The Turkish interest groups in Brussels

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Europeanisation

Social Actors
and the Transfer of Models in EU-27

edited by

Sandrine Devaux

and

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Turkish lobbies are quite numerous in Brussels. They are very well known by the different European interest groups and European institutions which work with them and accept them. I would like first to focus on the gap between the slow and difficult process of institutional integration of Turkey within the EU and the effectiveness of the Turkish lobbies full integration into the 'insider circles' of Brussels and thus, their commitment to European matters. I will then try to explain the process that leads these lobbies to Brussels: how did they get involved in European matters and how did they enter the Brussels polity?

Beyond European accession, integration in Brussels

Turkish interest groups: a part of life in the European capital

Both European Commission Desks and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) are in close contact with about 10 Turkish lobbies. More or less the same numbers of Turkish lobbies (not necessarily the same ones) are also accredited to the European Parliament. This can be considered a high level of representation in comparison with other (former) candidate states. For example, before the 2004 enlargement, the *Network of Interest Representation Offices from Candidate Countries* (NIROC) was composed of 24 organisations (from 6 countries); of these, 8 were Turkish!

European civil servants stress the involvement, the expertise and the key role played by these lobbies: "they are much more active and well organised than in other countries. They take a lot of initiative (…). Some of them meet very often the Commissionner (for Enlargement).

They have direct access to the policy-makers" (former civil servant at the DG Enlargement, Turkey desk).

Turkish lobbies are also very well integrated in the Eurogroups. For example, one of the most influential business groups in Turkey, *Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmens' Association* (TÜSIAD) has been a member of *the Industrial and Employers' Confederation of Europe* (UNICE) since 1987, while the *Turkish Confederation of Employers Association* (TISK) has also been a member since 1988. In 1996, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of TÜSIAD was elected to the vice presidency of UNICE. In 1998, taking into account the increasing number of candidate states, UNICE totally reviewed its internal structure, distinguishing three different statuses: "observers", who are simply informed of UNICE work; "associate members", who are involved in different boards and working groups but without voting rights (this status is only for organisations coming from the candidate states that have started accession negotiations); and "full members", organisations from EU member states. Despite this reform, TUSIAD and TISK still have the status of "full member" (which was not the case before 2004 enlargement of the EEC's organisations). As a first level social partner, UNICE shares with the *European Trade Union Confederation* (ETUC) and the *European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest* (CEEP) the right to initiate EU legislation in social and employment policies. Therefore, despite the absence of such a mechanism at national level, TÜSIAD and TISK became part of a governance structure guaranteeing their formal participation in policy making (Atan 2004).

In 1995, during the negotiation of the customs union, TÜSIAD opened its own desk in Brussels. TÜSIAD was one of the most important protagonists in the lobbying campaign during the customs union negotiations. It "became engaged in an unprecedented effort to seek the

collaboration of the European business community in gaining the approval of the European Parliament for a Turkey-EU customs union" (Atan, 2004: 104). By the end of the 1980s, TÜSIAD began to exert pressure on the Turkish government. The organisation had come forward "with loudly expressed demands for the expansion of political liberalisation and for deepening of democratisation" (Yilmaz, 1999: 185). It became a keen advocate of Turkey's accession to the EU, not only for economic but also for political reasons. After the Luxembourg summit decision of December 1997, which rejected Turkish candidacy to the EU, TÜSIAD strongly fostered a public debate on political issues within Turkey, and lobbied EU institutions and governments. Since then, TÜSIAD has continued to advocate EU membership for Turkey.

Business lobbies are not the only Turkish interest groups integrated in Eurogroups. Four Turkish Trade Unions are affiliated to the *European Trade Union Confederation* (ETUC). The *Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey* (DISK) is the only Turkish trade union which has a representative in Brussels, something it has had since 1980. Its relations with the European Trade Unions Confederation are very good. It plays a role of mediator between other Turkish Trade Union members and European organisations. Moreover, DISK is highly involved in a Meda project in Turkey. ETUC does not make any distinction between Turkish Trade Unions and other members. Moreover, it has always been a keen advocate of Turkish membership to the EU.

The limits of usual explanations of the "Europeanisation" of Turkish interest groups

The Europeanisation approach covers a very broad spectrum (Olsen, 2002) and the notion of Europeanisation has been blurred by the extensive use that scientists have made of it (Besnaie and Pasquier,

2007), especially concerning EU candidate states (Dokowska & Neumayer, 2005). I would like to underline two potential hurdles when the researcher encounters when using this notion to explain the commitment of Turkish interest groups in European matters and their very high integration in the Brussels polity.

The first problem arises if one takes the independent variable to be the European Union in order to shed light on the institutional and diplomatic relationships between the EU and Turkey and the commitment of Turkish interest groups. It could be argued that the economic integration process and Customs Union have played a key role in the increasing number of Turkish interest groups in European issues. According to this way of thinking, new Turkish interest groups have been created directly in Brussels following the integration of Turkey within European programmes (like the Framework program in the field of Research).

However, the institutional timing of the relationships between Turkey and EU does not entirely match that of the Turkish lobbies setting up in Brussels. For example, certain Turkish interest groups opened an office in Brussels in 1984, despite the loose official relationships between the EEC and Turkey that existed at the time (after the 1980 military coup d'Etat).

I would like to demonstrate that focusing on institutional relationships between the EU and Turkey or on the accession process is not helpful in order to understand the commitment of these social actors. Scholars working on candidate countries often use the model of conditionality and constraints resulting form the accession process. This model seems to be simplistic (Dakoswka & Saurugger, 2005); analyses should also take into account the mobilisation of various political and social actors and their interactions with institutions or others actors at local, national and European (or even international) levels.

Rather than being constrained by European demands, the actors re-evaluate and redefine their own resources, identities, and political preferences within the new dynamics of domestic political context in light of the EU integration process.

A second problem arises if one considers "Europeanisation" in a normative way. "Europeanisation" is sometimes used to imply a presumed "European identity", "European values" or a "European way of acting". In that sense, the commitment of Turkish interest groups is related to the ontology of the organisations. Turkey is indeed much more familiar with capitalism than the East European Countries. Furthermore, the "European identity of Turkey" has been one of the main roots of the Turkish Republic since its beginning and has become an ideological reference shared by most of the elite in Turkey. However, this does not help us to understand why the commitment to European issues can vary so much between one business organisation and another one. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the "European" discourse adopted by a part of Turkish elite does not necessarily equate to a will to bring Turkey in line with European standards (Avci 2004; Elmas 1998). Finally, this does not provide with any means of understanding why some interest groups or elites which were very far from the "European identity" or "European issues" have become involved in it. This means that scholars must be very careful when they analyse the discourse of the actors, especially concerning identity.

Rather than taking an ontological perspective, I prefer to analyse the commitment of Turkish interest groups in European issues as the outcome of a dialectic process. To do so, I will focus on the trajectories of various Turkish interest groups, with an interactionnist perspective. I will pay attention to the transformation of the definition of a situation in the course of the time, to the factors that condition a commitment at a given time but that cannot

explain the all trajectory and to the sequences of commitments.

Process of commitment to European matters

I do not consider Europeanisation as a new theory, but as an approach that can "provide a valuable shift of focus by generating a set a questions for the analysis of the interplay between different level of governance" (Radaelli, 2004: 15). Nor do I consider Europeanisation as a process that reinforces the Europeanness (in a normative sense) of an actor. Europeanisation refers to the way national actors are affected by how they use Europe.

If Radaelli's well-known definition of Europeanisation[1] covered both a bottom up and a top-down process, this latter concentrated on the impact of European integration on policy making of members countries (including actors, policy problems, instruments, resources and style). He does not consider how European politics and policy affect the new member states or the candidate states. Subsequently a more dynamic, interactive and sociological perspective was brought to the concept of Europeanisation, which has been taken into account by Radaelli: "domestic actors can use Europe in many discretionary ways. They may discursively create impacts. They may draw on Europe as a resource without specific pressure from Brussels. They may get entrapped in European discourses and socialisation processes that cannot be captured by narrow notion of impact (Jacquot

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[1] "Europeanisation consists of processes of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation 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 process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies" (Radaelli, 2000: 4).

and Woll, 2003; Thatcher, 2004). Europeanisation deals with how domestic change is processed, and the patterns of adaptation can be more complex than simple reaction to 'Brussels'" (Radaelli, 2004: 4)

With reference to TÜSIAD and DISK, the insertion of both structures in Eurogroups went together with a shift of their internal organisation, their discourses and (more or less) their norms. I would like to show how EU involvement is not explained by the pressure of conditionality, but rather to an opportunity that can be exploited by very different groups. However, this opportunity not only gives the actors additional or new resources to exert influences, but also constrains their autonomy, increasing mutual interdependency with European networks.

I will present a comparative in-depth analysis of the trajectory of only two Turkish interest groups: TÜSIAD, *Turkish industrialists' and businessmen's' association* and DISK, *Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Trade Unions of Turkey*. I chose them because although they come from very different backgrounds, they are both closely involved in European issues.

In fact, DISK has a strong leftist orientation. From its foundation in 1967, it developed a program based on the struggle of the working class. For a long time, DISK distanced itself from European issues. Domestically-oriented social groups didn't pay much attention to the EU as they considered it to be a foreign matter. Moreover, leftist groups used to be suspicious towards the EU (and some continue to be so). They emphasise the neo-colonialist or imperialist project and objectives of the EU enlargement process. Even if DISK is the second largest trade union federation in Turkey, it is not possible to compare its social position to that of TÜSIAD. With regard to the history and the current situation of trade unions in Turkey we can consider DISK to be a relatively

weak group, whereas TUSIAD is one of the most influential business association. Following the 1980 military coup, the military regime banned independent union activity. DISK's assets were confiscated and put under trustee administration. DISK leaders were arrested and put on trial, facing the death penalty on the grounds that they "*had attempted to demolish the constitutional regime*". The military court decided in 1981 to close DISK and a law issued in May 1983 restricted the establishment of new trade unions. In 1991 the Military Court of Appeals overruled the decision to close DISK and acquitted the union leaders. DISK was able to resume its activities after an interval of 12 years. Although a new labour law was issued in 2003, some restrictions and limitations still exist (concerning civil servants and the right to strike).

Beyond the different background of these two interest groups and their own specificity, I point out three distinctive steps that characterise the process of their commitment to European matters and that could be a pattern in order to analyse the Europeanisation of other social actors. Both TÜSIAD and DISK were founded as organsations autonomous of the State and opposed to its bureaucracy (1). Since then, this aim has never been abandoned. In this struggle, the EU became an important resource (2). However, the utilisation of this resource has not been neutral and slowly the organisations have been affected by an adaptation process, which has modified them (3).

The struggle for autonomy from the state

Both TÜSIAD and DISK were set up in order to escape from the state high control of what could be named corporatist structures. "The few sectoral associations, that were founded after one-party rule had ended [1950], remained of restricted impact" (Vorhoff, 2000: 149). This need for autonomy seems to be a common factor of high involvement in European issues.

Since 1952, the interests of Turkish merchants, industrialists, and commodity brokers have only been represented through their compulsory membership of the Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Maritime Commerce and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB). New associations representing the interests of private industry challenged TOBB's position as the authoritative spokesman for 'free enterprise' in Turkey. The *Union of Chambers of Industry* was founded in 1967 within TOBB. This coalition improved co-ordination of industrialists' demands but was unable to acquire independent status. In 1971, the *Turkish Industrialist and Business Association* was founded by representatives of the fastest-growing sector of the economy. This group was concerned about the planned economy that was ineffective. It sought a retreat of the state. It also worried about the strengthening of left ideology and the potential shift to sovietic economy. TUSIAD aimed to compete on foreign markets, to enter the world market and to insitituionalise the free market economy. TÜSIAD wished to be a "more ambitious voluntary employers' organisation with nation wide and supra-sectoral pretensions. (…) In contrast to [other] corporations, TÜSIAD pursued a highly selective membership policy" (*ibidem*). It aims to promote the identity of the entrepreneurial class.

In the labour field, the *Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions* (Türk-Is) was founded in 1952 at government instigation to serve as an independent umbrella group. Under the tutelage of Türk-Is, labour evolved into a well-organised interest group; but the organisation was not really autonomous from the government which made use of it to temper workers' wage demands, for example. The more liberalised political climate of the 1960s and its social consequences (strikes, lockouts, and collective bargaining were legalised in 1963) paved the way to set up new trade unions. In 1967, workers' dissatisfaction with Türk-Is as the representative of their interests led to the founding of the *Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Trade*

Unions of Turkey, DISK, which split from Türk-Is. The independence of this new trade union was seen as a threat both by the government and Türk-Is. However, the rapid growth of the popularity of DISK among the workers forced the government to retreat from a bill to abolish DISK in 1970. By 1980 about 500,000 workers belonged to unions affiliated with DISK. As previously stated, DISK was persecuted and thus abolished after the 1980 military coup d'Etat.

Although, the institutions this paper is concernedwith (TOBB, TÜSIAD, Türk-Is, and DISK) are now all members of different social European organisations (Eurogroups), beyond their apparent European enthusiasm there is a gap concerning their attitudes towards European matters and the accession process of Turkey. The distinction is not a sectoral one, but gathers TOBB and Tük-Is on the one hand, TÜSIAD and DISK on the other.

Upon its return to power in 1983, the civilian government ruled by T. Özal strongly reoriented economic policy towards liberalisation and integration into the world economy. In this context, TOBB began to assume the function of "economic diplomacy" (Bora 2000: 130). Under TOBB's umbrella a *Foundation for the economic development* (IKV) was set up that specifically dealt with relations with the European Community. In 1984, IKV opened an agency in Brussels. In addition, TOBB entered the *Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry*, Eurochambres, but only as an associate member. The application for full membership of Turkey in 1987 sparked the interest of economic groups towards the EU. However, "in TOBB's attitude towards the EU, from the mid-1980s onwards a continuous tension can be observed between the great desire for economic integration and a nationalist reactionary response to the conflicts over political issues and the delay in Turkey's membership" (Bora 2000: 130). TOBB waited until the establishment of

the customs union, in 1996, to delegate its one representative in Brussels (located in the IKV office). In 2004, the IKV representative in Brussels stated that some members of TOBB did not understand why the organisation was spending money on a representative in Brussels[2]. The start-up of the membership negotiations led TOBB to open its own office in Brussels in 2006/7. Meanwhile, from the beginning TÜSIAD put membership at the top of its agenda and took an active part in the debate about political reforms within Turkey.

Just like DISK, Türk-Is, which is the biggest trade union confederation in Turkey, is a member of the ETUC. But, unlike DISK, the relationship between Türk-Is and the European Trade Union Confederation is often confrontational. Türk-Is has developed a very nationalistic discourse towards European trade unions and denounces them as agents of the European imperialism. It suspects the other Turkish trade union members of the ETUC of associating with the European trade unions in order to work against Turkish Unity. Turk-Is refused to take part in a MEDA project about Turkey which was launched and founded by the ETUC. DISK applied for membership of the ETUC in 1977 but entered the Eurogroup in 1985. Last but not least, DISK supports EU membership for Turkey: "The EU may be instrumental to social change. We know there is a big debate about social issues in European countries, and a struggle for a more social EU. Our strategy is to be a part of the debate "[3].

Thus far, we have connected the struggle for autonomy and involvement in European matters, but we still have to demonstrate the link between them.

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[2]   IKV's representative in Brussels, Interview, May 2004.
[3]   DISK's Director of the International Department, Interview, January 2006.

European Union: a resource in the struggle for autonomy from the state

Although the processes that led TÜSIAD and DISK to commit themselves to European issues are quite different, the results are similar. "Europeanisation is largely conceived as an emerging political opportunity structure which offers [them] additional resources to exert influence" (Börzel and Risse 2000: 6)

EUROPE provides new resources to TÜSIAD to enhance its autonomy from the state and to exert influence on the government. From its beginning, TÜSIAD has strongly supported Turkey's EU membership for both foreign and domestic reasons.

The foreign dimension was the insertion of Turkey into a world economy. It was mainly related to economic reasons and didn't really distinguish TÜSIAD from the wills of other business organisations. TÜSIAD used to criticise the state's policy based on substitution of imports. The organisation pushed for the liberalisation of the economy in order to externalise it and insert it into the world economy. Since 1980 and the government decision to open the economy, roughly half of Turkey's trade has been with EU member states, foreign capital investments in Turkey are from EU member states, and the majority of tourists are from rich European countries. That is the reason why relationships with the EU have been seen as the best means of integration with the international economy.

Beyond this obvious foreign interest shared by a part of the entrepreneurial class, TÜSIAD strategically lined up with the EU cause in the 90's, in order to promote domestic changes. This distinguishes it from TOBB.

To a certain extent, the post-1983 evolution of Turkey towards liberalisation the opening of the country and

European accession answered TÜSIAD demands. Moreover, as civilians came back to power, the basics of political democracy were restored (a relatively unfettered party competition, regular elections, and limited freedom of speech). TÜSIAD members at first supported the coup d'Etat of 1980. They thought it would prevent Turkey from the "Communist threat". The new regime claimed that was committed to economic liberalisation. However, because of the coup d'Etat, the European Community suspended the Association Council. Since the middle of the 80's, in the course of an internal transformation (which give more power to the young generation), TÜSIAD started to criticise the government. TÜSIAD emphasised the interdependence of economic and political liberalisation and promoted domestic political reforms in order to "reduce the considerable autonomy of the bureaucracy and political class regarding the use of public resources, make bureaucrats and politicians more accountable to the general public, and ensure a meaningful participation of business association of public policies" (Yilmaz, 1999: 189). Since its inception TÜSIAD has questioned the centralisation and the unity of the Turkish state and has pushed for an end to orthodox Kemalism. These beliefs were not so easy to advocate as a domestic group: they "would have been (and were) easily ignored had they been voiced by domestic interest groups only" (*ibidem*). Turkey's candidacy for EU membership and the domestic reforms required by the membership process had been strategically emphasised by the TÜSIAD in order to accentuate and to justify its own interests.

In accordance with Keck & Sikkink's "boomerang pattern" model (1998), DISK has used its commitment in European networks to strengthen its organisation and prevent it from the authoritarian state. DISK is the best example of the "capacity of the movements to mobilise actors who have large resources through transnational commitment" (Ongün 2005: 191). DISK is *a priori* further away than TÜSIAD from EU resources. It was a more

contingent process that led the organisation to promote European matters.

After the Coups d'Etat of 1980, brought on by the state's repression of left-wing organisations, one of the members of DISK went into exile in Brussels. *"I arrived in Brussels by chance. I had been invited to a workshop, I knew people there"*[4]. Some contacts had been established before between Turkish and European organisations over the international network of the trade unions (the *International Confederation of Free Trade Union* for example). Since this time, the *European Trade Unions Confederation*, ETUC, has played a major role in support of DISK. While the European Confederations helped DISK to recover properties confiscated from it, DISK opened a base within the ETUC's building in Brussels. Even though DISK has been banned in Turkey, it has still continued to exist through the ETUC's support.

Although both organisations do not share the same proximity to the European project, they both "engage in strategic interactions using their resources to maximise their utilities on the basis of given, fixed and ordered preferences" (Börzel & Risse, *Ibidem*: 6). They both act in a "logic of consequentialism" (March & Olsen, 1998). However, although European political resources have been used by both organisations in order to pursue their own interests, the strategic use of these resources has impacted on both TÜSIAD and DISK. With reference to another trade union, E. Öngün (2005) speaks about the feedback impact of transnational strategie.

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[4]   DISK representative in Brussels, interview, May 2004.

The feedback impact of the resource

The involvment of TÜSIAD and DISK in eurogroups have different effects. Rather than focusing on the process of institutional isomorphism that has affected both of the organisations, which lies outside the remit of this paper, I will rather analyse the constraints that are represented by the new opportunity structure.

From its inclusion in UNICE, TÜSIAD has totally reviewed its organisational structure, implementing a new model adapted to those of its European Partners. Unlike other trade unions, DISK has largely developed its European department. DISK has also entered the *Joint Consultative Committee,* JCC, which was held by the *European Economic and Social Council,* in order to promote concerted action and good practices between economic, social and professional organisations from EU member states and Turkey. Both TÜSIAD and DISK played a prominent role in the institutionalisation of an *Economic Social Committee* in their country that has promoted social dialogue. The Economic Social Committee was set up in 2001.

Apart from this institutional adaptation, EU resources provide new constraints for both the organzations. Neither DISK nor TÜSIAD were familiar with and ideologically in tune with the norm of "social dialogue"[5]. Before 1980, DISK's action used to be based on class struggle and on revolutionary concepts. For a long time, TÜSIAD understanding of Democracy did not encompass

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[5] "Social dialogue is a unique and indispensable component of the European social model, with a clearly defined basis in the EC Treaty. It refers to the discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions undertaken by the social partner organisations representing the two sides of industry (management and labour)". Europa - Employment and social affairs' web site.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_dialogue/

social democracy (Önis & Türem, 2001). Despite the reluctance to accept the concept, both of the organisations were obliged to do so through the eurogroup they belong to. UNICE is one European social partner that has the right to initiate EU legislation in social and employment policies. "This process visibly influenced (…) TÜSIAD's understanding of social dialogue and participation in domestic policy-making" (Atan, 2004b). The European Trade Union Confederation –ETUC- shares with UNICE the right to initiate EU legislation in social and employment policies. The Eurogroup has played the same role of socialisation as UNICE did toward TÜSIAD. "Situated between the European political project and the national trade unions, the European Trade Union Cconfederation is used to being an institution that trains trade unionists in European matters. It works like a trade unions' university where national trade unions experience European codes, especially practical and symbolic norms that are used in the European community sphere" (Pernot, 1998: 61).

What is very interesting concerning TÜSIAD is that this constraint has been taken as a new opportunity by a group inside the organisation. Once again, European issues have been used as a resource by a specific group that seeks greater empowerment. Once again, it has led to a redistribution of resources, not between TÜSIAD and state this time, but within TÜSIAD itself. In the mid 1990's, the young generation clashed with the older one, advocating not only economic reforms but also for political ones, in order to fit with EU standards and requirements. "There has been a long-lasting confrontation between the old and young generations of TUSIAD members, starting from the first critical stance of O. Dinçkök towards the government on democratic standards, until the publication of the report on democratisation [this report, written by B. Tanör in 1997, had strongly affected the pulic debate in Turkey]. Europeanisation shaped the priorities and the style of

TÜSIAD's attitude in favour of the vision of its young-generation leaders and led the organisation to be proactive on the political reform process" (Atan, 2004a: 110). The success of the young generation led to a redefinition of the interests and identity of the organisation. TÜSIAD linked liberal economic thinking to liberal political ideas and embraced the cause of democratisation. It began to deal with taboo subjects such as Kurdish and Islamic issues. TÜSIAD is currently the keen advocate of deep reforms of the Turkish state, including very sensitive issues.

This process highlights the overlapping of the two logic of "consequentialism" and "appropriateness" (March & Olsen, 1998). In this example, the strategical process of redistribution of resources goes hand to hand with collective learning processes resulting in norm internatinolization and development of new identities.

Thus far, the same process has not taken place within DISK. The change within the organisation has been rather symbolic: DISK's change is the evolution of the English translation of its name: from the *Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Trade Unions of Turkey* (literal translation of DISK) it has become the *Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey*! The incorporation of the notion of "Social dialogue" is a very long process. Despite the participation of the organisation in the Meda funding programme on social dialogue, there is still a huge gap between the DISK's representative in Brussels and his colleagues in Turkey: *"This language is very unusual for them"*[6].

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[6] DISK's representative in Brussels, interview, May 2004.

Conclusion

Far from being an asymmetric process constraining the candidates countries through institutional conditionality, the Europeanisation of Turkish actors can be defined as a continuous interaction that provides both resources and constraints which pave the way to a conflictual process of adaptation. In order to better understand Europeanisation, further analysis needs to be carried out to take into account the historical trajectories of social actors within their own states. Instead of 'impact of Europe' it seems better to focus on the 'use' that actors make of it.

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