

## How can Turkey Protect Its Interests in the European Union?: The Role of the European People's Party

Türkiye Avrupa Birliği'ndeki Çıkarlarını Nasıl Koruyabilir?:  
Avrupa Halk Partisi'nin Rolü

Teslim: 10 Şubat 2017  
Onay: 05 Ekim 2017

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### Abstract

The European People's Party is the most powerful political force in influencing decision-making in the European Union's institutions. Thus, this party's views are not only very important for the European Union itself, but also for Turkey in terms of its membership bid and protection of its many other interests. The European People's Party, however, is strictly against granting Turkey the membership of the European Union, most importantly because it believes that Turkey does not share European cultural identity and Christian Democratic values. It also harms Turkish interests regarding the so-called Armenian genocide and the Cyprus question. Although the party has acted against Turkey for discriminatory reasons, due to its significant power in the European Union, this article recommends that Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party should become an associated member of the European People's Party. This would give the Justice and Development Party the right to vote in the institutions of the European People's Party. It is also recommended that the Justice and Development Party should empower its office in Brussels in order to influence the European People's Party members in leading European Union institutions through lobbying methods. Such pragmatic moves should help maintain Turkey's membership prospects and protect many Turkish interests..

**Keywords:** *European People's Party, European Political Parties, Justice and Development Party, Lobbying.*

### Öz

Avrupa Halk Partisi, Avrupa Birliği'nin kurumlarında karar alımına etki eden en önemli siyasi güçtür. Bu nedenden dolayı, partinin görüşleri sadece Avrupa Birliği için değil üyelik ve diğer çıkarlarını koruması açısından Türkiye için de çok önemlidir. Ancak, Avrupa Halk Partisi, en önemli nedenler olarak Avrupa kültür kimliğini ve Hıristiyan Demokrat değerleri paylaşmadığı gerekçesiyle Türkiye'ye Avrupa Birliği üyeliği verilmesine karşı çıkmaktadır.

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Ayrıca, Avrupa Halk Partisi, sözde Ermeni soykırımı ve Kıbrıs sorunu konularında Türkiye'nin çıkarlarına zarar vermektedir. Avrupa Halk Partisi Türkiye'ye yönelik ayrımcı nedenlerle hareket etmesine rağmen, bu makale iktidardaki Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin bu organizasyona Avrupa Birliği'ndeki önemli gücünden dolayı ortak üye olmasını önermektedir. Böylece, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Avrupa Halk Partisi'nin kurumlarında oy kullanabilecektir. Makalede ayrıca, Avrupa Halk Partisi'nin Avrupa Birliği'nin önde gelen kurumlarındaki üyelerini lobi yöntemleri ile etkilemesi için Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin Brüksel'deki ofisini güçlendirmesi önerilmektedir. Bu pragmatik eylemler, Türkiye'nin üyelik olasılığının devamına ve diğer birçok çıkarının korunmasına yardımcı olabilir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Avrupa Halk Partisi, Avrupa Siyasi Partileri, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Lobıcılık*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Several important factors make the European People's Party (EPP) the most significant political force in influencing decision-making in the institutions of the European Union (EU). First, the EPP with its 217 MEPs (Member of the European Parliament) represents the largest group in the European Parliament. Second, the EPP's MEPs chair more parliamentary committees and delegations than other parties. Third, the presidents of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council are all from the EPP. Fourth, 13 members of the European Commission are from the EPP family. Fifth, 8 heads of state and government in the European Council are leading political figures in the EPP. Sixth, the EPP group has more members than other party groups in the European Committee of Regions (CoR), with 127 members. Given that the EPP is heavily represented across these institutions, its views are very significant for EU decision-making.

Developing close relations with such a powerful organization is important for Turkey to protect its interests. Through the statements of its political leaders and its election manifestos, the EPP has shown many times its opposition of Turkey's EU membership bid. This mainly stems from Turkey's supposed distance from European cultural identity and Christian Democratic values. In addition to these discriminatory views, the EPP has taken biased actions against Turkey, such as supporting claims about the so-called Armenian genocide and defending the Southern Cyprus Administration on the Cyprus question. Nevertheless, Turkey should maintain a pragmatic approach. More specifically, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP) should become an associated member of the EPP to cast votes in this organization's leading institutions and empower its office in the EU's capital financially and institutionally to influence EPP family's members in the EU institutions. Such an approach would protect Turkey's interests, particularly its EU membership bid.

The first section of this article explains the history, structure, key policies and power of the EPP. The second section shows which EPP decisions, leader statements and parts of its election manifestos have damaged Turkish interests before analyzing the main reasons behind its opposition to Turkey's EU membership bid. The third section presents recommendations to the JDP to protect Turkish interests while the conclusion provides a general overview.

### **1. THE EPP: HISTORY, STRUCTURE, KEY POLICIES AND POWER**

After many years of struggle of the European political parties to receive funding from the EU, the Treaty of Nice (Article 2, Section 19), which came into effect on February 1, 2003, paved the way for the adoption of a Regulation related to the solution of the main problem of the European political parties by expanding Article 191 of the Treaty of Rome. It included the following paragraph: "The Council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to

in Article 251,<sup>1</sup> shall lay down the regulations governing political parties at the European level and in particular the rules regarding their funding.”<sup>2</sup> On November 4, 2003, Regulation No 2004/2003 was introduced, stipulating in Article 2 that a political party or alliance of political parties can be labeled as a “political party at the European level” if it fulfills the following conditions (Article 3):

“(a) it must have legal personality in the Member State in which its seat is located; (b) it must be represented, in at least one quarter of Member States, by Members of the European Parliament or in the national Parliaments or regional Parliaments or in the regional assemblies, or it must have received, in at least one quarter of the Member States, at least three per cent of the votes cast in each of those Member States at the most recent European Parliament elections; (c) it must observe, in particular in its programme and its activities, the principles on which the European Union is founded, namely the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law; (d) it must have participated in elections to the European Parliament, or have expressed the intention to do so.”<sup>3</sup>

Crucially, the regulation permitted the European political parties to receive funding from the EU budget.<sup>4</sup> As a result of the EU’s decision to give funding, the European political parties became more effective entities. On December 18, 2007, with the adoption of Regulation No 1524/2007 to amend Regulation No 2004/2003, the conditions to become a ‘political party at the European level’ were expanded and obligations on taking funding from the EU budget were tightened.<sup>5</sup> The Regulation also introduced the concept of a ‘political foundation at the European level’, meaning that the European political parties should establish think tanks to underpin their objectives.<sup>6</sup> Regulation No 1141/2014, adopted on October 22, 2014, changed the concepts of ‘political party at the

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1 Article 251 refers to the co-decision procedure in which the European Parliament takes part.

2 “Treaty of Nice Amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties Establishing the European Communities and Certain Related Acts”, Official Journal of the European Communities, 2001/C 80/01, March 10, 2001, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2001:080:TOC> (Accessed on: March 3, 2017).

3 “Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 on the Regulations Governing Political Parties at European Level and the Rules Regarding their Funding”, Official Journal of the European Union, L 297, 15 November 2003, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32003R2004> (Accessed on: February 1, 2017).

4 Ibid.

5 For these conditions and obligations, see “Regulation (EC) No 1524/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2007 Amending Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003 on the Regulations Governing Political Parties at European Level and the Rules Regarding their Funding”, Official Journal of the European Union, L 343/5, December 27, 2007, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32007R1524> (Accessed on: February 1, 2017).

6 Ibid.

European level’ and ‘political foundation at the European level’ to ‘European political party’ and ‘European political foundation’ respectively. In addition, the regulation gives EU-level legal status for the European political parties and their European political foundations if they meet certain conditions.<sup>7</sup> To grant such a status, an independent authority was established in the European Parliament. Among other requirements, EU funding of these entities was conditional on having legal status.<sup>8</sup> As of January 2017, the EU legally recognizes 16 pan-European parties as the European political parties: the Alliance for Direct Democracy in Europe, the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, the European Alliance for Freedom, the European Christian Political Movement, the European Democratic Party, the European Free Alliance, the European Green Party, the EPP, the Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom, the Party of European Socialists, the Party of the European Left, the Alliance of European National Movements, the Alliance for Peace and Freedom, the Coalition for Life and Family and the Europeans United for Democracy.<sup>9</sup> The latter four do not have a group in the European Parliament while the EPP forms the largest group.

The institutional cooperation between Christian Democratic parties in Europe dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1925, a congress of Catholic parties established ‘The International Secretariat of the Democratic Parties of Christian Inspiration’, in which parties from Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Italy were active participants. However, this ceased to function after World War II broke out in 1939. After the war, in 1947, cooperation between Christian parties restarted at the European level with the establishment of ‘*Nouvelles Equipes Internationales*’ (NEI, New International Team), which crucially managed to bring together Christian Democratic parties of Germany and France.<sup>10</sup> NEI became a very important political factor in the formation of Christian Democratic political groups in the Council of Europe’s Consultative Assembly, the European Coal and Steel Community’s Common Assembly and the European Economic Community’s European Parliamentary Assembly.<sup>11</sup> In 1965, having successfully held 16 congresses since 1947 NEI decided to change its name to the European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD) under a new charter. This was mainly the result of the establishment of many Christian Democratic

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7 For these conditions, see “Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the Statute and Funding of European Political Parties and European Political Foundations”, Official Journal of the European Union, L 317/1, November 4, 2014, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014R1141> (Accessed on: February 1, 2017).

8 Ibid.

9 European Parliament, “Grants from the European Parliament to Political Parties at European Level Per Party and Per Year”, Directorate-General for Finance, January 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/grants/Grant\\_amounts\\_parties\\_01\\_2017.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/grants/Grant_amounts_parties_01_2017.pdf) (Accessed on: February 23, 2017).

10 Steven Van Hecke, “On the Road towards Transnational Parties in Europe: Why and How the European People’s Party was Founded”, *European View*, 3, (Spring 2006), 153.

11 Roberto Panini, *The Christian Democrat International*, (Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 59.

organizations in the Americas as well as the formation of a world Christian Democratic Union that had restricted the NEI's activities in Europe.<sup>12</sup>

The decision taken at the EC (European Community) leaders' Paris summit in 1974 to hold direct elections for the European Parliament was a milestone for the EC political system. Shortly after, Europe's Christian Democrats started to work on establishing a European party. The EPP Statute, drafted in close cooperation by Wilfried Martens and Hans-August Luecker, was adopted at a EUCD Political Committee meeting on April 29, 1976, and the decision to establish EPP was taken. Leo Tindemans was elected as the EPP's first president. In February 1978, the Christian Democratic group in the European Parliament also changed its name to the Group of the EPP.<sup>13</sup> In the first European Parliament elections in 1979, the EPP received 29.6 percent of the vote against 26.6 percent for the Social Democrats, providing it the largest group with 107 parliamentarians in the European Parliament. However, the Social Democrats defeated the EPP in the 1984, 1989 and 1994 elections. The victory of the EPP in the 1999 elections was attributed to the economic concerns of European electorates regarding increasing immigration. In the next three elections, the EPP managed to protect its majority over the Social Democrats. Today, the EPP includes 79 national political parties, with 41 from the EU and 38 from non-EU countries,<sup>14</sup> making it the largest European center-right political party.

The EPP aims to enhance cooperation among its members to create common European policies; promote democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms through a common program; and promote EU unification and federalism. There are four types of EPP membership. 'Ordinary Membership' is open to all political parties in EU member states on condition that they follow a Christian Democratic or like-minded ideology. The EPP's Political Assembly can grant 'Associated Membership' to Christian Democratic or like-minded political parties from the non-EU member states whose applications have been introduced by the EU or European Free Trade Association member states. For example, the Democratic Party of Albania, the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, the Christian Democratic People's Party of Switzerland, Norway's Conservative Party and Serbia's Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina all have associated membership. The Political Assembly can grant 'Observer Membership' at the behest of the EPP Presidency to parties ideologically close to the EPP from EU member states, EU applicant states and states in the Council of Europe. The Republican Party of Armenia, led by the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, and two opposition parties, namely the Country of Law Armenia and the Heritage Party, currently have EPP observer membership. Finally, MEPs in the European Parliament's EPP group are ex officio 'Individual Members' if they were elected from the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>13</sup> EPP-ED Group, [http://epp-ed.europarl.eu.int/Activities/Forum/doc/martens\\_en.asp](http://epp-ed.europarl.eu.int/Activities/Forum/doc/martens_en.asp) (Accessed on: June 27, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> EPP, "History", <http://www.epp.eu/about-us/history/> (Accessed on: February 23, 2017).

list of a member party.<sup>15</sup>

The EPP's institutions comprise the Presidency, Political Assembly and Congress. The Presidency includes the EPP President, EPP Group Chairman in the European Parliament, the Honorary President(s), ten Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, Secretary General and, if they are from the EPP, the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council and the High Representative for the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. As the EPP's executive institution, it is, among other missions, tasked with implementing the Political Assembly's decisions, preparing the budget, monitoring the Secretariat work and making statements in line with the EPP's political program. The Political Assembly, which meets quarterly, is the EPP's strategic institution, comprising *ex officio* and delegated members.<sup>16</sup> It is responsible for adopting the budget, deciding on membership applications and exclusion of members, adopting internal regulations and finalizing political guidelines. The highest decision-making institution is the Congress, which meets tri-annually.<sup>17</sup> It decides on the political program and main policy documents, makes amendments to the party's statutes, elects the President, Vice Presidents, the Treasurer and the Secretary General, and elects the party's candidate for the President of the European Commission. In both the Political Assembly and the Congress, decisions are taken by an absolute majority of attending members. It is very important to note here that the presidents of associated member parties and their party delegates can also vote in the Political Assembly and the Congress.<sup>18</sup>

One of the EPP's principle policies is that a better EU can be achieved if major issues remain in the EU's domain while minor ones are delegated to individual member states. According to the EPP, the Euro is a reliable currency that makes the EU economically competitive in international markets and politically stable. It believes Europe can only grow if new businesses, small and medium-sized companies, family companies and entrepreneurs are supported. Although it sees free movement of people within the EU as one of the greatest achievements of the European integration project, it also claims the EU can only benefit socially from this freedom if EU citizens work in their own countries. To control illegal immigration, the EPP proposes closer cooperation among member states and between member states and front-line countries through which immigrants flow, and the reinforcement of the EU's border agency, Frontex. The EPP suggests that the EU's foreign security and defense

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15 EPP, "Statutes and Internal Regulations", October 21, 2015, 5-6, [http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/09/EPP-Statute\\_EN.pdf](http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/09/EPP-Statute_EN.pdf) (Accessed on: February 8, 2017).

16 *Ibid.*, 11.

17 EPP, "Internal Regulations of the European People's Party", Approved by the EPP Political Assembly in Oslo, June 2, 2015, 1, <http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/12/EN-Internal-Regulations.pdf> (Accessed on: February 24, 2017).

18 EPP, "Statutes and Internal Regulations", 13; EPP, "EPP Congress", <http://www.epp.eu/structure/congress/> (Accessed on: February 8, 2017); EPP, "Internal Regulations of the European People's Party", 3.

capabilities must be empowered to better cope with new security threats, such as international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and illegal immigration. According to the EPP this would make the EU safer and a global player. It welcomes the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Agreement negotiations with the United States, believing that this agreement can increase trade volume, growth, employment and prosperity.<sup>19</sup> The EPP's policy on EU enlargement is explained in the next section while analyzing its reasons to oppose Turkey's EU membership bid.

For various reasons, the EPP is the most influential political force in decision-making in the EU's institutions. First, by creating the largest group in the European Parliament after the 2014 European Parliament elections with 217 out of 751 seats, it has gained considerable power in the European Parliament. European Parliament's tasks include taking part in the EU's legislative process, the ordinary legislative procedure, equally with the Council of the European Union, having the final word on the EU's annual budget, electing the president of the European Commission, approving or dismissing the European Commission and giving consent for the EU to sign accession treaties with applicant countries. Forming the largest group in the parliament gives the EPP more strength than the other parliamentary political groups. Thus, EPP can easily set the political agenda and be in the winning side of votings in the European Parliament.<sup>20</sup>

Second, as the largest group,<sup>21</sup> the EPP has more MEPs in the European Parliament's standing committees and delegations. EPP's MEPs chair 8 out of 22 standing committees and 14 out of 44 delegations, including the Delegation of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee.<sup>22</sup> Having more MEPs in the committees gives a significant advantage to the EPP in the EU's legislative process, as in the general assembly, since these committees adopt reports in which they instruct legislative proposals, determine a team to negotiate with the Council of the European Union on draft laws and propose amendments.<sup>23</sup> The delegations are responsible for ensuring cooperation with parliaments in non-EU countries.

Third, the presidents of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council, namely Jean-Claude Juncker, Antonio Tajani and

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19 EPP, "Why Vote for the European People's Party? (2014 Election Manifesto)", 2014, [https://is-suu.com/eppparty/docs/epp\\_manifesto\\_final\\_single\\_page](https://is-suu.com/eppparty/docs/epp_manifesto_final_single_page) (Accessed on: February 8, 2017).

20 EPP Group in the European Parliament, "Structure", <https://www.eppgroup.eu/structure> (Accessed on: February 26, 2017).

21 The composition of the committees and delegations in the European Parliament is proportional to the number of seats that the parties hold in the general assembly.

22 MEPs from the EPP Group chair the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Budgetary Control Committee, the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Committee on Fisheries, the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

23 European Parliament, "About Delegations", <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/about-delegations.html> (Accessed on: February 28, 2017).



Donald Tusk, are all from EPP family. Juncker's political affiliation is particularly important since the European Commission is the EU's executive branch. Its President allocates portfolios to members (commissioners) and determines the European Commission's political agenda.<sup>24</sup> In addition, these presidents' statements are highly respected and considered very important for EU integration.

Fourth, the EPP has significant weight in the European Commission as 13 out of its 28 members (including the President) are from the EPP. While the European Commission principally takes its decisions collectively, it sometimes calls majority voting (15 out of 28, with each member having one vote).<sup>25</sup> The EPP holds regular meetings with these members, who belong to its family, to influence them regarding decision-making in the European Commission.<sup>26</sup> Given that the European Commission starts the EU's legislative procedure by preparing draft laws and introducing policies and strategies, the EPP wields considerable power over these issues thanks to these 13 members.

Fifth, 8 heads of state and government of the European Council currently belong to EPP family: German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, the Southern Cyprus Administration's Chairman Nicos Anastasiades, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov and Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic. As the EU's highest political institution, the European Council is responsible for setting the EU's political agenda by defining the EU's priorities and general directions.<sup>27</sup> It meets at least twice a year, taking its decisions mostly through consensus. While it does not take part in the legislative process, it is able to give an impetus to the EU's legislative process. Before each European Council summit, heads of states and governments from the EPP meet, officially called the EPP Summit, to ensure they speak as one voice in the summit to drive EU integration in line with the EPP's political orientation and strategies.<sup>28</sup>

Sixth, 125 out of 350 members in the CoR belong to the EPP Group. The CoR, which is the EU's assembly of local and regional representatives, plays a significant role in EU decision-making as it is consulted at all stages of the legislative process to prevent EU laws harming European regions and cities.<sup>29</sup>

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24 European Commission, "Role", [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/president\\_en#role](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/president_en#role) (Accessed on: March 16, 2017).

25 European Commission, "Decision-Making During Weekly Meetings", [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/decision-making/decision-making-during-weekly-meetings\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/decision-making/decision-making-during-weekly-meetings_en) (Accessed on: February 27, 2017).

26 EPP, "European Commission", <http://www.epp.eu/network/in-the-eu/> (Accessed on: February 27, 2017).

27 European Council, "Setting the EU's Political Agenda", <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/role-setting-eu-political-agenda/> (Accessed on: February 27, 2017).

28 EPP, "Internal Regulations of the European People's Party", 3.

29 European Committee of the Regions, "Work of the CoR", <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/Pages/>

Two-thirds of all EU laws are referred to the CoR. Six separate CoR commissions<sup>30</sup> first give their opinions according to their areas of competence on the European Commission's proposed legislation before sending them to the plenary assembly for discussion and adoption.<sup>31</sup> Because both CoR bodies use majority voting for their decisions, the EPP is the driving force as it has more members than other parties in them.

## **2. THE EPP AND TURKEY**

By looking at EPP election manifestos, various decisions taken by the EPP and important statements made by the EPP leaders, it can be observed that the EPP harms Turkish interests regarding its EU membership bid, the so-called Armenian genocide and the Cyprus question. The problematic concepts like European cultural identity and European values are the leading factors behind the EPP's opposition to Turkey's EU membership bid.

### **2.1. EPP Harm to Turkish Interests**

An analysis of the enlargement part of the EPP manifestos for the European Parliament elections shows the party's opposition to Turkey's EU membership bid. After EU member state leaders declared at the European Council's Copenhagen Summit of June 21-22, 1993, that the Central and Eastern European Countries would become members if they fulfilled the Copenhagen Criteria, these countries applied for membership. At the European Council's Luxembourg Summit of December 12-13, 1997, EU leaders decided to start accession negotiations with Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovenia and the Southern Cyprus Administration, which had met the Copenhagen political criteria. For the remainder, namely Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Malta, EU leaders decided to open negotiations at the European Council's Helsinki Summit of December 10-11, 1999. In its election manifesto for the 1999 European Parliament elections, the EPP viewed the forthcoming enlargement very positively, stating that enlargement would eliminate the division of the continent since the end of World War II while new members would increase stability and bring economic and political benefits to the EU. Thus, the EPP recommended the acceleration of their accession negotiations.<sup>32</sup>

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work-of-the-cor.aspx (Accessed on: February 28, 2017).

30 These commission are the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs, the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget, the Commission for Economic Policy, the Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy, the Commission for Natural Resources and the Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture.

31 European Committee of the Regions, "Commissions", <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/commissions/Pages/commissions.aspx> (Accessed on: February 28, 2017).

32 EPP, "On the Way to the 21st Century- EPP Action Programme 1999-2004", Adopted by the XIII EPP Congress, 4-8 February 1999, Brussels, 5, [http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/Action\\_Programme\\_1999\\_2004.pdf](http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/Action_Programme_1999_2004.pdf) (Accessed on: February 13, 2017).

However, when the EU opened the accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005, this troubled many Europeans, particularly in Germany, France, Austria, the Netherlands and Greece, due to a fear of free movement for Turkish workers within the framework of the Single Market if membership were provided. Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy significantly abused this fear both in their election campaigns and afterwards. This fear also played a major role in the Dutch and French voters' rejection of the EU Constitution, which the EPP was significantly in favor of since its introduction would create a federal Europe. Because opening accession negotiations with Turkey would have negative implications for some parts of its social base, who could this time very likely cast their votes for far-right parties, the EPP adopted a new enlargement policy in 2006, declaring that the EU must consider its absorption capacity in future enlargements.<sup>33</sup>

Faced with the negative effects on its social base of rising unemployment and illegal immigration in Europe, the EPP declared in its 2009 and 2014 European Parliament election manifestos that the EU must take into account its absorption capacity for new member states in addition to the requirement of fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria and must protect its identity when welcoming them.<sup>34</sup> It can be easily understood that, by emphasizing absorption capacity and identity, the EPP was referring to Turkey. Indeed, the EU restarted referring to absorption capacity in 2005 because of debates about Turkey's membership (absorption capacity was first included in the Conclusions of the 1993 Copenhagen European Council Summit),<sup>35</sup> while whether Turkey's Muslim identity is compatible with Christian Europe has long been a discussion topic in EU member states.

The most stunning example of the EPP leaders' targeting Turkey's membership had taken place at the EPP Summit on March 4, 1997, when the EU's Christian Democratic leaders discussed EU enlargement. The summit was significant since the leaders were going to submit their views on whether Turkey would be declared as a candidate country or not. They agreed that Turkey should not be a candidate country because it is different from other candidates with significant and seemingly unsolvable problems. The summit also discussed the potential differences between Turkish and European civilizations. After the summit, Wim van Welzen, President of the European Union of Christian Democrats, made a statement about the results on behalf of the attendees. He

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33 EPP, "For a Europe of the Citizens: Priorities for a Better Europe (Rome Manifesto)", Adopted by the EPP Congress, Rome, March 30-31, 2006, [http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/Rome\\_Manifesto.pdf](http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/Rome_Manifesto.pdf) (Accessed on: February 13, 2017).

34 EPP, "Strong for the People- EPP Election Document 2009", Adopted by the EPP Congress, Warsaw, April 29-30, 2009, 30, [http://www.epp-ed.eu/Press/pdoc09/manifestoEPP\\_en.pdf](http://www.epp-ed.eu/Press/pdoc09/manifestoEPP_en.pdf) (Accessed on: February 13, 2017); EPP, "EPP Action Programme", Adopted by the EPP Congress, Dublin, March 6-7, 2014, 31-32, <http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/Action-programme-EN.pdf> (Accessed on: February 13, 2017).

35 Michael Emerson, Senem Aydın, Julia De Clerck-Sachsse and Gergana Noutcheva, "Just What is 'Absorption Capacity' of the European Union", Centre for European Policy Studies, Policy Brief, No.113, September 2006, <http://aei.pitt.edu/7355/2/7355.pdf> (Accessed on: February 13, 2017).

said that Turkey should not be included in the EU since “the EU has different values than Turkey with regard to culture, humanity and Christianity.”<sup>36</sup>

While many senior Christian Democratic politicians in Europe have openly stated their opposition to Turkey’s EU membership, it is enough here to give two more examples since it is only focused on the EPP. On November 24, 2016, the European Parliament voted for a non-binding resolution suspending accession negotiations with Turkey. This resolution was adopted by 471 MEPs who claimed that Turkey had applied “disproportionate repressive measures” during the state of emergency declared by the Turkish government after the failed military coup on July 15, 2016, despite Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, seriously warned MEPs that approving the motion would only create a “lose-lose scenario.”<sup>37</sup> Shortly after the resolution was adopted, on November 26, 2016, Manfred Weber, Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, went further in an interview with the German newspaper *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, saying that “Turkey will not become a member of the European Union.”<sup>38</sup> His statement was reminiscent of the statement of Wilfried Martens, former President of the EPP (1990-2013), many years before: “Turkey has no place in Europe,”<sup>39</sup> or French presidential candidate Nicholas Sarkozy’s allusion to well-known Christian Democratic politicians’ views about Turkey’s EU membership after the EPP Summit in Brussels in December 2006: “Angela Merkel, Jose-Manuel Barroso, Jean-Claude Juncker, Wilfried Martens... we are all in agreement that we need Europe with borders.”<sup>40</sup>

The EPP also completely agrees with the Armenians regarding the so-called Armenian genocide. Following Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan’s intense efforts to influence the EPP’s view on this issue, on March 3, 2015, the EPP’s Political Assembly adopted a biased resolution, ‘The Armenian Genocide and European Values’, on the eve of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of events on April 24, 1915. The resolution called on Turkey to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide if it respected the European values as a candidate state, pay compen-

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36 “Türkiye Tartışması”, *Milliyet*, March 4, 1997; “Medeniyet Farkı Gerektirir”, *Milliyet*, March 6, 1997; “Kohl’un Gerçek Yüzü Ortaya Çıktı”, *Sabah*, March 6, 1997.

37 “Turkey Reacts Angrily to Symbolic EU Parliament Vote on its Members”, *The Guardian*, November 24, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/24/eu-parliament-votes-freeze-membership-talks-turkey> (Accessed on: February 9, 2017).

38 “European People’s Party Weber: EU will not be Blackmailed by Turkey”, *Tornos News*, November 26, 2016, <http://www.tornosnews.gr/en/greek-news/politics/20837-european-people%E2%80%99s-party-weber-eu-will-not-be-blackmailed-by-turkey.html> (Accessed on: February 9, 2017).

39 Cited from Meltem Müftüler-Baç, “The Institutional and Theoretical Implications of the Enlargement on Turkey’s Accession to the European Union”, In *D’Un Elargissement A L’Autre: La Turquie et les Autres Candidates*, ed. Jean-Claude Verez, (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 161.

40 “Sarkozy Says Gaining Ground Over Turkey”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 16, 2006, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/sarkozy-says-gaining-ground-over-turkey.aspx?pageID=438&n=sarkozy-says-gaining-ground-over-turkey-2006-12-16> (Accessed on: February 9, 2017).

sation, ensure the return of Armenians, repair religious and cultural sites used by Armenians, normalize relations with Armenia and refer to the so-called genocide in educational institutions. The resolution also invited the EU, and its legislative institutions, namely the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, and the international community to officially commemorate April 24 and condemn the so-called Armenian genocide.<sup>41</sup> As well as being biased, the resolution was also the solidarity show of European Christian Democratic parties with their Armenian counterparts, the ruling Republican Party of Armenia and two opposition parties, the Heritage Party and the Country of Law Armenia, which are EPP observer members. The EPP's move, as the most powerful political force in the EU's institutional political system, gave inspiration and courage to other groups in the European Parliament to adopt a non-binding resolution, almost identical to the EPP's, which was passed in the European Parliament on April 15, 2015, with an overwhelming majority. Turkey reacted harshly to this. While Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan accused MEPs of showing "religious and cultural fanaticism,"<sup>42</sup> the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommended that "Members of the European Parliament may better consider their own past and remember especially their roles and responsibilities in the most abhorrent calamities of humanity such as World War I and World War II, well before dealing with the 1915 issue."<sup>43</sup>

As with the so-called Armenian genocide, the EPP also has a biased attitude on the Cyprus question and it shows that by supporting the Southern Cyprus Administration. Whereas the international community criticized the Southern Cyprus Administration for its responsibility in the referendum that rejected the Annan Plan<sup>44</sup> in the island's southern part, the EPP gave strong support to the Administration against Turkey. Two years after the referendum, in March 2006, the EPP Congress in Rome adopted the following biased resolution, written by EPP member Democratic Rally Party of the Southern Cyprus Administration: "EPP calls on Turkish authorities to effect an early withdrawal, pursuant to the relevant UN resolutions, of its forces within a specific timetable, and calls on the Turkish authorities to show their constructive attitude in finding a settlement of the Cyprus question."<sup>45</sup> The wording of the resolution

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41 EPP, "The Armenian Genocide and European Values", Resolution Adopted by the EPP Political Assembly, March 3, 2015, <http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/The-Armenian-Genocide.pdf> (Accessed on: February 9, 2017).

42 "Turkey Accuses EU of 'Religious Fanaticism' in Armenia Genocide Resolution", DW, April 16, 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/turkey-accuses-eu-of-religious-fanaticism-in-armenia-genocide-resolution/a-18388624> (Accessed on: February 9, 2017).

43 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, "Press Release Regarding the Resolution by the European Parliament on the 1915 Events", April 15, 2015, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-117\\_-15-april-2015\\_-press-release-regarding-the-resolution-by-the-european-parliament-on-the-1915-events.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-117_-15-april-2015_-press-release-regarding-the-resolution-by-the-european-parliament-on-the-1915-events.en.mfa) (Accessed on: February 9, 2017).

44 The Annan Plan was prepared by the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan for the unification of Cyprus through a federal solution.

45 Southern Cyprus Administration Embassy in Washington D.C., "European People's Party Presi-

clearly shows that in order to demonstrate Christian Democratic solidarity, the EPP ignored or misrepresented Turkey's constructive efforts, which had been widely acclaimed internationally, both before and after the referendum, and the 64.9% 'yes' vote of Turkish Cypriots against the 75% 'no' votes of Greek Cypriots in the referendum itself. Nevertheless, this unjustified wording of the resolution is now included in many important EPP documents.

## **2.2. Reasons for the EPP to Oppose Turkey's EU Membership and Their Criticisms**

European cultural identity and European values (according to the EPP, these are also Christian Democratic values) emerge as the most important two factors in the EPP's opposition to Turkey's EU membership. This is clear from the analysis in the previous sub-section and from a questionnaire I conducted in February 2017 with a few MEPs from the EPP Group in the European Parliament.<sup>46</sup>

The EPP believes that European cultural identity is founded on ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and Christianity.<sup>47</sup> Since Turkey does not share these values, according to the EPP, it must not be allowed to become an EU member state. In fact, this has never been officially documented. However, many leading politicians from the EPP, such as Helmut Kohl, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Nicolas Sarkozy, Angela Merkel and Herman Van Rompuy have in many occasions clearly stated that Turkey's cultural differences establish a significant reason for the denial of its full EU membership, not to mention the famous discriminatory remarks of Wim van Welzen in March 1997. For example, in 2004, President of the Convention on the Future of Europe, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former French President and former MEP from the EPP Group in the European Parliament, stated that Turkey cannot become an EU member due to its different cultural identity: "the European Convention sought a clearer definition of the foundations of this entity, which include the cultural contributions of ancient Greece and Rome, the religious heritage pervading European life, the creative enthusiasms of the Renaissance, the philosophy of the Age of the Enlightenment and the contributions of rational and scientific thought. Turkey shares none of these."<sup>48</sup> Although it is true that these significantly contributed to the civilization process in Europe, they are not entirely European since it achieved this cultural

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dent Says Failure of Annan Plan does not Pardon Turkey", May 7, 2007, <http://cyprusembassy.net/home/index.php?module=article&id=4048> (Accessed on: February 28, 2017).

46 Although I sent the questionnaire to all MEPs in the EPP Group in the European Parliament through e-mail, only six of them responded. That is why I could not put the results in the article. Nevertheless, the answers gave me a general idea about their real opposition reasons to Turkey's EU membership bid.

47 EPP, "A Union of Values", Basic Document Adopted by the 14th EPP Congress in Berlin, January 11-13, 2001, [http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/A\\_Union\\_of\\_Values.pdf](http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/A_Union_of_Values.pdf) (Accessed on: February 21, 2017).

48 Cited from Catherina MacMillan, *Discourse, Identity and the Question of Turkish Accession to the EU: Through the Looking Glass*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 103.

accumulation to a large extent through borrowing and diffusion from ancient Mediterranean civilizations,<sup>49</sup> in which Anatolia made a very significant contribution. Modern Turkey is located in the geographical area where a significant part of Greek thoughts accumulated, which eventually led to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.<sup>50</sup>

In its four party programs, adopted in 1978, 1992, 2001 and 2012, the EPP states that the cultural identity of Europe is also based on Christianity.<sup>51</sup> The EPP has also sometimes clearly acted against secularism and religious pluralism (diversity) in Europe. In this respect, it is sufficient to give two examples. First, during the preparations of the EU Constitution, Elmar Brok, then the Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, who represented the EPP at the Constitutional Convention, fiercely demanded the inclusion of an explicit reference to Christianity in the EU Constitution, stating that “Europe as a whole is based on a Christian heritage.”<sup>52</sup> To realize this, Brok’s Group also proposed an amendment for the Constitution’s Article 2.<sup>53</sup> While some in Europe opposed a reference to Christianity since it would severely damage the EU’s secular character, others argued that it would be obviously discriminatory since Judaism and Islam had also contributed to Europe’s history and civilization.<sup>54</sup> Second, faced with mass Muslim immigration to Europe following the crisis in Syria, in 2015, the EPP’s official think tank, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, published an article entitled “Ethics and Religion: What’s the EU Got to Do with It?”, which offered many discriminatory policy proposals for the EU to protect Christianity in Europe. The article complained that Islam was becoming more powerful in Europe while Christianity was disappearing; thus it called on EU institutions to play an active role in the re-Christianization of Europe.<sup>55</sup>

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49 Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford, *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and Implications for Europeanization*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 38.

50 Onur Bilge Kula, *Avrupa (İtlık) Nedir? Türkiye Ne Kadar Avrupalıdır?*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2015), 429-430.

51 The first three party programmes should be reached from Thomas Jansen and Steven Van Hecke, *At Europe’s Service: The Origins and Evolution of the European People’s Party*, (Berlin: Springer, 2011), 253-353. For the EPP’s last party programme, see, EPP, “Manifesto- EPP Statutory Congress”, Adopted at EPP Congress in Bucharest, October 17-18, 2012, <http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/EPP-Manifesto-2012-EN1.pdf> (Accessed on: February 21, 2017).

52 Terrence Murray, “Europe Debates God’s Place in new Constitution”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 10, 2003, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0410/p07s01-woeu.html> (Accessed on: February 20, 2017).

53 Kimmo Kiljunen, *The European Constitution in the Making*, (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2004), 51.

54 Sabrina P. Ramet, “Thy will be Done: The Catholic Church and Politics in Poland since 1989”, In *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, eds. Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 141.

55 Jos J. Van Gennip, “Ethics and Religion: What’s the EU Got to Do with It”, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, Brussels, 2015, 19 and 32. <https://www.martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/ethics-religion-eu.pdf> (Accessed on: February 15, 2017).

The EPP's opposition to Turkey's EU membership because of its Muslim identity stems from its aim of protecting Europe's supposed Christian identity and avoiding a loss of votes in European Parliament elections since a large part of the party's social base opposes Turkey's accession. Regarding the former aim, the EPP claims that accepting almost 80 million Turkish Muslims into the EU will significantly damage Europe's Christian identity. Many puritans in the EPP also believe that Turks have been the most important defender and developer of Islam for centuries, and that Turkey was established on the heritage of the Ottoman Empire, which was Christianity's major enemy in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Regarding the latter aim, troubled with domestic political failures, such as rising unemployment, the failure to integrate Muslim immigrants into European social life and terrorist actions against many European cities, the majority of the EPP's social base has become very prejudiced against Muslim populated Turkey. Thus, the EPP fears losing votes if it takes any positive view on Turkey's EU membership. It also considers it is very profitable to use anti-Turkey discourses to consolidate the party's social base, especially during election campaigns.

The EPP's Christian-centric understanding of European identity is very problematic because, in addition to the contradiction of referring to a Christian European identity and secularism together, it obviously ignores the accumulation, historicity, processual nature and relativity of the concept of culture. Consequently, the EPP's understanding ignores how many of Europe's and Christianity's roots appeared and evolved in Anatolia.<sup>56</sup> To give a few examples, the vast majority of ecumenical councils that first determined the fundamental beliefs and practices of Christianity gathered in Anatolian cities like İstanbul, **İznik** and Ephesus;<sup>57</sup> Anatolia's very significant role in the spread of Christianity is reflected in the word 'Christian' being first used in the Anatolian city of Antakya, from where it spread worldwide;<sup>58</sup> Saint Basil the Great started the sermon tradition in Christianity in Cappadocia.

According to the EPP, European values include "human dignity, peace, freedom and responsibility, democracy, fundamental equality, justice and solidarity, the rule of law, checks and balances, the separation between state and religion, tolerance, freedom of speech, truth as well as subsidiarity," which the EPP also defines, interestingly, as Christian Democratic values.<sup>59</sup> It considers that Turkey does not share these values since it is a Muslim country.<sup>60</sup> However, both ideas are absurd since these concepts are not in the preserve of

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56 Kula, XXI.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 25-27.

59 EPP, "Protecting the Union and Promoting Our Values", Adopted at the EPP Congress in Madrid, October 21-22, 2015, p. 3, <http://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2015/11/Protecting-Union.pdf> (Accessed on: February 22, 2017).

60 Mirela Bodgani, *Turkey and the Dilemma of EU Accession: When Religion Meets Politics*, (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 94.



any particular country, international organization or religion; rather, they are universal values so allocating them into the framework of just one religion, as the EPP does, indicates the EPP's ignorance of the history of civilization. One may ask why, if it seriously defends European values, the EPP adopted in 2002 the 'European Partnership' concept for Turkey instead of EU membership given that Turkey was introducing unprecedented and widely praised democratization reforms between 1999 and 2004. It is also worth asking why the EPP started to support a 'Privileged Partnership' with Turkey just after accession negotiations started instead of encouraging Turkey to make more democratization reforms. One reasonable answer is that the EPP did not believe Muslim Turkey was compatible with Christian Democratic values.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE JDP**

Turkey's center-right political parties' first gained presence among transnational Christian Democratic political parties in Europe in 1985 when the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi-ANAP) joined the European Democrat Union (EDU), most of whose members were EPP members. The EPP absorbed the EDU in 2002. Although the True Path Party and the Welfare Party also applied for EDU membership, they were rejected on the grounds that ANAP's consent was first required because of an article in their statutes, which stipulated that other parties from one country can only become a member if an existing member party from the same country agrees.<sup>61</sup> On January 28, 2005, the JDP was granted observer membership by the EPP, although it actually demanded and was invited to become an associated member. Merkel's Christian Democratic Union and Sarkozy's French Union for a Popular Movement played a significant role in blocking the JDP's associated membership. Nevertheless, the EPP promised to grant this once accession negotiations started. As an observer member, the JDP was not allowed to cast votes in EPP institutions.<sup>62</sup>

After the start of Turkey's accession negotiations on October 3, 2005, the JDP many times requested the EPP to fulfill its promise of giving associated membership. When the EPP failed to respond, the JDP left the EPP in 2013 and joined the Eurosceptic 'Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe' (ACRE) in the same year. However, the JDP has not found what it was looking for in ACRE since the association has very negative views on enlargement, federalism and immigration. The European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), ACRE's political group in the European Parliament, also signed motions about the so-called Armenian genocide in April 2015 and for a temporary freeze of accession negotiations with Turkey in November 2016. Turkey's interests in the EU may be better protected if the JDP manages to gain associated membership of the EPP by reapplying. This would have two

61 "Refah'ın EDU Üyeliği Zor", *Milliyet*, November 11, 1997.

62 "AKP, Avrupa Halk Partisi'ne Gözlemci", *Sabah*, January 29, 2005; "AP'deki Erdoğan Kavgası'nın Nedeni", *Internet Haber*, <http://www.internethaber.com/apdeki-erdogan-kavgasinin-nedeni-606861h.htm> (Accessed on: February 28, 2017).

benefits. First, since the EPP gives such members the right to cast votes in the Political Assembly and the Congress, harming the interests of one of the family's member countries would be difficult for the EPP, both in adopting resolutions and in its leaders' statements. Second, ACRE's power to influence EU decision-making is very limited compared to the EPP, as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Comparison of the Powers of the EPP and ACRE in EU Institutions**

| <b>Number of Members in EU Institutions</b>   | <b>EPP/Total</b> | <b>ACRE/Total</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Number of MEPs in the European Parliament   | 217/751          | 75/751            |
| Number of MEPs Chairing the European Parliament's Standing Committees               | 8/22             | 2/22              |
| Number of Member Politicians Leading EU Institutions                                | 3                | 0                 |
| Number of Members in the European Commission  | 13               | 0                 |
| Number of Members of the Heads of State and Government in the European Council      | 8/28             | 2/28              |
| Number of Members in the European Committee of the Regions                          | 125/350          | 15/350            |
| Number of Members Chairing the Commissions in the European Committee of the Regions | 2/6              | 0/6               |

*Source: Websites of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council and the European Committee of the Regions.*

The EU's legislative institutions, namely the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the CoR and the Economic & Social Committee are all located in Brussels. These institutions, particularly the European Parliament have increased their legislative role over the last 20 years as the EU has provided them significant powers to participate in lawmaking. This has led to business groups, companies, trade unions, civil-society institutions and non-EU countries to establish lobbying offices in Brussels to influence EU law-making. Although there is no precise number, the Corporate Europe Observatory estimates that there are nearly 30,000 lobbyists in Brussels today, with two-thirds of them representing business interests. This huge number means that the EU capital is the world's second largest lobbying center after Washington D.C.<sup>63</sup> Many major political parties from various EU and non-EU countries also have offices in Brussels.

Although the JDP established an office in Brussels in 2015, it seems that it was not founded with the aim of lobbying since it lacks sufficient financial power and personnel. Instead, its activities remain focused on providing political education to Turks through its Political Academy and organizing occasional conferences in its office building and the European Parliament. If the JDP

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63 Corporate Europe Observatory, "Brussels: The EU Quarter", September 2011, 7, <https://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/ceolobbylow.pdf> (Accessed on: October 20, 2015).

manages to gain associated membership of the EPP, it should consider empowering this office financially and institutionally to protect Turkish interests by influencing EPP members, who are the most important influencers of EU decision-making in the European Parliament, the European Commission and the CoR. The following lobbying methods could be used. First, to convince MEPs, particularly MEPs in the EPP Group, about Turkey's problems and explain Turkey's interests, it should organize more conferences in the European Parliament about Turkey's problems with the participation of prominent politicians from Turkey and scholars. Second, it should arrange regular cocktail parties and dinners in prestigious Brussels locations for JDP and EPP members to meet. Third, it should host trips to EPP family members to Turkey to show them Turkey's rich variety of cultural and religious sites. The latter two strategies, particularly the third, should be very effective for developing friendships and breaking down prejudices on Turkey, especially regarding cultural identity differences. It is worth noting that such methods are already used very effectively by the European Friends of Israel, a powerful Jewish lobby in Brussels.

## **CONCLUSION**

Among all the European political parties, the EPP is the driving force behind EU integration because it has enormous influence in EU decision-making institutions. In the European Parliament, it forms the largest group, represented by 217 out of 751 members. It also has more MEPs in the standing committees than other parties and holds the chairmanships of 8 out of 22 of these committees. In the European Commission, 13 members are from the EPP, including President Jean-Claude Juncker. In the European Council, 8 out of 28 heads of state and government are EPP family members. President Donald Tusk is also from the EPP. As in the European Parliament, the EPP is the largest group in the CoR, with 125 out of 350 members. This also gives it more members than other parties in the CoR's six separate commissions, with EPP members chairing two of them.

Due to such powers, the EPP's views are very important for Turkey, both in terms of the EU membership and to protect its various interests in the EU. Yet Turkey's political parties are not represented in this very effective organization. This situation conflicts with Turkish interests since it creates a platform for the EPP and its leaders to exhibit an anti-Turkish attitude regarding Turkey's membership bid. In addition, the EU's most powerful political force seems to be vulnerable to Armenian and Southern Cyprus Administration influence. Thus, Turkey's ruling JDP, which gave up its observer membership status in 2013 before joining ACRE as a full member, a much less powerful European political party, should consider re-establishing cooperation with the EPP. The best way to protect Turkish interests would be to gain EPP's associated membership since this gives voting rights in the EPP's decision-making institutions, namely the Political Assembly and the Congress. If the JDP can become a decision-maker and family member of this organization then the EPP and its leaders would refrain from conflicting with Turkish interests as they did

before regarding Turkey's EU membership, so-called Armenian genocide and the Cyprus question. To protect Turkish interests, the JDP should also consider strengthening its office in Brussels to lobby EPP family members in Brussels, through organizing high-quality conferences in the European Parliament on issues of concern to Turkey, cocktail parties and dinners with the participation of JDP and EPP members. Moreover, trips to Turkey can help the Turkish representatives to show their cultural and religious heritage. Such precautions can eliminate EPP prejudices, which mainly stem from their belief that Turkey does not share a European cultural identity.

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