

THE ATTITUDE OF TURKISH CYPRIOT MEDIA ON EU RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study is devoted to the analyzing of the attitude of Turkish Cypriot Press on the development of the relations between EU and Turkish Cypriots, within the context of EU enlargement process. It has been found that a part of the press supports the necessity of the development of relations with EU; however, a part of the press is more cautious on these relations. The attitude of both groups has an important role in shaping the ideas of Turkish Cypriots on EU.

Together with the developments in communication technologies, media became the most effective power center of the world. Likewise, media is described as the fourth power in Cyprus, like most of the western countries. Naturally, media today, possess the methods and the means to affect as well as to change the attitudes and behavior of people. Media, possessing the power on determining the attitudes is also effective in shaping national and international relations.

In this research, the attitudes of Turkish Cypriot community and the role of press on EU relations in recent past has been studied. Three newspapers of the highest circulation were searched thoroughly, and the news and interpretations concerning EU have been analyzed through "content analysis method". The results are compared with Euro Barometer 67 and 68 public opinion (on Turkish Cypriots) results, and evaluated.

Key Words: Press, EU Relations, Attitude

ÖZET

Çalışmada, AB Genişleme perspektifinde, AB ve Kıbrıslı Türklerin ilişkilerinin geliştirilmesi sürecinde Kıbrıs Türk Basını'nın izlediği tutum ele alınmıştır. Çalışma sonucunda, bir grup basın kuruluşunun AB ve Kıbrıslı Türklerin ilişkilerinin geliştirilmesini desteklediği ancak karşı görüşte olan bir grup basın kuruluşunun bu konuda daha temkinli yayınlar yaptığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Her iki grupta yer alan basın kuruluşlarının yaptığı yayınların, Kıbrıs Türk halkının AB'ne bakış açısının şekillenmesinde önemli rol oynadığı tespit edilmiştir.

İletişim teknolojilerinin de hızlı gelişimiyle medya bugün, kamuoyunu etkilemede en güçlü araçlardan biri haline gelmiştir. Dünyada olduğu gibi KKTC'de de medya dördüncü kuvvet olarak toplum içinde yerini almıştır. Bu gücüyle medya, kamuoyunun tutum ve davranışlarını etkileme ve değiştirme yöntemlerine sahiptir.

Bu çalışmada, Kıbrıs Türk Basını'nın son yıllarda AB ve Kıbrıs Türk halkının ilişkilerinin şekillenmesinde oynadığı rol irdelenmiştir. Tiraajı en yüksek üç gazetede yer

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alan AB ile ilgili haber ve yorumlar 'içerik analizi' yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar AB Barometer 67 ve 68'de yer alan Kıbrıslı Türklere ilişkin kamuoyu görüşleriyle karşılaştırılarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AB İlişkileri, Basın, Tutum

INTRODUCTION

The news media are the primary source of the pictures in our heads about the larger world of public affairs, a world that for most people is 'out of reach, out of sight, out of mind' (5, p.29). The priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. The aspects of issues selected for attention by the media influence the public's perception of these issues. Media's perception of the issues is effective on drawing the attention of the public.

Attitudes and behavior are usually governed by cognition – what a person knows, thinks, and believes. Hence, the agenda setting function of the media implies a potentially massive influence to be investigated and appreciated (6, p.11). At the same time media express the interests and understanding of the public. Shifting patterns of positive and negative tone in press effects attitudes and opinions. Beyond attitudes and opinions, the picture of reality created by press has implications for personal behaviors and this correlation shapes public opinion. We can see this correlation between Turkish Cypriot press and Turkish Cypriots attitudes towards EU.

The EU enlargement process had a new pace in 2004 with the participation of new members, including Cyprus. Because of no solution in the island, EU suspended *acqui communitaire* in North. However, EU institutions took some steps to develop the relations between Turkish Cypriots - EU and to prepare Turkish side to the Union.

After the referendum held in 24th April 2004 on Annan Plan, the decision of European Commission for the Financial Aid and Direct Trade Regulations for Turkish Cypriots strengthen the relations between EU and Turkish Cypriots. The aim of both regulations is to contribute to the economic development of Turkish side.

Parallel to this development, the Turkish Cypriot Press had reflected the new process in the news contents. The news about EU and the regulations took important place in the newspapers. Headings were supported with photographs taken in meetings by Turkish Cypriots before referenda in favor of Annan Plan, and the articles were mostly optimistic.

The Financial Aid Regulation approved in 2006 by the Commission, two years after Council's decision and the trade regulation remains with the Council for consideration. As a result of this, news contents in newspapers dramatically changed and gradually became pessimistic. The mutual interaction

of Turkish Cypriots' perception and the news contents in the press are the reflection of the current image of EU – Turkish Cypriot relations.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to determine the changes in the attitude of Turkish Cypriot Media towards EU relations and to put forward the current situation for consideration. The determined aim is going to be reached through the following sub-aims.

1. The effect of media on public opinion and the importance of presentation of news.
2. The relation of Turkish Cypriot community with EU after Referenda 2004.
3. The expectations of Turkish Cypriot community.
4. News in newspapers in the first half of 2007.
5. Euro barometer 67 and 68 results.

METHOD

This study is carried out through general searching and content analysis methods. The 1, 2, and 3 sub-aims of the study constituted through searching literature on this field from different sources and the information have been reconstructed. The 4th aim of the study is achieved through searching the news in three newspapers, *Kıbrıs*, *Halkın Sesi* and *Yenidüzen*, which have the highest circulations in North Cyprus, and the number of the news and the contents has been analyzed. The page numbers of the news have also taken into account in order to determine the presentation and the importance given to the news. The news are categorized in four parts as, “distribution through months”, “number of news in each newspaper”, “distribution through subjects” and “the page numbers of the news”. In the last part, the results are compared with Euro Barometer 67 and 68 public opinion results (on Turkish Cypriots).

FINDINGS

1. Media

1.1 The Effect of Media on Public Opinion

The media play a crucial role in forming and reflecting public opinion. The media communicate the world to individuals and reproduce the self-image of the society. Media is means for the transfer of information, concepts and ideas to both general and specific audiences (7).

The power of the news media to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on certain issues, is an important and well-documented influence (6, p.1). The agenda setting influence of the news media is not limited to this initial step of focusing public attention on a particular topic, but also influence the

next step in the communication process, our understanding and perception on the topics in the news.

Mass media, apart from any influence they may have on personal opinions, can also influence an individual's perception of what other people are thinking. The reason is that people infer public opinion from their perceptions of the content of media coverage and their assumptions of the persuasive impact of that coverage on others. The correlation between how issues are ranked on the media agenda and how the public ranks the importance of these same issues is +50 or better. That reflects a substantial degree of influence (6, p.3).

1.2 Importance of the Presentation of the News in Newspapers

The presentation of the news in newspapers is also as important as the content of the news. The page number and its place in the page, headings and the photographs used contribute to the effectiveness of the news. News given in front page, supported with photographs, with big headings and spots helps to draw the attention of the reader on the issue. Newspapers arrange and page-up the news according to their importance to make readers to perceive the agenda easily.

There is a casual relation between the importance given to certain issues by newspapers and the public. The presentation of the news is the product of the dominant views among the public. The daily repetition of the issues in the form of articles, headings and subheadings, especially supported by photographs, is an other way of presenting news. It is the authority of the newspapers to create focus on certain news or just the opposite.

2. The relations of EU with Turkish Cypriots after Referenda 2004

Following the outcome of simultaneous referenda held on 24 April 2004 in Cyprus, European Council (26 April 2004) stated that the Turkish Cypriot community has expressed their desire for a future within the European Union, and Council was determined to facilitate the reunification of Cyprus by encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community. The Council invited the Commission to bring forward comprehensive proposal to this end, with particular emphasis on the economic integration of the island and on improving contacts between the two communities and with the EU. After this development, Commission proposed on 7 July 2004 a package of aid and trade measures for this reason (4, p.1).

2.1 Financial Aid Regulation

The aim of the Financial Aid Regulation is to establish a legal instrument for encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot Community. The Council has approved the aid regulation on 27 February 2006. The financial resources allocated to this programme amount to 259 million Euros. Assistance is being used to support inter alia;

1. The promotion of social and economic development including restructuring, in particular concerning rural development, human resources and regional development.
2. The development and restructuring of infrastructure.
3. Bringing the Turkish Cypriots closer to the Union, through *inter alia* information on the EU's political and legal order, promoting to people to people contacts and community scholarships (4, p.2-3).

2.2 Direct Trade Regulation

The aim of the Direct Trade regulation is to enable Turkish Cypriot community on special conditions to trade with EU. The draft proposal offers a preferential regime for products entering the Customs Territory of the EU and contains *inter alia* detailed rules concerning the documents which would certify the origin of goods and which would be issued by the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce or another duly authorized body, phytosanitary inspection, food and product safety, taxation issues, communication obligations, and safeguard measures in the event of ineffective cooperation, irregularities or fraud. It is proposed that the preferential regime take the form of a tariff quota system which should be established with a view to encouraging economic development while avoiding the creation of artificial trade patterns or facilitating fraud. (1, p.2)

3. The Expectations of Turkish Cypriots

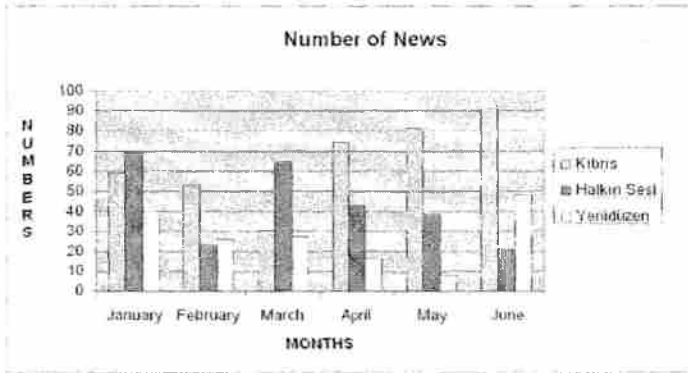
After the referendum, Turkish Cypriot community who voted in favor of the Annan Plan expected EU to take concrete steps to support Turkish Cypriot economy at once. After the Commission's invitation of a package of aid and trade measures, Turkish Cypriots had great hopes that they would have obtained opportunity to have cooperation with EU. Turkish community perceived the Commission's decision as a symbolic sign of ending economic problems and believed that both regulations complemented each other. Because the Regulation remains with the Council for consideration, Turkish Cypriots have begun to lose their enthusiasm and trust to EU Institutions as time passes. Diminishing of the hopes of effective corporation with EU changes their attitude towards EU and this change gradually reflected in the news contents of the Turkish Cypriot Press.

4. News in Newspapers in the first half of 2007

4.1 Discrimination through Months

In the research, it is determined that totally 865 news on EU published in the first half of 2007 (January, February, March, April, June and July) at three newspapers *Kıbrıs*, *Halkın Sesi* and *Yenidüzen*. The number of the news through months in each newspaper is shown in table 1:

Table 1 Discrimination through Months

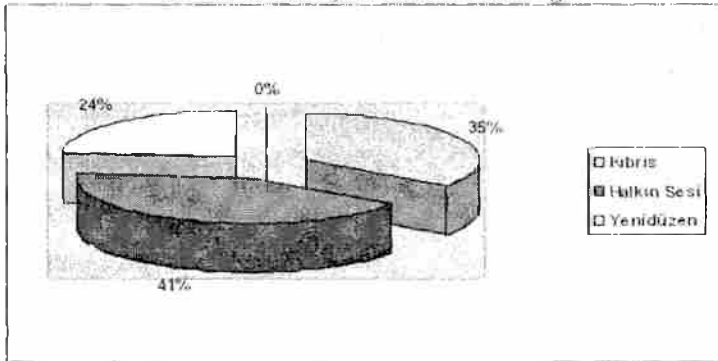


The number of news in *Kıbrıs* and *Yenidüzen* newspapers, who support to strengthen EU relations, is almost same in six months; however, *Yenidüzen* newspaper, especially last three months, has meaningful difference compared to *Kıbrıs*, as the number of news decrease dramatically.

4.2 Number of the News

The number of the news in percentage is given in table 2:

Table 2 Number of the News in Percentage



Although *Kıbrıs* newspaper has more news in last three month compared to both newspapers, *Halkın Sesi* newspaper, which is more cautious on EU relations, has the highest number of news in whole period. The distribution of all news in six months is also homogenous in *Halkın Sesi*.

4.3 Distribution through Subjects

The news is gathered under six subjects. The statements by Presidents and the President's Office, statements by the government bodies, statements by political parties, statements by NGO's, statements by Turkish Authorities and news from EU in general.

In this period 129 number of news on the statements by the President and the President's Office took place in three newspapers. Most of the news under this group calls EU to keep the promises on Financial Aid and Direct Trade Regulations. Most of the news took place in first three pages, emphasizing the importance given to these calls. The news under this group is mostly contains negative aspect.

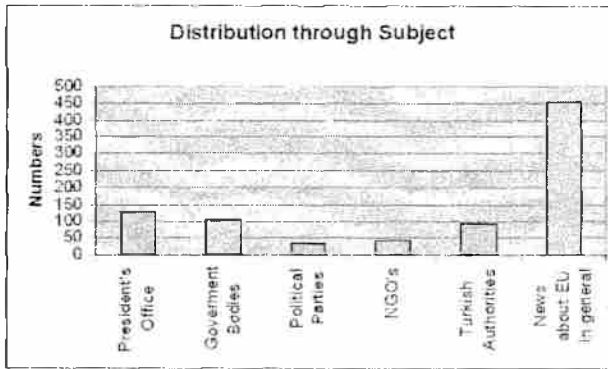
The number of statements by the government bodies is 104, mainly calling EU to keep its promises. The news under this group also includes EU-Turkey relations especially on Cyprus issue and stressing Turkish Cypriots' lose of confidence to EU. Most of the news took place in the first pages and the news having negative aspects in the headings.

The third group is the statements by the political parties which is totally 35. The news is about losing of confidence of Turkish Cypriots to EU and about the promises by EU. The opposing parties also criticize both EU and the government. Most of the news took place in middle pages, however, the news with negative aspect were in headings.

The number of the statements by NGO's is 42, which mostly includes calls to EU for its promises. There is news on seminars for the harmonization of legislation in accordance with EU legislation. News under this group also gives information about EU and its institutions. The fifth group of news, statements by Turkish authorities is 94, are mostly about the promises of EU. Most of the news took place in first pages.

The number of news about EU in general is 455. The news contents are generally about the statements by EU authorities, especially EU Parliament and EU Commission. EU authorities in their statements mostly emphasize that EU will carry out its promises. However, in some news it is obvious that EU authorities expect some steps from Turkish Cypriots. Most of the news took place in middle and back pages.

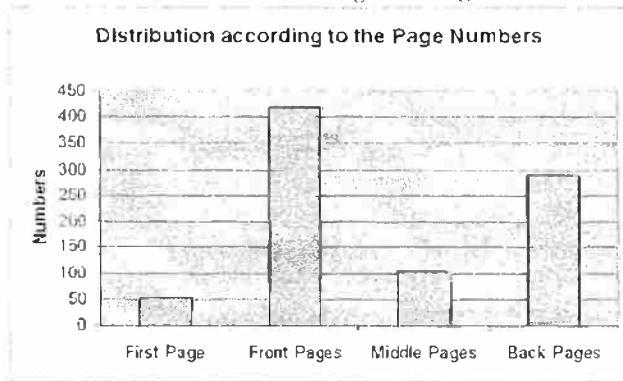
Table 3 *Distribution through Subject*



4.4 Distribution According to the Page Numbers

Within six months the news about EU on six subjects put forward in the research mostly took place in the front pages. The number of news in first page is 52, front pages (2-10) are 420, middle pages (10-20) 105 and back pages are 288.

Table 4 *Distribution according to the Page Numbers*

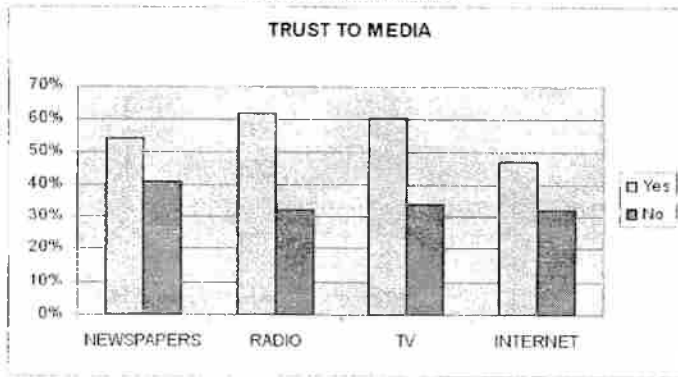


5. Euro Barometer 67 and Euro Barometer 68 Results

5.1 Euro Barometer 67 Results

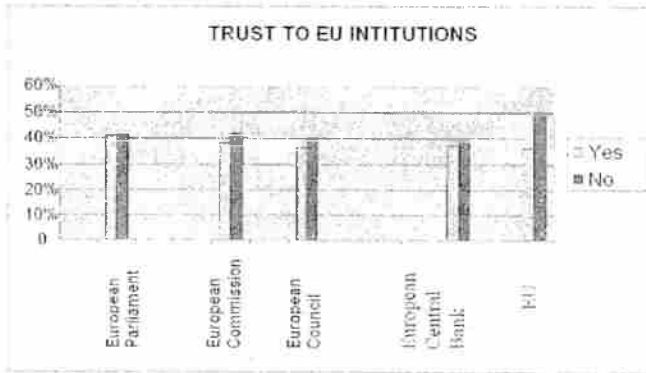
The public opinion research took place in spring period, beginning from October to June 2007. The results on confidence to media and the thoughts on EU relations in Euro barometer 67 shows that 58% of Turkish Cypriots trust media, respectively radio, television and newspapers. The trust to radio is 62%, TV 60% and newspapers are 54%. However, there is no meaningful difference between the percentages as shown in table 5. (2, p.)

Table 5 Trust to Media



The trust to EU is 36%, which has decreased from 45% from the previous public opinion research. Besides this, there is a tendency of no confidence to EU institutions among Turkish Cypriots. According to the results, Turkish Cypriots know more about European Parliament than other EU institutions and in parallel they trust more to European Parliament as shown in table 6. (2, p.)

Table 6 Trust to EU Institutions

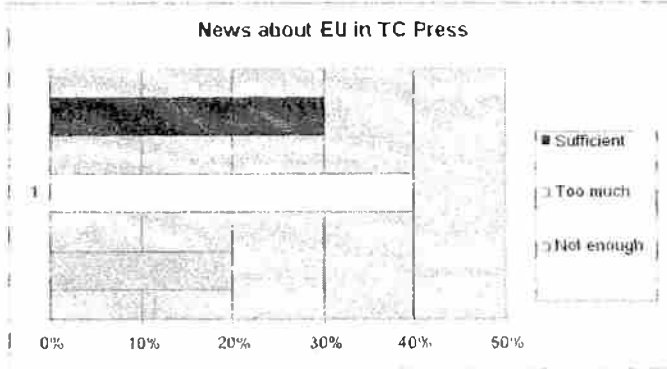


5.2 Euro Barometer 68 Results

The public opinion research took place in autumn period, between July to December 2007. The results on confidence to media and the thoughts on EU relations of Turkish Cypriots in Euro Barometer 68 shows that 46% of Turkish Cypriots trust media, respectively radio, television and newspapers. The trust to TV is 49%, radio 47% and newspapers is 44%. However, there is no

meaningful difference between the percentages. Compared to Euro Barometer 67, the trust level to media decreased (3, p.35).

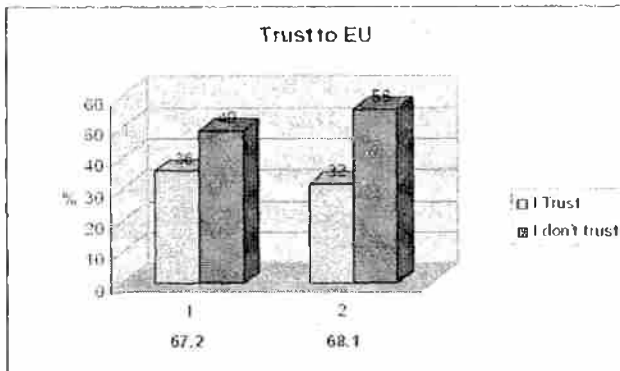
Table 7 Media and European Union



Forty percent of the applicants think that newspapers have sufficient news about EU, 30% think there too much news about EU and 20% thinks there is not enough news. The 39% of Turkish Cypriots think that like TV, newspapers also have positive news on EU and 24% thinks newspapers are objective about the issue. On the other hand, 23% think newspapers have negative aspects. Totally 70% thinks there is sufficient news about EU (Table 7) (3, p.33).

The trust to EU institutions is 32%, a 4% decrease compared to Euro Barometer 67. The result in Euro Barometer 67 is 36%. There is a dramatic decrease in last 18 months in trust to EU institutions (Table 8), (3, p.4)

Table 8 Trust to EU



The other important result is that the number of Turkish Cypriots who think EU membership is a good thing has dropped from 60% to 47%, indicating the declining tendency to EU membership (3, p.27).

CONCLUSION

In the study it is observed that in the period between January and June 2007 the number of the news about EU in Turkish Cypriot Press has decreased gradually and the news contents has changed. In news analysis it is found out that the trust of Turkish Cypriots to EU after referenda was in the peak. However, in the following months the attitude of press to EU relations became pessimistic and cautious. The negative statements by representatives of government and the NGO's took place mostly in front pages.

The number of news published in newspapers on EU had homogenous distribution in general. *Yenidüzen* newspaper which support EU process was expected to have more news on EU, however fell behind the other two newspapers. It is considered that as it is a party newspaper political and local news were covered mostly in the newspaper. Three newspapers showed almost the same attitudes on the EU relations. *Kıbrıs* and *Yenidüzen* newspapers, which are more optimistic on the issue, have more positive news at the beginning of the period compared to the last four months. *Halkın Sesi* Newspaper is more cautious during the period, especially in the contents of the articles. In the last three months the news contents were negative compared to the beginning of the period.

The news contents are usually on Financial Aid and Direct Trade Regulations and the EU's attitude on the issue. These kinds of news mostly call EU to keep its promises to Turkish Cypriots. There is news about EU Institutions as well as about EU legislation. However, the numbers of the news on these issues are not sufficient. The statements of EU representatives took place especially in middle pages. This shows that the three newspapers focus more on statements by Turkish Cypriot authorities than EU representatives. The reason for this is to reflect the Turkish Cypriot people's thoughts and attitudes on EU relations and shows that the statements of EU representatives do not have same impact on public as before.

It is determined that the results of Euro Barometer 67 and 68 coincide with the content analysis results of this study. Both in Euro Barometer 67 and 68 the trust on EU decreased %4 and %13 respectively. At the same time the negative aspects in the news contents increased in this period. This shows the correlation between the trust and negative contents of the news. In order to improve the relations between EU and Turkish Cypriots, EU needs to develop

its relations with Turkish Cypriot Press. Briefing journalists, columnists, as well as NGO members on EU bodies and legislation, by focusing on different aspects of EU membership will improve the cooperation between these institutions and will bridge the way to reshape the Turkish Cypriot attitudes.

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