

**Panel report on "Ignorance, fear and prejudice – do Europeans get Turkey?"
(15.11.2011)**

Turkey's multifaceted reflections in European media

Turkey's image in the press of many European countries is going through a noticeable change. This is one of the observations the chairman of the European Stability Initiative (ESI), Gerald Knaus, emphasized in a panel discussion at Istanbul Bilgi University's European Institute. Knaus presented the results of a one year detailed monitoring of the press coverage on Turkey in five EU countries – in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The panel discussion, organised in co-operation with the German Studies Unit of the European Institute, addressed remarkable differences in the coverage of the five countries. While the journalists' attention in France and Belgium focused predominantly on Turkey's home and foreign policies, the coverage in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands to a larger extent focused on relations of the own country with Turkey, often connected with a coverage on the situation of citizens of Turkish background in these countries.

A spotlight on the public discourse in Germany was thrown by Peter Widmann who is developing the German Studies Unit at Bilgi's European Institute in co-operation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). He described a noticeable change of tone in the media coverage on Turkey as well as on German Turks. Whereas perspectives focusing on culture and religion – often with negative connotations – have become louder in the past decade, such views became increasingly challenged since 2010. A main factor for that was the debate on the former politician and federal banker Thilo Sarrazin's best-selling book "Germany does away with itself", that was seen as an extremely prejudiced pamphlet especially against migrants from Muslim countries and has become a wake-up call for liberal voices as well as for German-Turkish journalists, writers and artists to participate in public discussions more resolutely.

The interplay between public discourses in Turkey and EU countries was analysed by Senem Aydın Düzgit, assistant professor at the European Institute and an expert on Turkey-EU relations. She explained how the interaction between Turkish and EU discourses has the potential to evolve into vicious or virtuous circles and discussed the fading of EU related topics from the spotlight in the Turkish debate and its correlation with a grown self-confidence of political elites and citizen publics in Turkey. The discussion highlighted the role of media as important actors in the political arena that are more than just mirrors of political processes: For better or for worse they take part in the shaping of the political reality on the field of EU-Turkey relations.