

6th National Selection Conference of EYP Turkey in Istanbul, Turkey

DELEGATES' PREPARATION KIT



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1. Overviews

The overviews are written by the Committee chairpersons to serve as background material. They aim to identify the key issues at stake while synthesising the topic area. The objective is naturally to keep these overviews as balanced as possible, yet they may not receive unanimous consent. It should be noted that the EYP strongly encourages independent thinking so feel free to disagree!

2. Keywords

The non-exhaustive list of keywords intends to facilitate searching for information, may it be documents, news items or articles, with different types of search engines, news websites and encyclopaedias.

3. Research Links

As regards the suggestions for research links, the list is by no means exhaustive. Rather than citing individual links, we have preferred indicating links to websites where several relevant documents and articles can be found. Please note that EYP is not responsible for the contents on various websites; the texts reflect the opinions of their authors only.

We wish you successful preparation and interesting reading!

Oğulcan Torun
President of the Session

Emre Tekişalp
President of EYP Turkey

Merril Hope-Brown
RCEYC Advisor

Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO)

Lisbon treaty: When the recently accepted Treaty is put into effect, how should the new EU act in order to avoid, as the president of the Czech Republic puts it, "a significant shift from a Europe of states to a Europe of one single European state."?

Overview:

"Sometimes I like to compare the EU as a creation to the organisation of empires. We have the dimension of Empire but there is a great difference. Empires were usually made with force with a centre imposing diktat, a will on the others. Now what we have is the first non-imperial empire." -European Commission President J-M Barroso, said in 2007 and the debate on EU as a single acting power has never been as real as now.

Although, the Czech president has been considered to be the stumbling block to the ratification of the Lisbon treaty, Klaus signed the document recently and thus completed a long road of treaty ratification, following the long awaited Irish 'Yes' . The EU's controversial Lisbon Treaty has had a fraught genesis, involving a decade of negotiations. The second Irish referendum on it, on 2 October, once said to be a major milestone, passed.

The Lisbon treaty emerged from the debacle of the European Constitution, which was rejected by French and Dutch voters in 2005. Some argue that the treaty is simply the constitution repackaged, while others say the differences are fundamental.

Overcoming the major challenges of ratification seems not to be the end of the story. In many-crucial aspects the EU shall act as a single state after the December 1st , when the Lisbon treaty comes in force. Considering the nature of the different powers existing in the EU and the historic ambitions of certain member states, it should act wisely in order to avoid a shift to the European state.

According to the treaty, the European Parliament, will be directly elected by EU citizens. The Lisbon Treaty includes major reforms in the way the E.U. is run, changing its voting and decision-making procedures to avoid institutional gridlock. Supporters of the treaty say it improves the Union's capacity to deal with 21st century challenges such as the economic crisis, climate change, energy security, cross-border trafficking and crime. It also establishes a full-time president for the Union, gives new powers to the European Parliament, and creates a European diplomatic service. The major challenge lies in creating the position of EU president and acting as a single power in the issues of foreign policy and security.

We can readily dismiss those who believe the E.U. is, or should be, about economics. The relevant economic context is not European but global, and the responsibility for pursuing economic policies that will enable business and industry to prosper in a globalized world economy is national. Experts claim the purpose of the E.U., right from the start, even when it called itself the European Economic Community, has always been political and moreover its political impacts are to become clear after the enforcement of the Treaty of Lisbon.

by Ann Tsurtsumia

Keywords: Lisbon Treaty, The EU Presidency, EU member states, European Parliament, European Commission, European Diplomatic service, ratification, referendum

Links:

1. Introductory material

- <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:SOM:EN:HTML>
- http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/index_en.htm

2. Official sources

- <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2007/aug/eu-reform%20treaty-csfp1-2-2.pdf>
- <http://euobserver.com/18/28918>
- http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/doemoff/govinfo/intl/gov_eu.html
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VEby-KHjCY>

3. News articles

- <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1934489,00.html>
- http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14586858
- http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14803052
- <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1927731,00.html>
- <http://www.opendemocracy.net/blog/ourkingdom-theme/catherine-reilly/2008/06/01/lisbon-treaty-democracy-down-to-the-wire>
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8337791.stm>
- http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14573513

Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)

With the Taliban resurgent in Afghanistan and Pakistan on the brink of collapse: how should Turkey work with the international community to prevent further acceleration of instability and security lapses in the “New Middle East”?

Overview:

The US-led coalition removed the Taliban government of Afghanistan from power after a brief war in 2002. However, the struggle against the insurgents still continues. Operating both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Taliban continues to gain small victories against the foreign military and accelerate the instability of the entire region. The development of Afghan democracy is disputed; both the opposition and the international community criticized the presidential election in August.

When it comes to the Taliban and its operations, it is important to understand the difficulties in locating and reaching the insurgents. On the western side of the Afghan-Pakistani border, NATO and other forces are able to operate. On the eastern side, it's the sovereign territory of Pakistan. But it is on the eastern side of the border that the Taliban and other insurgent groups are located. Recently, the Pakistani military has led a major offensive in South Waziristan, a region hosting a Taliban stronghold near the Afghan border. In response, the Taliban and other insurgent movements have conducted several attacks on military personnel and civilians in Pakistan. After his re-election in August, President Hamid Karzai offered the Taliban the chance to take part in the formation of the new government. The insurgents quickly rejected the offer.

Several UN employees have been killed in recent terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, and critics have questioned the presence of the international community in Afghanistan. In several countries taking part in the ISAF operation of the NATO, public opinion has turned against the operation. On the other hand, several governments and international organisations still stress the importance of settling the most severe disputes and helping Afghanistan to secure democracy and human rights.

Turkey hasn't taken part in the ISAF operation militarily but has provided Afghanistan with considerable civil assistance. In 2009, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan established trilateral meetings in order to increase co-operation. Head of the Turkish Parliament's Foreign Relations Commission, Murat Mercan stated that “Turkey, having historical brotherhood relations with both, is in a special position to improve and deepen this cooperation [between Afghanistan and Pakistan]”.

The AfPak region is one of the most troubled areas in contemporary world politics. The key difficulty is the inability of the international community to tackle the problems only by military force – the Taliban is difficult to fight with conventional tactics. Also, Human Rights issues and the level of democracy in Afghanistan may be of equal importance.

by Jari Marjelund

Keywords: AfPak, ISAF, trilateral negotiations

Links:

1. Introductory material

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Turkey
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_%282001%E2%80%93present%29

2. Official sources

- http://www.mafa.gov.tr/turkey_s-political-relations-with-afghanistan.en.mfa

- http://www.mafa.gov.tr/turkey_s-political-relations-with-pakistan.en.mfa

3. News articles

- http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/11/05/no_insurgency_here?page=0,0
- http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/11/05/interview_un_humanitarian_under_secretary_general_john_holmes
- <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/afpak>
- <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/afghanistan/091028/taliban-attacks-both-sides-the-afpak-border>

Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)

Discrimination and Intolerance: At the beginning of the current academic year, Turkey's Education Minister Nimet Çubukçu issued a circular promoting anti-discrimination and tolerance lessons in primary and secondary schools. What are the preventive measures and new regulations that should be put in place in order to eradicate discrimination and intolerance and ensure respect for human rights?

Overview:

Ever since the Enlightenment we have believed in human reason and universality. We as human beings know what is wrong and what is right because we have the ability to reason. Secularization seemed to be answer to the problems of the 18th century. The French and American revolutions brought about the notion of equality of men which later was extended to all people and we have tried to cherish this up until this day. Because of the ongoing Globalisation it seems that new problems have come to the surface and we are once again faced with the question of inequality and discrimination.

The article number one of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood", in some countries this is taken as granted and in some parts of the World the question of equality causes heated discussions. Europe today is a multicultural society in which various ethnic groups live side by side, many different religions are being practised and languages spoken.

Multiculturalism also brings along problems and conflicts which sometimes affect all aspects of the society. Discrimination against certain ethnic groups is often deeply rooted in the nation's history and it is a long and hard process to change this. In a society in which people have different values and individuals have sometime a different sense of morals, it is important to promote equality and prevent discrimination.

Including lessons on anti-discrimination and tolerance in the school curriculums is a good example of a government making an effort to change the current climate especially because the youth of today is the future and foundations need to be laid at an early stage. But is giving lessons to young people on how to behave enough? Are there any concrete ways and if so, to what extent is it possible to impose change on the attitudes of people without actually ending up contradicting the freedom of speech and thought?

by Riika Räisänen

Keywords: Human Rights, Multiculturalism, Discrimination, Promotion of social equality, Prevention, Globalisation, Intercultural dialogue,

Links:

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

2. Official sources

- <http://www.icare.to/main.php?en>
- http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm
- <http://www.hrw.org/>
- http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/equality/

3. News articles

- <http://bianet.org/english/gender/117071-anti-discrimination-and-equality-highlighted-in-turkish-schools>
- <http://www.kurdishacademy.org/?q=node/632>
- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equality/>

Committee on Development (DEVE)

Turkey predicted to be the world's 9th biggest economy by 2050: With its fast growing economy, what steps should the state take in order to ensure sustainable growth and equal distribution of wealth as Turkey becomes one of the world's biggest economies?

Overview:

According to global investments bank Goldman Sachs, by 2050, Turkey will be the world's ninth largest economy after China, the USA, India, Brazil, Russia, Indonesia, Mexico and Britain. As for 2009, the current position is 17th with the GDP of 729,983 millions of USD, a move to the top ten would be a significant achievement for the country. With such progress, the world's economy would change radically in the next forty years; the traditionally big economies of Japan, Germany, Italy, France, and Spain would be ousted by countries that are currently counted as 'Developing'.

On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the size of an economy does not directly correspond to the GDP per capita. The countries ranking relatively low on the GDP per capita and ranking among the top ten in the nominal GDP are currently China, Russia and Brazil. All of these countries bear some similar characteristics. Their economies rely on natural resources, agriculture, heavy industry or a cheap labour force which attracts foreign investors. They also have to deal with social problems such as corruption, lack of democracy and unbalanced demography.

The Turkish economy is now in a better shape than ever before. But to become a large economy that will, in the future, provide citizens with high living standards and overall stability, some key changes should be undertaken. With the living standards rising, the currently cheap labour force will gradually become less attractive for foreign investors. Improvement in the areas of business, judicial and other legislation, and possibly the accession to the EU, would boost foreign investment. Turkey has a big potential, but it has to make sure that this potential is not wasted and the country does become a winner in the big changes ahead of us.

by Jonas Jancarik

Keywords: GDP per capita, nominal GDP, demography

Links:

1. Introductory material

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_turkey
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distribution_of_wealth

2. Official sources

- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2116.html?countryName=Turkey&countryCode=tu®ionCode=me&#tu>

3. News articles

- <http://www.economist.com/countries/turkey/> (upon registration, you get a 2 weeks free access to the online articles)

Committee on Human Rights (DROI)

Elimination of Child Labour: EU member states continue their trade relations with countries where Child labour is prevalent. What measures should the EU put in place in order to make sure that child labour, which is a form of exploitation and is against children's rights, is dropped to a minimum in these countries?

Overview:

For many Europeans today, child labour may seem something that only happens far away and which has nothing to do with how 'we' live our lives. The significance however may be far greater than one would expect perhaps - take the classic example of sneakers and footballs that the EU imports: where do they come from and more importantly, who made them?

Not all trade by EU companies is necessarily *fair*, which reinforces a demand for products of which a part is produced by the hands of children. The EU Member States like other states have 'the duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including business' while companies themselves also have the responsibility to respect human rights. However, without the violation of human rights, certain companies would not have been able to develop the way they have. In addition, products produced under questionable circumstances in part feed the Western consumerist society, which now also relies on that supply. Bearing in mind that the EU is the biggest trader in the world, how can it use its influence to actively combat child labour despite the possible dependency of its companies?

Child labour stretches further than merely the manufacture of goods, other forms of child labour and child exploitation can be found in agriculture, street services, prostitution and even slavery. The magnitude of the problem should not be overlooked when trying to think of solutions, whereas its different aspects may require different approaches to combating child labour. Therefore the challenge arises to determine what role the EU should play in eliminating child labour and safeguarding children's rights in *all* the different fields where child exploitation is prevalent.

Whereas the EU in itself poses an already important influence in the campaign against the violation of children's rights, there are more stakeholders involved such as NGOs, IOs, governments and companies. All bodies have different characteristics and needs, and a different influence on the situation. The EU already works closely with UNICEF in its campaign against the violation of human rights. However, with more stakeholders engaged and focused on the same goal, the combined influence would be much more significant than it is at the moment.

The aforementioned should be borne in mind when deciding upon the role of the EU in combating child exploitation. There are many fields in which child labour is prevalent, of which some have been highlighted earlier. Once again, these different facets are not to be neglected because in order to tackle the problem of child labour; the EU should start at its roots.

by Leonie Goettsch

Keywords: Rights of the Child, ILO, IPEC, EU's external policy, Human Rights, UNICEF, MDGs

Links:

1. Introductory material

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_labour
- <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm>

- <http://www.gapminder.org/>
- <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/clcsreu.pdf>

2. Official sources

- <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/clcsreu.pdf>
- http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-pravice_otrok.pdf
- <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/16031.07.pdf>
- <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>
- <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>

4. News articles

- <http://www.slideshare.net/sakaerka/eu-and-child-labor-in-turkey>
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8054960.stm>
- <http://www.barcelona-metropolitan.com/articles/child-labour---far-away-and-close-to-home>

Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)

Smoking bans and alcohol restrictions: Protection of citizens or infringement of individual rights? To what extent does the State have a role to educate and protect its citizens' health and what strategy should it adopt?

Overview:

Earlier this year Turkey joined many of its European neighbours in announcing a smoking ban in public spaces. While many have welcomed the move, citing the health benefits associated with the legislation; another, more vocal group attacked the ban stating that it was an erosion of their civil liberties.

With 80% of the European population behind a ban on smoking in offices, and 60% supporting a ban in restaurants and bars, it perhaps seems a wise move to introduce measures in order to protect the most vulnerable members of society; or is it yet another example of the Nanny State attempting to further erode civil liberties? In many countries such as the UK, the advertisement of Tobacco & Alcohol products is governed by a rigid set of guidelines in order to dissuade people from overindulging in these goods. Details of the health risks of smoking & drinking are part of the National Curriculum and have to be taught to children as part of their primary & secondary education. Indeed, there have also been high-level advertising campaigns of a free quit-smoking scheme called SmokeFree & a sensible drinking campaign called Know Your Units.

Whether it is a smoking ban or drinking restrictions, the same central dichotomy exists; the opposition between personal liberties and the responsibilities of the government to protect its citizens. If we accept that governments do have a duty to protect its people, then to what extent should they legislate without intruding into individuals' lives? What methods should they utilise in order to prevent citizens from endangering themselves through drinking and smoking and to also encourage them to follow a healthier lifestyle? Indeed, how can they also ensure that the individuals' rights are not breached?

by Ben Marshall

Keywords: Nanny State, ENSP, Smoking Advertising, SmokeFree, Know Your Units

Links:

1. Introductory material

- <http://www.eph.org/a/1941>

2. Official sources

- <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/07/660&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>
- <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1060&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>
- <http://units.nhs.uk/>
- <http://smokefree.nhs.uk>

3. News articles

- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7171245.stm>

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)

Gender Parity: Turkey ranks very low on gender equality measures according to the latest UNDP report based on the 'Gender-Related Development Index'. Given that gender equality is a critically important aspect of development, what should be done to accelerate progress in this area?

Overview:

In Turkey, one out of three women is a victim of violence at some phase of her life. And, 63% of the young women between the ages of 15-19 approve violence against women. ()*

UNDP (United Nations Development Program) is interested in measuring the development of a country by examining the three basic aspects of a developed life: health, knowledge and a decent life standard by taking into account its life expectancy, educational attainment and income with a report called Human Development Index (HDI). As a part of this index, two different gender related reports, GDI and GEM (an HDI regarding the differences between genders and a report highlighting the percentage of women involved in social/political/economic life) are also plotted, affecting a country's position of HDI negatively as gender-based inequality is proved to be common around the country. According to the latest report of UNDP 2009, Turkey ranked very low on GEM which decreased its position in the HDI ranking.

While living in Turkey, gender-based discrimination is applied at any period of time to one's life. Women of Turkey have no effective place in political life, showing a decline when compared to the first years of the Republic, when the number of women in the Congress and in the municipalities are regarded. Women had no domestic power either, since decision-making at home is monopolized by man. Violence against woman, honor killings, suicides of young women due to oppression evoked by the conservative regions of the society and illiteracy among with low levels of education are serious aspects of the problem, proving the inequality of the two genders and putting Turkey in an underdeveloped position. More importantly, it is proved that the issue goes even deeper than that as the young generation is ignorant and unaware of the discrimination it faces which is a definite reflection of the uneducated population.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the weight of gender equality on the development of a country. With this broader point of view, Turkey should act immediately in order to bring women to a higher level in the social life frame and fix the huge gap between the life standards of women and men with the help of the development programs applied by United Nations.

by Ece Özenir

Keywords: human rights, gender-based discrimination, inequality, domestic/non-domestic violence, honor killings, ignorance, participation in social/political/economic life, decision making, illiteracy, human development, empowerment, UNDP, GDI

Links:

1. Introductory material

- http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/gdi_gem/
- <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/125.html>
- <http://data.un.org/DocumentData.aspx?id=117>

2. Official sources

- <http://www.undp.org.tr/Gozlem2.aspx?WebSayfaNo=86> (*)

- [http://www.undp.org.tr/publicationsdocuments/NHDR_en.pdf\(s:45 section on “Victims on Honor Killings”\)](http://www.undp.org.tr/publicationsdocuments/NHDR_en.pdf(s:45 section on “Victims on Honor Killings”))

3. News articles

- <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/12716263.asp>
- http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/02/0212_020212_honorkilling.html
- <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=eu-to-depict-real-picture-on-gender-inequality-in-turkey-says-ngo-2009-10-13>

4. Articles

- http://www.omct.org/pdf/VAW/Publications/2003/Eng_2003_09_Turkey.pdf

Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO)

E-Censorship: With the number of websites blocked by court orders in Turkey fast reaching ten thousand, what should be the future goals and policies regarding the protection of the freedom of expression and the Turkish people's right to access information?

Overview:

Since the Law No. 5651 entitled Regulation of Publications on the Internet and Suppression of Crimes Committed became activated in 2007, accession of a remarkable number of foreign websites including popular websites such as YouTube, Geocities, DailyMotion, WordPress, Google Groups, and Google Sites have been blocked from Turkey by court orders. Apart from these popular sites, Turkish people are unable to access 19% of the vast Internet area.

The Internet, being the most significant media tool where users have almost total freedom of expression, has been losing its so-called "freedom" in the last two years. The justification for the blocking mainly consisting of the obscenity, abuse of children, provision for gambling and relationship to crimes about Atatürk (relating to the article 301). However, many social networking sites and informative sites are also in danger of being blocked due to their relation to the article 301 in some sort of way. In the EU's last two progress reports on Turkey, the damage done to the freedom of expression remains as the "still should be improved" part, while Turkey is considered as having insufficient progress in many other areas. The conclusion is unavoidable: In Turkey's path through the European Union, the number of websites blocked by court orders plays a significant role. The European Union, which Turkey is presently willing to join, is insisting on a relaxing of article 301. Their basic argument is that the law places serious restrictions on freedom of speech in Turkey and preventing citizens' right to criticize their own country. Further considering Turkish citizens' nationalism and their high emotions about Turkey, such an easing may bring out unexpected consequences. Obviously, EU's requests and Turkey's wills have to be balanced at some point.

Not only the EU, but also Turkish people themselves are standing for their right for the protection of the freedom of expression by using the social networking and the mass media. Sites such as <http://kampanya.org.tr/sansur/> gather up many companies and civil internet users, expecting their support in regaining their freedom of speech.

Regarding that the problem is worsening through time, both the EU and the Internet users are not satisfied with the current situation and that our country has to, somewhat, be protecting its national values; more effective solutions apparently have to be found.

by Zeynep Keserli

Keywords: Freedom of expression, article 301, article 312, article 81, democracy, accession to EU

Links:

1. Introductory Materials

- <http://www.kampanya.org.tr/sansur/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_in_Turkey
- <http://www.rsf.org/Prosecutors-violate-online-free.html>

2. Official Sources

- http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/nov/tr_sec_1390_en.pdf

- http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/turkey_progress_reports_en.pdf
- http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press_corner/key_documents/reports_nov_2008/turkey_progress_report_en.pdf

3. News Articles

- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/6475911.stm>
- <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article4790039.ece>
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7081747.stm>
- <http://en.ajans5.com/mg-haber-6042-EU.progress.report.to.cover.freedom.of.media.in.Turkey.mfk>
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5173576.stm>

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs I (LIBE I)

Freedom of Press: Turkey ranked 103rd among 173 countries in 2008 according to the Press Freedom Index compiled by the 'Reporters Without Frontiers'. What needs to be done in order to adequately address rising concerns regarding the freedom of the press in Turkey?

Overview:

Although the notion of press freedom is known to most people, it deserves an attempt at a more precise definition. 'Freedom of the Press' is the idea that no restraint should be imposed on newspapers, either by threatening reprisals against journalists who investigate sensitive issues or by exercising pressure on editors to prevent them from publishing any kind of controversial news. It also refers to the idea that each citizen, in order to be able to perform their duty of citizenship, has a right to quality information. This means that information should present citizens with various opinions relative to a certain subject, free from any bias that could arise if the information provider is himself personally involved in the subject and holds certain views. In this regard, the Press is viewed as a necessary tool for a democracy to be sound and effective.

However, these considerations need to be counterbalanced. Freedom of the press does not mean that the media, and more generally citizens, are allowed to say anything they want under the cover of freedom of expression. A balance has to be found between the right of people to express their opinions on one hand and the prejudice it could cause to their fellow-citizens or the government on the other hand. This limit is not easy to draw and both parties often abuse the lack of precision that underlies freedom of expression. Also, governments often evoke many reasons for putting restrictions on certain subjects, which range from national security, public or moral order, protection of someone's reputation, or state secrets, to the protection of state authority. It is the reason why legislation in the field of the media is far from being an easy task.

If we move on to the case of press freedom in Turkey, a recent enough fact may help to understand why this country appears near at the bottom of the list. Two newspapers- the daily *Günlük* and the weekly *Özgür Ortam*- were condemned in August to a one month ban for promoting the cause of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), recognized as a terrorist organisation by the Turkish government and the European Union. It particularly illustrates the fact that press censorship is often linked to sensitive political issues encountered by the government, portrayed here by the Kurdish case.

Freedom of the press is more than ever a matter of utter importance, especially since Turkey is negotiating the conditions to be fulfilled to adhere to the European Union. The process involves each and every citizen and their opinions, as well as their concerns, must be heard in order to ensure that the decision is not that of the government alone, but of all citizens. What is at the stake is the credibility of the political process. If people do not have an appropriate space to debate their opinions and ideas, such as the platform newspapers offer, they soon lose interest in political issues. The risk, then, is that they leave it to the hands of a few people, undermining the idea of democracy itself. The committee on Civil Liberties should therefore come up with measures to be taken in order to improve the level of press freedom in Turkey.

by Audrey Loetscher

Keywords: communication, legislation, freedom of expression

Links:*1. Introductory material*

- <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15>

2. Official sources

- <http://www.cpj.org/europe/>
- <http://www.rsf.org/-Anglais-.html>

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs II (LIBE II)

LGBT Rights: What are the measures that need to be taken in order to prevent any hostile acts, social exclusion and discrimination experienced by the LGBT people in Turkey?

Overview:

Turkey, being a Muslim country has always appeared modern showing its traditional roots from time to time. LGBT rights are just another dilemma for its citizens. With its armed forces defining homosexuality as a psychosexual illness and with the increase of honour killings of LGBT people we, as citizens, start to question what is actually right or moral.

Many LGBT people, unable to find employment, are forced into a life of sex work, violence, police intimidation, being driven from their homes, and serious health risks. Some lesbians are obliged to marry because of societal and economic pressure. They complain that there are no actions taken to protect their rights in the Turkish Penal or Criminal code. Furthermore, they complain that they are not even mentioned in the part about the discriminated people.

Honor killings are just another issue of morality. It has been recorded that between 1996 and 2003, 36 LGBT people were murdered. Turkish military, seeing homosexuality as an illness, wants proof and this proof uses humiliating measures. Until 2006 proving fit for military service used to require anal examination and photographs. Now it is said that they only require psychological examination.

Organizations such as Lambda Istanbul, Kaos GL, Rainbow Solidarity and Cultural Association for Transgenders, Gays and Lesbians, Pink Life are the few that have become legal and are active. Yet all of these associations were subject to lawsuits claiming that they are against the morality and family institution of the Turkish society. Although none of them could be banned, their situation remains on the hook with even the police being against them. Still many organizations try to survive in many parts of the country.

Turkey officially started to get acquainted with the idea of LGBT people with the EU negotiations on the horizon, but the idea still remains contrary to Turkey's traditions and moral values. A part of the society supports the notion that its approval might disturb the peace. In 2008 the UN General Assembly issued a declaration urging the Decriminalisation of Homosexuality Worldwide, but Turkey chose not to support it.

With Gay men and transgender people facing beatings, robberies, police harassment, threat of murder and psychological problems there remains much to be solved as Turkish citizens start to question what measures need to be taken.

by Özden Kınık

Keywords: lesbian, gay, homosexual, LGBT rights, honour killings, social exclusion, discrimination

Links:

1. Introductory material

- http://news.kaosgl.com/turkey_lgbt_history.php

2. Official sources

- www.kaosgl.com
- news.kaosgl.com

➤ <http://news.kaosgl.com/item/186>

3. News articles

➤ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/was-ahmet-yildiz-the-victim-of-turkeys-first-gay-honour-killing-871822.html>