

## PANEL A - THE EU: FROM THE INSIDE AND THE OUTSIDE

Chair: Eva Weissenberger, Kleine Zeitung

Panellists: Michael Fleischhacker, Die Presse (AT); Eva Herrmann, Swissinfo (CH);  
Zeynep Gögüs, TR PLUS-Centre for Turkey in Europe (TR); Hanne Skartveit,  
Verdens Gang (NO)

Eva Weissenberger:

Good morning. Welcome back again to the symposium and the panel discussion “The European Union – Perceptions and Expectations from within and without”.

Among the countries we are talking about today, as you know, Austria is the only member of the EU. However, according to a Eurobarometer survey from autumn 2008, 47 percent of Austrians feel that the country has benefited from this membership since 1995. This is an increase of 11 percent from the last study in spring 2008. Additionally, a majority of Austrians oppose further enlargement and display reservations against the accession of Turkey. So, whose fault is that? Johannes Foggenhuber, member of the EU parliament for the Austrian party, says in a current issue of the German weekly “Die Zeit” that it is Austrian politicians who are enthusiastic Europeans in Brussels, but complain about Brussels in Vienna. Turks on the other hand, as we heard before, have been seeking membership for more than four decades. Mr. Yenel, the ambassador of Turkey, has said before “Our effort is to show that Turkey is a modern, a western country.” So who has to make that effort, the people, the politicians, the media? We are going to discuss this on the panel first with representatives of the media of the four countries and later on I will invite you to join the debate. The panellists have prepared statements about their perceptions and expectations and their countries perceptions and expectations

Please welcome Mrs. Zeynep Gögüs, who is the founder and president of TR-Plus-Centre for Turkey in Europe, which is an independent non-profit network based in Brussels and dedicated to the integration of Turkey in Europe. She is also a publisher of the internet platform Europe-Turkey and Siegel-communication strategies Centre based in Istanbul. During her journalistic career she serves as a Brussels bureau chief, editor and columnist for various national Turkish media and she has conducted high profile interviews on television, won numerous journalistic awards and has published several books. So, would you like to start please?

Zeynep Gögüs:

ACHTUNG! <sehr sehr schlechte Qualität>

Thank you! Yesterday, I took the U3 Metro to come to the Bahnhof and in the metro, in the wagon, there were about forty people. And I looked around myself and said "Only two of those forty people want me in Turkey. But the recent barometer of course has shown that only five Austrians out of a hundred want Turkey in Europe, and that is the most in all 27 EU countries. The same number in Greece is five times higher than Austria. Greece and Turkey are seen as traditional enemies, as you know. So nowhere in Europe the level for Turkey is so low as in Austria. So, to find out why it was so low in Austria, I looked back in history and for me it was a big surprise, because in autumn 2002 there was very little difference between Austria and other EU countries. So the current mood is new and I realized through the attitudes of the politicians in Austria, I realized that this is a reflection of the directions given by the Austrian politicians and the positions they have chosen, rather than the reflection of the public attitude. For instance, because the numbers are very clear, and in the 2002 polls, the Croatian accession, those in favour in Austria were 34 percent and those against 51 percent, in 2002. And the same numbers for Turkey, those in favour in Austria were 32 percent. So between Croatia and Turkey there were only 2 points in difference, they were almost the same. And the opposition to Turkey were 53 percent. We came to 2005, in three years those in favour of Croatia's accession were 55 percent, opposition 40 percent, whereas for Turkey, those in favour were 10 percent, opposition 80 percent. And 2006, those in favour, as I said before came down to 5 percent. So what happened in those three years in Austria? The number of the Turkish people ...<...HUSTEN, nicht verständlicher Teil...> 220 000 are in Austria and half of them are Austrian citizens, with different Austrian citizenships.... So what has happened between 2002 and 2005, as a journalist I have ask myself this question and I found that I have to come back to the politicians. I found out that the turning point was in 2004 when the social democratic party freedom party of Haider and ...they were accused of ...<quality too bad> ... and from that point on the OVP ...(part missing, because of bad quality) And I realized also that the other debates, also the Austrian politicians

The subject here today, because the more we discuss, the more we will come to a better solution I hope. I am also asking myself the question why the Austrian

democrats, SPÖ, why are they an exception in the EU regarding Turkey. Maybe we should answer this question and they should question themselves why they are doing this, going beyond political debate in Austria. Maybe I should add a few words about Turkey and its perceptions or shall we continue later on?

Eva Weissenberger:

Later on.

Zeynep Gogüs:

Okay.

Eva Weissenberger:

Thank you very much for your statement. Mr. Fleischhacker is editor in chief of the Austrian daily newspaper "Die Presse". "Die Presse" delivers a daily section dedicated to European affairs and he has published several books, the last one is called, roughly translated "Bashing the Politicians". So, why do we like Croatia more than Turkey and is that true?

Michael Fleischhacker:

Well, the question is whether this is true, whether we do like Croatians more than we do Turkish people. I mean, obviously, it is free hypothetic reasons that we see for all the atmospheric problems we have. First, with the question of the accession of Turkey to the EU and second for the Euro-Barometer, being Austria the one country that has the worst numbers, and third, well according, somehow how also politics, media and the people and voters work together. Well, I would say, Mr. Foggenhuber as you mentioned, it is always the politicians' fault, because in Brussels they are the Europeans and in Vienna they blame Europe for everything that is going wrong in Austria. That might be right and it is and obviously it is easier to blame others for the mistakes that you make yourself, and if it is Brussels than it is Brussels and if it is Turkey than it is Turkey. So this is a mechanism that we can see in political business every day. On the other hand, I would say if you take the question what went on in Austria, looking for the reasons why the acceptance of the Turkish accession was higher earlier, one question that I would put against that would be maybe something happened in Turkey. Isn't that a question we could discuss as well? Or maybe

something happened at least in the perception of how Turkey's ambitions toward the accession to the EU have developed. So maybe it is helpful to put questions always on both sides of the table. So I think we can see quite clearly for example in the Euro-Barometer, what was the reason for the drop in the acceptance of the European Union in Austria. The clear cut is 2000 and it was the so called sanctions that the European, the other 14 members put against or to Austria. It is not the question whether every single person thinks that the measures were rightly done, it is just a question of evidence. If you look at the Euro-Barometer you will see the drop exactly after these measures in the year of 2000 and regardless to the question whether they were right or wrong. So this is the...we don't have to discuss any historic or any, I don't know, atmospheric topics, it is quite clear. That was 2000 the measures of the EU against Austria were the precise and single reason for the drop in acceptance of the EU in Austria. The question why Austrians...and so, from then on you have probably put, I would say a percentage of twenty at least to every other topic linked to the European Union, also Turkey and also Croatia, also the Eastern European question. Turkey, is well, why does, or why do the social democrats or why did the social democrats change their minds or put that pressure on the conservatives, on the mid-right government, 2004 is a good question. I can say exactly why social democrats in Austria do what they do in the European question today. I will come back to this question of politics and media, because there is one, and it is the biggest newspaper in Austria that has, I would say, forced opinion of the publisher of that newspaper toward the EU on the political party that is ruling now that is having the federal chancellor. There were long discussions during the last election campaigns whether the "Kronenzeitung" was any longer independent. When the son of the former publisher of the former "Kronenzeitung" even tried to go to court stating that they wouldn't be allowed to have 'independent newspaper' on the front page, because they had supported the social democrats so much. And it failed of course, because the question was not whether this newspaper was independent, but the question was if this party was independent. So it had to fail. That is why it is how it is between politics and media in Austria. The Turkey question I think we should differentiate a little bit more. The question that we should discuss here – Are there substantial, serious and plausible reasons for being against the accession of Turkey to the EU. Or should we discuss it in the way that it is always discussed that any argument or any statement in this accession is identified as some sort of xenophobia

and anti-Turkish-resentment. I would say that there are very serious plausible reasons for being against this accession and I cannot easily accept, also as a media person, that everybody who states those arguments and even says that “No, I am against this accession,” has to defend himself against not being a xenophobic, don’t know, xenophobic and somehow non-democratic person. So I think yes, there are reasons against this accession and we should discuss them openly and not bring the discussion into this awkward field of being a good guy or a bad guy.

Eva Weissenberger:

Okay, thank you, So, as you see the discussion in Austria is always about Turkey and the accession of Turkey, but we are discussing two other countries as well today. Hanne Skartveit....

Michael Fleischhacker:

Well they don’t want us, so...

Eva Weissenberger:

That’s different ja <laughing>, ja it is always we don’t want her, no, but as you said before, people here don’t want you to be here, like at the panel, I hope I can say that, four out of four people are glad to have you here today. <laughing>

Hanne Skartveit is a political editor of “Verdens Gang”, which is Norway’s largest newspaper and until December she was the leader of the group of editorial writers and columnists at her newspaper. So, thanks, the floor is yours.

Hanne Skartveit

Yes, thanks, as our ambassador has already told you, and as you all now, Norway twice rejected membership in the European Union, with a very narrow margin. I think until the modern time this is the closest Norway has ever been to civil war. The fights about membership, both in 1972 and 1994, friendships broke down, spouses were fighting didn’t talk nothing, families had been fighting, it was so emotional and so hard, those fights. You can ask, why did Norway say ‘no’ both of those times. I think both our blessing and our curse as a people is that we consider ourselves extremely independent. We want to rule ourselves, no matter what. It’s about our history, we

started out as self-owning farmers, we were extremely poor, but no one owned us. It was no feudal system. We could not afford the mobility. It was poor people spreading around the country, but they were owning themselves.

Self-rule. And then as someone mentioned here as well, we were in Unions with Sweden, the Danes were ruling us. We have been in someone else's arms and we clearly didn't enjoy it. So we don't want to go there again. And also part of the Norwegian soul is that we don't have any respect for authorities. We don't bow our neck for anyone. Our former king, King Olaf, he became the real king of the people when it was the big oil crisis and he was taking the tram up to the forest to go skiing and that pictured it, that he was really one of us, then we really really fell in love with him. The best thing you can say about a celebrity or a high standing person in any way is if you say "oh, he is ordinary" that's the biggest compliment that you can give.

All countries, most countries have this very centre-periphery axis. I think in Norway that is extremely so. You don't trust anyone who is in the local government, or the central government, or in Brussels. Those in town, they don't understand anything. I have an uncle, living in the west coast. I'm born in Oslo, I'm an Oslo girl and my whole life since I was a little girl we were visiting my uncle in the west coast he always told me 'all those stupid people on Oslo...'. I was responsible, as a nine year old girl, I was responsible for all the stupidity in this country because I was from Oslo. Both, him and I have matured and we don't have those fights anymore, but he's for me the incarnation of this "all in the central places are stupid", which is very engraved I think in the Norwegian soul.

When it comes to the fights we had about, the college fights, because there were fights, about the Norwegian membership in the European Union I think the most important defining thing was that those days managed to make it a fight between the people on the one side and the money and the elite on the other side. The no-sayers mobilized the people. The yes-sayers never did. There was much more enthusiasm on the no-side, they had the best parties, the best marches, the best gatherings. They were really making people feel they were taking part in something important, something good, which the yes-side never managed to do. And then we have of course the fishermen, the farmers, all this kind of thing, but...which I think is of course also very special for Norway. But I think it was so much that the right side was in favour of the thing and the left side was against it. You have some very small groups

on the left side that were in favour, but the broad picture is that the conservatives were in favour, the left side was against. The fight against poverty became the no-sayers' course, the fight for environment issues, the fight for solidarity for the third world. All those issues were within the no-sayers part of the playing field. And even the course for peace that surprised me, even the side for peace became the no-sayers side. They said we can negotiate and make peace in the world, as if Norway alone could make peace in this world, we can make peace in this world when we start alone. And in 1972, the one that was Prime Minister then and who had been taken out of concentration camps more dead than alive and he said in 1972 "My main argument for the EU is peace. I sat there in the concentration camp and said never again war". And the no-sayers at that time, they were just that stupid, they didn't even take that seriously. Back in 1994 I was making an interview with a Norwegian parliamentarian and he said the same thing to me, he said "My view upon the European Union were shaped in the German concentration camp". And it made such an impact on me, but that argument never made such an impact on the Norwegian people. That was just a non-real argument for the yes-sayers. So the whole no-war argument in a way was on the no-sayers side.

Eva Weissenberger:

But that was then in 1994. Has nothing changed in the meantime?

Hanne Skartveit:

Ah, but nothing has changed in Norway, and that's the depressing thing, nothing has changed in Norway. They said, in 1994, this is the call for the affluent, for the rich people and East Europe will never be a member, and if that happen, no it will happen because if that might change then of course. The East European came into the European Union and nothing changed, but of course they still say "No, it doesn't matter. We're still against.". The paradox is that today Norway is probably one of the most loyal, one of the counties that accepts all the rules from Brussels, we have part of the European economic space. We accept all rulings from their part, so we are so loyal, we have everything a membership can give, except the influence. We had the coalition government where the labor party was very split on this, don't want to talk about it, the no-parties have managed to get an agreement. They will not discuss it. No one, discusses membership now, it is a dead debate. We don't even discuss

Europe very much in Norway, which is kind of depressing. I think the only thing that might change the picture would be if one of the strong no-sayers from the two previous fights, fishermen or the socials' left party or some of those strong no-sayers, if they changed their mind something might happen. But I think our ambassador is too optimistic if he says ten or twenty years from now. In the core of all this, at the bottom of all this is the anti-establish sentiment in Norway. The money, the business life, the media, my newspaper is very much in favour of the EU, all that establishments of Norway are in favour of the EU is still the no-sayers strongest argument. The very very deep core of this is who are we and it comes down to what's the idea with Norway, what's the idea with Europe. I spend some years with my family in the United States, we came back two years ago, and the Americans have a very clear idea, the idea behind the United States. Freedom and justice for all my children...They have a very alive constitution which they cherish. When the EU tried to make a new constitution it became a big book. It was not clear cut, really it was not a good idea, I wouldn't say nonsense, but

Eva Weissenberger:

That will be the topic of the next panel – European identity.

Hanne Skartveit

Yes, I know, but I was thinking about what's the idea about Norway. The closest I came was our common value is equality and I think this is also the answer why we haven't joined the European Union, because the Norwegian people as a whole feel that the European Union is something else. They try to be a balance, they are not equal, but we are most equal people in the world.

Eva Weissenberger:

Thank you very much. The last, but not least panellist is Eva Hermann, she is head of the news team and member of the editors in chief office at Swiss Info. This is a nine language internet news and information platform that belongs to the Swiss broadcasting cooperation and its major task is to inform Swiss living abroad about the events in their home land and to raise awareness of Switzerland in other countries. In recent years she was a correspondent based in Brussels for the Swiss news agency. So now we heard why the Norwegians don't like us, what about the Swiss?

Eva Hermann:

I don't really have the answer, but it was funny to hear that also in Norway people are proud of being independent, because I thought that's a Swiss speciality. I think I have to go back until 1992. Then it was an important vote, the Swiss voters rejected the membership of the EEA, it isn't the same as in Norway, the European Economic Area. Since then, I think the Swiss minister already mentioned it, the Swiss have voted more than half a dozen times on the integration of Switzerland in the European Union. It was the people, really the people, who chose this path, this speciality of Switzerland, already mentioned in the relationship in the EU. This direct democracy is really seen in Switzerland as Swiss speciality. In the opinion, of course of many Swiss, this kind of serenity rules out all EU membership and we are something special, this idea of a 'Sonderfall' is, I think, it's still part of the identity of Switzerland. In this regard it is important for many people to have the possibility to correct a decision of the authorities. That's not only the authorities in the village or in the town, or in the canton, on the national level, but especially topics in relationship with Brussels. That's very important. In most cases the voters supported the government's proposal. It's just the idea to be independent and to have the last word. But for me this kind of serenity, this ideology of the direct democracy is the main reason for new scepticism in Switzerland, but if I look back in the recent years I think it has slightly changed. I don't dare to say that membership is coming closer, but the discussion of the relationship isn't anymore black or white and pragmatism has become more important in the decision making process. Especially in young people and also the government goes more in this direction I think. I have two examples maybe the positive outcome on the Schengen agreement and the extension of free movement to Rumania and Bulgaria might be two examples of this pragmatism of Swiss people. You mentioned the media, one other consequence of direct democracy in Switzerland might be the level of knowledge of the European Union in Switzerland. I think it's more or less the same as here in Austria. There are around the same number of correspondence in Brussels as for Austrian media, and of course much more than for Norwegian media. There is one important exception, not the "Kronenzeitung", but the "Blicktabloid" Switzerland's biggest selling newspaper. They don't have a correspondent in Brussels and over the past few years it has largely refrained from EU bashing. I think that's a difference. So, considering the published information the Swiss should be very well informed about the EU. Nevertheless,

many people in Swiss are persuaded that the EU is undemocratic, of course responsible for the tax against banking secrecy, that's very important at the moment, increase in unemployment and criminality, this is also the problems created in Brussels. One difference you mentioned that the government is bashing the Brussels at home. A non-EU member can't do that, because they have their own responsibility. That's another difference. What's interesting, regarding the opposition in Switzerland against the EU is that comes mostly only from the Right-wings Swiss Peoples' Party and Nationalists' Movements. The Greens and the Social Democrats are pro-European. As consequences the EU is not often blamed in Switzerland for its bad international transport policy, the negative consequences of the internal market, the tough asylum policy, GMO, several topics here discussed in Austria, they don't exist in Switzerland. Something else doesn't exist and I was quite astonished when I came back to Switzerland, I think we already mentioned it, at the European level there is a long debate going on about common values, where is Europe, what are the frontiers and is the EU capable to absorb this ongoing enlargement. All these topics discussed in European capitals and in Brussels, it does not exist in Switzerland. I have no reason why, but we are not part of the club so we don't care, that's my impression. I have no idea why it is so because on the other side the minister said "Yes, we are part of Europe" and of this development. I think that's something I don't understand.

Eva Weissenberger:

Thank you very much. You mentioned before that your newspaper is in favour of the EU, you mentioned that the Swiss daily newspaper "Blick" which is against the EU and we learnt about the "Kronenzeitung" which campaigns against the accession of Turkey and against the EU reform treaty. So my question would be – Does the free press have to create a slant, a pro European slant or shouldn't it just reflect the public opinion and report about the EU and not create a slant in any direction?

Hanne Skartveit

Well, for us it is a very clear distinction between what we editorialize. In our editorials we have always been very much in favour of EU, but when we bring stories and when we report the news that's always been balanced and there has not been campaigned in favour of the EU membership. So it's a very clear difference. All the

big Norwegian newspaper were editorializing in favour of membership, but at the same time it was a very fair balance, at least in my view, the reporting on the issue.

Eva Weissenberger:

For example in Austria the “Kronenzeitung” campaigns against the EU and maybe that’s the reason why other media, like the public broadcasting cooperation, create a pro-European slant and are in favour of the EU and create, I don’t know, feelings <laughs>. Should they do that, or just to lean into the other direction, shouldn’t they do that?

Michael Fleischhacker:

Well I think we have to make a difference between any newspaper that is privately owned and any public broadcasting organisation. A public broadcasting organisation has the legal obligation to objectivity, so they should not, no, because they are not even allowed to make a lot of comments in their news broadcasting so why should they create a slant against anything. Privately owned newspapers should always have the distinction between reporting and putting opinion. Of course, also for “Die Presse” for example as a quality newspaper, everybody would rightly expect objective reporting, but of course at the same time they would expect a clear opinion on any subject that is dealt with. The question is what means objectivity in that case. Where does objective journalism end and campaign journalism begin. So, as long as you report any arguments and cases in favour and against of any given case you should have any opinion that you want to have. The problem with the “Kronenzeitung” and this sort of campaign journalism is that they don’t report any argument in favour of a treaty, for example, they only report everything that anybody says against it or any argument that is on the table against it. The question is do we have objective journalism first and if yes, an opinion is okay for me, because as long as everything is reported in favour and against any case any publisher has the right I would say vis á vis his audiences even the obligation to have a clear stand point in any question.

Eva Weissenberger:

Thank you. Mrs. Gögus, Mr. Fleischhacker said before that there are substantial reasons for being against the accession of Turkey and that he doesn't want to defend himself all the time if he says something like that. Would you like to address that?

Zeynep Gögüs:

Well, I understand him very well, because I have been, for all my life, in a defending position. So it is not something you prefer. He also said that maybe something happened in Turkey between 2002 and 2005. Well, what happened in Turkey between 2002 and 2005? – These were the years while we had a very alive reform period. If you say what happened after 2005, I would not say the same, but during the 2002 and 2005 period the EU relationships were very alive and reforms were going on. We were concerned as a media, we were satisfied which we are not right now. Nothing happened in Turkey really between 2002 and 2005 to have a negative impact here in Austria. As far as the pros and cons are concerned regarding Turkey of course the Sarkozy government in France they say Turkey is not European, it is Asian. They put the geography argument. To that I can say from my father's summer house in Antalya I wake up in the morning I hear the cooks singing in Greek, because it is so close. Cypress is a member to the EU which is an East Mediterranean island and also when you read The Economist they are in the articles talking about Georgia and Georgia is referred to as an European country all the time. I don't know about geography of course, that's very prejudiced thing I guess. Prejudices against Islam is something that we can discuss for hours and also there is the idea that the EU is becoming neighbours with problematic countries of the Middle East. This is something we hear from the politicians all the time. This is nothing new. This was also when Turkey applied in 1986, the British Prime Minister was saying the same thing. But then, you know, what happened?- Then in 1999 in the Helsinki summit Europe has accepted Turkey as a candidate country, unanimously. What happened in 2004? – Again, accession talks are starting with Turkey. And there is no other country in the EU with which the accession talk has started and not ended up with membership. This is again something special, a situation created especially for Turkey when you say okay the accession negotiations have started, but it is open ended. Okay, having said that, of course I have to talk about the different lifestyles issue. What you see in the countries who are receiving migration from Turkey, but I think this is something of a public debate, I know that has shifted from an elite debate

subject that we are discussing right now like the strategic position of Turkey and the democracy, human rights, etc, the public debate has shifted. That has started in Germany and I understand that it is going on here in Austria as well in the same directions it has shifted from the elite issues to the issues such as women. So that is creating a big difficulty in understanding each other of course, because there is something going on in Turkey which is not reflected here to the migrant community and we need yet another two generations here so that there is a change among the migrant community as well. At the end of the day when I look at the whole thing, maybe the Norwegian example, maybe we will end up like Norway. Don't forget that we have adopted the Swiss laws, when we are talking about Turkey as Western country, back in the 1920s and Turkish women were given the right to vote 75 years ago. You know the Westernization in Turkey has started a long time ago. All the Western classics have been translated into Turkish, etc. So we may end up like Norway, but if I were Austrian I wouldn't take the blame on myself by taking the responsibility by making a referendum or whatever, by taking the responsibility myself and putting, saying, by being the country in Europe who is refusing Turkey of becoming the EU membership. This is for your own perception, being responsible, because you would be thought of as the country who is provoking the clash of civilization, or whatever you call it. I wouldn't take that risk. I don't think it is very intelligent for a country like Austria to position itself like that.

Eva Weissenberger:

I know it is an emotional topic, but please don't touch your microphone like that all the time.

Zeynep Gogüs:

Oh, I'm sorry.

Michael Fleischhacker:

I just wanted to...besides the fact that we can discuss pros and cons of Turkish membership of Turkey in the EU, and I guess it will also be a topic in the next identity panel, I think it was two think that were interesting and if we are talking about perception inside and outside the common denominator seems the one of rational and emotional approaches to membership or non-membership in the EU. The second

is the question of ordinary people and the elites, they may have together something. So this seems to be the interesting thing in all those countries. For me in Austria it is the second part that is obviously the difficult part for the Austrians, not only for the Turkish question, but also the Eastern Europeans. As you mentioned, the Barometer figures are bad also in that respect and again, what are the reasons? The common answer, well that's the Austrian xenophobic mind, they don't like the Eastern Europeans and the non-Austrian. The second is, or the second possibility of understanding is that it is a question of ordinary people and elites again. Because what people felt was that, okay, all the advantages of bringing the Eastern countries into the EU, they were just for the elites, for the Austrian banking cooperations that made 80 percent of their earnings of the new members of the EU in former Eastern Europe. The ordinary people had the fight of the labour market. The interesting question is – What now? Now that everybody is stating that Eastern economic links of Austria is the main risk and stating that the triple A rating could be endangered because of those close links to the Eastern economy. How will they discuss it now? Will the ordinary people say “There you have it. We did foresee and now that the Eastern Europeans are in problems we all have the problems”. So the elite people earned and now that Eastern Europe is in trouble we, the ordinary people, have to pay for it by more problems of free financing of Austrian money. So I think that this could become even worse now and to me it seems to be the core of perception in and out, seems to be elites and ordinary people.

Eva Weissenberger:

Do you think so as well?

Hanne Skartveit

Yeah, I think that's right. I also had have a question for you, because that's what I am very curious about – how do the Turkish people react to this hostility from European countries.

Zeynep Gogüs:

Oh well, depending on where you stand of course you may like or you may be worried about it. For instance Turkish people's interest in the EU, of course they were interested in the economic world, they were interested in the pre-movement in the

new EU, the cultural identity, the democracy, peace, etc, but we see that according to polls between 2008 the interest, because they wanted the EU because it presented richness, economic wealth, the interest in that respect was 48 percent and came down to 32 percent, so they were no longer interested as much as they did in that respect. Same goes for the pre-movement within travel, education, work, it came down from 30 percent 23 percent. The only thing which went up is the cultural identity. Being part of the European cultural identity has become more important.

Eva Weissenberger:

But there are attitudes in Turkey like you know them from privat relationships like mutual rejection. If we reject them then they say okay if they don't want us then we don't need them anyways.

Zeynep Gogüs:

Yes, I am coming to that. In 2005 55 percent of Turks thought it would be a good thing to be in the EU, before this number was higher. In 2008, this came down from 55 to 42 percent; this is the lowest we ever had. Those that think that membership is a bad thing are at their highest level now with 29 percent.

Eva Weissenberger:

Okay, thank you, Now I would like to join you the debate if you have got a question, please give me a sign.

Richard Kühnel:

Maybe a couple of thoughts on this ...

Eva Weissenberger:

Would you please take a microphone.

Richard Kühnel:

Okay, thank you. Richard Kühnel I am from the European commission in Vienna. On the Eurobarometer, because it was quoted, if we oversimplify a bit, the Austrian attitude toward the EU if we oversimplify it a bit is that we may not be very happy with the club we are in, but we know for sure we don't want others to come and join us.

The interesting thing with the development of the Eurobarometer is that it is moving a little bit, mostly also because of the economic crisis. We have in terms of the attitude of the Austrians vis à vis the EU a slight upturn and you said yourself, 47 percent now see an advantage in the EU. If we ask about Eastern Europe, if we ask about the European enlargement the figures get worse, unfortunately I must say. In the latest Eurobarometer we have asked for example “Are you in favour of future enlargement?” and 67 percent of Austrian say no, the highest number. “Do you think that the previous enlargement has strengthened the EU?” – 53 percent say “No, we don’t think so”. If you ask them “Do you have personally profited from the opening of the borders and the enlargement?” – 81 percent say “No, we haven’t profited”. Now, that obviously is a discrepancy if we compare it with the macroeconomic data and you have quoted that yes, enterprises, the elites do profit, the businesses make profit in the new member states, but what about the ordinary citizen. Now, it is true, that also in terms of employment there was a huge increase with enlargement. We have more employment, not only in the new member states, but also in the old member states. Obviously this communication did take place and I think a lot of the problems also facing Turkey is an issue of perception and communication. It’s true that Austrians are very sceptical and I don’t think, here I am with Mr. Fleischhacker, that this is based on an anti-Islamic sentiment. The European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, which is also based in Vienna, is about to publish a study asking Muslim populations within the EU how they feel integrated within their own state. And here in European comparison Muslim population in Austria feels the best integrated within the EU. So, obviously it is not something like an anti-Islamic attitude which is there, but I think it is a question of perception, where Turkey also has to work in order to improve the perception among public.

What I wanted to ask the two ladies from Norway and Switzerland is how do you see the attitudes shifting now with the economic crisis. Is this sort of a new element in the public discussion, because of course you reinforce your feeling of independence. Now it’s not the time of independence, it is the time of interdependence and also for Norway and Switzerland to some degree this is true with the economic crisis. Is this a new cause for a public debate about approaching the EU? How do you assess this?

Hanne Skartveit
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In Norway I think it is quite the contrary that we feel because of the oil, because of our big pension fund. We are..it's not possible to hurt us, we are in a way outside this crisis. It will affect us somehow, but it's not our fault, it's the world around us. We see that the EU has been struggling to find the right tools, the right things to do. So I think that a lot of people feel relieved that we are not member of the EU right now and we are a little spoiled, this little country far north with all this oil money.

Michael Fleischhacker:

Well it's a sort of a democratic emirate that you have.

Hanne Skartveit

In a way, yes. So I don't feel that this affects us very much at all, unfortunately.

Eva Hermann:

I think Switzerland has both sides. On one side its pragmatism is growing what does it bring to me, do I get a job when we join the European Union, but on the other side the government also complained to the EU "We do it better than the countries around us. We don't have to send problems, our banks are better". At the same time the EU, of course, is responsible for the problem with banking secrecy and so I can't see what will be the consequences of this debate in the next month, the next years that might have an influence, a negative influence.

Eva Weissenberger:

Thank you. Yes, please.

Male form Ankara, Turkey:

I would like to ask the two ladies from Switzerland and Norway when you mentioned about the reasons about why you don't want to join the EU, you emphasised non-economic reasons and there must be also some economic reasons behind that and I would like to hear about the economic reasons if possible. Thank you.

Eva Weissenberger:

Thank you.

Eva Hermann:

I think Switzerland was always an island in this problematic European world of low unemployment rates, we have an important Swiss frank, and of course these were arguments often mentioned. I don't know what will be the impact of the actual crisis, because it is so independent that I am not sure whether it will influence the future debate.

Hanne Skartveit

When it comes to Norway I think I will connect it to my previous answer, because that was also an argument on the no-sayers' side in a sense that if we join the EU we have to share our oil resources, we have to share our fish resources and will our wealthy state be threatened, with all the economic benefit for people. So the economic arguments were in fact also against EU membership. I think if it would have been a tougher economic time at the time when we voted, maybe things would have looked different. If we came into an economic crisis, if the oil price dumped down then it will be a different story, but I think as long as we have all the money it will not be an argument strong enough in favour of the yes-sayers.

Eva Hermann:

If I may add, regarding Turkey, I think the whole debate, concerning the process 'absorption capacity' or 'cultural identity', the ordinary people did not understand this word, this technique expression, but the word netto-contributer, everybody understood in Switzerland.

Eva Weissenberger:

Thank you. Unfortunately we are already running out of time, but there is some time for one or two more questions. Yes, please:

Female from Istanbul, Turkey:

I just have one question, I am from Istanbul, Turkey. The question is that there is always a reference to European identity whenever, you know, you want to apply for EU funds or want to do something with the EU, there is always a reference as a requisition that whatever project you come up with has to have some connection to

the European identity. My question is, how would you define, I am addressing it to the three European country representatives actually, Austria, Norway and Switzerland, how would you define European identity.

Eva Weissenberger:

Okay, that's the topic of the next panel, but it's a good one, so....<laughing>...please would you like to...

Eva Hermann:

No, if I try to reflect the opinion of the ordinary citizen this word does not exist. We have a Swiss identity, might be of the part of Switzerland I live, of my language, but a European identity doesn't exist for ordinary European people.

Hanne Skartveit

I think it gets stronger the further you live away from Europe. I was, as I said, living in the United States and I was studying at the University of Washington DC. I was an International Student, and there we felt as Europeans. But in Norway I don't feel as European the same way. I think it is an abstract, I think it is more something that people want to happen more than what it actually is.

Michael Fleischhacker.

Well, it is not a good question for a short answer, but I will try. Culturally I would say it's the idea of Christian heritage and the heritage of enlightenment and the heritage of openness to any other cultural identity. Then of course it is social market economy, I think it's even part of the cultural identity of Europe, and then it's the Viennese café.

Zeynep Gogüs:

Maybe I should add something, in another poll, 60 percent of the Austrians said that religion is irrelevant whether a country should be considered European or not.

Eva Weissenberger:

But you don't believe that, or do you believe it?

Zeynep Gogüs:

No, I believe that if they say so. 60 percent of a country, whether a country should join. Only 28 percent see the EU as a fortress, just to show the contradictions.

Eva Weissenberger:

Okay, thank you very much. If you want to know more about the European identity, please join us later at quarter to two, then the next panel will take place and it's about "Is the European Union a melting pot? - Any signs of a EU identity forming." In the meantime lunch will be served. Thanks for joining us and Bon Appétit.