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**“THIRD SECTOR AS A WAY OF INTEGRATING TURKEY
WITH THE EU”**

- Work in progress-

by

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Önder KUTLU

*Selçuk University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences,
Department of Public Administration, Campus, 42075, Konya – TURKEY*

Email: okutlu@selcuk.edu.tr - kuthuonder@yahoo.com

Tel: + 90 332 2233077

Fax: + 90 332 2410102

THIRD SECTOR AS A WAY OF INTEGRATING TURKEY WITH THE EU

I- Introduction

Turkish history of third sector institutions has experienced lots of ups and downs since the democratisation process started during the first part of the 19th Century. This long and problematic history provides a fertile ground for examining the developments in third sector in Turkey. There have been certain traditional handicaps (weaknesses) stemming from the approach attained for the operations of Turkish state; whereas the sector itself has also lacked enthusiasm and initiation for development.

The traditional problems of third sector in Turkey bear a number of special reasons. First, the sceptical approach of state towards mediatory institutions between itself and its citizens poses problematic relations. Second, third sector does not seem to have enough courage and power to claim power from the state. Final, history of the country does not display successful examples for observers. In other words, there was no blue print in the country set for third sector operations. Thanks to the European Union aspect, which has made a number of developments possible for the account of third sector; otherwise there would be very limited prospect for achievements.

The role third sector has been playing in the membership process of the country is important as the EU facilitates and encourages third sector in respect to supplying public services. Therefore, this makes third sector more visible in the eyes of the public as well as the bureaucracy and politicians.

The EU deployed a number of incentives to mobilise third sector. The incentives range from supplying financial means to producing administrative help for their restructuring. This paper examines these means and instruments to highlight strong and weak points of third sector in the country. Development Program for the Civil Sector, MEDA, Human Rights and Democracy, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth, and Active Labour Market Strategies are a few of these project. To a certain extent, these initiatives paved the way for the strong establishment of third sector in Turkey. On the one hand, third sector has been able to stand on their feet by the financial, administrative and legal assistance and

impositions of the EU, on the other the EU attempts have worked out to bring especially religious and ethnic extremist associations and foundations to moderate positions. As a result, third sector has been flourished by a number of EU projects and programs.

II- History and Concept of Third Sector in Turkey

Traditionally, third sector in the country did not find a friendly reception, as certain ideological assertions dominating the agendas of the power players are not facilitative enough to mobilise civil initiatives in Turkey. This has several reasons: the approach of the state to the organisation and functions of government, the perceptions of the public about government affairs, and the scarcity of resources for third sector.

History

History of third sector reveals invaluable lessons for students of public administration to find out the real motive behind the practices implemented in government. Strong state tradition dominated the Ottoman period. Despite certain arrangements, such as federal system and delegation of power to governors, the Ottoman state was a centralised one, resembling the Devolution in Britain after 1997. Local power players were not given independent decision making mechanisms; instead they were given initiation within specified limits.

Strong state tradition necessitated ultimate importance given to state *vis-à-vis* society.¹ Therefore, if the interests of the state of the society were in conflict, the state always had the final word. This prevailing authority did not necessarily tolerate power bases between its domain and its citizens. This does not mean that there was no third sector in the country at all. On the contrary, the state encouraged or at least tolerated endowments (*waqfs*) and professional associations (*loncas*) to provide services to the public. One can safely argue that Ottoman rulers fancied with social, economical and cultural institutions, rather than the organisations with political goals and perspectives. So the argument that the Ottomans did not allow third sector does not reflect the whole reality.

¹ Heper, M. 1992; "The Strong State as a Problem for the Consolidation of Democracy: Turkey and Germany Compared", **Comparative Political Studies**, Vol. 25/2, p. 145

The Republic period starting from 1923, on the other hand, did not automatically provide the essential tools for the operations of third sector. During the single party regime between 1923 and 1950, the state building and regime consolidation attempts were in practice. There was not even any kind of toleration to the endowments and professional associations, which had enjoyed a real freedom in the Ottoman times. The Act², prohibiting religious endowments and social institutions could be mentioned one single most important reason for the downgrading of third sector. It was directed as a part of secularisation project to close down religious schools and educational institutions, but it turned out to shot down the entire third sector. To a certain extent, all third sector institutions had some religious affiliations, because the society was based upon religious grounds.³ There was no stress on ethnicity; rather the concern was on religion. People were not named Arabs, Turks or Kurds, there were called Muslim, Christian, Jews and so on.

The multi-party era was a life kiss for third sector, as they were not on the scene at all during the single-party regime. There were about 733 third sector institutions in 1950⁴. However, there are always some questions whether these organisations posed the very basic characteristics of third sector. Associations and foundations mushroomed during the 50s. Liberal elections and freedom of choice contributed to the will of full implementation of democracy in the country. Of course there were certain misconducts by governments, disregarding the independence of third sector, but at least in theory there was the freedom to form and to run civil society institutions.⁵ A reasonable amount of powerful third sector institutions were launched during the 50s. Therefore, it is fairly safe to argue that the period helped establishment of third sector with some degree of traditions. Take the largest trade union, Türk-İş, as an example. It was launched during the 50s. Considering that the oldest political party was formed in 1983, a fifty year old trade union registers a success within

² **The Act Prohibiting Religious Institutions and Schools** (Tekke ve Zaviyelerin Kapatılması Hakkında Kanun), 3 March 1924,

³ The current dispute in the country about Christian endowments, which was closed with the act goes back to 1924. Christians are claiming their endowments back, but the act is still in effect. The irony is that the act was regarded as a part of the Revolution Regulations, which are fully protected by the Constitution; they can even be amended for whatsoever reasons.

⁴ Duman, F. 2003; "Civil Society", in Türköne, M. (Ed.), **Politics**, Ankara: Lotus

⁵ One of the reasons for the military take over of power was the intention of government to establish an inquiry commission to investigate the allegations against the media. (Eraslan, C. 2005; **The History of Turkish Republic**, Ankara: Can, pp. 574-76) This intention may show that the government intended to control the institutions which were not supposed to do. This intention may also show that third sector could not operate under these circumstances.

the terms of democracy. In 1960, the number of associations in Turkey rose to 18958. This represents around 25 times increase in numbers. One can rightly assert that it is a matter quality as well quantity.

Table 1: Statistics about Associations (as of 2006)⁶

Established Associations	173.848
Active Associations	80.757
Non-active Associations	85.488
Associations Ceased Activity by Court Verdicts	30.962
Associations Closed by Their General Assemblies	23.330
Associations Ceased Activity	30.990
Associations Closed by Court Verdict	206

After the military intervention of 1960, third sector had to start again from scratch. The 60s and 70s were dominated by the politicisation of third sector on the one hand; they showed a great improvement on the other.⁷ Overall the period can be deemed as success. Unfortunately, the military intervention in 1980 reversed again the achievements, but all in all the awareness about third sector rose in the public. One needs to mention two fortunate things about the following period: one is the Prime minister (1983-1989) and then President (1989-1993) Mr. Turgut ÖZAL, who believed in liberal values together with third sector; second is the convenient ground for the flourishing of the sector. Globalisation and achievements in IT helped develop these institutions, as individuals have become aware of their rights. Therefore, the political elite and the public have played to role of the guardian of third sector. Although the 1982 Constitution was criticised for containing anti-democratic principles, numerous amendments have transformed it to a democratic one. The EU has a large share in amendments. The following heading deals with the law.

Table 2 shows that currently there are over 80 thousand associations in the country. The closed associations attract one's attention. Associations Ceased Activity by Court

⁶ Ministry of Interior Affairs, **Directorship of Associations**, "Statistics of Associations in Turkey", <http://www.dernekler.gov.tr> (18.08.2006)

⁷ Kutlu, Ö. 1999; "**Bureaucrat – Politician Relations in Turkey**", Paper Presented to the Third Triennial EURAMES Conference, Ghent

Verdict and Associations Closed by Court Verdict count total of 31168 in numbers. Apparently, the courts generally reflect the approach of the state to these institutions. The record of the country caused by the courts does not display democratic results.

One explanation about the reasons for closing down the associations is the general environment during and just after the military interventions. Majority of the closures, which took place during the military interventions, gives a reasonable explanation. However, one would perfectly claim that the reasons for high numbers in closure by the courts could be a direct result of the 'grey' areas in the law, which leave too great a room for manoeuvre for the courts. In addition, a vast number of closure decisions were taken by State Security Courts, which deal with security issues and had judges from the military. By the same token, in 1999 military judges from these courts were withdrawn due to the pressure from the EU side.⁸

Types of Third Sector

The Turkish law regards three kinds of organisations as third sector: associations, foundations, and professional organisations. The Constitution spells out the assuring measures for these organisations: Article 5 (The Basic Aims and Responsibilities of State), Article 33 (The Right to Establish Associations), Article 51, 52 (Trade Unions), Article 135 (Professional Organisations), and Article 171 (Cooperatives).

Table 2: Third Sector Institutions in Turkey⁹

Type	Number	%
Associations	80757	94.2
Foundations	4915	5.7
Public Institutions	38	0.066
Professional Associations	14	0.034
Total	85724	100

⁸ The military judge was removed from the court during the trial of the leader of a terrorist organization, PKK. European Court of Human Rights found the availability of the military judge in certain parts of the trial as unacceptable. **Radikal**, "European Court of Human Rights' Decision Must be Implemented", <http://www.radikal.com.tr> (09.05.2005)

⁹ **Ankara Ticaret Odası**, "AB Kapısında Sivil Toplum", <http://www.atonet.org.tr>, (17.10.2005)

These six articles indicate that there is a good deal of regulations for safeguarding the third sector. Article 5 and 33 are specifically important as the former draws a general picture for the protection of basic rights and freedoms of individuals as well as the right to form organisations outside the public ones as the latter deals with third sector in a direct way:

“The fundamental aims and duties of the state are; to safeguard the independence and integrity of the Turkish Nation, the indivisibility of the country, the Republic and democracy; to ensure the welfare, peace, and happiness of the individual and society; to strive for the removal of political, social and economic obstacles which restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual in a manner incompatible with the principles of justice and of the social state governed by the rule of law; and to provide the conditions required for the development of the individual’s material and spiritual existence.”

According to the Article, it is a responsibility of the state to remove political, social and economical obstacles, restricting fundamental rights and freedoms. Besides, it is also the duty imposed on the state “to provide the conditions required for the development of the individual’s material and spiritual existence”. The Article clearly states that the Turkish state should not only remove the obstacles to basic right and freedoms of individuals, but also to provide the conditions for the development of the individual’s material and spiritual existence. This includes the formation of non-profit organizations which may deal with human rights, religion, social - cultural activities, and so on. The article composes the basic frame for the existence and approach of the state. This poses an assurance for individuals against the state by clearly declaring the responsibilities of the state, and mentioning basic right and freedoms of individuals.

Other provisions of the article could be regarded as a threat to the basic rights and freedoms and to the protection of the integrity of individuals. From time to time, public officials in Turkey are in the mood of understanding the rights and freedoms with a narrow margin. Therefore, they may take the readings of the Article “to safeguard the independence and integrity of the Turkish Nation, the indivisibility of the country, the Republic” more important than the words “to provide the conditions required for the development of the individual’s material and spiritual existence”. This is an obvious threat to human rights and to the existence of third sector.

The implementation of the Constitution depends very much on the general perception in the public and the power of third sector. The same threat is also obvious in other EU

countries. The recent Anti-terror Act in Britain has more severe provisions for human rights and third sector than the Article 5. This dispute is not different from the long discussed issue of strong state – weak society approach. Although the Anglo-Saxon approach to state is not a strong one, the dilemma between security and democracy seems to drive the British to more security and less democracy.

The Article 33 (as amended on October 17, 2001) of the Constitution is also a safeguard for associations and foundations:

“Everyone has the right to form associations, or become a member of an association, or withdraw from membership without prior permission.

No one shall be compelled to become or remain a member of an association. Freedom of association may only be restricted by law on the grounds of protecting national security and public order, or prevention of crime commitment, or protecting public morals, public health.

The formalities, conditions, and procedures governing the exercise of freedom of association shall be prescribed by law.

Associations may be dissolved or suspended from activity by the decision of a judge in cases prescribed by law. In cases where delay endangers national security or public order and in cases where it is necessary to prevent the perpetration or the continuation of a crime or to effect apprehension, an authority designated by law may be vested with power to suspend the association from activity. The decision of this authority shall be submitted for the approval of the judge in charge within twenty-four hours. The judge shall announce his decision within forty-eight hours; otherwise this administrative decision shall be annulled automatically.

Provisions of the first paragraph shall not prevent imposition of restrictions on the rights of armed forces and security forces officials and civil servants to the extent that the duties of civil servants so require.

The provisions of this article are also applicable to foundations.”

The article starts describing the associations by claiming that everyone has the right to form, to join and to resign without prior permission. Restrictions of associations can only be imposed “on the grounds of protecting national security and public order, or prevention of crime commitment, or protecting public morals, public health”. These provisions are in line with Article 5. The following sentence is a kind of guaranteeing their existence. Hence it imposes an act to take decisions about associations. In other words, there has to be a Parliamentary approval to design associations, rather than administrative decisions. The Article states in the last sentence that the same applies to foundations. Since the most common type of organisations is associations, foundations were not specified in detail in the Constitution. Table 2 clearly shows this. Therefore, the word association and third sector have nearly become acronyms.

The Article was amended on 17 October 2001, as a part of the “Democratisation Packages” required by the EU for the accession process¹⁰. As seen, before the implementation of the incentives and projects as regards to third sector, the amendment of the constitution was made possible by the impetus given by the EU. Therefore, this is a strong evidence that third sector was/is in the close interests of the EU. Besides, the control and supervision of associations were handed over from the General Directorate of Police Forces to Directorship of Associations in the Ministry of Interior Affairs.¹¹ This has been really an important step, as the move necessarily brings civilisation of the supervision as well as conducting the tutelage by a specially designed Directorate within the centre of the Ministry rather than in the periphery, namely the Police Force.

III- Integration and Third Sector

Non-governmental organisations have got crucial roles during the accession process of Turkey to the EU. The institutions include Economic Development Foundation (İKV), Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association (TÜSİAD), Turkish Economic and Social Research Centre (TESEV), Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) and certain confederations of trade unions such as Hak-Is, DISK and Turk-Is. These organisations are all well known and economically and politically strong institutions. Recently, certain human rights organisations and small third sector institutions have been placed in this list.

Government, with the impetus given by the EU, seems to be keen on recognising human rights institutions as well as concentrating on small grassroots organisations. This has several reasons. First, grassroots organisations are more amateur and popularly supported institutions. Hence, they need financial and human power support to act and to pursue their targets. Second, newly established organisations are usually closer to the people in the street. Public cooperation is needed in initiating reforms and joining the EU. Big scale organisations, on the other hand, have their own small circles and therefore they are not open to the public. So the EU’s intention to collaborate with some opposing and

¹⁰ Commission of the European Communities, **2001 Regular Report on Turkey’s Progress Toward Accession**, pp. 25-6, <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/english/RRTurkey2001.pdf>

¹¹ **Türk Hukuk**, “The EU Integration Laws-Associations Act”, <http://www.turkhukuk sitesi.com/showthreadphp?t=1768> (20.08.2006)

small scale civil society institutions has their own reasons. Third, these institutions include certain marginal and opposing interests. Human rights organisations and institutions with certain ethnic and religious orientations are in this group. Headscarf problems in Universities, for instance, have created a good deal of associations and foundations.¹² Some of them are working to influence decision makers resembling a human rights organisation, whereas some others collect funds to sponsor successful female students to the countries i.e. Austria and Britain, where headscarf is not forbidden in Universities.

The large scale and powerful organisations generally have their own funds and resources. The second type and small organisations are, on the other hand, usually lack resources and run with administrative and operational weaknesses.

First type of organisations uses instruments for the membership process such as publication of booklets about the EU, organising seminars, conferences, congress, and TV documentaries. The EU supplies a reasonable amount of funds for the development of third sector in the country.¹³

Some of the above mentioned third sector institutions work against the EU membership of Turkey. For instance, DISK and KESK are not in favour of EU membership, so they propagate against the government policies. The former is a workers' union and the latter is a public officials' organisation. They spent so much money and time to persuade the public against the Union. For this purpose, they paid a good deal of money to announce in a Daily paper the problems the EU membership would bring to the country.¹⁴

Progress reports are also important indicators to find out the views of the EU, because the reports reflect their opinion as regards to third sector and democratic problems occurring in the country. 2003 Progress Report, for instance, criticises Turkey by stressing on red tape and difficulties to form an association. Besides, the problems with Religious

¹² Özgürder was created for this purpose, but some other organizations have attracted more attention due to their involvement in the issue such as Mazlumder. See for a look at: **Özgürder:** <http://www.ozgurder.net>, and **Mazlumder:** <http://www.mazlumder.org>

¹³ European Commission's Turkish Delegation web site is a valuable source for third sector in seeking financial assistance: <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int>

¹⁴ Turk-Is, the largest confederation of trade unions, took the lead. **Cumhuriyet Daily**, <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr> (07.06.2002). The declaration included the followings: "in an unbelievable rush Turkish government has been accepting all the impositions of the EU, by undermining our important history, endless experience, and greater goals of the country. Therefore, they claim that if Turkey does not join the EU, it will become a part of anti-democratic Middle East, these are all lie."

non-Islamic foundations and trade unions are mentioned.¹⁵ In addition, the report was pessimistic about certain human rights issues and democratic principles i.e. cultural rights, associations, foundations and basic human rights. The report concludes by saying that third sector is to be strong to take initiatives and to advance in terms of human rights.¹⁶

The Progress Report in 2004¹⁷ also reveals valuable details. The report praises Turkish government by saying that Turkey achieved an enormous amount of success by amending the law in respect to associations and foundations. This was a deliberate move to respond to the criticism in previous year's report. The report highlights the concerns regarding the practice. In many cases, certain measures are taken to facilitate the working environment of third sector, but in practice public officials do not seem to observe the law in full capacity.

The European Union Council Summit on 17 December 2004 stresses on the policies of the Union as regards to third sector. The Summit concludes that in Turkey fighting against corruption should have a high priority, and the relations among the public, the private and the third sector need to be strengthened. The Council draws a road map for the coming period: human rights and women rights organisations would be supported by EU projects and programs.

The recent involvement of the EU in third sector of Turkey can best be examined through an initiative formed in 29 June 2005, namely the Civil Society Dialogue Between the EU and Candidate Countries Report. The report reviews third sector and labour market actors, third sector includes social and economical actors, nongovernmental organisations and local and regional organisations.¹⁸ The report highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining the relations between the third sector in Turkey and the EU countries. In addition, there are further words by joint efforts of the EU and Turkey to help mobility projects, scholarships, financial assistance to contribute to the development of civil society institutions, professional associations and educational institutions. Third sector would take

¹⁵ Commission of the European Communities, **2003 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress Toward Accession**, <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/english/RRTurkey2003.pdf>

¹⁶ TÜSEV, "The Theme of Associations and Foundations in the EU's Progress Report on Turkey", 2004; <http://www.stgp.org> (10.07.2006)

¹⁷ Commission of the European Communities, **2004 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress Toward Accession**, <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/english/RRTurkey2004.pdf>

¹⁸ Güncel Haber, 2005, "The Civil Society Dialogue Between the EU and Candidate Countries", p. 76, <http://www.abinfoturk.com>

measures to activate cultural cooperation, and social dialogue. After the report the EU started to put these findings in practice by designing projects for third sector in Turkey.

IV- The EU Projects for Third Sector

The EU has been supporting certain types of projects, which are directly or indirectly related to human rights and democracy are proposed by third sector.¹⁹ Direct contributions to third sector may not be effective enough to create a real impact. These kinds of contributions are given directly to heal financial and administrative problems of third sector organisations, while indirect help is given for the projects that are nothing to do with the organisational features of third sector, but related to the functions of it. For instance, an association for blind people may submit a project to the EU, dealing with the education of its members to have them skilled labour force. This is an indirect help to the civil society, because third sector would become adept in its operations through the activities. This resembles the ‘supplying of fish or teaching to catch fish’ dialogue.

This paper deals with direct and indirect supports, because both types of support are valuable in certain phases of development. In other words, direct support may be more important in the very beginning stages, but after a while there may be more help needed to make third sector stand on its feet. Altogether four projects are reviewed. This has its own reasons: first, each project is directed to a specific goal and function; second, there is a practical question that only one example could be examined in each case.

Development Program for the Civil Sector is a direct support project, Human Rights and Democracy project is a semi-direct support project, Leonardo da Vinci program is an example of semi-indirect, and Active Labour Market Strategies project is an indirect support program.

After the Copenhagen Summit in 1999, Turkey was given a candidateship status by the EU. Most of the projects in Turkey have commenced with the start of the candidateship perspective. This also shows the reasons for the involvement of the EU in the third sector in the country. Of course, the EU has its third sector policies and democracy priorities to

¹⁹ Usta, S. 2006; **Civil Society in the Accession Process to the EU: Civil Society, Democracy, and Trust**, Unpublished MA Dissertation, Selcuk University: Konya, p. 82

implement in larger areas than its geographical boundaries, but still there is a limit to include non-member countries with financial and administrative constraints. Turkey has had long lasting relations with the EU, but a cursory glance at the time of introducing the projects reveals that there is some degree of correlation between the integrations process and the timing of the projects related to third sector in Turkey.

The Development Program for the Civil Sector (DPFCS)

The program was initiated in 2001 by the decision of European Commission. The main goal of the project was to strengthen third sector to take an active part in the democratisation of respected countries. Five differing programs consist of the DPFCS:²⁰

- ❖ Local civil initiatives
- ❖ Development of Turkish – Greek Dialogue
- ❖ Enriching the dialogue and capacity between trade unions of Turkey and EU countries
- ❖ Developing the dialogue and cooperation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries between their EU counterparts
- ❖ Police, professionalism and public programs

The program intends to support to local initiatives, which have the main goals of both establishing on a solid ground in terms of finance and administrative mechanisms, and along with the public and private sectors, supplying certain services to the public. The support includes financial help either in their reorganisations or in their concrete projects, which strengthen its capacity to cope with difficulties.²¹

Development of Turkish – Greek dialogue is also important as the long standing questions between the countries impede the EU – Turkish relations. Therefore, before establishing clear communication lines and a common ground for both partners there would be too much a burden to go along with. The DPFCS put this issue at the top of the list.

Developing a dialogue between trade unions and Chambers of Commerce and Industries in Turkey and in the EU were two of the programs in this respect. Considering that the EU regards trade unions and chambers as third sector, the ties between these

²⁰ DPFCS, 2004; “**The EU Support to Turkish Civil Society Institutions**”, <http://www.stgp.org> (15.08.2006)

²¹ Usta, **Civil Society in the Accession Process**, pp. 84-5

institutions would ease cultural and social discrepancies among the member countries and Turkey. Therefore, there seems a deliberate attempt to lift barriers to the integration process of the country.

Certain twinning projects have been implemented to this end. The project, for instance, to bring into cooperation Konya Chamber of Commerce and Marseille Chamber of Trade and Industry has been put on track.²² The main project was co-hosted by the EUROCHAMBERS²³ (Union of European Chambers) and the Turkish Union of Chambers. The program had two phases: Development Program for Turkish Chambers I and II. The DPTC-I was in effect between September 2001 and January 2003, containing 10 pilot projects.²⁴

Successful and fruitful implementation of the phase I motivated the Eurochambers and the Union of Chambers in Turkey led to phase II, which covered 2004 – 2005 years.²⁵ Konya Chamber of Commerce and Marseille Chamber of Trade and Industry submitted a proposal to develop foreign trade relations between respected partners within the frame of DPTC-I. The project has been successfully implemented. To disseminate the outcomes, Karaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a neighbouring province of Konya, was invited to join the project. Therefore, “Karaman CCI, a small Chamber with limited financial and administrative capacity, has been able to gather very important experience and lessons, which was already produced by both Chambers”.²⁶

The main theme of the project was direct foreign investments. Both sides have obtained mutual benefit, with the prospect for future and potential benefits. The Chairman of the Konya Chamber of Industry is very positive about the outcome. He states in an interview²⁷ that “the project has brought not only positive results to both sides in terms of trade and market, but also a view to understand other cultures and the opportunity to present ourselves, which we need may be more than the first dimension, as the current

²² **Konya Chamber of Industry**, <http://www.kso.org.tr> (15.08.2006)

²³ **Eurochambers**, <http://www.eurochambres.be/activities/tcdp.shtml> and <http://www.eurochambres.be/activities/tcdp2.shtml>

²⁴ **Strategic Plan for Konya Chamber of Industry: The 2006 – 2009 Period**, Konya, December 2005, pp. 12-3

²⁵ **The Union of Chambers in Turkey**: <http://www.tobb.org.tr/abproje/euro/proje/europt1.php> (13.08.2006)

²⁶ The view was expressed in an interview by the project coordinator, Mr. Sedat Taşkazan, the Secretary General of Konya Chamber of Industry. Konya, (10.08.2006)

²⁷ Interview with Mr. Tahir Büyükhelvacıgil, the Chairman of Konya Chamber of Industry, Konya (10.08.2006)

developments all around the world show, stemming from lack of tolerance. Therefore, there are obvious reasons to create joint-projects, in exchanging cultural and social values.”

As the example of Konya displays, the DPFCS has had cross-country and cultural facets. Integration in diverse environments, such as Turkey and the EU, would only be possible with prior cooperation. Therefore, it is pretty safe to claim that the program leaves priceless lessons for the integration process.

Human Rights and Democracy Project

The program, the European Initiative for Protection of Human Rights and Democracy, was established in 1992 by the decision of European Parliament.²⁸ The main intention of the project was to strengthen third sector in the member countries and to consolidate democratic principles.²⁹ The program aims to advance consciousness of democracy and democratic values by funding human right projects.³⁰

The major priorities of the project are:³¹

- ❖ Support to general election procedures
- ❖ Protection of civil and political rights
- ❖ Reform in the public sector for the sake of human rights
- ❖ Transparency in the public sector
- ❖ Teaching human rights
- ❖ Gender equality
- ❖ Support to local groups

Within the general frame of the program a considerable amount aid was distributed to third sector. The some of the major beneficiaries of the project are Human Rights Association, WALD, Human Rights Foundation, Helsinki Citizens’ Association, Environment Foundation, Human Rights Centre of Ankara University, Female Solidarity Foundation, Turkish Economical and Social History Foundation.³²

²⁸ **European Commission’s Turkish Delegation**, “Human Rights and Democratic Principles”, <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int> (10.07.2006)

²⁹ Usta, **Civil Society in the Accession Process**, pp. 88-9

³⁰ Ak, N. 2003; **Civil Society in the Process of European Union**, Unpublished MA Dissertation, İzmir: Dokuz Eylül University, p. 105

³¹ **Human Rights and Democratic Principles**, <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int> (10.07.2006)

³² Usta, **Civil Society in the Accession Process**, pp. 89

Depending on the project the Commission supported between 50000 to 200000 € to each beneficiary. Therefore, these institutions have learned not only to propose and implement projects, but also the way of submitting a project. Of course, certain projects were not perfectly prepared, but as time went by they learned the logic.³³

Leonardo da Vinci Program

Turkey established its National Agency in December 2002 to undertake European Commission's education programs, i.e. Socrates, Youth and Leonardo da Vinci.³⁴ The full reception of the country to Leonardo and other programs was in April 2004. During 2003 certain pilot projects and orientation activities took place. In February 2004, for instance, around 21 people mostly from universities were taken to Britain to train them about Leonardo projects. Turkey's support to the program between 2004 and 2006 was 9 m €, 13.55 m € and 20.3 m € respectively.

Leonardo's main priority is on vocational and technical education. Therefore this program is more about education than reorganisation. In other words, Leonardo program deals mainly with education rather than supporting organisational and financial constraints of third sector. There are three types of projects in Leonardo: Project A, Project B, and Project C. Project A is a mobility program, as a part of their education trainees are sent to other countries both to get skills in a different environment and to cope with different experiences. There need at least two partners from two countries. There are 32 countries taking part in the project.³⁵ Public, private or third sector-run educational institutions could submit a project to the National Agency. Besides, all professional associations could also take part in the preparation of projects. Project A is decided by the NA, but other two are reviewed by European Commission. This program helps the students to communicate in a different country.

³³ For the last two – three years a vast number of Project offices have been established in Turkey. They mainly concentrate on preparing projects to be submitted to the EU. Besides, certain third sector organisations also offer courses to prepare an acceptable project to the EU. The Secretary General of Konya Chamber of Commerce states in the interview that they have organised around 20 courses for symbolic amount of charges for third sector representatives from Konya and neighbouring provinces. Konya, (10.08.2006)

³⁴ **Turkish National Agency:** <http://www.na.gov.tr>

³⁵ The list includes member countries (25), EFTA countries (3) and candidate countries (Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia)

Project B and Project C are concerned with vocational and technical training too.³⁶ However these kinds of projects are more on theoretical part than Project A. they either instigate a method in vocational and technical education, which would lead to creative results or would initiate a way to be helpful in EU-wide experiences. All professions may become a part of the project, either hosting or joining. The second phase of Leonardo is lasting in December 2006. Third phase will start with new priorities and with a new introduction in 2007. A considerable amount of third sector institutions have already taken place in Leonardo programs. Therefore, this program has established a good deal of beneficiaries in respect to third sector in the country.

Active Labour Market Strategies (ALMS)

The European Commission established a joint project with Turkish Labour Organisation,³⁷ which was to deal with labour issues, employment and unemployment. Around 80m € was distributed to the public and third sector institutions with the idea of supporting to the active labour market. Each project was given between 50.000 and 300.000 Euros.³⁸ Applicants were expected to provide at least 10 % of the total project cost. The priorities of the project are:

- ❖ Caring environment,
- ❖ Support to the people whose job is in danger due to privatisation,
- ❖ High priority to unemployed, ex-inmate, disabled, female, and first time job seekers,
- ❖ Training of IT knowledge
- ❖ Professional associations and third sector institutions,
- ❖ Training of basic skills in practical professions to strengthen the labour force's position.

The ALMS project attracted a considerable amount of third sector organisations to take part in the program. From all over Turkey around 600 projects were found

³⁶ İKV, 2004; **Turkey's European Community Programs: Leonardo da Vinci II**, Istanbul, pp. 9.11

³⁷ **Turkish Labour Organisation**: <http://www.iskur.gov.tr> (10.12.2005)

³⁸ **European Commission's Turkish Delegation**, "Active Labour Market Strategies Project", <http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int> (10.06.2005)

acceptable.³⁹ They were implemented from November 2004 to November 2005, totalling 12 months. However, the projects are supposed to be continuing for 5 more years, as the precondition for the project imposed.

Two projects were accepted from Konya province: one is from Konya Chamber of Industry,⁴⁰ the other is from Konya Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce's project was about training people to work in textile industry, which is the leading sector among Turkish exports. The Chamber Industry's project was about establishing an IT laboratory to train 50 % employed in industry, 50 % unemployed job seekers. The trainees were taught to get ECDL certificate. During the project year around 120 people were trained. The total cost of the project was 195.000 €, around 20.000 € was supplied by the Chamber and the rest was funded by the European Commission.

The course provided not only education, but also trainees and the members of the Chamber were very much involved with the European aspect. One member states in an interview that he was against the membership of the EU, but having seen the attempts to develop labour force of the country he thinks that the EU would like Turkey to join with a better labour force.⁴¹ Therefore, his perceptions have changed with the projects.

The Chamber of Industry has been very famous with its projects accepted by the EU. Despite its limited sources, the Chamber is regarded as the champion of the EU initiatives. To a certain extent, other chambers and third sector institutions envy the chamber, only because of the EU projects. The projects of the Chamber include the Euro Info Centre, Eurochambers, IT Centre, Industrial Automation, and CAD/CAM Design. They have been implemented for the last three years. The EIC, for instance, is a gold mine for industrialists, who would like to expand their business especially with the EU countries. As the Project Coordinator of the EIC states in an interview⁴² “without the European projects the life would be very different and difficult for the Chamber of Industry”.

³⁹ **European Commission's Turkish Delegation**

⁴⁰ **Konya Chamber of Commerce:** <http://www.kto.org.tr>

⁴¹ Confidential interview with a member of the CI, Konya (11.07.2006)

⁴² Interview with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şaban ÇALIŞ, Konya (15.08.2006)

V- Perceptions of Third Sector about the EU

The European support to the civil society has got a strong impact not only on service provision, but also on organisational side. However, third sector in Turkey has got a number of weaknesses, which are hampering their business. A survey⁴³ commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce in Ankara commissioned in 2004 to find out the problems of third sector in Turkey is worthy of examination:

- ❖ The lack of professionalism impedes democracy within the working mechanism of third sector
- ❖ Very small chance of removing the frontrunners in third sector
- ❖ There is very small incentives to attract young population
- ❖ Lack of cooperation among themselves
- ❖ Lack of financial resources
- ❖ Lack of education

There is very long list of problems, but the ones given above are indicative enough to sum up the issue. One can rightly assert that these problems are the problems of democracy in Turkey. Therefore, once the level of democracy arises the problems are expected to fade away. Besides, these problems might find a common ground in many democratic countries.

Although the level of democracy and the functioning of third sector may be affected by historical developments and features, the people are also a part of the problem too. Third sector in the country is deemed basically to be pressure groups, as they play the transitional role between government and the public.

Despite the importance given to third sector by the EU, successive governments in Turkey do not seem to have paid enough attention. The opinions of third sector are changing too. Certain trade unions, for instance, were completely against the membership to the EU, but they are in favour of joining at the moment. Take Hak-İş as an example. It was against the Union and they declared in 1989 General Congress⁴⁴ of the confederation that: “The Islamic religion of Turkey is very huge problem in the integration of the Europe.

⁴³ Ankara Chamber of Commerce, **Civil Society in the Brink of the EU**, <http://www.atonet.org.tr> (24.7.2006)

⁴⁴ Hak-İs, 1989, **6. General Assembly Annual Report**, Ankara, ss. 471-2

Turkey is not a western country in terms of history, ethical values, philosophy, religion and national characteristics. Whenever westernisation has been on the agenda of the country, it always brings alienation and treason. If we are forced to join the EU, this is something like a complete surrender...”

In 2003, the same union praises the steps taken to the integration with the EU in the words “A further achievement in the way Ataturk’s westernisation and civilisation project”.⁴⁵ This is certainly true for conservative type of people and organisations of the country. Surprisingly though, the initial supporters of the EU project have some reservations, while the initial sceptics are in favour. Third sector has a degree of role in the changing attitudes of the public, as conservative views have materialised civil initiatives first time in its history. Hence conservative views were never in the power since the foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923.

The words of a chairman of an Islamic association display the entire story: “we would like to submit a project to exchange families between Turkey and Greece. Greek families could come here, we could go there and therefore we get to know other cultures, other values and other entities.”⁴⁶ This is a very important idea, as conservative resistance is usually quite strong. Certainly, this would help erode negative perceptions of the public against the EU memberships.

VI- Conclusions

The traditional problems of third sector in Turkey have been losing ground with the impulsion given by the EU projects. The idea of strong state and the sceptical views against third sector are not the main subjects of discussions anymore at least in the public domain. In other words, abstract discussions and ideological matters seem to have gone, and more practical arrangements such as which association would join in a panel or which foundation says what are more visible.

There is a clear pattern regarding the EU involvement in respect to third sector in Turkey. The efforts have been intensified qualitatively and quantitatively with the EU

⁴⁵ Çelik, A. 2004; “The Most Problematic Area in the EU Process: Social Rights”, **Birikim**, Vol. 84-85, s. 9

⁴⁶ This view was expressed to the author by a very conservative person, when he visited Selcuk University to get assistance to submit a project to the EU. Konya (22.03.2004)

decision to include Turkey as a candidate country since December 1999. Therefore, the EU has placed the policy of transforming the country on its agenda with financial and administrative supports to third sector to obtain two outcomes at the same time. First outcome is to consolidate democracy in the country, which was not very bright, by providing certain incentives for the third sector. Second is the support again to third sector to reach to lower segments of Turkish society, the segments which are characterised with conservative and marginal values. In other words, the EU projects have had twofold effects: the level of democracy is increasing on the one hand; the resistance to the membership has been eroded on the other. Four types of projects, direct, indirect, semi-direct and semi-indirect display this result.

There is no empirical evidence that with the EU involvement third sector institutions are self sufficient, but there is evidence that they are stronger in terms of self-esteem and effectiveness. Therefore, the EU projects have certainly created a safe-refuge for third sector institutions. Of course some of them may not be able to stand on its feet; they may endure only by the assistance of the EU. However, this does not indicate that the support would create useless institutions with artificial needs. On the contrary, they might get support from the EU for a certain period on the condition that it has to pass a number of tests to get assistance.

One should always keep in mind the reality that there has been the trend of democratisation especially since the multi party democracy was established in 1950. Without the EU effect nobody knows what would have happened to the third sector in Turkey, but the interviews and other material reveals valuable results that the EU touch have created a real life kiss for the third sector.

Consequently, the third sector in Turkey did not have a successful background, but the EU involvement has fastened or at least facilitated the smooth transformation of the country toward democracy and human rights. Third sector is contributing to the democracy of the country by attracting the attention of the EU, as the EU membership perspective makes impossible things possible. The change of the law to democratise the country was only possible by the EU demand. Therefore the state tolerates third sector, with the impositions of the EU membership prospect. As a result, the EU projects have had a visible impact on the change of policies and perceptions in Turkey.