

Communicating Diversity or Unity? The Construction of European Identity in Media and Citizen Discourses on Turkey's Accession to the EU

This PhD project addresses the tensions resulting from the EU's dual objectives of furthering European unity whilst maintaining diversity, and explores the ways in which media discourses on Turkey's accession to the EU frame European diversity and identity. Furthermore, the project will complement these elite discourses of public actors in the media with opinions, arguments and justifications expressed in citizen discourses.

The agreement on accession negotiations with Turkey in November 2006 marked the official acknowledgement of the EU that the Copenhagen criteria have been met. Discussions about these criteria, which require stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, and their fulfilment are ongoing. These discussions touch upon key issues of European identity and integration, social cohesion and the future of Europe, testing the inclusiveness of European cultural diversity to make Turkey a part of it. Turkey serves as a case to illustrate the understanding of European diversity and the construction of European identity when confronted with the EU's cultural boundaries. The empirical part of this research comprises a document analysis to explore the understandings of European diversity and identity historically as expressed through EU cultural policies and official documents on relations and negotiations with Turkey. A comparative media content analysis of daily newspapers in Austria, Germany, Ireland and the U.K. aims to explore the framing of discourses on Turkey's accession to the EU to reveal mediated cultural codes in the construction of European identity. Focus groups in the four mentioned countries will complement these elite discourses with citizen discourses to compare whether and how they differ.