

Why not Turkey? Attitudes towards Turkish Membership in the EU among Citizens in 27 European Countries

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Abstract

Turkey has made significant efforts to fulfil requested accession criteria through socio-economic and cultural convergence with EU Member States. However, Turkey's eventual membership in the EU depends on the support of current EU citizens. This article therefore analyses citizens' attitudes towards Turkish accession in the 27 EU Member States. The analysis shows that a clear majority of citizens reject the idea of Turkey joining the EU. Four factors work rather well to explain this rejection: the economic benefit of Turkish accession, cultural differences, political ideology and general attitudes towards the EU.

Introduction

Accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey have been under way since 2005. The European Commission issues a progress report every November on the state of these negotiations, and, as the November 2008 report shows, Turkey has made progress in conforming to EU standards. The Commission emphasized Turkey's increasingly important foreign policy significance for Europe: EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn praised Turkey's intermediary role between Syria and Israel, its diplomatic approaches with Armenia, and above all, its role in the military conflict between Russia and Georgia (Schmid, 2008).

Despite Turkey's weight in foreign policy and despite its fulfilment of certain accession criteria, prospects for Turkey's membership in the EU have worsened. Most of the citizens of current EU Member States are not supportive of Turkish accession, and pressure on politicians not to ignore their citizens' wishes regarding the EU has risen in recent years. The following analysis is centred on an analysis of citizens' attitudes in 27 EU Member States towards Turkish EU membership. Our study differs from similar studies on this topic in the following dimensions. Whereas De Vreese *et al.* (2008) analysed Dutch attitudes towards Turkey and Schoen (2008) analysed Germany, our study looks at attitudes in all 27 EU Member States. Our study also differs from McLaren (2007) in two respects. First of all, we analyse all 27 member countries, including the east European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, whereas McLaren's study is restricted to 15 west European countries. This allows for a more systematic analysis of the differences between countries and possible macro-level factors that influence people's attitudes. Secondly, our analysis is based on recent survey data from 2006. This is important because, as will be shown below, attitudes towards Turkey have changed since McLaren's study, which is based on data from 2000. Part of the reason is that the issue of Turkish membership in the EU has become more salient since then. Many scholars have shown that when there is controversy and polarization among political parties and elites with respect to certain issues, these issues become more salient among the wider public, and people tend to form clear-cut opinions on them (Hetherington, 2001; Müller and Krosnick, 1996). This is precisely what happened to the issue of Turkish EU membership in recent years. During the Copenhagen Summit in 1992, the EU resolved to make a decision on opening accession negotiations with Turkey in December 2004. This was approved by the European Council in 2004, and accession negotiations began in October 2005. This process of political decision-making was accompanied by heated debates among supporters and opponents of Turkish membership, making this matter a salient and controversial public issue. In their analysis of German newspapers, Schäfer and Zschache (2008) show that the debate on Turkish membership has increased tremendously since 2002. Because the enlargement of the EU is an abstract issue that is not directly linked to people's everyday lives, and because opinions on such abstract issues are widely influenced and determined by the political elites, we assume that clear-cut opinions on Turkish membership among the wider public have only emerged in recent years. It is therefore crucial to use recent data when analysing such opinions.

The first section briefly describes the state of negotiations between Turkey and the EU as well as steps that Turkey has taken to bring the

country closer to Europe. The second section is an analysis of citizens' opinions towards Turkey's accession, which covers 27 EU Member States and is based on the Eurobarometer survey. The descriptive findings show that a majority of citizens oppose Turkish membership, and that the percentage of citizens opposing Turkish accession has even risen over time. Furthermore, the results show that there is a great difference not only between countries, but also within them. The third section is therefore dedicated to the question of how one can explain these differences. Taking into account other studies that have analysed citizens' attitudes towards Turkey, we first formulate hypotheses that are then tested with the help of multivariate analysis. Four factors can explain citizens' attitudes towards Turkish EU membership rather well: the economic benefit of Turkish EU membership, cultural differences, political ideology and citizens' generalized attitudes towards the EU. The last section summarizes the results and discusses the political implications of our findings.

I. EU Expansion Policy and the History of Negotiations with Turkey

Turkey has striven for membership in the EU and its predecessor organizations for many decades. In 1959, Turkey applied for membership in the then EEC (European Economic Community). An association agreement between the EEC and Turkey was signed in 1963. The EU Association Council began a customs union with Turkey in 1995, and in 1999 Turkey obtained accession country status from the Helsinki European Council. Official accession negotiations opened six years later and the screening process began, involving a comparison between Turkish and EU law. This process ended in 2006, and since then, negotiations chapters have been opened one by one. Eleven of the 35 chapters have been opened for discussion thus far.

In the assessment of Turkey's accession capability, Turkey is subject to the same conditions as are other countries. Especially important are the Copenhagen Criteria, which cover a state's ability to take on the *acquis communautaire*, the economic criteria for a functional market economy, and above all, 'stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities' (European Union, 1995–2010).¹ As confirmed in the progress reports (e.g. Commission, 2008a), Turkey has made great progress on these fronts in the last few years. This progress is also confirmed by socio-economic indicators that describe the level of modernization in the country (Alber, 2004, 2007). The average annual growth rate of GDP per capita was 5.4 per cent from 2002 to 2007,

¹ Cf. <http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm>.

compared to the EU average of only 1.2 per cent. The most current EU progress report states that Turkey has sufficient macroeconomic stability and the medium-term capability for integration into the single European market (Commission, 2008a, b). The general degree of modernization in Turkey, as measured by the HDI (human development index), which combines various indicators including life expectancy, education and economic development, shows a clearly positive trend: between 2001 and 2005 the HDI, which can vary between 0 and 1, rose from 0.735 to 0.775.² Sociostructural differences between Turkey and the EU Member States have also been shrinking; the percentage of the Turkish population working in agriculture has sunk, education levels have risen and the overall standard of living has increased.

At the same time, the Commission rightly critiques Turkey on its human rights situation, on its limited freedom of speech and on its lack of gender equality. However, Turkey has made progress in these areas too, even if this progress is far from sufficient (Alber, 2007). According to the Freedom House Index, which measures countries according to their level of democratization on a scale from 1 (completely free) to 10 (completely not free), Turkey has improved consistently over recent years. Turkey's political freedom rating improved from a 4 in 2001 to a 3 in 2006. In terms of civil liberties, Turkey's rating improved from a 5 to a 3 during that same five-year period.³ Freedom of the press in Turkey has also improved according to Reporters without Borders' annual ranking of countries: Turkey improved both in its absolute ranking, going from 35 points in 2002 to 25 points in 2006, as well as in comparison to other countries. The best-performing countries (Finland, Ireland, Iceland and the Netherlands) score 0.5 points on the scale, Germany scored 5.5 and North Korea scored 109 points in 2006.⁴

In addition to these measurable developments regarding Turkey's convergence with the EU and its fulfilment of EU accession criteria, the EU's foreign policy interests also appear to play an important role in the question of Turkish membership. According to the Commission, expansion in general and Turkish membership specifically would strengthen the EU's foreign policy weight in the world (Commission, 2008b). Turkey's geographic location makes it well-suited as a transit country for oil and natural gas and it could therefore play a strategic role in securing the EU's energy supply. The current constellation of power, and especially Russia's recent displays of strength (the conflict in Georgia, oil delivery to Ukraine and western Europe),

² Cf. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics>.

³ Cf. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006>.

⁴ Cf. Reporters without Borders, <http://www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/ranglisten/rangliste-2006.html>.

heightens Turkey's relevance and increases the pressure to bind Turkey with the EU (cf. Commission, 2008b).

Despite Turkey's foreign policy importance for the EU and despite Turkey's increasing convergence with EU standards, there are multiple ways for the accession process to fail. Negotiations can be halted at any time if one-third of the Member States so desire, for instance if Turkey does not fulfil EU criteria concerning human rights, democracy or the rule of law. Even if the Council of EU Governments declares the accessions negotiations as successful and closed, sets a date for the accession and the European Parliament agrees, Turkey's accession is not secure. In that all EU Member States have to ratify the accession treaty, each state holds a veto point that can prevent Turkey's accession. Ratification of the accession contract in France and Austria would not likely stay confined to parliament, but rather be subject to popular referendums. Citizens in these nations would therefore have a *de facto* vote over Turkish EU membership. Even in countries where parliaments, rather than people, will decide, popular opinion is a relevant reference point for the political elite. In this respect, the question of whether citizens support Turkey's membership in the EU takes on a high level of significance.

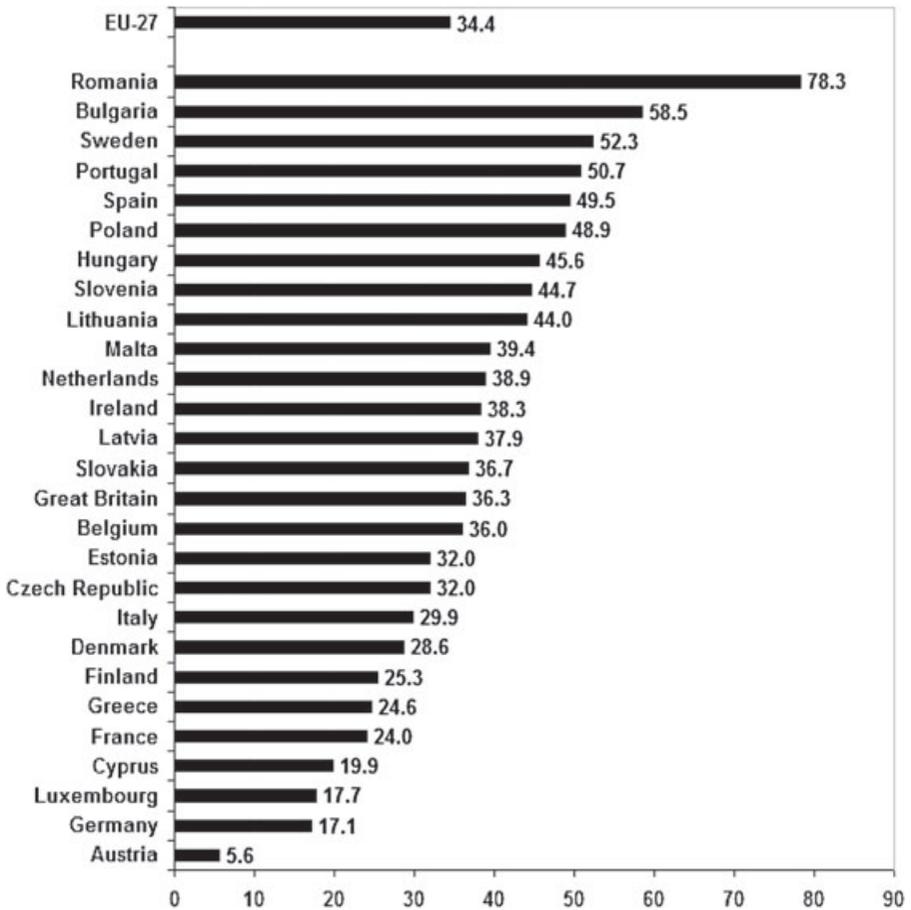
II. EU Citizens' Attitudes towards Turkish Accession

In this section, we analyse the degree of support for Turkey's accession among citizens of 27 EU Member States through a secondary analysis of the Eurobarometer survey (Eurobarometer 66.1).⁵ This survey was carried out in all EU Member States and in several non-Member States in 2006, and covers the population over 15 years of age. Our analysis is limited to citizens in the current 27 EU Member States, in that their opinions are the relevant ones when it comes to future expansion policy. Eurobarometer samples are representative for each country and vary between 503 interviewees in Cyprus to 1,526 in Germany. The central variable in our analysis is the following question: *'For each of the following countries, would you be in favour or against it becoming part of the European Union in the future?'* Interviewees could respond with 'for' or 'against' – there were no other response options.

Figure 1 gives an overview of the level of support for Turkey's accession among citizens in all EU Member States. The results are sobering. Only

⁵ The database is available through the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research (ZA). Information on the Eurobarometer study can be found at: [«www.gesis.org/en/data_service/eurobarometer/index.htm»](http://www.gesis.org/en/data_service/eurobarometer/index.htm).

Figure 1: Support for Turkish Membership in the EU in 27 Countries (%)

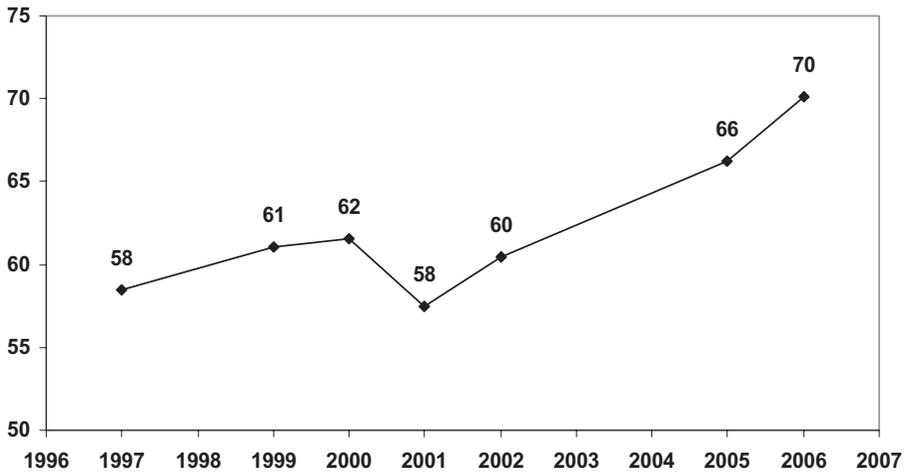


Source: Authors' own calculations based on Eurobarometer data.

Note: Percentage of those who support the EU membership of Turkey as opposed to those who reject it. 'Don't know' responses were excluded from the analysis.

one-third of EU citizens would like Turkey to become a Member State of the EU. Only in Romania, Bulgaria, Portugal and Sweden does a majority support Turkey's accession. Support was below 50 per cent in the other 23 Member States, and was far below 50 per cent in some countries. In the two countries that have indicated their intentions to hold referendums, France and Austria, support for Turkish accession is extremely low: only 24 per cent of the French and 5.6 per cent of Austrians favour Turkish membership. The

Figure 2: Rejection of Turkey's EU Membership in 15 EU Member Countries over Time (%)



Source: Authors' own calculations based on Eurobarometer data.

Note: Percentage of those who reject the EU membership of Turkey as opposed to those who support it. 'Don't know' responses were excluded from the analysis.

chances that Turkey's accession will be accepted by citizens in all EU Member States are therefore very slim. The figure also shows that the citizens of most countries are split over the question of Turkish accession. While the majority in most countries is against accession, there is also a sizeable minority of accession supporters.⁶

Questions about Turkish EU accession have appeared frequently in past Eurobarometer surveys. However, because central and east European countries did not join the EU until 2004 or 2007, we can only track the shift in attitudes towards Turkish accession in countries that have been part of the EU for quite some time. McLaren (2007, p. 252) pointed out that even in the 1980s, support for Turkish membership in the EU was not very high, yet the group of those with no clear opinion on the question was still rather large. In 2002, the year from which McLaren bases her analysis, rejection of Turkish EU membership was relatively moderate, ranging between 66 per cent in Luxembourg and 23 per cent in Spain (McLaren, 2007, p. 253). As Figure 2 shows, the percentage of citizens who reject Turkey's joining the EU has risen drastically since 2001. The question of whether Turkey should even have

⁶ Because the corresponding variable is dichotomous, we could not differentiate how strong the degree of support or rejection was.

accession candidate status has been contested in European politics since 2000, which served to transform the topic from a 'cold issue' to a 'hot issue'. Opponents of Turkish EU membership have continually been able to expand their support base since that time.

Comparing attitudes towards expansion between Turkey and other countries, it becomes clear that the overwhelming rejection of Turkey as an EU member is not due to a general expansion fatigue among EU citizens. In the same survey that forms the basis of Figure 1, people were also asked if they would welcome Swiss, Norwegian or Icelandic membership – EU membership for all three countries had acceptance rates of over 80 per cent. Balkan countries also enjoyed higher rates of support than does Turkey, both for countries with candidate status, such as Croatia, and for potential candidate countries such as Montenegro, Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia and Albania (cf. Gerhards and Hans, 2008; Nissen, 2003). Although levels of support for Balkan countries is not incredibly high (the highest level of support was for Croatia at 59.7 per cent, the lowest for Albania at 40.3 per cent), they are clearly higher than in the case of Turkey. These results show that the majority of current EU citizens are acutely sceptical of Turkey's joining the EU and that this scepticism has increased in recent years.

Interviewees in the Eurobarometer survey were also asked about their opinions as to why Turkey does not belong to Europe or alternatively why Turkey should join the EU. Respondents could tell whether or not they agreed with the statements listed in Table 1 on a scale from 1 (completely agree) to 4 (completely disagree). Examining these opinions allows us to reconstruct the arguments that are responsible for rejecting Turkey's membership in the EU.⁷ Table 1 shows the percentage of EU citizens who agree with the following statements.

EU citizens are almost unanimous in their opinions that Turkey must systematically respect human rights and improve the state of its economy should it want to join the EU. Levels of agreement were not quite so high for the two statements regarding cultural difference, yet more than two-thirds of EU citizens feel that the cultural differences between Turkey and the EU are too

⁷ Harald Schoen (2008) treated these attitudes of German citizens towards Turkish accession as causal factors. This approach assumes, however, that people are *first* of the opinion that Turkey must, for example, improve on human rights before acceding, and, on the basis of this opinion, come to the conclusion that Turkey should not be allowed into the EU. This can also work in reverse, in that people could have a predetermined notion about Turkish EU membership and then look for reasons to fit their opinions. This is probably the case for the Eurobarometer survey used in this article. Respondents are asked *first* about their attitudes towards Turkish accession in general, and *directly afterwards* are asked about the selected statements above. Someone who just expressed opposition to Turkish EU membership would hardly state a few moments later that he/she considers Turkey a part of Europe. Respondents generally try to give consistent, logical and traceable answers (Esser, 1986).

Table 1: Citizens' Attitudes towards Different Propositions with Regard to Turkey (%)

	<i>Support</i>	<i>N</i>
1. Turkey's accession would help rejuvenate an ageing European population	36.7%	20,486
2. Turkey's accession to the EU would strengthen security in this region	40.6%	21,996
3. Turkey partly belongs to Europe by its history	50.3%	22,497
4. Turkey partly belongs to Europe by its geography	64.7%	23,129
5. The cultural differences between Turkey and the EU Member States are too significant to allow it to join the EU	68.9%	22,744
6. Turkey's joining could risk favouring immigration to more developed countries in the EU	76.3%	22,480
7. To join the EU, Turkey will have to significantly improve the state of its economy	89.5%	22,574
8. To join the EU, Turkey will have to systematically respect human rights	93.6%	23,609

Source: Authors' own calculations based on Eurobarometer data.

Note: Percentage of those who said 'tend to agree' or 'totally agree' as opposed to those who 'tend to disagree' or 'totally disagree'. 'Don't know' responses were excluded from the analysis.

significant to allow it to join the EU. Over three-quarters of respondents expect increased migration to more developed EU countries if Turkey were to accede. Despite these attitudes, the majority of respondents believed that Turkey, historically and especially geographically, partly belongs to Europe. A significantly smaller percentage of respondents agreed with the two potentially positive outcomes of Turkey's joining the EU, namely rejuvenating Europe's population (37 per cent) and strengthening its security (40 per cent).

Economic differences between Turkey and Europe, human rights in Turkey, perceived cultural differences and fears of increased immigration are seemingly the most important reasons why EU citizens are sceptical of having Turkey join the EU. Citizens' evaluations overlap with arguments found in the mass media, as shown through a content analysis of editorials in daily newspapers (Schäfer and Zschache, 2008).

III. Explaining Citizens' Attitudes

In this section we attempt to explain the differences in the levels of support for Turkish accession, both between and within countries. We disregard current and historical political conflicts that Turkey has with individual EU Member

States such as Cyprus or Greece, which revolve around a singular factor and do not allow for systematic analysis. Our hypotheses are formulated both from studies that have analysed citizens' attitudes towards the EU in general (Hooghe and Marks, 2005) and towards Turkey in particular (McLaren, 2007; De Vreese *et al.*, 2008).

Economic Costs

Many studies have shown that economic factors play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards different aspects of European integration (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel, 1998; Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Anderson and Reichert, 1996; Anderson and Kaltenthaler, 1996; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Berezin and Díez-Medrano, 2008; Schoen, 2008). McLaren (2007) and De Vreese (2008) show that such considerations also influence attitudes towards Turkey. Our first hypothesis is therefore:

H 1: The higher the economic benefits of Turkish accession into the EU, or the higher the respondent perceives those benefits to be, the more positive his/her attitude towards Turkish accession will be.

We will explain this somewhat general hypothesis more precisely. Were Turkey to join the EU, despite all its recent progress, it would be the least economically developed country of all the Member States, including the east European countries that joined in 2004 and 2007. Turkey's GDP per capita was only €9,700 in 2006, as compared to the EU-27 average of €23,600.⁸ Structural convergence is one of the most important goals of the EU, and in order to even out these economic differences, Turkey's accession would be accompanied by transfer payments, i.e. financial burdens for well-to-do EU states and their citizens. This is an especially salient issue for those countries that are already net payers into the system and therefore do not directly profit from their EU membership. Because citizens of such countries probably anticipate these costs, they are more likely to be opposed to Turkish accession than are people in net recipient countries that have yet to experience the fiscal burden of EU membership. An indicator for this type of cost-benefit analysis is whether or not a country is a *net recipient country*.⁹

⁸ Cf. Eurostat, «http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,39140985&_dad=portal&_schema=POTAL&screen=detailref&language=de&product=REF_TB_national_accounts&root=REF_TB_national_accounts/t_na/t_nama/t_nama_gdp/tec00001».

⁹ On the other hand, net recipient countries stand to lose through the accession of an economically weaker country, in that they may turn into net payers. In this case, the variable 'net recipient country' could have a negative influence on support for Turkey's accession.

In addition to direct fiscal implications, EU Member States are subject to another possible economic consequence of Turkish accession: immigration. As shown in Table 1, a majority of EU citizens believe that accession would be accompanied by increased immigration to other, more developed EU countries. This is a realistic expectation, because Turkish citizens would have freedom of movement in the EU after a certain transitional time period. These migration flows could have negative economic consequences, such as increased competition in particular segments of the labour market. Not all EU states would be affected to the same degree. First, immigration patterns tend to favour specific countries, especially in the more economically developed EU-15. To measure the potential impact of immigration, we use the actual percentage of foreigners in a given country in 2006 as an indicator, which varies between 0.1 per cent in Romania to 40 per cent in Luxembourg. A second way in which countries could be differently affected is in regard to their labour markets: in countries with a high unemployment rate, increased immigration would likely exacerbate the situation, whereas the population in countries with low unemployment rates may greet immigration as a way to overcome labour shortages. We use the *unemployment rate* as another indicator to explain differences in attitudes towards Turkey's EU accession between countries.

In addition to country-level differences, there are also substantial differences within countries at the individual level. Personal economic situations can also influence an individual's cost-benefit analysis regarding Turkish accession into the EU. Gabel and Palmer (1995) argue that the market liberalization associated with European integration tends to have negative consequences for those individuals who are in precarious economic positions, for example for those with a weak position in the labour market or with low levels of human capital. This assumption has been empirically confirmed by other authors (Gabel, 1998; Hooghe and Marks, 2005). EU expansion therefore triggers negative economic consequences for low-skilled individuals, who are easily replaceable in the labour market. This includes the unemployed, who perceive the heightened competition in particular sections of the labour market as a threat to their own economic chances. Increased immigration does not translate into increased economic competition for individuals with professional qualifications. The opposite in fact may be true: highly skilled professionals can profit from lower wages due to a larger labour supply, which makes goods and services cheaper. In our analysis we therefore use the respondent's level of qualification as measured by their *education* level and whether or not they are *unemployed* (0 = employed, 1 = unemployed) as indicators for individual economic positions. We assume that the less educated and the unemployed are more likely to oppose Turkey's accession to the EU. Education is operationalized through the individual's age when they

acquired their highest educational degree,¹⁰ with values over the age of 25 grouped together.¹¹

In addition to objective economic circumstances, respondents' subjective considerations about their economic circumstances may also play a role when weighing the economic costs and benefits of Turkey's potential accession. People who perceive their own economic situation as secure are less likely to feel threatened by immigration than are those who see their situation pessimistically. These subjective perceptions may refer to national as well as individual economic situations. We therefore use an *index for the evaluation of individuals' personal economic situation* as well as an *index for the evaluation of a particular country's economic situation* to explain attitudes towards Turkish accession. The first index regarding personal economic circumstances is a composite of two separate variables: how the respondent sees his/her own financial situation and his/her position in the labour market in the next 12 months (worse, the same or better). The resultant index has five levels. Cronbach's alpha, a measure for the internal consistence of a scale, is 0.66, which is acceptable for a scale that consists of only two variables. For the economic situation of a country, we used the respondent's assessment of the economic situation of their country and of its labour market (very bad, bad, good, very good), and created a seven-level scale. Cronbach's alpha is 0.79. For both indices, high values indicate an optimistic evaluation. The Eurobarometer survey also has a subjective assessment for the macro variable 'net recipient country'. Every respondent was asked if they thought their country profited from EU membership (0 = does not profit, 1 = profits).¹² We created a *profit from EU membership* variable from this question.

We have both subjective and objective indicators at the individual and societal levels with which to analyse people's economic cost-benefit analysis on Turkey's potential EU accession. Table 2 summarizes the different indicators, based on a diagram by Hooghe and Marks (2005, p. 422). In contrast

¹⁰ Operationalizing this variable through actual degrees obtained would have been more appropriate; however, this information is not available through the Eurobarometer survey. Because this article is based on secondary analysis, it is not possible to use the best possible indicators in every case. This same situation applies to other explanatory variables throughout our analysis.

¹¹ One can use the Heckscher-Ohlin Theory to assume that the difference in opinion regarding Turkish EU accession will differ sharply between highly educated people and those with less education in rich EU countries, whereas in poorer EU countries one can expect the opposite effect (cf. O'Rourke, 2003; Hooghe and Marks, 2005). This assumption has not been empirically confirmed, either in separate analyses for poor and rich EU countries, or through taking into account the interaction effect between education and GDP.

¹² Because this survey was conducted shortly before Hungary and Bulgaria joined the EU, a slightly different question was asked in these two countries. The question asked whether respondents believed their country would profit from their upcoming membership of the EU.

Table 2: Indicators to Measure Cost–Benefit Calculation

	<i>Individual level</i>	<i>Societal level</i>
Objective situation	* Educational level * Unemployed	* Net recipient * Country's unemployment rate * % of foreigners in country
Subjective evaluation	* Personal economic situation	* Country's economic situation * Profit from EU membership

Source: Authors.

to McLaren (2007) and De Vreese (2008), our study details citizens' cost–benefit analysis across multiple levels.

Cultural Differences

In Section II, we showed that many EU citizens feel that the cultural differences between Turkey and the EU are too significant to allow Turkey to join the EU at all. Many EU citizens also suspect that Turkey's membership in the EU would result in increased immigration, and some respondents fear that their own national culture would be threatened through this demographic shift. Other studies show that this threat to national culture posed by European integration turns people into Eurosceptics (Carey, 2002; McLaren, 2002; Rippl *et al.*, 2005). Hooghe and Marks (2005) show that cultural variables have an even stronger influence on general attitudes towards European integration than do economic considerations; De Vreese *et al.* (2008) write about the Netherlands, saying that 'cultural soft predictors outweigh hard economic predictors'. Our second hypothesis is therefore as follows:

H 2: The stronger the cultural difference between the respondent's country and Turkey and the stronger that Turkish membership is seen as a cultural threat, the stronger the rejection of Turkey as a prospective EU Member State.

We begin here also by explaining this general hypothesis more precisely. Cultural differences refer to many different areas, such as language, religion and value systems (cf. Gerhards, 2007). Differences in religion may be especially well suited to explain why EU citizens are so sceptical regarding Turkey's accession, as compared to the accession of other countries (Gerhards and Hans, 2008). In contrast to those other countries, the Turkish population is predominantly Muslim, which may be threatening to the Christian majority in the EU. Strabac and Listhaug (2008) use data from the European Values Study to demonstrate that people in many European countries have more

negative opinions towards Muslims than they do towards immigration. There is no indicator in the Eurobarometer survey to measure fear of religious difference, but it is plausible to assume that these opinions depend on the *individual's religion*. Those who are Muslim themselves would likely have no objection, whereas Christians may object to a Muslim country joining the EU. Likewise, many atheists and agnostics may feel that Muslim religious values are fundamentally opposed to their own values, such as gender equality, and that Muslims pose a threat to the secular nature of European societies, for instance, by women wearing a Muslim headscarf or parents not sending their girls to co-ed schools. We therefore test the influence of an individual's religious affiliation (no religious affiliation, Catholic/Protestant, Orthodox or Muslim) on their opinion of Turkey's membership in the EU.

The possible migration flows into more developed EU states resulting from Turkey's membership in the EU are not only associated with economic disadvantages for certain segments of society, but also with a threat to one's own lifestyle and culture. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005) showed that anti-immigrant sentiment has an influence on Eurosceptic attitudes; McLaren (2007) and De Vreese *et al.* (2008) also showed that attitudes towards Turkish EU membership are influenced by these cultural factors. We therefore test whether the respondents see immigrants as providing cultural enrichment, which would correspond with support for Turkey's accession into the EU. Respondents could answer if they believed that *immigrants contribute positively* to their country (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Political Ideology

Turkey's potential membership in the EU has become a topic in the political arena of many countries, and we use general political ideology to analyse these political attitudes. As many scholars have shown, the left–right scale is an abstract, ideological framework that citizens use to interpret specific political issues (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Huber, 1989; Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990). This abstract left–right pattern is based on two underlying dimensions: an economic one and a cultural one. In the economic dimension, the 'right' is associated with deregulation and market expansion, and the 'left' is associated with regulation of markets and state intervention. Culturally, 'right' issues are an exclusive national identity, national pride and an emphasis on national sovereignty, while the 'left' is associated with inclusion, tolerance towards minorities and internationalism (Hooghe *et al.*, 2004; Kriesi *et al.*, 2006). The economic and cultural dimensions imply different associations between political (left–right) ideology and attitudes towards Turkish EU membership. Since the accession of Turkey implies a further

market expansion and less regulation, people who position themselves on the political right should support the enlargement, whereas those on the political left should oppose it. The opposite should be true for the cultural dimension: since migration movements from Turkey following the accession could be perceived as a threat to national identity in the older Member States, those on the political right should disapprove of the enlargement. Whether the economic or the cultural dimension is more important for people's interpretation of the issue of Turkish membership largely depends on how the issue is framed in public debates. Schäfer and Zschache (2008) show that in German newspapers, cultural interpretations of the issue are more frequent than purely economic reasoning, especially in conservative papers. Likewise, right-wing parties were the ones who argued against the accession of Turkey in the campaign before the 2009 elections to the European Parliament. We therefore suppose that the cultural left–right dimension shapes people's attitudes towards Turkey more than the economic dimension. This assumption is supported by a study by De Vreese *et al.* (2008), who found that a right-wing ideological outlook has a negative impact on support for Turkish accession. In line with this finding, we hypothesize:

H 3: People on the right end of the political spectrum are more likely to reject Turkey's membership in the EU than are people in the middle or the left of the political spectrum.

Other studies of European integration have shown that those who identify as politically left have a more positive attitude towards the EU than do those who identify as politically right (e.g. McLaren, 2002). However, other authors argue that extreme political orientations, both left and right, account for negative attitudes towards the EU (e.g. Berezin and Díez-Medrano, 2008). This interpretation about political extremism applies to political parties as well as to individuals. Carrubba (2001) and Marks *et al.* (2002) show how moderate parties like social democrats are more pro-European than either extreme left- or right-wing parties. To measure political orientation, we use a ten-level scale from Eurobarometer. Respondents could place themselves in the spectrum between left (1) and right (10). Because the relationship between *left–right orientation* and attitudes towards EU expansion may be non-linear, we created three distinct variables: values from 1 to 3 are treated as 'left', values from 4 to 7 are considered 'moderate' and values from 8 to 10 are labelled as 'right'.

General Attitudes towards European Integration

Regardless of the respondent's political ideology, we suspect that his/her attitude towards Turkey joining the EU will be influenced by his/her attitude

towards the EU in general.¹³ Scholars and politicians often view the process of deepening the existing EU structures versus widening the EU to include more members as conflicting aims. According to this argument, EU institutions in their current form are already overstrained as a result of past expansion rounds, as evidenced by financial costs, major socio-structural and economic differences between Member States, migration flows, and an increasing number of decision-makers and potential veto points. This not only complicates the EU's decision-making process, but can also lead to an inability to arrive at an agreement and to act jointly (Lang and Schwarzer, 2007). Turkish membership in the EU would likely further complicate the EU's decision-making process; Turkey would have an important say in many areas due to its large population (it would be the EU's second-largest Member State).

A possible conflict of aims between deepening versus widening current EU structures is a concern among both elites and citizens. Karp and Bowler (2006) show that over 30 per cent of citizens in EU-15 Member States were in favour of strengthening the EU, but at the same time were against expanding to include new members (Karp and Bowler, 2006, p. 376). We therefore assume that attitudes towards strengthening the EU in general affect specific attitudes towards Turkish expansion as follows:

H 4a: Those in favour of deepening the EU are more likely to be against Turkey's joining the EU, viewing it as a hindrance to their goals for advancement.

To measure *attitudes towards deepening the EU* we analysed respondents' agreement with the Europeanization of certain political fields. The index is a composite of whether or not the respondent supports a common currency (0 = rejects, 1 = agrees), an EU-wide foreign policy, a common defence policy and an EU constitution. Cronbach's alpha is 0.70.

One reason for the widespread scepticism towards future rounds of expansion is the fear that EU institutions are not in a position to handle the consequences of expansion. Those who believe that the EU and its institutions function well will probably be supportive of including additional countries. We therefore test the effect of general trust in the EU on a respondent's attitude towards Turkish accession. The variable *trust in the EU* has the values 0 (do not trust) and 1 (trust).

¹³ This is in contrast to footnote 7 above. The attitudes in question here are more general in nature and refer to other objects, such as EU institutions, whereas in the argument outlined above, the attitudes measured were about the same object as the dependent variable itself (Turkey). The Halo effect mentioned above also does not apply here, because the survey questions about these attitudes were placed in a different section of the survey, as were those concerning Turkish EU membership.

H 4b: Respondents who trust the EU's institutional capability are more likely to support Turkish accession into the EU than are those who do not.

In addition to concrete attitudes about the EU and its institutions, we also assume that citizens' identification with Europe will influence their attitudes towards expansion. Dieter Fuchs *et al.* (2009) demonstrated that identification with Europe influenced citizens' support for the EU in general and for EU expansion in particular. Harald Schoen (2008) found a similar correlation regarding support for Turkish accession in Germany. Those who identify not only with their own country or region, but also with Europe as a whole, will be amenable to EU expansion, even if that expansion (as in the case of Turkey) is accompanied by significant costs and economic disadvantages for their own country. We assume:

H 4c: The stronger an individual's identification with Europe, the more likely he/she will support Turkish membership in the EU.

The Eurobarometer contains a suitable variable to measure *identification with Europe*: respondents were asked if they never (= 1), sometimes (= 2) or often (= 3) thought of themselves not only as German, French, etc., but also as European.

Overall, we assume that citizens' attitudes towards Turkey's potential membership in the EU are influenced by their assessment of the economic costs of accession, cultural differences, political orientations and general attitudes towards the EU.

Empirical Results

To test our hypotheses, we calculated logistic regression models that estimate the influence of the individual explanatory factors on the likelihood of supporting Turkish EU membership. We used multi-level models in order to accurately reflect the hierarchical nature of the data (individuals within countries). Table 3 shows our results.

In the first model, we included the various indicators that measure economic costs and benefits. The results show that an individual's personal economic situation hardly influences his/her attitude towards Turkish accession:¹⁴

1. The effect of education is very marginal; an additional five years of education only raised the factor by which a respondent would support Turkish accession rather than reject it by 1.2.¹⁵ This corresponds, for example, to an increased probability of 34 per cent rather than 30 per cent.

¹⁴ The effect of age was controlled for in all models. Other studies have shown that attitudes towards European integration depend on age. Also, age is correlated with other variables in the models.

¹⁵ $1.2 = 1.038^5$.

Table 3: Multivariate Analysis: Explaining Attitudes towards Turkey's EU Membership

	<i>Economic benefits</i>	<i>Cultural differences</i>	<i>Political ideology</i>	<i>Attitudes towards EU</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Fixed effects</i>					
Education	1.04***				1.01***
Unemployed	1.49***				1.35***
Evaluation of personal economy	1.03***				1.00***
Evaluation of country's economy	1.17***				1.08***
Evaluation of EU membership	2.04***				1.33***
Unemployment rate	0.95***				0.94***
Proportion of foreigners	0.93***				0.92***
Net recipient country	2.24***				2.34***
Religion – none ^a		0.41***			0.36***
Religion – Catholic/Protestant ^a		0.28***			0.26***
Religion – Orthodox ^a		0.41***			0.30***
Immigrants contribute		1.84***			1.58***
Political ideology – centre ^b			0.70***		0.84***
Political ideology – right ^b			0.53***		0.66***
In favour of deepening of EU				3.79***	2.94***
Trust in EU institutions				1.36***	1.18***
European identity				1.38***	1.18***
Age	0.99***	0.99***	0.99***	0.99***	0.99***
<i>Variance components</i> ^c					
Country-level variance	0.19	0.45	0.46	0.43	0.16
Rho	0.05	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.05
Pseudo-R ² of non-hierar. model ^d	7.5%	6.7%	1.1%	5.5%	13.6%
N	11,845	11,845	11,845	11,845	11,845
Number of groups	27	27	27	27	27

Source: Authors' own calculations.

Notes: Multi-level logistic regression model. Dependent variable: In favour or against Turkey becoming part of the EU (0 = against, 1 = in favour). Odds ratios are reported. ^a Reference category: Muslims. ^b Reference category: left. ^c Values for empty model are: var(country) = 0.45, rho = 0.12. ^d Pseudo-R² refers to non-hierarchical logistic regression model as there is no commonly used and easily interpretable measure for multilevel models. * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.

2. Contrary to our expectations, the unemployed support Turkish accession more than others, and the effect of one's economic situation is not significant.
3. Likewise, the unemployment rate in a respondent's country does not play a role in determining attitudes towards Turkish accession. Even though many EU citizens are fearful that Turkey's joining the EU would cause increased migration flows, it seems that these fears are not directed towards the labour market.
4. However, the fact that these fears exist shows the positive effect of the variable 'proportion of foreigners' in our model. The higher the percentage of foreigners in a country, the more citizens of that country reject Turkey's accession into the EU. For a 5 per cent increase in the proportion of foreigners, the average level of support for accession sinks by 12 percentage points, for example from 40 per cent to 32 per cent.¹⁶

In contrast to respondents' evaluations of their own economic situations, their subjective evaluations of the national economy have a strong effect on attitudes towards Turkish accession. The odds of supporting rather than rejecting accession are 2.6 times as high for those who assess the situation positively in comparison to those who judge their economy pessimistically. This translates, for example, into a 60 per cent likelihood over 40 per cent. Another influential factor is the respondents' evaluations of the financial costs for current EU countries that would accompany Turkey's membership. As shown by the strong and positive effect of the variable 'net recipient country', citizens in recipient countries are clearly more supportive towards Turkish accession than are citizens in other countries. We assume this is because respondents from these countries focus on the benefits they receive from their membership rather than on the possible financial and economic costs resulting from Turkish accession. This pattern is also present at the individual level: those who believe that their country profits from its membership in the EU are much more supportive of Turkish accession than are those who do not see any profit in their membership.

To sum up, the results support the idea that cost-benefit considerations are relevant factors in predicting attitudes towards accession, as long as they are drawn from the country level rather than from the individual level. This confirms McLaren's (2007) analysis that individual interests play a smaller role than do concerns about the effects of Turkish accession on the nation as

¹⁶ As the percentage of foreigners in Luxembourg is particularly high and most of these immigrants are from the wealthier older EU member countries and do not represent the 'typical' migrant, we have calculated a separate regression analysis excluding Luxembourg. The analysis provides similar results – none of the coefficients changes by more than 0.04.

a whole. Respondents' objective and subjective evaluations of their personal economic situations are nearly irrelevant in estimating attitudes towards accession.

The second model tests the hypothesis that cultural differences influence attitudes towards Turkish accession. As shown above, almost all respondents expect that migration flows would follow, should Turkey join the EU. The deciding factor is how these migration flows are judged. As shown by the strong, positive effect of the variable 'immigrants contribute positively', people who think immigration and immigrants are positive for their country are more supportive of Turkey joining the EU than are those who judge immigration negatively and who fear the associated changes to their culture and lifestyle. This conforms to our expectations. In addition, attitudes differ depending on the respondent's religion as well. In contrast to Muslims (who serve here as the reference category), both people without any religious affiliation and Orthodox Christians are much less likely to support Turkish membership in the EU. This applies even more to Catholics and Protestants, who oppose Turkish membership more strongly than other groups. Catholics and Protestants on the one hand and atheists and agnostics on the other probably have different reasons for their aversion to Muslims. Whereas the first may feel a threat to their own Christian faith and the Christian heritage of their society, the latter may feel that Muslim religiosity challenges the secular nature of modern European societies. The results imply that feeling threatened in one's own religious values leads to the strongest objection to the EU membership of a Muslim country.

These findings support the idea that perceived cultural differences are viewed as an actual threat and are therefore treated as a reason to reject Turkey's accession into the EU. This is backed up by results from McLaren (2007) and De Vreese *et al.* (2008) for western Europe and the Netherlands, respectively. We can also show that these cultural differences are tied to religion. This explains why Turkey, as a Muslim country, experiences stronger rejection from EU citizens than do other possible accession countries that also differ in areas like language and value systems, but are Christian.

The third model tests the influence of political ideology on attitudes towards Turkish accession. The results confirm our hypotheses, but at a much lower level of significance. Those who judge themselves to be in the middle of the political spectrum have a higher probability of rejecting Turkish membership in the EU than do those who self-identify as politically left. This is also true for those who identify as politically right – their probability of supporting Turkish accession into the EU is much smaller than it is for those on the left. Apparently, it is not those with politically extreme viewpoints who are sceptical of Turkish accession; rather, the rate of rejection increases the more

that you move from the left end of the spectrum towards the middle or the right.

The fourth model tests the degree to which respondents' general attitudes towards Europe and the EU affect their attitudes towards Turkish accession. All of our indicators show positive effects – people who see themselves as a citizen of Europe in addition to belonging to a nation or region are more supportive of Turkish accession into the EU. Those who have a high level of trust in EU institutions are also positive towards Turkish accession. It may be that these people are more confident that EU institutions would not be overstrained by expanding to include Turkey and could handle the consequences. Contrary to our expectations, respondents do not anticipate a conflict between deepening versus widening the EU. Those who support strong political integration and a transmission of authority to the EU level are also more supportive of Turkish membership – the correlation between these two attitudes is especially high. As compared to those who vehemently reject deepening current EU structures, those who preferred strengthening the EU are at the same time 3.8 times more likely to support rather than reject Turkish accession, which corresponds to a 40 per cent likelihood of supporting accession versus a 72 per cent one.

Like De Vreese *et al.* (2008), we found that economic factors, in addition to political and cultural factors, influence attitudes towards EU expansion. However, we do not differentiate between supposedly hard and soft and traditional indicators, but rather by various theoretical and thematically deduced sets of explanatory factors. We therefore come to a slightly different conclusion for the EU-27 than De Vreese *et al.* did for the Netherlands: overall, a respondent's generalized attitude towards Europe, fear of cultural difference, and economic reasons all work to influence his/her attitude towards Turkish accession in roughly equal measure.¹⁷ The fact that economic factors as a whole play a slightly larger role in determining attitudes could be due to the fact that our data allow us to differentiate between objective and subjective economic conditions at both the individual and societal level and that we analysed differences both within and across countries.

Finally, model 5 tests whether our results hold after controlling for all other variables. As the results show, this is largely the case. The only variable that loses significance is education, whose effect was already very small in the earlier model. Model 5 also reveals that personal economic situations (both objective and subjective) do not influence attitudes towards Turkish accession. However, this is not the case for the national economy: the effects of the

¹⁷ Economic and cultural factors work independently of one another – our evidence did not support an interaction effect between 'hard' economic measures and 'soft' attitudes towards immigration. The result that De Vreese *et al.* (2008) found could pertain specifically to the Dutch situation.

macrovariables ‘proportion of foreigners’ and ‘net recipient country’ are just as significant in this model as before, and the respondent’s subjective evaluation of the national economy remains significant.

Cultural differences retain their significant influence on attitudes towards Turkish accession, even after adding in other variables. Especially noteworthy is that Christians tend to reject Turkish accession more than do those with no religious affiliation, whereas Muslims tend to support Turkey’s accession. The influence of migration also remains strong between models 2 and 5, as does political ideology. The further right in the political spectrum a respondent places him/herself, the more likely he/she is to reject Turkey’s membership in the EU. The effects of general attitudes towards the EU are only marginally smaller in the composite model than they are without the control of other variables. Those who feel European, support deepening EU structures and trust the EU also tend to be in favour of Turkey joining the EU.

Overall, our hypotheses were confirmed: the higher the respondents see the economic benefit of Turkish accession for their country, the lower the real or imagined cultural differences, and the more positive view they have towards Europe and the EU in general, the more likely they are to support expanding the EU to include Turkey. As model 5 shows, our analysis is not made up of alternate and mutually exclusive approaches, but rather of factors that are legitimate both on their own and in tandem with other approaches.

Conclusions

After a long period of hesitation, the EU opened official accession negotiations with Turkey, and Turkey has made significant efforts to fulfil the accession criteria in recent years, both through political and economic reform as well as through socio-economic convergence with EU countries. At the same time, however, Turkey’s eventual accession into the EU has become less likely. As our analysis shows, support for the EU’s expansion goals is slim among its citizenry and has actually lessened over time. Our analysis of the Eurobarometer survey shows that citizens in countries that would ratify the accession treaty with Turkey through a referendum (rather than through parliament) are especially opposed to Turkey’s eventual membership. It seems rather unlikely that a majority of French or Austrians would eventually support the accession, given that current rates are only 24 per cent and 5.6 per cent, respectively. If the accession process were to fail due to a referendum in a Member State, EU–Turkish relations would be severely damaged. Turkey has been trying to become a member of the EU since 1963, and, to that end,

has undergone strenuous accession negotiations and exerted itself greatly to fulfil the accession criteria. If Turkey's candidacy is rejected by an EU Member State after this long process and despite fulfilling all of the formal accession criteria, this would appear both as a snub and as a public slight against the Turkish people.

Our causal analysis suggests that EU citizens' attitudes will only change in a positive direction if they are convinced that the expansion process will not bring about inordinate financial costs or increased immigration from the accession countries to the more well-off countries. If politicians want to influence their citizens towards a more positive view of Turkish accession, they should address these specific concerns. They should work to better portray the economic and political *advantages* that Turkey's EU membership would have for current EU citizens. If the common fear is that accession would create large-scale migration and therefore threaten culture and labour markets in the EU, then politicians could set longer-term limits on freedom of movement, for example.

It is also valid to think about alternatives to full EU membership and to prepare 'Plan B'. Cemal Karakas suggested a 'gradual integration' model in which 'Turkey is not only economically but also partially integrated in political sectors and would be granted participation in those integrated sectors; however, Turkey would not have the right to veto in the Council' (Karakas, 2006, p. 6). Karakas sees numerous advantages to this model: 'additional gain of time that is required by the EU as well as by Turkey for further reforms; partial political integration of Turkey into European structures without overstressing the Union institutionally; comparative cost advantage in comparison to full membership' (Karakas, 2006, p. 7). The idea of gradual integration is already a reality for current EU members: there is one group of Member States who share a currency and another group that enjoys freedom of movement through the Schengen Agreement. A gradual integration model would not only help Turkey prepare politically, but would also keep a working relationship between Turkey and the EU should full membership be rejected.

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