

## **Foreword: A Conceptual Register for the European Studies in Türkiye: A Tribute to Prof. Atila Eralp**

‘Europe’ has always been a pivotal determinant in Turkish political history but this intense preoccupation gained a particular momentum and form with the 1963 Ankara Agreement (the Association Agreement between Turkey and the European Union-EU). Since then, European Studies has been a significant academic area of interest in Türkiye. Interestingly enough, ebbs and flows in Türkiye-EU relations during all those years left this academic interest intact and since the 1960s, the most established Turkish universities kept opening European Studies Centres including METU and has been involved in extensive research and teaching activities famously known all over by European academia. From the start, the urge to disassociate practical hurdles of the EU integration process from cutting-edge research on European integration has been a challenging yet enriching experience for the European Studies in Türkiye. Centre for European Studies at METU (CES-METU) has been founded in 1997 as one of the leading research centres specializing on European integration within Türkiye and its region against this background. CES-METU was granted the title of a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in 2007 and has been recognized as one of the best practices of its kind in Europe and beyond. In this respect, with its openness to the civil society, accumulated knowledge on EU integration and academic expertise to explore the correlation between academic knowledge and everyday information on European integration, CES-METU has been a significant initiative with its potential to foster development of novel teaching, research and knowledge exchange within the epistemic community in Türkiye. In this respect, if there is one name that needs to be honoured for contributing to the establishment and institutionalisation of Centre for European Studies in METU, as well as to the emergence of European Studies in Türkiye as a distinct discipline, it is Prof. Atila Eralp.

This foreword aims to put the challenges and opportunities faced by the European Studies in Türkiye in a conceptual and historical perspective, mainly with the aim of paying tribute to Prof. Atila Eralp, one of the pioneers of European Studies in Türkiye. Prof. Eralp, among others, has been pivotal for the establishment of the European Studies Programme and the Centre for European Studies of METU in 1997, which aimed to academically equip bureaucrats and policy makers in Ankara who wanted to specialise on European integration against the background of the 1999 Helsinki decision as well as to develop a well-qualified academic cadre in METU as well as in other Turkish universities particularly specialised on European Studies (Eralp, 2023: 7). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the context which contributed to the proliferation of European Studies in Türkiye. In this

respect, this foreword will first explore the academic and disciplinary hurdles of theorising and practicing European Studies in a candidate country like Türkiye, which is in the EU's waiting room for more than 60 years against the background of the historical development of Türkiye-EU relations. We will then assess the experience of integrating European Studies within the Turkish bureaucracy in general and within the Turkish Foreign Policy in particular, which will be followed by a final discussion on the future projections on the European Studies in Türkiye. The final part presents the contents of this issue prepared in honour of Prof. Atila Eralp.

*Challenges and opportunities of teaching and learning the EU in a candidate country*

Research and teaching on the EU and the European integration process has been a largely Eurocentric exercise (Alpan and Diez, 2022: 202). This potentially led to the tendency that European Studies predominantly lacked critical perspectives, a linkage of policy advice and analysis, and a bias towards the prevalent modalities of EU governance. Outside the EU, and in the immediate neighbourhood in particular, EU scholarship has traditionally been dominated by research and material produced within the EU, recycling dependency structures and the academic framework set by the European integration. Thus, it creates a particular dilemma on the part of the European Studies researchers from non-EU countries that they either have to keep their original and critical perspective within the European Studies and get unheard and unpublished, or they have to adopt mainstream approaches to the EU, thereby being able to be heard in the academic circles. The picture gets even more complicated when it comes to teaching European Studies in countries like Türkiye as the EU integration is predominantly an ongoing process and a moving target and the European Studies faces the danger of being perceived as a derivation of how the country in question is doing with regard to the European integration rather than an autonomous scientific discipline in these countries. In this respect, it is necessary to uncouple practical hurdles of the EU integration process from academic research within the EU Studies and sustaining academic dialogue on these challenges. Turkish scholarship on the European Studies seems to suffer from these challenges. Within the European Studies discipline in Türkiye, epistemic diversity has remained fairly limited given the lack of geographic diversity in authorship knowledge production in EU–Türkiye studies and has been mainly Eurocentric due to the almost exclusive use of grand and up-and-coming theories/concepts of European integration. Moreover, the proliferation of issue areas since the launch of the discipline has not culminated in a strong focus on non-

traditional, avant-garde research topics as such (Turhan and Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm, 2022: 290).

Having said that, it is equally inspiring to see that the European Studies is a quite a well-established and institutionalised discipline. The puzzling co-existence of both longevity and complexity in the EU–Türkiye relationship propelled a rich body of literature on the topic and its dissemination through a wide array of established journals to the extent that we can enunciate the strong presence of ‘EU–Türkiye studies’ (Turhan and Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm, 2022: 291). Turkish scholars explored ‘Europeanization’ of public policies (Güney and Tekin, 2016) and specific policy areas in Türkiye such as foreign policy (Torun, 2021; Günay and Renda, 2014), minority policy (Yılmaz, 2017; Atıkcın, 2010), gender policy (Aybars et. al., 2019; Bodur-Ün, 2021), employment policy (Göksel, 2011) and migration policy (Kale et. al, 2018; Kaya, 2021). Beyond that, the second-generation European Studies research agenda also included the study of European debates on Türkiye (Şenyuva and Baydarol, 2024; Aydın-Düzgıt, 2012), discourses (Aydın-Düzgıt, 2016; Alpan, 2014), identities (Rumelili, 2008; Nas, 2012) and public debates (Kaliber, 2016). Nevertheless, Turkish scholars also focused on various processes and policies in the EU per se, such as European Neighborhood Policy (Kahraman, 2005); conflict resolution (Üstün and Akgül-Açıkmeşe, 2021; Ergun and Valiyev, 2024) and the EU’s approach to the Middle East (Altunışık, 2008; Cebeci, 2019) underlining the fact that European Studies in Türkiye is not limited to focusing on the EU policies’ impact on Türkiye.

### *Türkiye-EU relations and the development of European Studies in Türkiye*

Türkiye-EU relations have long been a cornerstone of Türkiye’s foreign policy and a subject of academic inquiry. Although Türkiye’s association with the European project dates back to the 1963 Ankara Agreement, this relationship has been marked by fluctuations, shaped by geopolitical shifts, mutual expectations, and domestic politics on both sides. The intricate dynamics of Türkiye-EU relations have fostered the development of European Studies as a vibrant academic field in Türkiye. This field has grown significantly, driven by increased engagement with the EU institutions, mobility and funding opportunities such as Erasmus+ programs, and academic partnerships under frameworks like FP6, FP7, Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. Turkish scholars have actively contributed to debates on EU enlargement, foreign policy, migration diplomacy, trade relations and democratic governance, often providing unique perspectives informed by Türkiye’s strategic position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the neighborhood.

Universities and research centres in Türkiye have established dedicated programs and institutes to European Studies. One of the pioneer institutions

established in 1987 was the European Communities Research Center (ATAUM) at Ankara University. In Istanbul, the European Union Institute at Marmara University, fostering interdisciplinary research and dialogue on European integration, law, and policy followed soon. At METU, the Center for European Studies under the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences was established by Prof. Atila Eralp and Prof. Ali Gitmez in 1997. The Centre's establishment was followed by the imitation of its interdisciplinary graduate programmes. The European Studies interdisciplinary programme was initiated by Prof. Atila Eralp and Assoc. Prof. Galip Yalman in 2001. The post-graduate studies transformed into two separate programmes of European Studies and European Integration. Under Prof. Atila Eralp's guidance and the collaborative efforts by the scholars at METU and elsewhere, these programmes and the center became hubs for critical scholarship and dialogue, attracting academics, policymakers, and students from Türkiye and abroad. These developments contributed to the proliferation of numerous courses in European Studies developed and initiated by the faculty members of the Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences such as Assoc. Prof. Galip Yalman, Prof. Aylin Ege, Prof. Nuri Yurdusev, Assoc. Prof. Gamze Öz, Assoc. Prof. Sevilay Kahraman, Prof. Özgehan Senyuva, Assoc. Prof. Asuman Göksel, Assoc. Prof. Zerrin Torun, Assoc. Prof. Başak Alpan, Assoc. Prof. Onur Bahçecik and Assoc. Prof. Başak Kale.

Prof. Atila Eralp also contributed significantly to building academic networks and collaborations, particularly through EU-funded projects and partnerships, which enhanced the visibility and credibility of Turkish scholarship on European integration. One of the first social science 6<sup>th</sup> Framework (FP6) EU-funded projects (CESCER) in Türkiye was achieved by the young academics of this Center through the guidance of Prof. Atila Eralp. The Delegation of the European Union later donated its Documentation Center to the CES-METU making it more accessible to undergraduate and postgraduate student and scholars.

CES-METU developed research projects through various EU-funded programmes and Prof. Eralp also received the title of Jean Monnet Chair. The Delegation of the European Union acknowledged that METU students have been the number one recipient of Jean Monnet Scholarships in Türkiye. European studies and European integration related extensive curriculum is definitely contributed to this achievement. The CES-METU later became a Jean Monnet Center of Excellence in 2007 (its Jean Monnet Seminar Programmes are still running since then), and it was recognized by the European Commission as one of the most outstanding centers of excellences around the world in 2010. There is no doubt that the success of this center lies in the collaborative research and teaching environment that has been achieved through its young scholars, research assistants, social

scientists, visiting scholars and academics continuously contributed and benefited from its activities and resources.

Prof. Eralp's legacy extends to mentoring generations of scholars who continue to shape European Studies in Türkiye and internationally. His emphasis on combining rigorous academic inquiry with policy relevance has created a tradition of scholarship that engages deeply with the challenges and opportunities of Türkiye-EU relations. Even as the political landscape evolves and Türkiye's path toward EU accession faces uncertainties, Prof. Eralp's contributions provide enduring frameworks for understanding the dynamics of European integration and Türkiye's role within it. His impact is not only reflected in his publications, but also in the institutional and intellectual foundations he laid for European Studies in Türkiye together with his colleagues, students and collaborators. Dr. Funda Tekin, the Director of the IEP (Institut für Europäische Politik) based in Berlin and honorary Professor at the University of Tübingen explains that:

“Atilla Eralp has not only been one of the leading scholars on EU-Turkey relations but he was also among the first to identify EU studies as an important field of research to assess Turkey's future. He analyses EU-Turkey relations from various angles including foreign and security policy, the EU's enlargement policy and the German-EU-Turkey triangle. He has never hesitated to employ new methodology in his research and is among the very few scholars who have applied narrative analysis to EU-Turkey relations. He aims to educate the younger generation accordingly and gives his best to integrate them into his well-established networks.”

Similarly, Prof. Wolfgang Wessels from the Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies at the University of Cologne (Emeritus) and Jean Monnet Chair *ad personam*, also points out to Eralp's pivotal position on Türkiye-EU relations:

“In several projects - funded especially by the EU Commission, the DAAD and the Mercator Foundation- his highly reflected contributions framed and stimulated our debates- not only about widening but also about deepening the EU. His EU-wide audience has also extended their knowledge and insights into the Turkish Foreign and EU narratives and into concrete policies. His analysis and assessments contribute to understanding the challenges and - as he certainly would agree - the limits of an effective EU-Turkey relationship. His research questions enumerate a multitude of topic for the present and future academic and political agenda. Beyond his direct interventions he also contributed to develop the European network of researchers into a lively academic community. His engagement in the TEPSA board and for viva of

PhD defenses in Cologne led to concrete projects of cooperation and even more to personal links- not at least for younger generations”.

### *European Studies and the Turkish Foreign Policy*

Analyses of foreign policy have comprised one of the most prolific pillars of the literature on European Studies scrutinised above. Turkish foreign policy became remarkably active in multiple regions especially after the end of the Cold War and it aligned considerably with the EU’s CFSP declarations and positions since 1999. However, the literature on Turkish foreign policy in relation with the EU integration flourished in the 2000s, particularly after the Justice and Development Party came to power. Research pointing out the similarities and differences between Turkish and EU foreign policies benefited from the application of the ‘Europeanization’ as a concept. As an accession country, Türkiye has to fully align its foreign policy with that of the EU in order to close Chapter 31 on foreign, security, and defence in the accession negotiations. Therefore, the degree of Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy helps determine how close Türkiye is to EU membership. Regardless of membership, Europeanization is also important since it increases the chances of cooperation between Türkiye and the EU in foreign policy. Thus, whether we can speak of Europeanization of foreign policy towards a region or of methods drew attention of many scholars and PhD students alike. Given the difficulties the EU experiences in integrating foreign and security policies of its member states (Eralp, 2018), it was a pleasant outcome when studies identified high degrees of Europeanization of foreign policy and its methods during the period between 2003 and 2010, up to the Arab uprisings. The prevailing ethos of this period’s foreign policy, i.e., relying on soft power and cooperating with neighbours, was generally in harmony with the EU’s foreign policy approach and Türkiye’s rate of alignment with the EU’s CFSP declarations was at its highest level. However, on par with the developments in practice, the literature moved towards highlighting selective Europeanization and de-Europeanization in a decade. In this context, Prof. Atila Eralp co-authored one of the early articles arguing that “Europe” has shifted from being a strategic goal to signifying an instrumental partnership for the policy-makers in Türkiye (Eralp and Torun, 2012). He focused his efforts to articulate the reasons why Türkiye has moved away from the European integration, in general and the EU foreign policy, in particular (Eralp, 2011; Eralp and Torun, 2011; Arisan Eralp and Eralp, 2012). Comparing the Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War and the period until the 2010s, Prof. Atila Eralp attributed the growing distance between Turkish and EU foreign policies to Türkiye’s soft-balancing strategy as much as its alienation from the European accession process due to the loss of the credibility of

the EU membership perspective (Eralp and Torun, 2021). Recently, divergences between Türkiye and the EU have increased in particular with regard to Syria and Cyprus and Türkiye's rate of alignment with the EU's CFSP significantly decreased. In the absence of a fundamental change in Turkish foreign policy, which prioritizes strategic autonomy more than ever, the future relationship between the EU and Türkiye may continue to take place on a case by case basis on issues such as pandemics, counterterrorism and migration. The literature has also been drawing attention to the ad-hoc and transactional approach to EU-Türkiye cooperation in various dimensions, including foreign policy. In this context, Prof. Atila Eralp has aptly warned both parties to embrace a rules-based, multilateral approach in order to revitalize EU-Türkiye relationship (Eralp, 2019; Eralp and Keyman, 2020). A return to original commitments and an institutional and inclusive process facilitating cooperation and reform in all aspects of the accession process, including foreign policy is indeed what is needed.

## **In this Issue**

This issue of the METU Studies in Development is prepared in honour of Prof. Atila Eralp, as one of the pioneers for the development of the European studies as an interdisciplinary field in Türkiye. The issue includes seven articles by 11 authors, who responded positively to the Call for Papers. Mainly focusing on Türkiye-EU relations, as well as the role of the EU in terms of its integration capacity and actorness, the thematic coverage of the issue can be grouped in three pillars.

In the first pillar, historical development and future prospects of Türkiye-EU relations are examined by two articles. Senem Aydın-Düzgit in her article entitled *“Temporality and Interaction in the EU-Turkey Relationship,”* demonstrates the explanatory power of the “temporality and interaction” conceptual framework of Eralp (2009) not only in understanding the trajectory of EU-Türkiye relations before the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, but also in the post-2005 era, characterised as a period of detachment for the Türkiye-EU relations. Considering the EU perspective, Sanem Baykal in her article entitled *“Turkey-EU relations: Road to nowhere or hope for progress? An analysis in light of the enlargement policy-concepts, tools and prospects”* questions the design and implementation of the enlargement policy by the European Union in light of the concept of EU's “integration capacity” in the context of the intertwined nature of the deepening and widening dilemma of the EU, and puts such a discussion into perspective for the future prospects of Türkiye-EU relations.

The second thematic pillar of this issue focuses on three “living” topics of the Türkiye-EU relations, namely migration, Cyprus problem and public opinion. On the migration issue, in their article entitled “*Barely Alive? The Costs and Benefits of the EU-Turkey Statement on Irregular Migration*,” Başak Kale and Ebru Turhan analytically overview the costs and benefits of implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016, also known as “EU-Turkey Deal,” from 2016 to 2024, both for Türkiye and for the EU, and suggest that the advantages of the Statement for the EU (governments) and the Turkish government outweigh its costs. In the second article on the theme of migration entitled “*Artificial Intelligence and Migration Governance: Navigating Cooperation and Complexity in EU-Türkiye Relations*”, Ayselin Yıldız and Arıkan Açar investigates the role of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in migration governance regarding its potential for revisiting and revitalizing EU-Türkiye cooperation in the field of migration. The authors question whether the AI use in Türkiye’s migration policy would offer a renewed impetus for EU-Türkiye migration cooperation or it would merely reinforce Türkiye’s alignment with the EU’s migration policies, primarily through the securitisation of migration.

Nilgün Öner Tangör and Galip Yalman in their article entitled “*Yet another spatio-temporal turn in the Turkey-EU relations: The continuing saga of the ‘Cyprus problem’*” provides a comprehensive account of the multifaceted “Cyprus problem” in the context of the Türkiye-EU relations, by unpacking Eralp’s (2009) “temporality” conceptualisation with a critical political economy perspective. The authors argue that although the coupling of geopolitical contestation with the hydrocarbon economy agenda in the context of Cyprus conflict points to a new temporality for the trajectory of the Türkiye-EU relations by adding a new political economy dimension, the main conditions for a possible resolution of the conflict persist. In his article entitled “*Unwavering aspirations: An exploratory analysis of the resilience of Turkish public support for EU membership*”, Özgehan Şenyuva attracts attention to public opinion, particularly the resilience of Turkish public support for the EU membership, despite significant political, economic, and diplomatic challenges in Türkiye-EU relations. Examining three trends and underlying determinants of Turkish public opinion, as public sentiment, namely feasibility, positive historical experience and ideological entrenchment, the author identifies the Turkish public opinion as an internal anchor, for the country’s European aspirations, even when political divergence and skepticism from EU member states persist.

In the third pillar of this issue, the focus shifts to the EU’s actorness. In their article entitled “*What Accounts for the EU’s Actorness Within its “Geopolitical Awakening”?: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Effectiveness and Cohesion of*



the European Union”, Özlem Tür and Başak Alpan focus on the EU’s neighbourhood perspective around the concept of EU’s actorness. The authors argue that the EU is constantly facing the dilemma of its self-definition as a humanitarian actor, and its operational conduct, as shown by the key tension between the EU’s normative commitments and its recent geopolitical take on in the case the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As the faculty members of the European Studies Programme (EUS) of the Middle East Technical University, the project team of the MEDIATE Jean Monnet Module project and last but not the least, the students of Prof. Atila Eralp, we would like to express our gratitude to all the authors, reviewers and editorial team of the METU Studies in Development for their valuable contributions.

We hope that the articles in this issue will stimulate further research and discussion in the fields of European Studies and Türkiye-EU relations as intended with the MEDIATE “Mending the Gap in Turkey-European Union Relations in the Post-Pandemic Era” Jean Monnet Module project implemented by the European Studies Programme between 2022-2025. We also believe that the open access nature of the journal will help disseminate research widely and inspire particularly the young researchers for future research in these fields.

Başak Alpan, Asuman Göksel, Başak Kale, Özgehan Şenyuva, Zerrin Torun

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