

TRIANGLE Roundtable and International Workshop, June 7th and 8th, 2017

In January 2017, the Centre for Turkey and EU Studies (CETEUS) at the University of Cologne together with the Middle East Technical University, Ankara, started a new research project on “Blickwechsel in EU/German-Turkish Relations Beyond Conflicts: Towards a Unique Partnership for a Contemporary Turkey?” (TRIANGLE) funded within the Blickwechsel Programme of Stiftung Mercator (www.blickwechsel-tuerkei.de). On June 7th and 8th 2017, TRIANGLE was officially launched by three activities at CETEUS, University of Cologne:

1) Internal Project Meeting

The research teams of CETEUS and METU met to discuss the overall research framework, assess the progress of the project, decide on common methodology and plan the upcoming project and research activities.

2) TRIANGLE Roundtable

At the TRIANGLE Roundtable, chaired by **Funda Tekin** (CETEUS), **Atila Eralp** (METU), **Javier Niño Pérez** (Head of Division Turkey, European External Action Service), **Wolfgang Wessels** (CETEUS), and **Wolf-Ruthart Born** (former State Secretary) engaged in a discussion on “Blickwechsel in EU/German-Turkish Relations Beyond Conflicts – Towards a Unique Partnership for a Contemporary Turkey?”. The speakers agreed that the long-lasting and cyclical character alike rendered EU-Turkey relations unique. They acknowledged the particularity of the current crisis in the relationship while at the same time reminded the audience of its historical context, highlighting the challenges and opportunities of EU-Turkey relations. Furthermore, Germany’s role in the relationship was underlined and explained.

3) International Workshop “Narratives and Perceptions on EU-Turkey Relations – A Differentiated Future?”

On June 8th, Funda Tekin (CETEUS) opened the International Workshop. At the first panel, chaired by Johannes Müller-Gomez (CETEUS) and titled “History of EU-Turkey Relations – What kind of Master Narrative?”, the speakers, **Atila Eralp** (METU), **Wolf-Ruthart Born** (former State Secretary), **Dicle Korkmaz** (METU) and **Wolfgang Wessels** (CETEUS), discussed the changing narratives during the long-lasting EU-Turkey relations. The cyclical character of Turkish and European perceptions of their relationship was elaborated, emphasizing that narratives on both sides had been contested during the last decades. Furthermore, the discussion focused on the EU’s lack of political conditionality towards Turkey due to an ‘empty promise’ of membership.

In the second panel chaired by Ebru Ece Özbey (METU) and titled “National Perceptions of EU-Turkey Relations Today – EU Member States as Potential Veto Points?”, **Aras Lindh** (Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm), **Bianca Benvenuti** (Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome) and **Senada Šelo Šabić** (Institute for Development and International Relations, Zagreb) presented and discussed self-penned country reports on the national debates on EU-Turkey relations in their home countries. These reports had been prepared within a Horizon 2020 project on the Future of EU-Turkey relations (FEUTURE, www.feuture.eu). The speakers agreed that each of the respective countries would be critical of current developments, albeit each country would address the issue with individual intensity. Further, economic considerations would have priority, especially for Italy and Sweden, over political concerns. Despite the contemporary set-backs, following the speakers’ historic perspective, all countries would have displayed a general positive outlook on Turkey's EU membership bid.

The third and final panel chaired by Mirja Schröder (CETEUS) and titled “A Differentiated Future for EU-Turkey Relations?” consisted of **Elina Brutschin** (Webster University, Vienna), **Funda Tekin** (CETEUS), and **Ebru Turhan**, (Türk-Alman Üniversitesi, Istanbul). The speakers discussed whether

there would be a differentiated future for EU-Turkey relations. The three contributions concluded that external differentiated integration would be gradually enhanced between the EU and Turkey. Thus, new formats of partnership might substitute the concept of full membership in the long run. However, there still remained open questions, for example: (1) What are the policy fields in which the EU and Turkey could integrate? (2) How can one structure the institutional design of EU-Turkey relations? (3) Which actors will push and shape new formats of EU-Turkey relations?

All three events have generated valuable input to the TRIANGLE project considering the topical and geographical range of opinions and analysis. The project's research will now start with mapping the institutional EU/German-Turkish relations. The next project activity will be the TRIANGLE PhD workshop on "The European Union, Turkey and its wider neighbourhood: challenges and opportunities" taking place 17th-18th October 2017 in Barcelona. The Call for Papers has just been published (<http://www.ceteus.uni-koeln.de/aktuell/singleview/call-for-paper/>) and we are looking forward to engaging in another enriching debate on EU-Turkey relations.