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### Immigrant Integration Through Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: An Analysis of the Turkish Diaspora in the Capital of the European Union

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# Immigrant Integration Through Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: An Analysis of the Turkish Diaspora in the Capital of the European Union

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**ABSTRACT** *This research focuses on the European Union's (EU) public relations and public diplomacy efforts for immigrant integration. It uncovers the relationship between the EU and leaders of Turkish associations in Brussels, Belgium. In-depth interviews with Turkish association leaders reveal the way they see themselves and the Turkish diaspora, how they reflect on their national identities, and their understanding of EU public diplomacy and public relations strategies. The communication strategies Turkish associations use to gather information about immigrant integration and their opinions on EU communication strategies are also studied. In addition, the research investigates whether two-way communication exists between the Turkish associations and the EU, and unveils the strategic communication and public relations strategies the Turkish diaspora uses to influence public policy and to engage in lobbying.*

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the European Union (EU) public relations and public diplomacy efforts toward immigrant integration through an analysis of the Turkish immigrant community in Brussels. Based on critical case sampling, qualitative interviews with leaders of Turkish associations in Brussels were conducted to understand how they receive, evaluate, and respond to EU public relations and public diplomacy efforts about immigrant integration and their relationship with the EU. The interviews also provide a detailed profile of the Turkish diaspora in Brussels and how they communicate within their community, their concerns, and their reflections on their identities. Findings may be instrumental in providing strategies

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for relationship building, cultivation, and the engagement efforts of the EU regarding immigrant integration.

### **Public Relations and Public Diplomacy for Immigrant Integration**

The theoretical foundation of this study borrows from the evolving body of knowledge of mass communications and political sciences, more specifically international relations. In particular, public relations is a field of study within mass communication, and public diplomacy traces its roots to international relations studies. In this study, the authors endeavor to bring both literatures closer in order to understand the ways in which they interact and intertwine.

Both public relations and public diplomacy aim to manage the mutual relationships between an entity and its primary publics. While organizations use public relations, states engage in public diplomacy to establish and maintain relationships. Leonard also suggested that public diplomacy's focus should be on building connections between different publics. "Public diplomacy should be about building relationships, starting from understanding other countries' needs, cultures, and peoples and then looking for areas to make common cause," Leonard explained.<sup>1</sup>

Signitzer and Coombs claimed that public relations and public diplomacy are becoming similar through a "natural process of convergence."<sup>2</sup> J. Grunig agreed, emphasizing that public diplomacy is the "application of public relations to strategic relationship of organizations with international publics."<sup>3</sup> Public relations can enhance public diplomacy, especially through introducing a research-based, two-way symmetrical model that focuses on managing relationships. "Public relations can help public diplomacy in developing its scope and in advancing—not only in theory, but also in practice—from one-way information models to more two-way communication models," Signitzer and Wamser stated.<sup>4</sup>

A community-building approach to public relations aims to bring together people around common interests and values, which is also similar to what the EU needs to accomplish: to unite people around a common European identity. Immigrant integration is part of community building. As Hallahan suggested, community building aims to integrate people and organizations around "a functional collectivity that strives toward common or compatible goals."<sup>5</sup> Ledingham explored how public relations, as part of public diplomacy efforts, can contribute to community building by nurturing relationships and bringing together diverse populations through reducing conflict, and by resolving differences and conflicting perceptions.<sup>6</sup> Utilizing public relations and public diplomacy to integrate its increasingly diverse population, especially diasporas, should be a major goal for the EU to reduce conflict and enhance community building, especially in its contemporary political and economic context.

### **Immigrant Integration in the EU**

The main objective of the European Commission has been to effectively manage migration by taking into consideration the economic and social background of the

EU member states.<sup>7</sup> Most EU member states face migration and immigrant integration challenges. In the European Council meeting in Tampere in October 1999, EU leaders emphasized the need for a common, EU-wide immigration policy to promote the integration of Third Country Nationals (TCNs).<sup>8</sup>

According to a European Commission report published in November 2007, the population of TCNs within the EU is 18.5 million, making up 3.8 percent of the total EU population of approximately 493 million.<sup>9</sup> The 3.8 percent may seem insignificant; however, 18.5 million TCNs living within EU borders make up a population larger than many EU member states and constitute a large immigrant community. EU institutions have been developing common integration decisions and initiatives to be adopted by all member states and encouraging the exchange of the best practices.

*The First annual report on migration and integration*, published in July 2004, summarized current EU migration data, integration policies, and practices especially regarding TCNs.<sup>10</sup> The goal of establishing a common EU immigration policy was further emphasized in 2004 with the adoption of the five-year *Hague program* by the European Council on November 2004 to strengthen freedom, security, and justice in the EU for the period 2005–10. The program suggested control over migration and asylum policies in many areas including entry, admission to labor markets, integration, and returns.<sup>11</sup>

Shortly after, the JHA Council adopted the *Common basic principles* on November 19, 2004, to enhance the coordination of national integration policies to establish an EU framework for the integration of TCNs.<sup>12</sup> The principles encouraged EU states to be involved in the employment, social affairs, equality, and gender rights of TCNs.<sup>13</sup> The main goal of the *Common basic principles* was to strengthen national integration strategies and create consistency between national and EU strategies.

On September 1, 2005, the Commission proposed *A common agenda for integration—framework for the integration of third country nationals in the European Union*, according to which integration is defined as a “dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.”<sup>14</sup> The goal was to ensure that the *Common basic principles* are put into practice by the EU member states through such initiatives as the establishment of National Contact Points on Integration; the *Handbook on Integration*; an Integration Web site; European Integration Forum; and the *Annual Report on Migration and Integration*.<sup>15</sup> The Commission also suggested that “the practice of diverse cultures and religions must be safeguarded”<sup>16</sup> by encouraging the creation of intercultural, inter- and intra-faith dialog platforms and establishing dialog with religious and humanist organizations at the national level.

The Commission also stated, “the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies supports their integration.”<sup>17</sup> To enhance integration, the Commission recommended a study/mapping exercise of various rights and obligations of TCNs as well as the creation of immigrant organization platforms at the EU level. Also planned is the launch of a Web portal for European experiences on immigrant integration, a *European integration forum*, to encourage EU-level participation by all stakeholders.<sup>18</sup>

However, all these initiatives and rights do not mean much for immigrant communities unless they know about, comprehend, and act upon them. As Valentini stressed, supranational organizations such as the EU “need to communicate with the language, the values and norms of their publics” if they want to reach them and incur behavioral changes.<sup>19</sup> The significance of using public relations and public diplomacy for immigrant integration in the EU is enormous, and if used effectively it can support social harmonization within the EU community.

### **Turkish Immigrants in Europe and Belgium—TCNs**

This study focuses on the Turkish diaspora in Belgium because at the time it was conducted, Belgium had less strict citizenship requirements compared to most European countries, and studying the conditions of Turkish immigrants in Belgium thus seemed interesting as most European studies focus on Sweden, Germany, Austria, France, and the Netherlands, which have more stringent nationality requirements. In fact, when this study took place, Belgium was unique as “Belgian citizenship [was] open to all immigrants with a sufficient period of legal residence, and [was] not conditional upon language, work or integration requirements.”<sup>20</sup>

The status of the Turkish population in west-European countries is important in the discussion of immigrant integration issues since it represents a large share of the (non-EU) foreigners living in these countries, including Germany, Austria, and Belgium. Although most studies that focus on Turkish immigrants focus on Germany, Turkish immigrants in Belgium and their integration challenges have previously been studied by Wets,<sup>21</sup> Kaya & Kentel,<sup>22</sup> Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw,<sup>23</sup> and Hooghe.<sup>24</sup> The two main non-EU nationalities in Belgium are Moroccans and Turks, and Turks are often presented as the least integrated group of immigrants.<sup>25</sup> Thus, this study can be seen as a follow-up of the study of the Turkish diaspora in Belgium. Finally, the study of Turkish immigrants living in Belgium also has indubitable significance given that Brussels, Belgium, serves as the capital of the EU and, as the study assumes, EU immigrant integration policies and decisions—and their impact on the communities, which are their target—would be most visible there.

It is important to study the Turkish diaspora as Turkish immigrants constitute the largest group of TCNs living in Europe, making up 25 percent of all TCNs legally residing in the EU. “The main recipient countries are Germany (77.8 percent of those migrant workers, or 2.3 million people), France (7.9 percent, or 230,000), Austria (4.7 percent, or 135,000), and the Netherlands (4.4 percent, or 128,000),” the Commission reported.<sup>26</sup> Although Turkish immigrants make up the most numerous group of TCNs having lived in Europe for over three generations, they are not yet accepted as “Europeans.”

As Erzan and Kirisci stated, Turkish immigrants face severe integration problems because of many different factors.<sup>27</sup> First, there is a lack of proficiency in local languages, which leads to poor performance in school, lower education levels, and thus unemployment later in life. Lack of proficiency in the local language negatively affects participation in social and political life, leading to further alienation, causing

immigrant families to move to “ghetto-like societies” resulting in a withdrawal from the local culture and community. Wets also emphasized the poor level of education among Turkish migrants and argued that the main reason for this is that children do not master the language of education sufficiently. Because most children do not attend pre-school, they are unable to master the local language and cannot socialize with the Belgian children, thus causing frustration and learning problems once they start primary school.”<sup>28</sup> This language barrier may in fact negatively affect them in their life choices later in life. Smith, Wistrich, and Aybak<sup>29</sup> argued that different groups of immigrants in Europe, with Turks making up the most populous immigrant group, suffer from racism and discrimination in many areas of social and economic life including interactions with police, courts, education services, training, health, social life, employers, trade unions, work mates, shops and offices, banks, neighbors, and landlords.

Kaya and Kentel referred to Turkish immigrants living in Belgium as Belgian-Turks, emphasizing their hyphenated identities, and reported that an “overwhelming majority (74 percent) of all Belgian-Turks primarily identify themselves with hyphenated European identities, as in European-Turkish or Turkish-European.”<sup>30</sup> The authors also reported that the Turkish population in Belgium is around 200,000, including immigrants from all ethnic backgrounds. According to Jacobs, Phalet, and Swyngedouw, 80 percent of the Turkish immigrants confirmed that “they see themselves as a genuine community,” especially since most of these immigrants came from the same Anatolian villages and towns due to chain migration over the years.<sup>31</sup> More than half of these Belgian-Turks, 58 percent, were born in Turkey and most, 37 percent, migrated from Central Anatolia and 39 percent have a rural background.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, 66 percent of Belgian-Turks reported that they immigrated to Belgium following someone in their family, which reveals the chain migration trend among Belgian-Turks through family reunification and arranged marriages by importing brides and bridegrooms from Turkey.<sup>33</sup> Kaya and Kentel estimated that around 1300 brides and bridegrooms come from Turkey to Belgium every year. This is a really high number compared to other immigrant communities in Europe. However, an exact count cannot be known as “no statistics are kept of members of the Turkish community who have acquired Belgian nationality.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the numbers of Turkish nationals who have been nationalized and became Belgian citizens are not included in these figures.

Belgian-Turks are involved with Turkish print media and TV broadcasting from Turkey, Belgium, and Europe as almost all major Turkish TV channels have European units that provide programming “suitable to the ‘habitats of meaning’ of the diasporic subject.”<sup>35</sup> Turkish non-nationals tend to live together in neighborhoods in Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse, which are municipalities within Brussels. Manco also reported that around “one-fourth of the country’s Turkish immigrants live in five of the Brussels-Capital Region’s nineteen boroughs, namely, Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse, City of Brussels, Anderlecht, and Molenbeek.”<sup>36</sup>

While Turks represent a significant percentage of the immigrants in Europe, including those exposed to Belgian society, their affiliations with Turkish

communities and culture remain strong. In this context, it becomes necessary to examine how these communities identify themselves, what kind of relationships they have with the larger EU milieu in which they are situated, and whether the EU is able to inform them of its policies. Consequently, the following research questions have been proposed:

**RQ1** How do Turkish association leaders see and define the Turkish Diaspora living in Belgium?

**RQ2** How do leaders of Turkish associations in Brussels receive, evaluate, and respond to EU public relations and public diplomacy efforts about immigrant integration?

**RQ3** Can Turkish immigrant associations influence the EU on immigrant integration; are they engaged in a two-way communication, and what strategies do they use to influence EU decisions and initiatives?

### **Methodology and Sampling**

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Turkish association leaders in Brussels to gauge their understanding of EU public relations and public diplomacy strategies regarding immigrant integration, to identify the communication channels the associations use to gather information regarding immigrant integration and to document their opinions on the EU's communication strategies. In addition, this study investigated whether two-way communication exists between the Turkish associations and the EU. The communication and lobbying strategies these immigrant associations use to influence public policy were also examined. This research opens a window into how Turkish immigrants in Brussels feel about being immigrants and how EU decisions regarding integration affect the lives of the Turkish Diaspora.

In-depth, semi-structured interviewing was selected as the method of data collection as it provides flexibility and interaction between the researcher and participants and allows participants to tell their stories and express themselves freely.<sup>37</sup> Brussels was selected as the venue for this research because it is the capital of Europe, and EU institutions such as the European Commission and the European Council are headquartered in Brussels. Thus, it was assumed that if there were one place where the public relations and public diplomacy efforts of the EU are most visible, this would have to be Brussels because of its diplomatic importance.

Critical case sampling, a purposive sampling strategy commonly used in qualitative studies, was utilized. Maxwell argued that purposive sampling can be used to recruit specific "settings, persons, or events" because of the "information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices."<sup>38</sup> Critical case sampling allows for including participants who can make a point quite dramatically or are particularly important in trying to understand what is happening in that specific case.

It was assumed that if the leaders of Turkish associations in Brussels are having difficulty accessing information about immigrant integration in the EU, then it is



highly unlikely that ordinary Turkish immigrants will be aware of integration issues. Finding out about how much these leaders know about EU public relations and public diplomatic efforts toward immigrant integration would provide clues on whether the EU is successful in its public relations and public diplomacy efforts at reaching out to the Turkish Diaspora, or even other ethnic groups living in Brussels.

In the first part of the interviews, demographic questions were asked to get basic background information about the participants and to establish rapport. After getting a personal history and detailed information about the organizations they represented, questions about the EU integration efforts were asked. The goal was to understand how much the participants were aware of EU immigrant integration strategies, whether they are affected by them, how they learned about them, and their feelings about how the EU communicates these integration strategies to them through public diplomacy and public relations. Participants' opinions about how they believe the EU should use public relations and public diplomacy for immigrant integration were also discussed. Finally, participants were asked questions about two-way communication and the role of the associations in influencing public policy, whether they have any direct contact or relationship with the EU institutions, and whether they can engage in lobbying.

### **Results: Turkish Association Leaders' Definition of the Turkish Diaspora in Belgium**

Twenty-three semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 Turkish association representatives, 2 Turkish-Belgian politicians, and 1 diplomat from the Turkish Embassy in Brussels were conducted between April 7 and May 20, 2009. During the interviews with the association leaders, the names of two politicians came up occasionally who were later contacted to include their opinions on the Turkish community in Brussels and immigrant integration efforts, both at the national and EU levels. The association types were selected based on the distinction made by Kaya and Kentel,<sup>39</sup> which include labor union, political party, Turkish/Belgian friendship associations, cultural center, religious associations, and fellowship associations. The number of interviews with different types of associations is given in [Table 1](#).

Most Turkish associations were registered in Turkish neighborhoods in the Brussels-Capital, which include Schaerbeek, Saint Josse, and Molenbeek. Two were based in Anderlecht but had branches in Brussels-Capital. Almost all the study participants had acquired Belgian citizenship; however, they have also kept their Turkish citizenship, so they are considered dual citizens. Only four study participants did not have Belgian citizenship. Out of the 23 people interviewed, only six were women and the rest were men. A single woman participant was a politician, two were the leaders of two education associations, and the other three were women's association leaders. There were variations in the ages of the participants, while most of the participants were between the ages of 35 and 55, there was one participant who was 22, and two participants who were older than 65. Seventeen of the study participants were college graduates or were currently taking classes from a university; six were

**Table 1.** Number of Interviews according to types of associations

Association types	Number of interviews
Business	3
Religious	2
Political	3
Fellowship	1
Cultural	4
Education	4
Women	3

middle-school or high-school graduates. While almost none of the women participants worked, half of the men interviewed were only involved in their associational positions and did not hold other jobs. Those who worked were mostly small businesses owners, managing their own restaurants, supermarkets, or stores.

Interview transcripts were coded and highlighted in Turkish through textual analysis. Commonly used or interesting words were noted, paying attention to repetitive phrases and important statements and focusing on stories told by participants as suggested by Rubin and Rubin.<sup>40</sup> Concepts, main arguments, and themes were identified through multiple readings of and repeatedly listening to the transcripts. Later, all 23 transcripts were coded to determine whether the concepts, themes, and main arguments were present in all the transcripts.

### *The Little Anatolia Schaerbeek: Neighborhood Culture*

Schaerbeek, the area where a majority of the Turkish community in Brussels lives, is very close to the city center and is just three metro stations away from Schuman, the center of the EU. However, it could easily pass as a street from Turkey. Restaurants, cafes, and stores have Turkish names and almost everyone on the streets speak Turkish. Neighborhood culture in Schaerbeek was the first theme that came up during interviews. While a large group of participants agreed that this neighborhood culture disabled the integration process, a smaller group believed that it helped protect the Turkish identity. One of the politicians interviewed had worked in the municipality and she said that Schaerbeek is, in fact, the sixth largest municipality in Belgium with a population of 130,000 residents. This population is mainly made up of Turkish nationals, who tend to call the neighborhood *Little Anatolia*. A cultural association's representative underlined the deep neighborhood culture in Schaerbeek:

You can do things you wouldn't be able to do in Turkey. For example, you can greet someone you don't know on the street here. When you understand that they are Muslim, you greet them openly.

Some others, however, did not see this neighborhood culture as positively as it provides a protected area almost like a cocoon for the Turkish immigrant community. The leader of a women's association reflected on this issue during the interview: "There are families or women who have never gotten out of this part of town. They have been trapped here." The leader of an education association also agreed with this view saying that

living together in Schaerbeek has influenced integration negatively. Turks living here could not move on. But when you look at the Turks in Turkey, you realize that they are much more developed, they are much more educated.

In fact, one of the politicians interviewed stated that although she was born and raised in Brussels, she got lost on the first day of college and her father had to take her to the university during the first week until she learned how to get there. "We hadn't gotten out of Schaerbeek much, we didn't know the city." In fact, the neighborhood has become a sort of a cocoon, a ghetto, for the Turkish community.

### *Cocoon Feeling*

A few of the participants were more critical of the Turkish community in Brussels. An education association leader mentioned the word cocoon during the interviews when describing the life of the Turkish community:

We have to get out of our cocoon. We don't even know what is around us. We have to be more involved in social life, in matters that concern society. The elections are approaching, but we don't know the candidates, what they propose, who to vote for. But if we want to move forward as the Turkish community, we have to think about the future.

This cocoon seems to be a pattern for the Turkish community in Brussels. Some other participants also talked about the community forming a cocoon, a protected area for the Turkish community around itself in Schaerbeek. These participants criticized the Turkish community for not having opened up to the Belgian lifestyle and community.

### *Ghettoization*

The issue of ghettoization came up during the interviews. Again a critical minority of the participants focused heavily on this issue. The leader of a Turkish women's association admitted Turks were not successful at integrating:

We have many problems as a society. We have language issues, we have education issues, and our youth has problems. We are seen as second class citizens across Europe and some of it is our fault. The Turkish community here is

different than those in Turkey. People here have been ghettoized. They were not able to open up to the society here.

One political association leader also complained about this ghettoization effect. “Turkish kids are deeply influenced by Arab kids, especially in regard to having a Muslim identity. There are really strong Islamic pressures in the neighborhood schools.”

One participant, the leader of a cultural association, argued that the ghettoization is, in part, a result of the Belgian government’s mistakes in the past. He stated that when they first arrived in Brussels, large groups of immigrants moved somewhere and brought their families. When newcomers arrived, they moved to those areas as well. The participant criticized the Belgian government for assuming that immigrants would return home one day and for not having an immigration policy for a long time:

If the Belgian government had taken immigration seriously, and distributed immigrants to different locations in town, then the ghettoization present today could have been eliminated. The newcomers would have been better educated and they would have learned the local languages. The immigrants did not change after they came. They still live like they did in the 1970s and 1980s. Today the Belgian government worries about eliminating the ghettos. It’s too late now.

On the contrary, there were a few participants who were happy about the Turkish immigrants living together in Schaerbeek and the neighborhood culture. One participant from a religious association said a ghetto is where immigrant communities live. But he said that this has created a Turkish neighborhood in town:

All Turkish immigrants who came to Brussels moved here with their families. People did not lose their Turkish identities. It is not like this in other European countries. Living together helped protect our people.

### *Being Lost*

A small group of participants expressed that they were worried about the future of the Turkish community in Belgium. Participants seemed really concerned about what will happen to the Turkish community after 50 or 100 years. There were fears of the Turkish diaspora losing its culture and traditions, forgetting its language and history, simply being lost in the future. The leader of a Turkish women’s association kept asking questions when talking about the future of the Turkish community: “Where will the Turkish community be after 50 years? What will the youth know? How much of Turkish history could we teach our children?” The leader of a cultural association also shared these fears. He stated that the situation of the Turkish immigrants is different than that of the Turks in Turkey:

People in Turkey don't live under the risk of losing their identities. Here, the first and the second generations are not under this risk either. Families are able to teach Turkish culture and history to their children. But if we are permanent here, we have to consider what will happen in the next 50 or 100 years. If we don't work on the people, they will get lost. I don't want them to have Turkish names but not know a word of Turkish in the future.

### **Turkish Associations' Awareness of EU Immigrant Integration Strategies**

Interview participants were not aware of EU immigrant integration efforts. From the interviews, it seems as if the Turkish associations are not interested in EU immigrant integration decisions and initiatives. Whatever information they have, they seem to have learned from word of mouth. The leader of a religious association said that he did not have much information about EU immigrant integration efforts, but said that they sometimes heard things from people. An education association leader suggested that they did not know much about the EU efforts; however when examples of EU integration efforts were provided, he claimed to be aware of these initiatives without knowing they were initiated by the EU.

A political association leader admitted that they had not done anything about the EU other than protesting some decisions. He added that the EU did not have a direct relationship with immigrant associations. The leader of a women's association believed that the Turkish Consulate might be the resource to provide information on these issues. "People rely on word-of-mouth information. People should go to the consulate and learn it from the experts. But unfortunately no one does this." Another women's association leader admitted that they had not tried to partner up with other Turkish associations to be proactive in these issues. The leader of a religious association said that the EU immigrant integration issues did not concern them because they were not part of their goals as an association, but he added that they tried to inform their members as much as they can. A political association leader said they do not have one-to-one communication with the EU and complained about the lack of interest among Turkish associations:

The immigrant associations are not as active as they should be. They can't open up to the outside. We live in the center of the European Union, but we don't have much communication with them. This is unfortunate. But we don't know how to get into contact. We don't know what to do. The Turkish state needs to help us about this.

In fact, one of the Turkish politicians interviewed also agreed that the Turkish immigrants in Brussels, especially those who have been naturalized, did not have information about the EU or its immigrant integration efforts. On the other hand, she said that those who just migrated to Europe or immigrants who could not acquire Belgian citizenship might know about these laws. She claimed that this might be due to the lack of communication on the part of the EU to inform TCNs:

They cannot establish a connection with people. They (EU institutions) haven't established a bridge, a relationship with their citizens. But I don't think they are even aware of this. They do so much research; they publish so many reports. But I don't know who benefits from all these efforts.

A political association leader focused on the EU immigrant integration strategies from a totally different perspective. He supported the idea that the concept of participation should take the place of integration:

We reject the concept of integration as an organization. Integration is over because clear definitions of integration are never provided. Communities that have been living for three generations; when will they be considered integrated? What does integration really mean? The concept of participation is more realistic. It supports pluralist identities.

He mentioned the *Eurobarometer* surveys arguing that the EU must care about what the public thinks if they invest resources in these public opinion polls. He argued that the EU was not successful at communicating its efforts to the EU community. In addition, he stated that people needed time to understand EU policies. "There are so many resources and communication tools. It is hard for people to find time to research these issues."

An education association leader said that EU immigrant integration issues had not been their priority. However, she added that she knew about the integration efforts toward immigrants from the new EU member states, Bulgaria, and Romania. She also said that the EU needed to promote its immigrant integration strategies and one way to do this could be to reach out to the immigrant communities directly. The suggestions of Turkish associations about how the EU should communicate its immigrant integration efforts will be discussed later.

### **Turkish Association Leaders' Relationship with the EU and Strategies to Influence EU Policies**

Other questions this research tried to answer were whether Turkish associations can influence the EU on issues of immigrant integration, whether they are engaged in two-way communication, and what strategies they use to influence EU policies. Almost all participants underlined the importance of lobbying as a unified community to be more informed about EU immigrant integration efforts and to influence policy in these areas. Lobbying was a distant term for most participants. They all knew what lobbying meant; however, almost all participants argued that the Turkish community in Brussels was not active or integrated enough to act together and form a lobby.

While a few participants suggested that the Turkish state officials needed to help the Turkish community to get organized, many other participants argued that the associations needed to be more integrated to act together and form a lobby. A business association leader said that one cannot speak of an active Turkish lobby

in Brussels and he suggested that lobbying was not well established among the members of the Turkish community: “Some people think lobbying is bribing, but it is a long-term process. You first need to get to know people, establish a network to influence people.”

Another business association leader suggested that his organization engages in lobbying in the EU to inform EU officials about Turkey and the Turkish community in Europe and to establish relationships. He said that they arranged informative seminars and meet with parliamentarians to discuss issues of interest. He seemed to be the only association leader actively involved in lobbying at the time the interviews were conducted. The leader of a cultural association argued that lobbying was necessary; however, he added that they were a small association and did not have the staff or resources.

A women’s association leader complained that they had not been able to form a lobby and voice the concerns of the Turkish community. A cultural association leader also viewed lobbying as communicating the Turkish community’s issues. However, he believed that there needed to be a political platform to be able to do that. A political association leader also argued that a unified Turkish platform—a Turkish lobby—was missing because the Turkish civil society was not well developed.

Some held the Turkish state responsible for organizing the Turkish lobby. A political association leader argued that the Turkish Embassy and Consulate should be blamed for not being more involved with the Turkish community. “They should come and explain to us, teach us, organize us.” The leader of a religious association believed that there would be a strong Turkish lobby in the future:

Financial and other resources are needed. An association is needed which will organize all other small organizations. This association needs to be neutral and free from outside influence.

An education association leader believed that immigrant associations needed to partner-up and engage in lobbying to explain themselves. “There needs to be more cooperation between Turkish associations.” The leader of a political association also pointed out the importance of lobbying for the Turkish community. He suggested that establishing relationships with parliamentarians and engaging in direct communication was important. He added that being a contact point for the mass media may be used as a lobbying tool.

#### *How the EU Should Reach Out to Immigrant Communities*

Most participants believed that EU institutions needed to be proactive in communicating with immigrant communities. Participants had many suggestions about how the EU institutions could communicate to them about immigrant integration efforts. Almost half of the participants believed that the EU institutions needed to reach out to the civil society organizations directly to communicate about immigrant

integration efforts. An education association leader argued that the EU should focus on reaching out to people directly. He suggested that this could be done through establishing relationships with the civil society organizations. He believed that this could also help to move immigrant integration issues from the national level to the EU level. "In fact this might be influential in creating a public debate within the EU community because EU decisions include many voices and different opinions."

The leader of a women's association also suggested that the EU should first communicate with civil society organizations, which can then reach out to people directly. A cultural association leader said that the EU should reach out to civil society organizations directly, but he added that these organizations needed to improve their structures to establish a better relationship with EU institutions. A cultural association leader suggested that EU institutions should try to reach umbrella organizations like federations, instead of many small associations, to reach out to people. He argued that the EU could not visit each little association individually.

A women's association leader also argued that immigrant associations should be more involved in these issues. However, she believed that this was not sufficient to inform people. She also provided an example from the Flemish government's communication strategy, where the government communicates EU decisions that interest the public via small brochures. She suggested that this strategy could be used by the immigrant communities to communicate EU policies and developments in immigrant integration issues. In addition, she argued that the local Turkish media, newspapers, and news Web sites such as *Yenihaber*, *Binfikir*, and *Belcikahaber* should also inform the Turkish immigrant community about EU immigrant integration efforts. In addition, she said that opinion leaders and trusted people in the community, such as politicians, should also be more active in communicating immigrant integration issues. However, she complained that the Turkish community did not have many elected officials and argued that this needs to change as well.

An education association leader suggested that the EU institutions could try to reach students directly. In addition, he proposed that an information center could be established so that people who want to learn more about EU immigrant integration issues can directly apply for more information. Another education association leader said that the responsibility to communicate EU immigrant integration issues fell on politicians, civil society organizations, mass media, and people working in the municipalities. The leader of another education association argued that the mass media, especially TV channels, should be used to inform people. She suggested that Turkish TV channels could be used to reach out to the Turkish community in Europe.

The leader of a political association had an interesting suggestion as to how the EU can communicate its integration strategies to the public. He suggested that participative democracy, giving people responsibility, should be utilized by EU institutions.

The European Union has this approach: Let's make a decision; people will eventually accept it anyway. This approach is typical of *representative democracies*. However what they need is *participative democracy*. The rise in Euro skepticism is also a part of this problem. The European Union could use



pilot projects and consult people. They have to make the public feel responsible to make a decision before making a decision at the EU level.

*Turkish Associations' Relationship with the EU and Strategies to Influence EU Policies*

One reason for the lack of a relationship between EU institutions and Turkish immigrant associations in Brussels could be the lack of organization within the Turkish community in Brussels. There are many small associations which do not have the capacity or the resources to research and inform the Turkish community about these efforts, let alone establish a communication with the EU and follow, or even try to influence, EU immigrant integration efforts.

Participants were asked how the EU should establish relationships with immigrant communities and inform them about the EU initiatives on immigrant integration. Participants had some interesting suggestions. First of all, they suggested that the EU institutions should target immigrant federations and umbrella organizations in member states rather than try to reach every little association. It would be the responsibility of these federations and umbrella organizations to further transfer the information within their community using smaller organizations. Another suggestion was for the EU institutions to use pilot projects to make the public feel responsible for decisions taken at the EU level. The EU institutions should use participative instead of representative democracy by giving people responsibility before making decisions. One other suggestion for the EU institutions to be more effective in reaching the Turkish immigrant community in Europe was to use Turkish TV and radio as communication channels. Finally, it was suggested that the Belgian government could be more proactive in communicating EU immigrant integration efforts to the immigrant community.

Participants also engaged in self-criticism and suggested the following for the Turkish associations to be more effective in communicating the EU immigrant integration efforts to their communities. One suggestion was for immigrant associations to prepare and distribute brochures to inform their members on EU immigration initiatives in this area. The participants also suggested that the local Turkish newspapers could be more informative about the EU immigrant integration efforts and try to raise awareness about the EU's relevance for immigrant communities. Another suggestion of the participants was for the politicians and opinion leaders with a Turkish background to be more active in informing the Turkish community about the EU immigrant integration efforts, and to be more proactive in voicing the problems of the Turkish immigrants and in trying to influence EU decisions on immigrant integration issues.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, the authors tried to bring together the literatures of mass communication and international relations to achieve a better understanding of how they are actually

similar and may work together by using immigrant integration as an example. As a result of the study, it was realized that public relations and public diplomacy need to be utilized together to communicate with immigrant communities and to encourage two-way communication to support immigrant integration.

The interviews with the leaders of Turkish associations in Belgium demonstrate disconnect between Turkish communities and the larger Belgian contexts in which they are located. The three research questions on which this study concentrated examined how the Turkish Diaspora identifies itself, whether the EU is able to communicate its policies to the communities affected by them, and vice versa. While the statistics regarding the Turkish communities indicate their insulated quality, some members defined themselves as having a form of hybrid identity. However, the communities' exposure to EU policies seemed to be limited and deficient, as did potential channels through which they could express their concerns to the EU body, indicating the need for more comprehensive and active public diplomacy and public relations.

The first research question focused on how the Turkish association leaders view the Turkish community in Brussels and what they believe the main issues affecting them are. One of the main themes participants discussed was the issue of national identity. There was a difference in the perception of national identity depending on whether the participants belonged to the first, or second and third generations. In fact, those who were newcomers or first-generation immigrants defined themselves as Turkish and were very proud of their Turkish identity. On the other hand, participants who were second or third generation, meaning those who were born in Belgium, also acknowledged their Turkish heritage, but emphasized their Europeaness.

When considering the cocoon feeling or identities mentioned by the respondents, one needs to take into account the multileveled nature of identities. Although the interviewees answered the questions as leaders of Turkish associations, one must remember that they are also individuals with personal experiences, feelings, and ideas. In fact as Albert, Ashforth, Dutton discussed, understanding the multileveled context of personal and collective identities is important for making sense of an individual's values, thoughts, and feelings, and of how one acts in social domains such as organizations.<sup>41</sup> According to Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, there is a continuum between personal and social identity, and an individual's identity, feelings, and actions are influenced by group-related or personal characteristics.<sup>42</sup> Social identity is very strong in influencing behavior and making people act, think, and feel in accordance with the norms of the groups to which they belong.

In fact, Terry, Hogg and White argued that

role identities as individual-level identities or "me's" reflect the definition of self as a person who performs a particular social role, whereas group level identities are conceptualized as "we's" because they reflect identifications of the self with a social group or category.<sup>43</sup>

This dichotomy between the play of individual and social, or collective, identity also influenced our respondents. When answering questions, they had their personal

opinions, experiences, and feelings, but because they were representing a group, they also had to answer by taking into account the identity and norms of the associations they represented.

Some of the respondents mentioned the terms Euro-Turk or Belga-Turk in their self-definitions. When we talk about identities, we also need to consider ethnicities. However, the ethnic backgrounds of respondents were not mentioned during the interviews. As Wets stated, the Turkish community in Belgium is composed of persons of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Turks of Kurdish origin, Christians, Sunnis, and Alevis.<sup>44</sup> However, the individuals interviewed for this study did not specify their ethnic backgrounds. It was not part of the questions being discussed as the interviews were focused more on the challenges they face while living in Belgium. In addition, the respondents may not have felt comfortable talking about their ethnic backgrounds either. So unfortunately this research does not provide insight about the specific ethnic backgrounds of respondents and how this influences their lives as immigrants, but this could in fact be a focus for a future study in this area.

Other themes identified about the Turkish community in Brussels include the life of the Turkish diaspora; the Little Anatolia Schaerbeek and neighborhood culture; living in a cocoon; and the ghettoization of the Turkish community in Brussels. The Turkish community was concentrated in a single neighborhood which functions as a cocoon for them, but which had also become a ghetto, isolating them from the local culture and community. Another research question focused on the awareness of Turkish associations of EU integration initiatives. However, interviews with Turkish association leaders in Brussels revealed disconnect between EU institutions and the Turkish diaspora. This disconnect is understandable because, although decisions may be taken at the EU level, their implementation is at the national level and it is hard to know whether a decision comes from the EU or the national government. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the Turkish community in Brussels is not aware of the importance of the EU despite living in its capital, potentially suggesting the isolation of the former and the restricted outreach of the latter.

The Turkish population's lack of awareness of EU policies is therefore not surprisingly mirrored by the community leaders' lack of engagement with EU and Belgian institutions. Regarding the final research question, it can be argued that Turkish association leaders are not proactive in learning more about the EU and EU-level initiatives, communicating with EU officials or trying to influence decisions regarding immigrant integration. The questions around which the research focused revealed that the current communication efforts of the EU are not reaching the Turkish immigrant community. Even the community leaders' lack of knowledge about the EU immigrant integration efforts shows that effective communication is needed. While the literature referenced in the study emphasizes the crucial role of public diplomacy in uniting different communities around common goals, EU policies have not been able to reach out to the Turkish population. These communities remain isolated, even detached, despite EU ambitions of building a collective European community. EU institutions need to use public relations and public diplomacy strategies to

promote EU founding principles and other decisions and initiatives, including issues of immigrant integration. The EU needs to utilize public relations and public diplomacy to integrate its increasingly diverse population and create a transnational European identity, especially among immigrant communities. A new way to ensure enhanced communication with various EU publics, including TCNs, is to engage in dialog with civil society groups. Interacting with interest groups and immigrant associations may be helpful for EU institutions, especially during the planning or implementation of new decisions or policies. This way, the EU institutions could get the public's input on new policy areas. Such two-way communication between the EU and immigrant communities could be especially instrumental in joining different communities under a European identity and in helping combat the increasing Euro-skepticism among different ethnicities.

Future research on the subject of whether the EU is able to communicate its immigrant integration policies could yield valuable results by taking into consideration the limitations of this study. For instance, the public relations strategies that the EU could adopt would have to understand how the Turkish diaspora situates itself in terms of a European identity. Results revealed differences in participants' self-definition, depending on whether they were first- or second-/third-generation immigrants. The issue of national identification or self-definition needs to be studied further in order to consider the ways in which a common European community can be built.

This study relies solely on secondary research to gather information on the EU immigrant integration public relations and public diplomacy efforts through searching for information on the EU Web site, EU reports, and articles. Interviewing EU officials could provide deeper insight into EU integration strategies. If two-way communication is to be pursued, both the objectives of EU policies and the experiences of the Turkish community must be taken into consideration in assessments of impact on one another.

In addition, conducting the research in Brussels at the time might have significantly influenced the results of the study as Belgium had much more liberal immigrant naturalization laws. A person who had lived in Belgium for five years had the right to apply for Belgian citizenship and become naturalized. However, this has changed since January 1, 2013. The new law to modify the Belgian Nationality Code, which requires immigrants to prove that they are linguistically, socially, and economically integrated, approved on December 4, 2012, became applicable as of January 1, 2013.

The new law has certain language and integration requirements to start the nationality acquisition procedures. As a result of this new law, obtaining naturalization is more complicated with more requirements, and maintaining citizenship has more stringent criteria.<sup>45</sup> According to the new law, there are no integration requirements for a person who was born in Belgium and has lived there ever since. A person who has had five years of legal residence now needs to prove his/her knowledge of one of the three languages spoken in Belgium; show evidence of his/her civil integration and economic participation, with exceptions for spouses of Belgian citizens, and disabled or retired persons. After ten years of legal residence, a person needs to prove his/her knowledge of one of the three languages and participation in life in Belgium.<sup>46</sup>

This is a major change because now immigrants need to wait five years instead of three for applying for naturalization, and ten years instead of seven for automatic declaration of citizenship. Although waiting for five years is typical for many countries such as the USA, the Netherlands, the UK, France, etc., ten years—the maximum allowed by the Council of Europe Convention—is rare and is applied in countries with very strict naturalization requirements such as Austria, Italy, and Spain.<sup>47</sup>

Another important change is that Belgian nationality can only be requested in Belgium and not from abroad. In addition, legal conditions to deprive a person of Belgian nationality are extended to persons who acquired nationality by a marriage, which was later annulled. The law has been criticized for posing barriers for the elderly, lower-educated, refugees, other vulnerable groups, and women immigrants as they do not tend to work in the host community.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, if this research were conducted in 2013, we believe that the respondents would be more likely to have an interest in accessing immigration information, specifically EU immigrant integration initiatives and in trying to engage in two-way symmetrical communication efforts to influence policymaking. Future studies could use the same research questions and instrument to assess differences in attitudes and behaviors.

## Notes

1. Leonard, "Diplomacy by other means," 50.
2. Coombs and Signitzer, "Public Relations and Public Diplomacy," 146.
3. Grunig, "Public Relations and International Affairs," 143.
4. Signitzer and Wamser, "Public diplomacy," 454.
5. Hallahan, "'Community' as a Foundation," 259.
6. Ledingham, "Government-community Relationships," 285–95.
7. "Immigration."
8. Individuals who are neither from the EU country they currently live in nor from any one of the EU member states. In other words, immigrants who come from a country that is not a EU member state.
9. "Third Annual Report."
10. "A Common Framework."
11. "European Harmonization."
12. "A Common Framework."
13. Commission of the European Communities
14. "Common programme," par. 3.
15. "A Common Framework," 2.
16. "Common programme," par. 10.
17. *Ibid.*, par. 11.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Valentini, "Global versus cultural approaches in public relationship management," 123.
20. Corluy, Marx, and Verbist, "Employment chances and changes of immigrants in Belgium," 350–68.
21. Wets, "The Turkish Community in Austria and Belgium," 95
22. Kaya and Kentel, "Belgian-Turks," 72.
23. Jacobs, Phaet, and Swyngedouw, "Political Participation and Associational Life," 145–61.
24. Hooghe, "Ethnic Organisations and Social Movement Theory," 975–90.
25. Wets, "The Turkish Community in Austria and Belgium," 86.
26. "Issues Arising from Turkey's membership perspective."

27. Erzan and Kirişçi, "Conclusion," 163–72.
28. Wets, "The Turkish Community in Austria and Belgium," 95.
29. Aybak, Smith, and Wistrich, *The Immigrants' Voice in Europe*.
30. Kaya and Kentel, "Belgian-Turks," 72.
31. Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw, "Associational membership and political involvement," 546.
32. Kaya and Kentel, "Belgian-Turks."
33. Ibid.
34. Hooghe, "Ethnic Organisations and Social Movement Theory," 979.
35. Kaya and Kentel, "Belgian-Turks," 64.
36. Manco, "Turks in Europe," 3.
37. Kvale, *Interviews*.
38. Maxwell, "Designing a qualitative study," 87.
39. Kentel and Kaya, "Belgian-Turks."
40. Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*.
41. Albert, Ashforth, and Dutton, "Organizational Identity and Identification," 13–17.
42. Tajfel and Turner, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict."
43. Hogg, Terry, and White, "The Theory of Planned Behaviour," 230.
44. Wets, "The Turkish Community in Austria and Belgium," 85–100.
45. "The law modifying Belgian nationality code is published today."
46. "Annual Policy Report 2012 on Asylum and Migration in Belgium."
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.

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