



Identities and Modernities in Europe (IME): Briefing of Findings in Europeanization of Higher Education in Turkey



INTRODUCTION

IME has investigated European Identities, a wide range of definitions of 'us, the Europeans' proposed and acted upon by various actors in and around the current European Union (EU), in particular in nine cases: Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The project has addressed three major issues regarding European identities: what they are, in what ways they have been formed and what trajectories they may take from now on. This is a briefing of major findings in the Turkish case, focusing on the perceptions of Europeanization of the Turkish higher education.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

The project elaborated on the internal identity construction programmes in Turkey, consisted of a comprehensive analysis of the state of Turkish higher education and the nature of its reformation since the early days of the Republic. In order to investigate the role of Europeanization in higher education, we looked at the discourses of state and non-state actors as well as private individuals. This stage of the research was supplemented by 9 interviews conducted with non-state actors and 20 interviews conducted with private individuals. While we looked at various important issues surrounding the reformation of Turkish higher education, such as representation of religious beliefs and education in Kurdish, we would like to briefly address our findings on the implementation of and perceptions on the Bologna Process.

Our research shows that there is a considerable lack of knowledge and research on the restructuring of the Turkish education system along the lines of the Bologna Process requirements. Therefore, we preferred to focus on this subject matter since it is one of the topics that yielded very interesting information on the westernization of the Turkish higher education system. Our research into the role of Europe and Europeanization in the Turkish higher education system began with the identification of different approaches with regard to the transformation of the education system. We have seen that the Bologna Process is commonly framed as *internationalization* rather than Europeanization in order to prevent the possible backlash resulting from the rise of Euroscepticism. This type of framing which was more apparent in state actors' discourses was indeed replaced by disagreements over internationalization and Europeanization at the non-state and private individual levels. This shift in the discourses used in regards to the effects of the Bologna Process in Turkey is significant since different understandings of internationalization and Europeanization have recently emerged. In congruence with our project's research topic, this finding reveals that non-state actors and private individuals have different definitions of Europeanization.

In addition, the notion of neo-liberalism and neo-liberal motivations behind the Europeanization of the education system became an apparent concern with regards to our research on the reformation of education. It is also noteworthy that our research and findings on the Bologna Process coincided with the rise of concerns over the value of education as a public or private good in European countries, which became apparent with the rise of student and faculty protests in various European Universities. To that effect, we should also note that non-state and private actors' approach to Bologna Process revealed that they would prefer to discuss the "American model" of education and hence Americanization rather than the European model and Europeanization as the basis of the westernization of the Turkish higher education system. Indeed, while this preference is grounded in the restructuring of the system along the lines of the American model in the 1950s, our fieldwork showed that it is still the model that is recognized, and most of the time favored by those who participated in our fieldwork. Nonetheless, this is in fact related to the diverse opinions on what Europeanization is and what it entails to be European.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

IME Employed qualitative research Methods in its investigation including policy documents analysis, in-depth interviews with state/EU officials, civil society actors and private individuals. The details of the fieldwork can be supplied upon request.

PROJECT IDENTITY

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