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By Ayşe Aslıhan Çelenk & Nimet Bulut
Adana Science and Technology University

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EU's Educational Policy and Norm-Building in Candidate Countries: The Case of Erasmus+ in Turkey

Ayşe Aslıhan Çelenk [α] & Nimet Bulut [σ]

Abstract- This article analyzes the impact of the EU's educational policy on the construction of European norms and identity in candidate countries. One significant tool of educational policy in this respect is the exchange programs, which are now combined under the single framework of Erasmus+ and in order the determine the relationship between educational policy and norm-building, the article conducts a case study in an English-speaking state university located in Central Anatolia, Turkey on the participants, who benefited from the Erasmus+ exchange. The study shows that EU'S educational policy is a major tool in terms of stimulating social learning in candidate countries and preparing them for adaptation and diffusion of European norms and identity.

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I. Introduction

The idea of establishment of a European identity shared by all citizens of Europe dates back to the Post-World War II efforts to create a perpetual peace in the European continent (Monnet, 1955) The European Community was founded upon a shared history and common institutions such as "the Roman law, political democracy, parliamentary institutions, ethics, humanism and rationality" (Smith, 1992, p.70), which were also the features helped to construct a common European identity, which became essential with the deepening of European integration. After the 1980s, it became apparent that the European project could not continue unless it was owned by the citizens of Europe and this showed the importance of building common norms and values that would define 'Europeanness' and create a distinct European identity acceptable for every actual and potential member of the Community.

Education is an important tool for the internalization of the European project by the citizens. To this end, the EU has created various education programs targeted towards both the members and candidate countries. Many academic studies were conducted regarding this specific policy area. In her research "Europeanization and Education Policy", Nafsika Alexiadou (2005) analyzed the relationship between EU's education policy and the process of Europeanization, where she determined a positive correlation between common education goals and standards and diffusion of common values. Aaor Ollikainen (2000) reaches a similar conclusion in "European Education, European Citizenship? On the Role of Education in Constructing Europeanness", revealing the norm-building function of education and how it can be utilized in the construction of a European identity.

Following this line of literature, this study investigates how the EU creates and diffuses its norms by its educational policy, specifically the exchange programs, by a case study conducted in Turkey. The Turkish case is important because although the country's official candidacy status is in standing since 1999 and it started the accession negotiations in 2005, its 'European-ness' is still debated. There exist concerns at the societal level at both sides on whether Turkey is compatible with the European norms. By conducting field research on the students who have benefited from the exchange programs of the EU, the study tries to evaluate to what extent the EU's educational policy and exchange programs can create a European identity in the candidate countries.

The first step of the analysis is to develop a theoretical framework to clarify the concepts of norm-building borrowed from the constructivist theory and Europeanization. The second part will deal with the relationship between the educational policy of the EU and norm building in candidate countries. To illustrate this relationship, the last part of the study will provide a case study conducted in a Central Anatolian university of Turkey on 75 students that took part in the EU exchange programs in 18 different EU countries.

II. Theoretical Framework: Building EU Norms and Europeanization

The idea that common norms are an important part of how the international system operates and how actor behavior is shaped in the international system, has been a contribution of the constructivist theory of international relations. According to constructivist theory, norms matter as much as institutions and international actors such as states, international organizations and

Author α: Prof. Dr., Adana Scienceand Technology University, Department of Political Science and Public Administration.
e-mail: acelenk@atu.edu.tr
Author σ: Exchange Programs Specialist, Abdullah Gul University.

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individuals are meaningful as long as they are interrelated with shared norms (Onuf, 1989, p. 40; Wendt, 1995, p. 73).

Identity, which is a social and cultural construct, shapes the interests and behaviors of political actors, and while actor identity shapes political institutions, political institutions also affect the identity. Thus, as a result of this mutual construction between actors and institutions (Hoph, 1992, p. 172), it is possible for political actors to gather around common norms and to construct a collective identity (Wendt, 1995, p.71). Norms can be defined as types of rules which the actors are expected to comply with (Katzenstein, 1996a, p. 5), and this compliance is achieved by various mechanisms such as sanctions, loss of credibility, and formal and informal mechanisms of pressure. In the norm-building process, there is a certain kind of exchange between norm-makers and norm-recipients (Checkel, 1999, p. 85), where either ",regulative norms," create new rules for existing actor behavior or "constitutive norms", which lead to a whole new set of behavioral patterns (Katzenstein, 1996b) are determined.

According to Finnemore and Sikkink, there are three stages of norm-building and diffusion, which they call the "norm life cycle" (1998, p. 896). The first stage is the stage of norm-emergence, at which the norm entrepreneurs in international organizations, or the norm-makers, build regulations or construct norms, through debate, persuasion or consensus. The second stage is called the stage of norm cascade, where the states, international organizations, or individual actors accept the new norms and adjust their behavior accordingly through socialization, institutionalization, or demonstration. The last stage is the diffusion stage and called internalization. It is the stage of social learning, during which the norms are institutionalized and become a behavioral habit for the actors (Ibid, p. 898). The EU offers a valuable case for the examination of this norm-building and diffusion process. In this case, the EU is the norm entrepreneur, where the EU institutions and member states collectively build the norms. The mechanism of norm cascade and internalization is the process of Europeanization, whose functioning and impact on the diffusion of norms differ according to the policy area at hand.

In his famous essay "The Many Faces of Europeanization," Johan P. Olsen (2002, p.3) offers five different definitions for Europeanization. Accordingly, Europeanization may refer to; (1) changes in the territorial boundaries of the EU, (2) development of new forms of governance at the European level as a result of policy coordination, (3) central penetration of national and subnational systems of governance, (4) exporting forms of political organization and governance beyond European borders and (5) a political project aiming at a unified and politically stronger Europe. In terms of norm-building, "Europeanization consists of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms, which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy-making process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, political structures, and public policies" (Radaelli, 2004, p. 3). This process creates the European identity in the long-run and it is a multi-actor process, where the EU institutions, member states, non-governmental organizations, other policy networks, and individual citizens contribute to norm-building and creating an EU-way of living.

In terms of the emergence of new ways of policy-making, Europeanization is "an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making" (Ladrech, 1994, p.17). In time, "domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making" (Börzel, 1999, p. 574) in three stages: "the European decisions, the processes triggered by these decisions as well as the impacts of these processes on national policies and (emerging) institutional structures" (Heritier, 2001).

Europeanization is a dynamic process, where member states upload their preferences, approaches and, traditions of policy-making to the EU level and have an impact over norm-building at the EU according to their institutional power, such as economic contribution or voting weight in the EU institutions and where they download these norms in the form of applying the EU decisions at domestic level (Börzel and Panke, 2010). According to Tanya Börzel and Thomas Risse (2003, p. 60), Europeanization takes place in three areas: the policy area, where targets, standards, tools, and discourses are shaped; the area of politics, where an EU-way of interest formation, representation, and public discourse emerge; and the polity area, where the member states become closer to each other in terms of institutional structures, legal institutions, public administration, state tradition, and state-society relations. Policy area is the most dynamic one since there is a large portion of EU legislation in 35 policy chapters, to which actual and potential member states are expected to adopt. In this area, the Europeanization process starts with adaptational pressures from the EU-level institutions, which form new norms. With the facilitating effect of norm entrepreneurs and the appropriate political culture, the EU norms are internalized at the domestic level, which ultimately creates domestic change and convergence among the member states (Börzel and Risse, 2003, p. 69).

In terms of Europeanization of policy area, the candidate countries are in a more difficult position than the EU members since there is a power asymmetry between these countries and the EU (Schmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2008, p. 34). As these countries are in

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the process of adapting to the EU member states, they have to learn the way of policy-making, which is already existing in the EU area and they are the norm recipients. Social learning and increasing the feeling of European-ness are important for the internalization of new policy-making norms as it facilitates the process both for the political actors and society. The cultural match between norm-makers and norm recipients facilitates the diffusion and internalization of norms (Checkel, 1999, p. 85). Following this logic, the EU's education policy and its exchange programs, which include the candidate countries are at a strategic location in the Europeanization process, as they provide the environment and necessary conditions for norm diffusion by targeting to create a common European identity.

III. EU's Educational Policy and Norm-Building: The Erasmus+ Program

a) *EU's Education Policy*

At the early stages of European integration, education policy was not an immediate concern. It was considered as a part of contributing to the emerging European common market with the improvement of vocational qualities (Charlier and Croche, 2005, p.8). The education policy of the EU was initiated under the social policy chapter to facilitate free movement of labor by creating common education standards for the community needs in the 1970s (EC, 1994).With the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, education became one of the policy areas of the EU. It is a dynamic policy area, whose strategies and targets change according to the emerging needs of the EU market and deepening of European integration. Starting with the Bologna Declaration of 1999, strengthening of the idea of European citizenship, creating an area of common values and cultural space became the targets of the EU's education policy (EU, 1999), which officially recognized education policy as a tool for norm building. According to Article 165 of Lisbon Treaty, in addition to the improvement of the quality of European education at all levels, EU's education policy aims to promote democratic participation, life-long learning and movement (EU, 2008) and to create the idea of European citizenship, the sense of European-ness among the EU nationals (EC, 2017). To this end, the EU has created educational exchange and movement programs, whose target areas were dynamically redefined according to the community needs and the existing state of European integration.

Table 1: The dynamic evolution of EU education policy and exchange programs

Year	Treaty In Force	Exchange Program	Social Policy Aim	Education Policy Aim
1987	Single European Act	Erasmus and COMETT	Economic integration and employment	Youth employment, university-industry cooperation
1992	Maastricht Treaty	Erasmus	EU citizenship, creating a common European culture	Exchange, movement academic recognition
1997	Amsterdam Treaty	Socrates I	EU citizenship, European cultural heritage	Education about the EU institutions
2000	Nice Treaty	Socrates II	Creating a sense of European-ness, common identity	Life-long, accessible, open education for everybody
2008	Lisbon Treaty	Erasmus+	Social coherence, effective use of EU citizenship rights, Europeanization at the societal level	Life-long, accessible, open education for everybody

As Table 1 suggests, at each stage of European integration, the content and targets of the education policy were redesigned to contribute to the deepening of integration. Depending on these, each program constructed new norms, which together created a European way of policy and decision making.

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Table 2: The norms constructed with education programs in the EU area

Year	Education Program	Constructed Norm
1987	COMETT	Youth employment
1987	Erasmus	European Citizenship
1995-2006	Socrates I-II	Protection of European cultural heritage
2007-2013	Life-Long Learning Program	Life-long learning
2014-2020	Erasmus+	Europeanization and Sense of European-ness

At the current stage of European integration, Erasmus+ program assists the spreading and internalization of the EU norms by creating an environment for cultural exchange and interaction between member states and potential member states. Since Erasmus+ is the recent and all-encompassing educational policy tool of the EU, it needs further analysis to comprehend the role of education policy in norm-building in the candidate countries.

b) The Erasmus+ Program

Erasmus program was created in 1987 for the exchange of university students and academic staff among 11 EU countries and in its first year, 3244 students benefited from the exchange (EU, 2012). Thirty years after its initialization, about 4 million actual and potential EU citizens enjoyed the intercultural exchange offered by Erasmus (EC, 2014). Since 2014, all youth, culture, education, and sports programs of the EU were combined under a single framework, which is now called the Erasmus+. As a part of the norm-building project, the Erasmus+ is open to participation from candidate countries as well. For instance, in the Turkish case, about 400.000 students and academic staff benefited from Erasmus, while more than 300.000 Turkish citizens took part in cultural exchange with Europe by other projects (Turkish Department of EU Affairs, 2019).

Erasmus+ covers the 2014-2020 period, and its budget is 14.7 billion euros (Turkish Department of EU Affairs, 2019). The aim of the Erasmus+ is the promotion of European values by developing the skills of individuals according to the requirements of the European job market, internationalization of education institutions, increasing and teaching language diversity of the EU, and supporting European integration (Turkish Department of EU Affairs, 2019). In addition to the EU28, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Norway and, Turkey (joined in 2004) are members of the Erasmus+ area (EC, 2015).

The program aims to contribute to tolerance to cultural diversity and the societal and individual level and to facilitate the integration among the existing and potential members of the EU. In the long-run, through cultural exchange, it is aimed to create a European identity based on the idea of EU citizenship and values and norms it brings (EU, 2012: 7). By targeting the candidate countries such as Turkey, Erasmus+ tries to facilitate the construction and internalization of the EU norms in the membership process and to build public support for the EU project in the society. It is a social learning process; whose success is worth questioning in terms of its contribution to norm-building in candidate countries, and the research conducted for this study constitutes a step to this end.

IV. The Case Study

To analyze the impact of Erasmus+ on norm-building in EU candidate countries, a case study was conducted in a sample of 114 students in an English-speaking Turkish state university located in Central Anatolia, who benefited from the program in 18 different EU countries. The perceptions of the Turkish students were measured by a questionnaire of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions.[1]Seventy five out of the total 114 accepted to answer the questions. Thus the actual sample of the study represented approximately the %66 of the population that took part in the exchange program. The next aim was to obtain a general idea about the relationship between Erasmus+ and construction of EU norms in candidate countries. To this end, the questions regarding the students' motivation to take part in mobility abroad, the effect of mobility on their foreign language skills, possible changes in terms of their approach to cultural diversity and their ability to adapt to different cultural settings, their perceptions about the EU, the meaning they attribute to "being a European" before and after their stay abroad and their ideas regarding the role of exchange programs in Europeanization were directed to the participants.

While taking part in the Erasmus+, the students were motivated primarily by learning about new cultures, increasing their cultural adaptation skills, and building an international professional network. This motivation shows that the EU's education policy is perceived as useful tools for self-improvement.

[1] The link of the questionnaire is https://goo.gl/forms/deg Dxpnn2CXe 7sGD2

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Table 3: Top 5 motivations for participating in Erasmus+

1	% 73.7	Going abroad and meeting new people
2	% 69.3	Improving social and cultural skills
3	% 66.7	Learning about new cultures and countries
4	% 64	Familiarizing with international curricula and different styles of higher education
5	% 58.7	Building a professional network

One of the purposes of the Erasmus+ is increasing the language diversity of the actual and potential EU citizens to facilitate cultural communication and, thus, the construction and learning of common norms. The research shows that this aim of Erasmus+ is also fulfilled as %81.3 of the participants felt that their English skills improved in the duration of exchange and %70.7 told that they also learned a second foreign language as well during their mobility. These perceptions were also verified by the Online Language Support System of the European Commission, which measures the language skills of participants before and after their mobility in the Erasmus+ framework as according to the results from the OLS system, %64.6 of the sample grouped increased their language skills after their mobility.

In terms of constructing the norms of European citizenship and of a European way of cultural diversity and communication, the research also shows the positive impact of Erasmus+. The participants believe that Erasmus+ mobility improved their skills of cultural adaptation, increased their tolerance to different cultures, identities, and ideas, made them more open-minded, and more open to working and living in an international environment.

Table 4: Adaptation to cultural norms promoted by the EU

Easier adaptation to different cultures	% 89.3
More tolerant to cultural diversity	% 77.3
Open to differences	% 74.7
Open to working and living in an international environment	% 73.3

To evaluate the changes in their perceptions about the EU after international mobility, the students were asked open-ended questions regarding their opinions on whether Erasmus+ contributes to the European integration, whether their ideas about the EU changed after their exchange experience, and on the prospects of Turkey's EU membership after getting familiar with the EU norms. %92 of the participants thought that Erasmus+ facilitated European integration by bringing different cultures and identities closer and forming a common ground. %64 of the participants stated that their perceptions of the EU changed in a positive manner because the Erasmus+ helped to build a diverse environment and created a sense of European citizenship.

The interviews also support the idea that educational exchange programs are useful tools for norm-building. For instance, participant 15 stated: "*When I traveled to the receiving country and spent time there, I saw that the EU was a more tolerant and diverse environment. There are significant differences between European culture and Turkish culture in this sense. If we want to join the EU, we need to learn to be more tolerant of diversity".*

Similarly, participant 21 stated that "*the EU resembled a single state made up of different cultures and spending time with exchange made them more open-minded in this sense,*" while for participant 24 "*the EU was a place, which improved inter-cultural communication and understanding and this was a thing Turkey needed to learn to join the EU".*

The importance of common norms and social learning for EU membership becomes more evident in the participants' thoughts regarding Turkey's membership prospects. % 53.3 of participants, after observing and experiencing the EU way of policy-making and the European way of living, believed that Turkey was not ready for EU membership. For instance, participant 47 stated that "*there are significant differences between Turkey and European countries right now. We are like two different cultures, but in time, when Turkey makes necessary changes and learns from the EU, we can also be one of the European countries."* Participant 56 noted the differences as well but also

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stated: "*the importance of cultural exchange and interaction for increasing tolerance and communication and bringing Turkey closer to the EU.*"The research showed that while there are a variety of differences between the candidate countries and the EU in terms of norms and values, including them in the educational exchange programs makes these countries aware of these differences first at the individual level and then the social level and provides the ground for construction and learning of the common norms.

To understand their perceptions about European-ness, the participants were also asked what they understood from "being a European."The top five words that were used by participants to define what being a European means were "*freedom, tolerance, open-mindedness, democracy, and respect.*"These were also the basic norms at the foundation of European citizenship according to the participants, and they thought that Erasmus+ helped them internalize these norms as well. %50.6 of participants stated that they felt more European after their stay in the EU countries and noted that "*after the adaptation process, living in one of the EU countries and actively taking part in cultural exchange, the feelings of belonging to the European identity increased.*"

When asked about the contribution of exchange programs to Europeanization, %89.3 of participants stated that Erasmus+ had a positive impact on Europeanization, understood as construction and learning of EU norms. As participant 35 pointed out: "*exchange programs are a tool to increase social awareness in terms of seeing different practices and norms and trying to find the ways for bridging the gap between the EU norms and domestic norms. The solutions and changes in this process create Europeanization*".

V. Conclusion

The education policy of the EU is a policy area that is often neglected in terms of its potential contribution to the construction of the European citizenship identity and European norms. The changing targets and dynamic nature of educational and exchange programs show that the EU's education policy is also adaptable to meet the changing demands and needs of the European market and the EU policy area. Exchange is open to the candidate countries as well as the member states of the EU. Thus, they are a significant tool for initiating the social learning and internalization of the EU norms in the candidate states. As more people benefit from the exchange programs, the European ideals and norms of citizenship are learned and spread at the societal level, which creates pressure over policy-makers to bring the legal and political framework of decision-making closer to these norms, and this facilitates the adjustment of the candidate country with the EU policy-making area.

The case study conducted for this article supports this fact as the data reveal that Erasmus+ familiarized the participants with the EU norms, made them aware of the differences between the national and the European ways of decision-making and also promoted thinking about the ways that could bring the country closer to the EU. This overall process is an example of the construction of norms through social learning, which becomes possible because of the educational policy of the EU and its philosophy and shows that the EU's educational exchange programs are significant tools that create suitable conditions for the construction of European norms in candidate countries.

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