into effect in 1973 gained a new momentum with Turkey's making a full membership application to the community in 1987 (Kaçar, 200, pp.391-395). A new turn has been passed for Turkey-EU relations at the summit held in Brussels on 17 December 2004 and it has been stated that Turkey has fulfilled the political criteria at the desired level.

In October 3, 2005, an Intergovernmental Conference was held in Luxembourg and with this conference Turkey's negotiations for accession to the EU have been passed (<http://www.ab.gov.tr/index.php?p=111>). During this period, economic and political progress has been recorded. For the sake of progress the EU has realized various public diplomacy strategies in order to influence the change and transformation in Turkey. The Civil Society Dialogue Program, implemented by the EU in the context of change and transformation, is also a public diplomacy application for this purpose. In this respect, it is important to evaluate how this public diplomacy application for Turkey is used, what processes are monitored in practice and what changes are expected to be made in the target group.

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## Understanding Public Diplomacy

The public diplomacy, which is to establish a basic character relationship, is the language of international image and reputation. Public diplomacy is a means of facilitating communication from person to person (Cull, 2009, pp.12-13). Public diplomacy is the linking of the people of other countries (Seib, 2009, pp.773-774). During this connection phase, the public diplomacy, has been expanding the communication platforms and has been put into practise the policy making process. There are different approaches and perspectives on public diplomacy in the literature. These approaches and perspectives provide us various definitions.

Gullion defines the public diplomacy as influencing on the basis of private groups, governments and individuals' other country governments and opinions of their people's and their approaches and foreign policy decisions ([http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/Diplomacy/ Definitions](http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/Diplomacy/Definitions)).

Szondi focuses on the change of foreign and domestic politics in public diplomacy and the pressure of governments. Szondi also notes that in order for this to be successful, the people of the target country must be influenced and that the public should influence their own governments. In addition, the public diplomacy forming the public opinion for goals and national interests in foreign policies (Szondi, 2008, p. 7) is a convincing and impressive art purified from intimidation, threat, lifeless movements and repression (Ba, 2011, p.44).

The Edward Murrow Public Diplomacy Center makes sense of "dominating the behavior of the public in the execution and regulation of foreign policy" as a public diplomacy ([http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/ Diplomacy](http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/Diplomacy)). Cull describes the public diplomacy as "an international actor trying to manage the international environment to connect with other countries' people" (Cull, 2009, p. 12).

According to Aydemir, public diplomacy is "a multidimensional array of values, that basic messages are created according to determined needs, stories about countries are transmitted, strategies are selected and put into practice in order for the purpose, people and non-state actors actively take part in the process and the messages are left mark to the memories by using strategic communication" (Aydemir, 2016, p. 106).

Tuch sees public diplomacy as “the communication mechanism of a government that aims to convey the ideals and views of one country and its cultural heritage, institutions, current policies, national goals to the people of other countries” (Tuch, 1990, p.3). Public diplomacy is one of the most important means of soft power (Melissen, 2005, p. 4) and is to ensure the support to national interests by governments informing, influencing and involving the people of other countries (Rugh, 2004, p.1).

### **European Union’s Public Diplomacy Approach**

EU public diplomacy work and communication policies are not very old. In particular, the rejection of the EU Constitutional Draft by the French and Dutch peoples in the referendum revealed that the EU had inadequate contact with the citizens, but this was noticed in Europe, but not in relations with foreign countries (Akçadağ: 2012, p. 236).

Europe is rich with examples of both new and traditional public diplomacy strategies trying to reach various goals (Cross and Melissen, 2013). There are many types of public diplomacy practiced today in Europe (Pamment, 2013, p. 12) and public diplomacy is carried out by different actors in the EU with different budget lines (Rasmussen, 2016). The EU has an understanding of public diplomacy based on multi-layered projects and programs, and has executed the implementations within the scope of such approaches.

One of the complicated factors of EU public diplomacy is that it is historically and primarily oriented towards the inside (Duke, 2013, p. 2). In this respect, there is a lack of monotony in terms of decentralization, communication practices and contents of the message in the EU public diplomacy. This is related to significant differences in funding and professionalism after the EU delegation and single voice in EU is not only a technical problem of EU public diplomacy and it is noted that this problem can be solved with strategic planning or coordination mechanisms and better funding (Rasmussen, 2016).

Despite the lack of single voice, the EU’s strategy of public diplomacy towards in and out of the Union aims at creating a common sense of identity. It is an important issue for citizens to engage in political life in accordance with EU core values. It is also about disclosure of the objectives and

responsibilities for countries like Turkey, which has the desire to become a member of the EU in the EU public diplomacy strategy.

It should be emphasized that programs and projects are designed to influence public perception on the basis of objectives and responsibilities. In this respect, the integration of the public with the core values and the creation of a consensus in the public opinion are very important in terms of the EU public diplomacy and constitute the strategy of multi-purpose objectives.

### **European Union Public Diplomacy Practices**

EU public diplomacy practices are under the various policies of the EU. These policies are; neighborhood policy, European Mediterranean Partnership, educational policy, European Visitor Program and integration.

EU public diplomacy practices oriented both inward and outward, have aim at expanding the fields of democratization and freedom. The EU, which wants to include all segments of society within and outside the Union into the process of democracy and development, builds on the public diplomacy strategy on mind-sharing.

The EU public diplomacy, which does not limit the sharing of minds with the members of the Union, also acts in the direction of “mind sharing” through participation and dialogue in the third country societies (Manners and Whitman, 2013, p. 196). In this way, the EU has the purpose moving from a regional power to a fully global goal, and is trying to put its values into practice with effective policies.

In this context, the EU carries out various fields of application of public diplomacy, in particular education and culture, in Turkey. Public diplomacy applications carried out by the EU in Turkey are:

- Horizon 2020
- Jean Monnet Program
- SALTO Cultural Diversity
- Union for the Mediterranean
- European Neighbourhood Policy
- Erasmus+ Program
- The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
- Civil Society Dialogue Program

## Civil Society Dialogue Program

Dialogue negotiations and cooperation resulted between the EU and Turkish citizens in the EU process come into prominence as a complementary feature. The EU has set a strategy in 2005 that sets out the key priorities for the dialogue strengthening between EU civil society organizations and candidate countries on the basis of the need for dialogue. This strategy has been called the Civil Society Dialogue and has had an importance equivalent to the implementation of the reform process and aligning with the *acquis* (<http://www.ab.gov.tr/45649en.html>). And eventually it was put into practice as a public diplomacy with a strategic focus of the EU.

The Civil Society Dialogue Program between the EU and Turkey, which started in 2008 under the mentioned strategy, is one of the EU's major public diplomacy implementations for Turkey. This public diplomacy has been realized as an implementation that establishes fundamental and lasting dialogue between EU Member States and Turkey's NGOs, mutual exchange of information, and recognition the communities each other related to the given topic. The EU has provided substantial support to this project in order to strengthen mutual understanding between Turkish citizens and EU citizens, to bring societies closer together and to give them the opportunity to communicate experiences and information. In the Civil Society Dialogue Enhancement Project, which is supported in a wide range of fields, approximately 350 projects have been created with more than 600 dialogue-based partnerships and about 42.5 million Euros have been awarded to dialogue projects that support hundreds of collaborations and activities (<http://civilsocietydialogue.org/us/>).

The Civil Society Dialogue Program functions as a public diplomacy exercise performed in order to provide contribution to the political reform process of the civil society in Turkey to create a lasting dialogue between the EU and Turkey. The incentives of NGO partnerships in Turkey are as follows:

- Democracy
- Human Rights
- Anti-Discrimination
- Superiority of Law.



The subjects in the Civil Society Dialogue public diplomacy implementation take place in the program as a political priority. In other words, the EU is trying to shape its political influence in Turkey with public diplomacy by implementing the projects on the basis of the themes.

### **Implementation Processes of the Program**

The EU characterizes the implementation of public diplomacy in the development of the civil society dialogue periodically with various policies. Specifically structured policies try to influence public opinion to legitimize values and recognize policies through implementation processes. Within the scope of Civil Society Dialogue Development project process consists of four periods:

Development of Civil Society Dialogue Between Turkey and EU-I (CSD I): It was prepared for the development of a civil society dialogue between the EU and Turkey and was supported by European Commission funding. The project was developed for Turkey under the 2006 Pre-accession Assistance Program and the project implementation period is over (<http://www.ab.gov.tr/p.php?e=46008>).

Civil Society Dialogue Improvement Project between Turkey and EU-II (CSD II): The second project focused on providing better understanding and knowledge of Turkey in the EU and provided 5.3 million Euros support within the scope of project. In addition, the EU aimed to support local and small-scale NGOs in all regions of Turkey with this project (<http://www.ab.gov.tr/p.php?e=46008>).

As seen in the project, the program is being implemented in all regions of Turkey without any regional distinction. The Civil Society Dialogue Program promotes public diplomacy as a support to different NGOs of different qualities for the implementation process of the program and the implementation process creates a wide network for the EU. In this way, the EU functions as an extension of the legitimacy sources of the values to the public by means of NGOs.

Civil Society Dialogue Development Project between Turkey and EU - III (CSD III): This phase of the Media Dialogue Seminar components and the Political Criteria and Media grant programs began to be implemented in 2014. Within the framework of the Political Criteria and Media grant

programs, around 7 million Euros of grant support is provided to 55 projects jointly developed by the EU and Turkey media organizations and civil society organizations. The Media Dialogue Seminars aim to strengthen the communication process between the media, NGOs and public institutions, which have important functions in improving the mutual perceptions of the people in EU-Turkey relations. For this purpose, dialogue seminars and workshops in different cities of Turkey are organized. The media ground of the program gives Turkey the opportunity to exchange opinions with regard to the tasks and the importance of mutual dialogue that various actors play in the membership steps of the Union. Six dialogue meetings were held in Antalya, Istanbul, Gaziantep, Samsun, Eskisehir and İzmir cities in Turkey within the scope of Media Dialogue Seminars and more than 600 sector representatives attended. In the panes where the public was informed about the process, “Understanding, Expressing, Compromising” was emphasized and expert actors shared their experiences with the participants (<http://siviltoplumdiyalogu.org/diyalog-seminerleri/>).

Civil Society Dialogue Development Project between Turkey and EU - IV (CSD IV): At this stage, 11 million Euros grant support has been provided to NGOs in various grant programs. Some of the supported grant programs are education, justice, freedom and security. 80 projects were eligible to receive grants in the framework of this program, and the grant-related projects passed the stage of realization on 15 February 2016.

As understood from the supported programs, the actions are transparently related to the benefits of citizens in Turkey. Moreover, grant schemes have transformed the policies applicable to the EU into the original narratives by increasing the number of actors involved in public diplomacy and a two way communication has become the narrative of the EU with the seriousness of publicly open projects.

### **Implementation Examples of the Program**

It will be in place to give some examples of good practice in the Civil Society Dialogue Program, which is aimed at promoting the sharing of EU policies in Turkey, through the establishment, strengthening, dialogue

support and long-term sustainable cooperation (<http://siviltoplum diyalogu.org/us/>):

There are projects jointly executed by Cities and Municipalities. In these applications, projects that brought together Turkish and EU local communities are implemented. For example, the Fire Department of Kayseri Municipality and the German project partner Fire Department of Duisberg Municipality have signed a multi-faceted and productive relationship. The project has helped to establish and develop links between people in Kayseri and Duisberg.

Another project brought together the authorities of Istanbul Zeytinburnu Municipality and the municipal authorities of Berlin from Germany and Beringen from Belgium. The activities carried out under the project "Dialogue between Municipalities for the Integration of Migrants" have created opportunities for the people of Istanbul, Berlin and Beringen to get to know each other more closely.

Projects have been implemented to perform EU standards in Turkey in partnership with EU cities and municipalities, to improve local public service provision through innovation, and to implement leading EU models in protection and tourism. It was explained to the Turkish public that pluralism will also strengthen local government and public service provision in such projects.

NGOs and Professional Organizations are also involved in the implementation of public diplomacy in the Civil Society Dialogue. The EU supports organizations that are inexperienced in managing EU funds and in establishing a dialogue with EU partners. The EU wants to create and consolidate the idea of "Thinking and living like a European" in Turkey by using its NGOs and Professional Organizations.

One of the projects related to the theme is the Izmir Bornova Auto Mechanic and Craftsman's Chamber, which implements a vocational training project with the Munster Craftsman's Chamber in Germany. Within the scope of the project, vocational and technical training were provided to 600 mechanics and it was provided an opportunity to establish a long-term relationship between the Turkish and EU professional organizations.

Another project is also the "Mediterranean Dialogue Bridge" under the theme of Justice, Freedom and Security. It is aimed at increasing the capacities of local governments and non-governmental organizations by

providing for the implementation and development of political reforms on the rights of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the city of Gaziantep in Turkey. The project is being implemented to increase the level of knowledge about EU values in Turkey (<http://siviltoplumdiyalogu.org/project/akdeniz-diyalog-koprusu/>). Some of the other projects implemented in the fields of justice, freedom and security are The Placement of Refugees, The Power of Civil Society in Fighting Human Trafficking and Women on migration pathways.

The Civil Society Dialogue carried based on the *acquis* and democracy is very important in the implementation of public diplomacy as well as in the projects themed the Political Criteria. In projects where democratic values are supported by civil society, the better understanding of reforms and results realized in Turkey's EU membership process, and the implementation of these reforms with the participation of non-governmental organizations have been supported. The topics of human rights fight against discrimination and democracy and superiority of law are the basis of the projects. One of the projects takes place in the theme is Transparency in Politics. This project aims at strengthening the transparency and accountability of political finance in Turkey and contributing to the democratic political life. As in every project, the Transparency in Politics project is also implemented step by step:

1. The problems and deficiencies of transparency and accountability of political finance are identified.
2. The Report on Honesty and Transparency in Political Finance in Turkey is prepared.
3. A civil coalition is organized in this field.
4. Honesty Principles for Turkey is prepared and lobbying and advocacy work is organized for signing these principles.
5. Trainings are given to correspondents on transparency in political finance.
6. The declaration of property campaign for the deputies is organized.

As themed Political Criteria in the projects such as Active Participation of Civil Society to the EU Negotiation Process, Best Practices from Turkey and Europe for Strengthening Democratic Participation, My Freedom Project, Everything for the Rights, Rights for Everyone, Innovative Methods

against Human Rights Violations have been implemented and they all contain the common objectives of the EU in public diplomacy. As can be seen from the examples, the EU widely uses the strategic value of communication by actively utilizing from NGOs, professional organizations and municipalities in public diplomacy implementation for Turkey. It is desirable to establish a sustainable cooperation and communication network between Turkey and EU NGOs and municipalities in the projects. Especially, this strategic and preferred implementation by the EU encourages the Turkish public to think like Europeans. It has also made an effort for the establishment of a deep inter-communal dialogue ground in the practise. Implementation is managed by the values that make up Europe in a framework based on mutual communication and interaction and ultimately European culture is being tried to be adapted to the Turkish public.

### Conclusion and Discussion

The public diplomacy practices of the EU's political reform processes and socio-economic transformations are based on the contribution of the dialogue and the accurate and effective transfer of the values it has to the public. As it is understood from the application of public diplomacy, the EU allows the Turkish citizens to understand the values and policies of the EU that make up the soft power of the EU and strengthen the sharing of contacts and mutual experience between societies. In this direction, the local governments, professional organizations, business community, social partners, non-governmental organizations, universities, media, youth and the cultural activities carried out in these fields constitute the target mass of Civil Society Dialogue public diplomacy application and provide an opportunity to the universities, professional organizations, municipalities and young people in Turkey to communicate with their counterparts in EU countries.

Mutual communication is an indication that the implementation is built for change and transformation in Turkey (<http://www.ab.gov.tr/48092.html>). The public diplomacy implementations, which are designed on the basis of mutual understanding and building trust, support dialogue between the EU and other countries through established partnerships. For

this reason, the EU uses the civil society dialogue as a partnership instrument to achieve its goals. Because public diplomacy practices carried out through civil society will enhance the understanding of the EU's views, policies and priorities, will develop the EU perception and promote the values such as human rights and democracy in Turkey (European Commission, Public Diplomacy).

This article, which is on the use of the Civil Society Dialogue Program as a public diplomacy implementation, will change the perspective of the EU in that the other practices based on democracy and *acquis*. Because this article presents the information on approaching the criterion of the programs carried out in Turkey by the EU as a public diplomacy implementation. In addition, this study, which is a guide for EU-based implementations, will provide significant contributions to domestic and foreign literature.

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**Kaynakça Bilgisi / Citation Information**

Aydemir, E. (2017). Assessment of the civil society dialogue program between european union and turkey as a public diplomacy implementation. *OPUS – International Journal of Society Researches*, 7(13), 912-926.