

LIMITS OF COSMOPOLITANISM?
EUROPEAN COMMISSION OFFICIALS ON THE SELVES AND OTHERS

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Abstract:

With its institutional motto 'unity in diversity', the European Union officially embraces a cosmopolitan outlook. This article argues that this motto becomes reality within the institutions of the EU as the officials undergo a cosmopolitan transformation process by experiencing cultural diversity on a daily basis. This cosmopolitanism, however, is not without limits. The discussions on Turkey's EU candidacy are a case in point. By analyzing the discourses of Commission officials with regard to their own identity as well as their discourses on the Turkish elite, this article assesses the extent and limits of cosmopolitanism in the European Commission and its general implications for the EU.

Keywords: *cosmopolitanism, EU, Turkey, European Commission*

Short Biographies:

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INTRODUCTION

With its institutional motto 'united in diversity', the self-definition of the EU is cosmopolitanist in the sense that it recognizes and builds upon the diversity of cultures within Europe. Within this EU-wide institutional discourse, the diversity that comes with 27 member-states and 23 official languages is conceptualized as richness instead of a barrier for cooperation. The cosmopolitan assumptions are furthermore built into EU governance through mechanisms that ensure the representation of member-states throughout EU institutions. Indeed, the multicultural character of EU institutions has received much scholarly attention¹, addressing the question of how officials with different nationalities work together in the daily governance of the EU and pointing out to the "transnational"² or the "cosmopolitan"³ identities of EU officials.

From its outset, European integration has had a "cosmopolitan momentum"⁴ and as it stands today, the EU and its supranational governance can be labeled as a form of "institutionalized cosmopolitanism"⁵. The fact that the cosmopolitan ideals are embedded in the conception of the EU, however, is not sufficient to classify it as cosmopolitan. For example, if national categories are not replaced by a cosmopolitan outlook, it could mean that the EU represents an expanded form of nationalism, what can be termed as "Euro-nationalism"⁶. Thus, "supranationalism bears the risk of degenerating into a European super-nationalism"⁷.

The cosmopolitanism of the EU has indeed been challenged, especially during the discussions on the European Constitution with regard to the defining characteristics and the boundaries of the EU. The relevance and urgency of these existential identity debates is partly linked to the issue of Turkey's accession to the EU⁸. This is mainly due to the fact that it is a contested candidate on grounds of the 'goodness of fit' between its 'European' credentials and the future order of the European project. 'Are there limits to the cultural diversity the EU is

able to unite?' has appeared to be a fundamental question that needs to be addressed above and beyond the technical criteria of EU accession. Whereas cosmopolitanism is per definition geared towards a world identity, the fact that there have been renewed calls for drawing the limits of Europe can be considered as contradictory since "as soon as geographical or cognitive borders are established around the concept of cosmopolitanism, the very essentialisms that cosmopolitans *as critics* have traditionally sought to confront are reproduced."⁹

As such, the accession of Turkey constitutes a critical litmus test for the EU's cosmopolitanism. This choice stems from the fact that Turkey is a controversial EU candidate whose accession has been challenged in terms of identity and Turkey's potential inability to act "European"¹⁰. Whereas the EU's official policy has been to conceive of Turkey's accession bid as a further potential 'foothold' for a cosmopolitan outlook¹¹, the concerns about cultural incompatibility have rested on the argument that "Turkey will struggle to assimilate the liberal values of modern(ist) Europe, as these are simply irreconcilable with its primordial Islamic identity"¹².

We adopt the premise that "cosmopolitanism is a two-way relationship in which encounters with the Other require a mutual acceptance of living with differences and of the possibility of being transformed as a result of this encounter."¹³ In this article, we analyze the conceptualizations of cosmopolitan identity within the EU from the perspective of this cosmopolitan premise and question the extent to which this cosmopolitanism extends to include Turkey as a prospective member of the EU. After a summary of the theoretical debate on cosmopolitanism, identity, Turkey, and the EU, we briefly present the empirical data on which we base our analysis. Next, we delve into the conceptualizations of identity within the institutional context of the European Commission. We then move on to the discourses of Commission officials with regard to their perceptions of the Turkish elite based on their encounters with them in the framework of the accession process. On the basis of these findings, we evaluate the extent and limits of cosmopolitanism in the Commission.

COSMOPOLITANISM AND IDENTITY IN THE EU

The engagement of the critical approaches in IR with the issue of Turkish accession goes back to late 1990s when Turkish pleas to be included in the same accession queue with Central and Eastern European countries were rebuffed by European leaders in the 1997 Luxembourg Summit. Iver Neumann had argued that it was Turkey's perception as a 'historical Other' that prevents it from being included as a full member of the European community.¹⁴ Rumelili took the debate further by highlighting how official EU discourse constructs Turkey as a 'liminal' country that can be included only through evaluations on the 'acquired properties' of membership such as democracy and human rights and excluded to the extent that 'inherent properties' such as religion are taken into consideration.¹⁵ Other scholars closer to social constructivism have approached the issue from a Habermesian perspective of argumentative rationality and underlined that the official arguments used to justify Turkish accession in the EU rest only on 'interest based' arguments such as Turkey's strategic value or its economy as opposed to the cultural bases of justification that was used in arguing for the inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries in the EU. It was then argued that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have been prioritized in the enlargement process at the expense of Turkey because it was not perceived to be a sufficiently European country¹⁶.

More recently, in analyses that pertain to the European Commission, there has been a tendency to denote the European Commission as a "cosmopolitan agent" in enlargement policy which treats Turkey solely on the basis of acquired criteria such as democracy, human rights or economic governance while upholding a "cosmopolitan identity" that is inclusive of Turkey.¹⁷ While these works have all highlighted the significance of identity based dynamics in the analysis of Turkey-EU relations, their focus of analysis was mainly on the official statements of the EU leaders and/or enlargement Commissioners.

This study focuses on the micro level, namely the individuals working within the European Commission bureaucracy. The Commission is a central actor in the internal institutional structure of the EU and represents the supranational norms of the EU as the institution endowed with the role to represent the overarching European interest. Furthermore, the identities of Commission officials have often been described as "cosmopolitan"¹⁸. How

this cosmopolitan identity is played out and how this self-identity relates to the officials' vision of Europe and Europeanness could be essential in shaping the debates on the future of European integration. In this respect, enlargement policy is crucial in defining the boundaries of the EU by determining which countries to include (in-group)/exclude (out-group) and under which conditions.

The Commission is a key EU player which is “engaged in all stages of the enlargement process”¹⁹. The power of the Commission in the enlargement policy is two-fold. At the macro level, the Commission employs a significant amount of discursive power in both the member states and the applicant countries in question by shaping the terms of enlargement debates via the regular evaluations it provides on the applicant countries.²⁰ Furthermore, through its official/legal role as negotiator and initiator of policy through recommendations to the Council, it also exercises power by ‘governing’ where the discursive power becomes institutionalized in a way in which it officially and forcefully conditions, in the words of Foucault²¹, the “possibilities of action” for both the member states and the applicant countries.

Although the enlargement related desks and units of the Commission prepare the main reports and other policy-related documents upon which much of the official discourse rests, there is little information on how the Turkish identity is conceptualized by these European civil servants who do not express their views publicly. By focusing on the discourses of Commission officials on their Turkish counterparts, we limit ourselves to the analysis of a “most likely case” of transformation in terms of changing the conceptions of the Self and the Other – firstly because elites are more likely to be adjust their ideas on the basis of new information and secondly because direct contact might lessen thinking about the Other in stereotypical terms as one gets to know the Other better. As such, this study addresses the question of how Turkey challenges the cosmopolitan imaginary of the European Commission, pushing for the development of novel, and more cosmopolitan, conceptualizations of identity in EU institutions. Analyzing the discourses of the Commission elite on the Turkish elite gives us insights as to how much Turkey fits in the picture of the EU as portrayed by Commission officials, and if not, the reasoning behind such evaluations. Hence, it demonstrates the ways

in which the boundaries of cosmopolitanism are set and challenged by the prospects of Turkey's accession.

At the micro level, the Commission is the only EU institution that engages on a daily basis with the applicant country, both through the country's official/governmental bodies and its civil society institutions. This puts the Commission officials working on the Turkish accession in direct contact with their Turkish counterparts. Socialization theory would lead us to expect that long-lasting and intense contacts induce individuals to take on new ideas and norms.²² This would lead to a mutual transformation process whereby the Commission elite adjusts its conceptions of Turkey on the basis of new information and contacts and the Turkish elite changes its conceptions of Europe.

One of the key tenets of the cosmopolitan outlook is the recognition of "Otherness", where even a positive value is placed on difference, without hierarchical ordering²³. Applied to the EU, cosmopolitanism upholds a notion of Europe that rests on "pluralised cultural models" rather than constituting a supranational identity constructed along the lines of the nation-state, or an official identity that is constantly in tension with national identities²⁴. Hence one of the central issues that need to be addressed in studying cosmopolitanism empirically is the extent to which cultural categorizations on the basis of nationality are transformed so as to cease thinking in terms of 'us' and 'them'. To the extent that national identity serves to distinguish out-groups from the national 'we' group, culture constitutes a factor of inclusion or exclusion²⁵. European identity can equally serve this function when it is used to draw boundaries between EU member-states and its potential members and neighboring countries.

One of the obvious ways of drawing cultural boundaries is the use of stereotypes in evaluating the Other by ascribing characteristics to people on the basis of their group memberships²⁶. Stereotyping is especially at play in encounters with the unknown out-group members and stems from the psychological tendency to see out-groups as "all alike"²⁷. By contrast, working extensively with members of other nationalities would decrease stereotypical thinking and contribute to the transformation of identities. The transformation could occur through regular institutional contacts, such as those of Commission officials with

their colleagues in the Commission or those of enlargement policy officials with their Turkish counterparts as a part of the accession process. As a result of getting to know the Other, both the conceptions of the Self and the Other might undergo a transformation process which Gerard Delanty calls the “cosmopolitan imagination”²⁸. The internalization of cosmopolitanism is thus to be observed in the extent to which individuals adopt a new outlook on their own (national) identity as well as on their outlook on what was considered to be the Other.

For the purposes of this article, we focus on the transformation process of the Commission elite first as a result of contacts with officials of different nationalities within the Commission and secondly as a result of their contacts with the Turkish elite. The paper relies on original qualitative interview data gathered within the framework of two research projects. The first dataset concerns culture and identity conceptualizations in the European Commission. The interview excerpts extracted from this data are denoted as ‘COM#Official’. The data was gathered between April 2005 and February 2006 by interviewing 82 AD(Administrator)-level European Commission officials, working for the ‘Social Regulation DGs’ Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities; Environment; Health and Consumer Protection; and Justice, Freedom, and Security. A proportionally equal number of policy officials were randomly selected within each DG. The interviewed officials were working across the whole hierarchical range, working on a variety of policy or management issues. The aim was thus to get an overall view of a broad range of officials.

The second dataset focuses on the perceptions of the Turkish elite amongst the Commission bureaucrats. The interview excerpts extracted from this data are denoted as ‘COM-TR#Official’. This data consists of 19 in-depth qualitative interviews with officials from the European Commission. The interviews were carried out between April 2007 and October 2007. Those who were interviewed were all AD-level rank staff of the Commission and consisted of mid-level desk-officers, international relations officers and program managers working on Turkey in their Directorate-Generals. Among the 28 DGs, only those DGs (14) that had a specific department/desk dealing with enlargement related issues including relations with Turkey at the time of the fieldwork were approached. The DGs included were:

Agriculture and Rural Development; Competition; Economic and Financial Affairs; Education and Culture; Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; Energy and Transport; Enlargement; Environment; Fisheries and Maritime Affairs; Internal Market and Services; Justice, Freedom and Security; Regional Policy; Research; and Trade. The respondents were selected on the basis of relevance and accessibility, meaning that attention was paid to contacting and speaking with officials who had contact with Turkish officials on a regular basis and were willing to speak about their encounters and impressions.

Given the limited number of interviews conducted, we do not claim generalizable results. However, the analyses we present and the arguments we bring up in this article have been derived in the framework of the broader research projects of both authors. The interview excerpts which are used in this article should thus be viewed as representations of broader patterns we have observed with regard to the issues in question.

THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE COSMOPOLITAN SELF IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Cultural diversity is a daily reality for the bureaucrats of EU institutions as the institutions represent a microcosm of Europe in terms of the diversity of languages, values, attitudes, and cultural backgrounds. As an institution, the European Commission puts the motto of 'unity in diversity' into practice. To begin with, the Commission applies the norm of multinationality throughout its formal structure: National diversity is reflected in the overall distribution of officials and across the organizational hierarchy of the Commission²⁹. This means that Commission officials are in daily contact with cultural diversity at work. What is essential, though, is not that officials recognize the presence of the different cultural backgrounds, which can eventually be considered as a demographic given, but how these cultural differences are perceived and acted upon by them. An analysis of cosmopolitanism in the Commission requires us to delve into the meaning of this diversity in practice.

At the individual level, cosmopolitanism refers to an orientation or capacity of individuals that can be described as "being at home with diversity"³⁰. In this respect, cosmopolitanism thus refers to "a cultural disposition involving an intellectual and aesthetic

stance of 'openness' towards peoples, places and experiences from different cultures, especially those from different 'nations'"³¹. Instead of antagonism towards the 'stranger', cosmopolitanism embraces "the search for, and delight in, the contrasts between societies rather than longing for superiority or for uniformity"³². Whereas the discourses of officials embracing the institutional motto of the Commission might be dismissed as paying lip service to the institutional norm, the personal discourses could be more useful in terms of revealing attitudes and in assessing their cosmopolitanism.

To begin with, Commission officials have personal histories and backgrounds that can be termed as cosmopolitan, due to the fact that the majority of them have lived, studied, or worked abroad³³. Their experience is not limited to having been abroad for an extended period of time, but they have also been extensively exposed to other cultures through mixed families and relationships, which means that they have undergone a multicultural socialization process. Even though officials might not explicitly define themselves as such, their self-definition is one of an enlightened cosmopolitan elite which diverges from the "average - local and mono-cultural" national citizen. As they have traveled and picked up pieces from various cultures in the world, these cosmopolitans see themselves no longer representative of their cultures of origin. To the extent that cosmopolitanism signifies "the channeling of specific ideas and cultural forms *between* cultures"³⁴, Commission officials are the personification of hybrid identities.

The experience with the multiplicity of cultures leads to the rejection of cultural categorizations, the most obvious of which is their attitude towards speaking of culture on the basis of stereotypes. Maryon McDonald also observed this attitude during her research at the Commission:

[T]here is a strong feeling amongst many officials in the Commission that stereotypes are something that European civil servants have gone beyond. 'We don't think in terms of national difference.' There is an '*esprit européen*' [European spirit] and a European identity. If there are differences, they are 'personality differences'. If there are cultural differences, then that is a part of Europe's 'richness'.³⁵

Indeed, during the interviews officials were quick in dismissing stereotypes and in providing counter-examples to the commonly held stereotypes on the basis of their first-hand experience to prove that the stereotypes are not true. These examples demonstrated that Commission officials had learned about other cultures beyond the stereotypes:

COM#5: When I began, I thought it existed, but absolutely not. It's more individual persons. When you see Italians, they are much more *rigoureux* [rigorous] that they are like the Germans now. I don't know how they've done it. Sometimes you can be surprised how an English or even a Swedish person or a Finnish can be completely *je m'en foutiste* [carefree]. I don't say that they're all like this eh, but I don't think it's a good criterion.

Although Commission officials admit to having had stereotypes about other nationalities when they started working for the Commission, they acknowledge that working with different nationalities has broadened their knowledge on and understanding of different cultures.

Commission officials feel that the combination of their backgrounds and experience with cultural diversity at the Commission puts them in a unique position to deal with cultural differences. Working for a multicultural organization develops the ability to feel at home with cultural diversity and to cherish it. As a result, they are able to “enjoy and have fun with the differences” (COM#22). This experience thus changes the perceptions and behavior of Commission officials with regard to culture (both their own and the others).

COM#17: People are not typical of their nationalities because once you are here, and you meet all the nationalities, and you realize that you are not the center of the world in the end. I think it is typical that everyone, if you stay in your country, that you think you are the best, you are the prettiest. You come to Brussels; you have the chance to meet all these nationalities, to change, to see that each one of them brings in something because everyone has something to bring in. So in the end it is a mix, and I believe that after some time, you are not... Yes, you cannot say that you are typically French or typically British or typically Spanish because you blend. [...] It is enriching to be here, very enriching because you learn from each nationality. I think that this is the reason why we stay here. Because it is really enriching to learn from everyone and if

you stay in your region or in your ministry, you don't have this possibility to enrich yourself with all these contacts. And that's fabulous. [...] You become perhaps more humble... The French have still a mentality, a nationality... We always say that we are the best and the most beautiful, but well, when you are in Brussels, no. We are not the best. We are not the prettiest. [Translated from French]

In explaining her transformation process, this official not only refers to how 'enriching' this 'blending' process has been for her, but gives proof of the fact that she has a more critical view on her own nationality. This excerpt represents a vivid description of the transformation process whereby they learn to take a critical stance towards their own culture and nation and become open to other cultures, which constitutes a key element of cosmopolitanism at the individual level. This intellectual distance from one's own country and the reflexive attitude towards its ways of doing and thinking echoes strongly the cosmopolitan virtue which Bryan Turner has termed as "cosmopolitan irony"³⁶. The fact that officials consistently refer in the interviews to this process of, what we can call, 'cosmopolitanization' can be considered as an evidence of the fact that they have internalized cosmopolitanism as a cultural disposition and a way of life. Our empirical evidence thus points to the presence of cosmopolitanism at the Commission. The next question is the extent to which this cosmopolitanism is open for the inclusion of new members and cultures.

ENLARGING COSMOPOLITANISM IN THE COMMISSION?

By definition, cosmopolitanism is open to enlargement with the addition of new cultures to the existent mix. This disposition has presumably been at work for the previous enlargements. One might argue, however, that identity issues have not been at the foreground. Even though cultural factors were not a major part of the enlargement debate during the Southern enlargement in 1986 and the Northern enlargement in 1995, the cultural differences between North and South Europeans are frequently referred to in the literature on the EU as a major point of cultural division³⁷.

In terms of administrative and historical differences, however, the enlargement towards East European countries has perhaps been the most pronounced EU enlargement in the cultural sense. Even though the largest bulk of new officials belonged to a new generation who have not experienced the communist regime as working adults, before the East European officials arrived in Brussels³⁸, officials were wary of the changes this might imply. As the new officials began to work for the Commission, however, the fears turned out to be unfounded:

COM#13: So, we have people that come from Eastern Europe. And really we, before the enlargement last year, everybody sort of worried. Eastern Europeans, you know, mad communists. These were people coming from what used to be the other side of the Iron Curtain. They'd be completely different. They would change the whole culture. But but, when they came, what did we discover? They are exactly the same! They are white, middle-class, well-educated. You know, I mean seriously it's really quite strange to see them. And they all speak languages which means that they all had a good, if you like, international education in Hungary, Poland, wherever. They're all very very similar to each other.

As this interviewee expresses it vividly, the new officials were far from being 'mad communists'. To the contrary, it appeared that they had similar backgrounds as the incumbent officials, especially in terms of their international education. One of the interviewed Czech officials had obtained a French education starting from secondary school and she also had friends in the Commission from the same school. She also confirmed that the first group of officials from the new member-states was not a 'representative group'. Whereas one does not usually encounter that many individuals who speak many languages and have had an international education, encountering a Polish official speaking in an accent-free English and French is not a rare occurrence in the Commission³⁹. Here again, we see that we are dealing with a cosmopolitan elite.

The case of the Eastern enlargement has indeed added nationalities and languages to the cultural repertoire of the Commission. The expectation that this would result in a cultural change in the institution, however, does not seem to have realized. With the addition

of new Eastern cosmopolitans, cosmopolitanism has been extended further but not substantively as the new officials resemble the old officials in terms of their cosmopolitan backgrounds. Even though Commission officials come from four corners of the EU, the diversity is perhaps paradoxically limited. The diversity in terms of backgrounds can be rather characterized as national diversity within the same white middle and upper middle-class European elite.

As it stands today, the EU bureaucracy can barely be qualified as culturally diverse in the broader sense of the word. The EU is in many aspects a typical international organization to the extent that it gives priority to representing national cultures and official languages. The limits of diversity show themselves also in the discrepancy between the diversity present in European societies and at the EU institutions. As Cris Shore also notes, "'cosmopolitan' in the context of the Commission means 'multinational' rather than multiracial.... Most officials are white, Caucasian and middle-class and the representation of ethnic minorities within the EU civil service is not an issue given any weight"⁴⁰. Indeed, in the sample of interviewed officials, there was only one official who belonged to an ethnic minority who shared Shore's point.

As these observations point out, there are limits to the cosmopolitanism of the European Commission. We are speaking of cosmopolitanism at the elite level which also has to do with the nature of European integration as a political project. In the end, the EU started as an elite project, and the EU institutions may be seen as a reflection of these foundations. The prospects of Turkey joining the EU also pass through these elites which are directly in contact with their Turkish counterparts in the framework of the accession process. The inclusion of Turkey in the European unity in diversity, however, may well require a transformation of what is considered to be 'European'. To evaluate the extent to which this is already occurring through the accession talks, we analyze the discourses of Commission officials as how the Turkish elite fit into their cosmopolitan imagery.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE TURKISH ELITE IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Turkey's institutional contacts with the EU has gained pace after the granting of candidacy status to the country in 1999 and intensified further upon the launch of accession negotiations in 2005. Although the perceptions of Turkey amongst the EU elite⁴¹ and EU public opinion⁴² have received some academic attention, there has not been any study that focuses on the EU's perceptions of the Turkish elite shaped through their encounters with EU institutions. Our analysis in this section suggests that the impressions delivered on their Turkish counterparts can serve as important indicators of the limits of the diversity praised by the Commission officials whilst referring to the current institutional context of the EU.

The perceptions of the Commission elite of their Turkish interlocutors are in general positive to the extent that they highlight their 'European/Western' and 'modern' outlook as facilitating factors in the Commission's dealings with Turkey:

COM-TR#14: I have to say our interlocutors give a modern impression, in a sense that, first of all, you feel that there is an absence of being spoilt by the communist tradition. The Turks don't have this. I am sure there is a lot of red tape in Turkish administration, but they give a very modern, well-informed impression I have to say. That can be explained by the fact that Turkey has such long standing relations with the EU. It had been exposed to contacts with Western Europe for many many years. With countries like Romania and Bulgaria, everyday you get in touch with people who have hardly any contacts with Western Europe and you simply feel it. Perhaps even the language barrier is less outspoken in Turkey. So it helps. Communication is very important in our relations and I think that it is certainly a strong point for Turkey.

COM-TR#3: I was in fact surprised by the Turkish administration. I did not expect such capacity and level of activity and knowledge, because when we prepared the screening exercise, the Turkish administration came in Brussels later on to present their legislation, and it was really really really impressive. I was also very surprised, I must say, because in the administration I had to deal with lots of female staff and I was imagining that people would have scarves or something, it was not the case. I never saw a scarf. You know they had lipstick, shoes with heels and so on, they were very modern, I was impressed.

As demonstrated in the first two excerpts above, the Commission elite frequently underscores the 'modern' outlook of the Turkish elite, as displayed in their work-related performance ('well-informed', 'capacity', 'level of activity and knowledge') and/or through their expressions of belief and life-styles. The extent to which impressions gathered are predicated as positive depend upon the congruence of the perceived elite qualities with that of 'Europe' and 'Europeanness'. This is visible in the first excerpt above where contacts, and thus socialization into an assumed set of 'European' behavior is taken as a yardstick for the positive attributes of the interlocutors, through which the new Eastern European member-states are being subjected to an Othering based on their communist past.

The second excerpt demonstrates that certain given stereotypes, such as the belief that all or a substantial number of women wear the headscarf in a Muslim setting, can change upon contact with the Turkish peers. Yet, instead of indicating a certain degree of cosmopolitan outlook where it is expected that contacts as such would have a transformative impact on the perceptions of the Self in a way in which it becomes more open to recognizing and respecting diversity without subjecting it to hierarchy, it demonstrates a preference for the Other to resemble the Self where the 'headscarf' becomes an aberration from the 'modern' norm.

The limits of cultural diversity espoused in the European Commission becomes more visible when the discussions turn to the clear distinctions that the officials draw between their Turkish interlocutors and the rest of the Turkish population:

COM-TR#4: If I go to Turkey and I work with the ministries, I have to say, I find they are much more advanced than many other countries I have been dealing with. They are much more European in the sense of education, more modern or whatever... Then you come to the other part and you come to let us say the rest of the population. And there I find that there is a big gap... It needs to transcend this spirit from this part of the population to the rest of the population. There is a value difference, and I think that is about everything. I mean women's rights are definitely one thing, and then also education, also in that sense religion plays a big role, and how that is seen. Especially values like how should religion be separated from state and how should religion be

practiced, how big the influence of religion be, with regards to the state and culture in general.

COM-TR#6: I meet with women, with men at all levels. Gender is very well embedded at the higher level, and it is a very open society, but it is of course the top that we see. So I have to start thinking or saying that for the time being, it is still very much a dual society. I would not put it rich and poor, but it goes together, educated and uneducated, religious and nonreligious, which I think is now more pronounced than before.

As seen from the excerpts above, Commission officials are often engaged in constructing clear-cut binary distinctions between the elite with which they interact on a professional basis and the 'people' established as a separate category. The use of phrases such as 'dual society' and 'gap' divide the country into the binary oppositions of modern/pre-modern, educated/uneducated, advanced/backward, urban/rural, rich/poor, religious/less religious or nonreligious defined within the framework of European oriented cultural values. 'Gender' and/or 'women's rights' seem to be key issues through which these binaries are constructed. This entails the perception of Turkish society as a homogenous entity, with little scope for diversity. It points to a single linear historical European narrative⁴³ and thus excludes accounts that point to the emergence of multiple modernities in Turkey where the clearly delineated categorizations do not necessarily match⁴⁴. The wearing of the headscarf is a typical example in such accounts which emphasize the importance of the headscarf for Muslim women in carving a space for themselves in the public sphere⁴⁵.

More importantly, the predicates displayed above provide insights into the European cultural space that is envisaged by the Commission officials: a modern, progressive, open and enlightened one where religion plays a minimal role. It also suggests that social learning through institutional contacts⁴⁶ does not necessarily result in the fostering of a cosmopolitan outlook in the perceptions of a society that is constructed in its mass as 'different' from the modern European Self. In fact, the analysis shows that certain stereotypes have resilience even in the descriptions of the Turkish elite when the discussion concerns attitudes towards national sovereignty among the Turkish officials. This was found to be particularly the case in

those DGs that deal with 'politically sensitive' issues requiring a great degree of sovereignty delegation from the nation-state level to the EU:

COM-TR#18: People within different ministries that I met are very intelligent, smart and well-educated, so there is no trouble there. But Turks should understand the principles on which the EU is established. The main principle is communication between member states. So for me it is very important that Turkey understands this principle. This, I see, as a bigger problem in Turkey because there is this nationalist feeling that the EU is going to steal their autonomy, that they will lose their sovereignty if they join the EU...The way they communicate is that they do not want to provide a lot of information, they feel that this is for a later stage, that this is some kind of trade off. I find this as a big difference because I come from Central and Eastern Europe and we were more open. We provided a lot of information and we admit our shortcomings. Turks have a tendency to say that we are the best, and sometimes I also had the feeling that you have an agreement, and then in one or two days, you find out that the agreement is not in place.

COM-TR#8: I think our interlocutors are competent, prepared persons, as far as their dossiers are concerned. They speak excellent English, they are a modern bureaucracy willing to fulfil the tasks and so on. But you know if you are European, whatever Greek, German, you have a basis way of thinking. On this point, I was obliged to see the differences...They are thinking predominantly Turkish, it is too much national, like in front of them there is somebody who is an enemy, somebody who they have to fight. This is sometimes difficult. Of course, they are defending their national interests and principles, but one does have the impression that they have something deep, completely different.

The Commission elite often problematizes whether Turkish officials in the Commission would adapt to supranational decision-making, particularly through discussions over their socialization with their peers working in the relevant Turkish ministries. The excerpts above highlight that the experiences which the Commission elite recount with their Turkish counterparts often turn for the negative when their approach to sovereignty enters the

picture. The 'pride', 'arrogance' and sometimes 'unreliability' of the Turkish elite, coupled with 'mistrust' towards the EU are presented as significant problems that prevent a constructive dialogue between the two sides. In the first excerpt above, these properties are described as 'national' traits, positioned against those of Eastern Europe, the region from which the interviewee comes from. Hence the positive attributes assigned to their Turkish interlocutors does not preclude the Commission elite from defining their counterparts as comprising culturally determined traits determining the way in which they negotiate with the EU.

A similar situation can be discerned in the second excerpt above, where the 'nationalist' nature of the interlocutors is essentialized and generalized through the construction of a 'way of thinking' that is unique to the Turks and that naturally sets them apart from their European counterparts. By engaging in essentialist stereotyping, such accounts exclude those interpretations which underline that "the problem of reconciling the demands of European integration with national 'pride' ... is by no means unique to Turkey"⁴⁷ and concerns even present-day member states⁴⁸.

These excerpts also suggest that new information that has been gained through contact with the Turkish interlocutors does not seem to have changed some of the existing stereotypes of officials substantively as they still rely on them to make sense of the behavior of Turkish officials. It has been extensively documented in works of history that the concept of "oriental mentality" had been a dominant stereotype used to describe the Ottoman Empire and the Turks in European narratives, particularly of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries⁴⁹. While it would be misleading to draw linear and reductionist parallels with history, it can be argued that the notion of "ungrounded pride"⁵⁰ which constituted a crucial ingredient of this stereotype seems to have survived up to this day in generalizing the attitudes of the Turkish bureaucracy towards the EU.

In short, a closer look at the discourse of the Commission officials on their experiences on the Turkish dossier suggest that faced with substantial diversity, cosmopolitan tendencies may be circumscribed among the Commission bureaucracy. While this may be less pronounced in the conceptualization of the Turkish elite, who can also be subject to

stereotyping depending on the subject of discussion, it is more widespread in the perceptions of “the Turkish society”, which is constructed by Commission officials as a homogenous entity that is largely predicated as non-European and pre-modern.

CONCLUSION

This article has aimed to assess cosmopolitanism in the EU by analyzing the discourses of Commission officials with regard to their self-identity and the identity of the elites of a controversial EU candidate, Turkey. We started off with a definition of cosmopolitanism as an inclusive world identity which embraces cultural diversity as a richness, such as professed by the EU's institutional motto ‘unity in diversity’. As recent research has shown, Commission officials not only define themselves as cosmopolitans, but they also adopt a cosmopolitan lifestyle⁵¹. Yet this cosmopolitanism is to be mainly characterized as elite-level cosmopolitanism since such lifestyles and characteristics that come with it are barely a widespread phenomenon, neither in Europe nor beyond⁵². This is not problematic as long as the EU remains an elite project. Rising levels of Euroscepticism, however, increasingly make this less attractive politically.

In times of economic and political crisis, the future of the EU becomes a salient topic of debate. The ambitions of the EU as a cosmopolitan project are perhaps the least of EU's concerns. As critics debate the possible end of the EU, there are still countries waiting in line to be included in this European project. The extent to which this project is and will be a cosmopolitan project will depend on the enlargement process further towards the East – from the Balkans to the Caspian Sea. The accession of Turkey is crucial in this respect. That is why we analyzed the discourses of Commission officials in order to assess the extent to which their identities were open towards further cultural diversity. Our results demonstrate that their conceptualization of Turkey is only inclusive of the Turkish elite. This is similar to how Commission officials perceived their East European counterparts before the enlargement took place.

When it comes to a transformation of the perception of the 'Other', that is acquiring the "cosmopolitan imagination"⁵³, the borders of cosmopolitan Europe currently seem to stop at the borders of Turkey. Despite their encounters with Turkish officials, Commission officials often seem to stick to stereotypical depictions of Turkey as a predominantly backward and traditional society. This stands in contrast to the rejection of stereotypical depictions based on culture in their discourses on culture and identity in the Commission.

At least two major alternative interpretations are possible which lend support to different theoretical viewpoints. First, one could argue that the contacts of Commission officials are not frequent and intensive enough to change their stereotypes of Turkish officials and Turkey, so as to arrive at a transformation. Accordingly, the quality of the contacts has not reached the level desirable for internalization of new ideas and norms. This would mean that, as with the Eastern European enlargement, only when Turkey would enter the EU would it lead to the extension of cosmopolitanism of Commission officials, as they get to know Turkey better through close contacts with Turkish officials.

The alternative interpretation would see the evidence provided in this article as a proof for the limits of (current) cosmopolitan Europe. Because Turkey is not accepted as a part of this European identity due to the large cultural differences, it will be difficult if not impossible for Turkey to join the EU. This, however, would strengthen the argument as a sort of "European super-nationalism"⁵⁴, which only includes identities that fit the European identity (however it might be defined at a given point in time and context). Currently, these existential debates seem to be taking place at the member-state level as the popularity of anti-immigrant parties in Europe indicates. The inclusion or exclusion of Turkey will thus be intricately tied to the definition of Europe and Europeans in the near future. This will in turn determine if the EU chooses for a multicultural project composed of diverse cultural traditions or a civilizational project whereby the boundaries of Europe will be defined by the heritage of Christianity and Enlightenment⁵⁵.

NOTES

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²Hermann et al., *Transnational Identities*.

³Shore, *Building Europe*; Suvarierol, "Everyday Cosmopolitanism in the European Commission," *Journal of European Public Policy* 18 (2) (2011): 181-200.

⁴Edgar Grande, "Cosmopolitan Political Science," *The British Journal of Sociology* 57 (2006), p. 95.

⁵Ibid, p. 96.

⁶Senem Aydın Düzgüt and Semin Suvarierol, "Turkish Accession and Defining the Boundaries of Nationalism and Supranationalism: Discourses in the European Commission," *South European Society and Politics*, (2011), forthcoming.

⁷Grande, "Cosmopolitan Political Science", p. 96.

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⁹Owen Parker, "'Cosmopolitan Europe' and the EU-Turkey Question: the Politics of a 'Common Destiny'," *Journal of European Public Policy* 16 (2009), p. 1088.

¹⁰Diez, "Europe's Others".

¹¹Parker, "EU-Turkey Question", p. 1090.

¹²Idem.

¹³Feyzi Baban and Fuat Keyman, "Turkey and Postnational Europe. Challenges for the Cosmopolitan Political Community," *European Journal of Social Theory* 11 (2008), p. 109.

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¹⁵Bahar Rumelili, "Constructing Identity and Relating it to Difference: Understanding the EU's Mode of Differentiation," *Review of International Studies* 30 (2004): 27-47.

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¹⁷Parker, "EU-Turkey Question".

¹⁸Shore, *Building Europe*; Suvarierol, "Everyday Cosmopolitanism".

¹⁹Udo Diedrichs and Wolfgang Wessels, "The Commission and the Council," in David Spence and Geoffrey Edwards, eds., *The European Commission*, (London: John Harper Publishing, 2006), p. 231.

²⁰See also Cécile Robert, "Doing Politics and Pretending Not To," in Andy Smith, ed., *Politics and the European Commission: Actors, Interdependence, Legitimacy*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

²¹Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, eds., *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982).

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²⁴Gerard Delanty, "The Idea of a Cosmopolitan Europe: On the Cultural Significance of Europeanisation," *International Review of Sociology* 15 (2005)', p. 417.

²⁵Ruth Wodak, "National and Transnational Identities: European and Other Identities Constructed in Interviews with EU Officials," in Richard K.Hermann, Thomas Risse and Marilyn B. Brewer, eds., *Transnational Identities: Becoming European in the EU*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), p. 123.

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²⁷Marilynn B. Brewer and Norman Miller, *Intergroup Relations*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), p. 51.

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³²Idem.

³³Suvarierol, "Everyday Cosmopolitanism".

³⁴Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 251, emphasis added.

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³⁶Bryan S. Turner, "Cosmopolitan Virtue, Globalization and Patriotism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 19 (2002): 45-63.

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³⁸ The fieldwork conducted for the first study took place at the time when the first East European officials were joining the Commission.

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⁴⁰Shore, *Building Europe*, p. 192.

⁴¹Senem Aydın Düzgit, *Constructing Europe through Turkey: European Discourses on Turkish Accession to the EU*, (London: Palgrave, 2012, forthcoming).

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⁴⁷Thomas Diez, "Turkey, the European Union and Security Complexes Revisited," *Mediterranean Politics* 10 (2005), pp. 171-172.

⁴⁸See Jeffrey T. Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework," in Jeffrey T. Checkel, ed., *International Institutions and Socialization in Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 3-30.

⁴⁹See Aslı Çırakman, *From the 'Terror of the World' to the 'Sick Man of Europe': European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁵⁰Idem.

⁵¹Suvarierol, "Everyday Cosmopolitanism".

⁵²Calhoun, "Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism".

⁵³Delanty, "Cosmopolitan Imagination".

⁵⁴Grande, "Cosmopolitan Political Science".

⁵⁵Baban and Keyman, "Turkey and Postnational Europe".