

European Enlargement and Women: An Analysis on Turkey

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Abstract

The EU's recent economic and political stalemate has found its most obvious reflection in the European Commission's new president Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker's statement on halting further enlargements during his presidency. Those who are fighting for better democratic standards in Turkey are certainly disappointed with Mr. Juncker's mission letters, although the relations between Turkey and the EU was at a virtual freeze in the past years. This paper will focus on the reforms made for ensuring women's human rights since accession negotiations began with Turkey, and how women's achievements might relapse once the EU membership carrot disappears. Although legislation and action plans are adopted and implemented in the field of women's human rights and gender equality; there might be fall backs in women's access to education and the labour market, political representation, combatting violence against women, honour killings and the issue of early and forced marriages, all of which remain a serious concern in the Progress Reports. Press news indicate that 853 women were killed by their male family members in 2010-2013, and none of the government ministers have any remarks on the issue. This paper will analyze the ups and downs of women's achievements in the period of 2005-2014 by looking at the legislative reforms, implementation of the new laws and regulations and their reflections in the society. What might be lost with the postponing of enlargement or rejection of Turkey's membership will be speculated based on past implementation.

Keywords: Enlargement of the European Union, Political Conditionality, Turkey, Women's Human Rights

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Introduction

The European Union (EU), the outcome of the dream to stop wars in the European continent by economic integration, successfully integrated 28 European states and more than 500 million European citizens in the past 65 years of its foundation. Having started as an economic integration movement, it is now a huge body that is active in various policy fields from agriculture to fisheries, social policy to environmental policy, transportation to foreign relations. It is a sui generis organization, one of its kind, combining supranational and intergovernmental characteristics in certain policy areas.

However, the European integration movement did not only result in bringing together various European states under an economic roof. The EU has also created European values, and the idea of what being European is. Therefore, the EU is a norm creator, and has developed, in the course of time, the European identity and the criteria to be fulfilled in order to be defined as a European country.

EU's identity is a collective one and is forged, as Bretherton and Vogler (2004: 6) put it, by 'shared understandings, both within the EU and among third parties, about what the EU is, in terms of its character and its values, and what it should (or should not) do, in terms of its external policies and actions. Identity is, thus, an important aspect of the Union's international presence', where presence 'combines understandings concerning the fundamental nature, or identity, of the EU and the external consequences of the Union's internal priorities and policies'.

The sui generis character of the EU is an important factor in formulating its distinctive collective identity. This point is closely related with Turkey's membership attempts in the European Union. Turkey's candidacy is a challenge, not only for Turkey, but also for the EU as Turkey's membership attempts are raising questions on what being European is. Turkey is the longest waiting candidate for membership, applied for membership to the European Economic Community in 1959, the Agreement Establishing and Association between the European Economic Community and Turkey (Ankara Agreement) was signed in 1963, and a Customs Union was established between the contracting parties in 1995. Turkey applied for full membership to the European Community in 1987, and was rejected in 1989. The Commission's opinion on Turkey's accession was negative, not because of civilizational or 'inherent' differences, but because the EC was not ready to accept new members mainly due to "new ambitions of European integration resulting from the Single Act" which would prevent the Community from accepting new member states before 1993, and Turkey's geographical, demographic, economic and political conditions (Commission Opinion on Turkey's Request for Accession to the Community, December 20, 1989). Throughout the 1990s, Turkey's relationship with the EU was a complicated one. In 1995, Turkey and the European Union established a Customs Union. In 1997, right after the 1997 Luxembourg Summit, the keenness of the EU in responding to the membership demands of the newly independent Central and Eastern European countries and its ongoing hesitation towards Turkey's inclusion resulted in Turkey's breaking off political dialogue with the EU. Soon afterwards, Presidency Conclusions of the Helsinki Summit of 1999 declared that Turkey was 'a candidate country destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate states'. Welcoming the 'recent positive developments in

Turkey', the EU pointed out the problematic areas that Turkey has to improve in order to realize her prospect of full membership. Further, it is stated that Turkey, like other candidate countries, would benefit from a pre-accession strategy to stimulate and support its reforms.'

The reasons behind this problematic relationship between the parties are not the topic of this article. However, it is worth mentioning that one of the problematic areas persistently brought up by the EU was the human rights record of Turkey. The 1999 Helsinki Summit, where Turkey was given a perspective for candidacy, was a turning point for the relations and Turkey's attachment to Europe. With the rising hopes for membership, Turkey started a comprehensive reform process, including major changes in the legislation concerning human rights, which in turn, triggered reforms in gender equality. The purpose of this article is to point out the reforms made during the candidacy process and show how influential they are in creating a gender equality regime in Turkey. In order to do that, the article will firstly focus on what being European is and how the EU defines, shapes and reshapes this definition. Secondly, Turkey's alignment with the EU *acquis* and thirdly, achievements on gender equality legislation will be summarized. Lastly, the article will speculate about what might be at stake if the membership perspective is lost.

Being European: Political Conditionality

The EU creates European values by a typical carrot and stick policy, called "political conditionality". Political conditionality is a foreign policy tool "aimed to promote democracy and respect for human rights through the attachment of these ideals to mostly economic relations" (Usul, 2011: 30). Political conditionality works in every aspect of the Union's external relations, from its relations with the third countries to the setting of criteria for membership for those who would like to be EU members. The EU uses several tools, such as trade agreements, financial assistance and the prospect for membership in order to induce change in third countries.

In terms of candidacy for EU membership, conditionality works in terms of the requirements to be fulfilled before accession. These requirements were vaguely defined firstly in the Treaty of Rome of 1957, which states that 'any European country may apply to be a member of the Community' (Article 237). In 1962, the Birkelbach Report prepared by the European Parliament further added that: "Only states which guarantee on their territories truly democratic practices and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms can become members of our Union" (Pridham, 1991:215). Political conditionality was put into practice for the first time during the Mediterranean Enlargement in which Greece, Portugal and Spain joined the European Community after dictatorships were abolished in these countries. The democratic conditions were kept at a minimum, though, such as holding fair and free elections, and having a democratic constitution and political party system.

With the end of the Cold War, the EU needed to redefine its identity clearly, as the EU needed to formulate a new security policy towards the Central and Eastern European countries. This policy resulted in a new wave of enlargement, and as a precondition for candidacy, the membership criteria were defined in the Presidency Conclusions of the European Council in Copenhagen in June 1993 (a.k.a. the Copenhagen Criteria) for those countries aspiring membership to the European club.

The Copenhagen Criteria were necessitating, firstly, the stability of institutions consisting of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities. The second criteria were economic, necessitating a functioning market economy and capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the European Union. Thirdly, the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* was required (Madrid European Council in 1995 added the need for “expansion of administrative structures for effective adoption of the *acquis*”, as the *acquis* will not only be adopted but needs effective implementation once the country is in the Union). The Union's capacity to absorb new members is also mentioned as an important consideration in deciding on future enlargements.

Conditionality was put into practice for the first time during the 2004 enlargement, as candidates' performance in meeting the criteria was monitored for the first time (Kochenov, 2008: 39). The mechanisms employed in the EU's political conditionality process were introduced in the 1997 Luxembourg Summit. These are the Accession Partnership Document (a basic road map for candidate states which lists the steps to be taken for membership as under the headings of Copenhagen Criteria and updated regularly due to the candidate country's progress), National Programme (prepared by the candidate country indicating its commitment to the process and shows the methods for fulfilling the priorities set in the Accession Partnership Document), Progress Reports (an annual assessment of the candidate country by the European Commission on the basis of its progress in realizing the priorities set in the Accession Partnership Document), and the opportunity to participate in the EU Agencies and Programmes. These mechanisms were introduced for preparing the candidate states for integration. It was also concluded in the Luxembourg Summit that compliance with Copenhagen political criteria was a prerequisite for the opening of accession negotiations. The 1999 Helsinki Summit further added that compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria was a prerequisite for the opening of accession negotiations whereas compliance with the entire Copenhagen criteria was required for accession to the EU.

By establishing criteria for conducting and deepening relations with a certain country, the EU is setting the criteria, and therefore, establishing asymmetrical relations in which it sets the rules. The candidate countries for EU membership have to meet the requirements if they would like to join the club. This asymmetrical nature of the relations further allows the EU to threaten to leave the countries out of the enlargement process if they do not comply with the norms (Usul, 2011: 64). Therefore, the political conditionality of the EU is a very important factor for political transformation in the countries wishing to join the EU. Turkey, as the country that has been waiting for membership for over 50 years, has been imposed to the political conditionality of the EU, and the EU has been very influential in promoting political change and democratic reforms in Turkey. The EU has increasingly been the main motor behind the adoption of norms of liberal democracy and reforms on human rights in Turkey as the EU membership perspective became clearer for Turkey and as it became obvious that accession negotiations with the EU could not begin unless Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen Criteria (Müftüler-Bac, 2005: 17).

The Impact of Political Conditionality on Turkey

The Ottoman Empire was engaged in a long process of Westernization/Europeanization during the last two centuries of its rule, but it was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who really went into a deep process of 'Westernization' by founding the modern Turkish Republic. Atatürk's main aim was to change the perceptions of the West about Turkey.

“The project of modernization in a Muslim country takes a very different turn from Western modernity in that it imposes a political will to ‘westernize’ the cultural code, modes of life and gender identities” (Göle, 1995, 21). Indeed, the Kemalist revolution created a new gender regime by introducing a secular system and Westernized modes of conduct. The new nation-building model emphasized the “new-women”, who were publicly visible and educated and equal to the men (in the public sphere at least), in contrast to the women who were confined to the private sphere in the old regime. Thus, the image of women represented the rupture between the old Islamic/Ottoman past and the modern, new, westernized Turkish Republic.

Kemalist reforms were comprehensive. The sultanate was abolished in 1922 and the caliphate in 1924. The new education law secularized the education system and made primary education mandatory for everyone, both boys and girls. The Latin alphabet was adopted in 1928. In 1926, the Swiss Civil Code was adopted and therefore, marriage and divorce were secularized, and monogamy was established and women were given the same inheritance rights as men. In 1930, women's suffrage was recognized in local elections, and in 1934, women's suffrage was extended to nationwide elections. Islamic veil was not officially banned, but women were encouraged to take off their veils (Arat, 1998).

It is also worth mentioning that the Europeanization/Westernization efforts did not target to eliminate patriarchy (and perhaps it would be naïve to expect them to do so). Patriarchal morality and social codes on women's behaviour were hard to eliminate, and kept their hegemony. Religious ceremonies of marriage, child marriages and polygyny continued especially in the Eastern and South Eastern parts of Turkey and among families within the lower socio-economic classes. Reforms and state's laws on gender equality could not penetrate into women's daily lives, and women's statuses were primarily determined by religious and traditional rules rather than state laws. It was not until the 1980s that Turkish women would indulge in a new wave of feminism and address their own problems such as domestic violence, harassment, honour killings, virginity examinations, family-oriented gender rules and the patriarchal power of men over women.

The Kemalist modernization established a secular state with a parliamentary democracy and a significant level of industrialization. Meanwhile, the main motivation behind Turkish foreign policy has been, since then, the desire to be accepted as an equal European state in the European states' system. As Müftüler-Bac points out, ‘Turkey's membership in various European organizations and its association with the EU should be analysed within this perspective: as a bid towards gaining the status of a European state’ (Müftüler-Bac, 1997: 3). Indeed, after the Second World War, Turkey became a member of major Western organizations; the OECD in 1948, the Council of Europe in 1949, and NATO in 1952, all of which were

interpreted by Turkish policy makers and Turkish public in general as the acceptance of Turkey's identity as a modern, secular European country by the (West) European states.

The Cold War years witnessed the redefinition of European identity. During this period, identities were associated with the 'blocs' and their corresponding ways of life. European identity, thus, came to reflect the European way of life, and defined in terms of 'Western European security interests. The security considerations during this period were legitimized under the 'Western security community' and its peculiar 'strategic culture', where this strategic culture is defined 'in terms of defence and security provided by a military structure, which acquires legitimacy as the provider of a 'way of life'' (Klein, 1988: 136). The social, historical, religious, and civilization oriented components were less important in the definition of European identity in this period, because European identity is defined now in terms of security and military components against the adversarial 'other', and this adversarial 'other' was also defined in terms of a military threat. Western Europe during the Cold War, thus, based its identity on this Western strategic culture. Turkey found its place in this Western strategic culture by its acceptance to the Western security organizations which were formed against the common threat of Soviet expansion and communism, and held a crucial position since she was 'one of the two countries which Soviet armies could have entered directly'. Moreover, because she was the only secular and democratic but dominantly Muslim society, Turkey had a crucial role to play in the region against Soviet plans in the Middle East (Klein, 1988: 131).

The Cold War years were not non-problematic for Turkey's European credentials, though. The establishment of the multiparty system in 1946 and the following electoral success of the centre-right Democratic Party (DP) in 1950 reflected the uneasy fit of the modernization attempts. Several reforms were taken back by the DP administration. The result was the stepping in of the military into political life and closure of the DP in 1960 for its religious tendencies which were undermining the secular state. However, successive centre-right parties having similar tendencies with the DP came to power in the following years which continued to use "religious symbols, idioms, and practices as part of a new style of political communication and propaganda" (Ayata, 1996: 44). This emphasis on religion was seen as a method to fight communism, and as a result, Turkey was stuck into a loop where the military intervened into political life when either the religious or leftist tendencies got too far. These interventions and growing religious tendencies in Turkish politics did not constitute a major problem for Turkey's European identity during the Cold War.

In the meantime, the EU's (EEC then) conditionality was not political, but mostly technical, commercial or economic. Relations between the parties were based on the 1963 Ankara Agreement and its Additional Protocol that outlined the legal framework of the association relationship governing the technical issues concerning free movement of production factors. After the 1980 military coup, the EU preferred to monitor the developments in Turkey rather than suspending the relations. The relations began to normalize in 1986, and the Government applied to the European Communities for full membership on 14 April 1987. After this application, Turkey faced the EU's political conditionality for the first time. Before the 1999 Helsinki Summit, it was the European Parliament (EP) that was handling the mechanism for political conditionality and criticizing Turkey in many aspects ranging from torture to

the Kurdish issue. In many decisions of the Parliament, Turkey was called for improvement in human rights practices, and was warned that otherwise it should “bear the consequences” (Erdenir, 2012: 140). With the EP’s pressure, Turkey granted the right to individual petition to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 1987, recognized the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court in 1989 and signed the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1989.

With the end of the Cold War, Turkey’s strategic importance declined and the returning of the newly independent Eastern and Central European Countries to Europe was a more important target for the EU. There was an increasing emphasis on liberal values and therefore, the political conditionality mechanisms on Turkey were becoming stricter. A striking example can be found in the words of the leader of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, Pauline Green, as she explained the reason for supporting the Customs Union: “By using the Trade Agreement, we demonstrated our leverage power in the field of democracy and human rights” (Turkish Daily News, 30 December 1995; Erdenir, 2012: 142). In 1995, the EP was demanding the release of the imprisoned members of the Turkish Parliament and amendment of several articles of the Turkish Constitution and the Penal Code that were restricting freedom of thought. The EP made it clear that it was connecting its approval for the establishment of the Customs Union to the aforementioned conditions. When the Turkish Government amended the legislation, the European Parliament gave its approval to the Customs Union.

Even though Turkey was not given a prospect to start accession negotiations at the Luxembourg Summit of 1997 and Turkey suspended its relations with the Union, at the 1999 Helsinki Summit Turkey was granted candidate status, and a new period began. From December 1999 when Turkey was granted the candidate status until October 2005 when the accession negotiations began, the EU’s political conditionality was most effective on Turkey’s political reform process. One-third of the Constitution and 218 articles of 53 laws were amended during this period. Radical decisions ranging from the transformation of civilian-military relations to broadcasting in Kurdish, from the abolishment of death penalty and the State Security Courts to the termination of state of emergency were brought to life during that period (Erdenir, 2012. 151).

Political Conditionality and Gender Equality Reforms

The most important legal changes regarding gender equality are amendments in the Constitution, the new Civil, Penal Codes and the Labour Act, establishment of Family Courts and Juvenile Courts, Law on the Protection of the Family, and the approval of the optional protocol of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It is worth mentioning that, one of the most patriarchal aspects of the Turkish legal system, the articles of the Penal Code that relate to violence against women were not strongly raised by the European Commission’s Progress Reports, or in the various meetings held between the Turkish and European officials until 2003 (Muftuler-Bac, 2005, 21). Although the 2003 Report points out that more than half the female population are subject to physical and psychological forms of violence within the family environment, the issue of honour crimes and violence against women is raised only in two paragraphs in the report,

whereas 12–13 pages are dedicated to minority rights (Regular Report on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession, 2003: 36).

With the constitutional amendments in 2001 and 2004 to the Turkish Constitution, some gender equality provisions were established. In the 2001 amendment, Article 41 of the Constitution was amended as “The family is the foundation of the Turkish society and based on the equality between the spouses.” With a series of amendments in 2004, Article 10 was amended as “[...]Men and women have equal rights. The State shall have the obligation to ensure that this equality exists in practice”, and Article 90 was amended as “International agreements duly put into effect bear the force of law. In the case of a conflict between international agreements in the area of fundamental rights and freedoms duly put into effect and the domestic laws due to differences in provisions on the same matter, the provisions of international agreements shall prevail.” According to this statement in Article 90, the provisions of international agreements that Turkey is a signatory (such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) or the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)) will bear the force of law, and in case of a conflict between domestic law and a provision of an international treaty that Turkey is a signatory, Turkey has to follow the provisions of the international agreement.

In November 2001, a new Civil Code was adopted and became operational in January 2002. The New Civil Code established the legal marriage age as seventeen for both men and women. (However, considering the fact that the age of majority is eighteen, that every human being is considered a child up to the age of eighteen under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and that CEDAW recommends eighteen as the minimum age of marriage, it becomes clear that this situation contradicts the international treaties Turkey signed and that these are child marriages thereunder). Pursuant to this law, the judge may allow the marriage of men and women who reach the age of sixteen under extraordinary circumstances or on account of very important reasons. The new Civil Code established that no one can be forced to marry. It also abolished the concept of men being the “head of family”, granted women the right to use their own last names along with their husbands’, established that spouses need not obtain each other’s permission to work, and granted equal rights to spouses with regards to selection of the residence, matters concerning children, and distribution of property in case of divorce. It is worth mentioning that while Civil Code was negotiated in the Turkish Parliament, there was serious opposition to these clauses, particularly from the nationalist-Islamist male parliamentarians. It should be noted that given the new Civil code is a major breakthrough in terms of gender equality and was realized with the EU’s leverage.

The Turkish Penal Code had serious breaches of gender equality such as allowing rapists to go free if they agreed to marry the woman they raped. Men killing their female family members in the name of honour (“honour crimes”) had reductions in their penalties. If the rapists could prove that sexual intercourse with a child was with the ‘child’s consent’, the penalty was to be reduced. During the discussions for the revisions to the Turkish Penal Code were discussed in the Justice Commission of the Turkish Parliament the government party’s parliamentarians, backed by the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, wanted to insert a clause that would criminalize adultery, although adultery has not been a criminal act since 1998. As a

result of the reactions by the European Union, the proposal was taken back, but still reflects the importance of EU leverage. With the New Penal Code which took effect in 2005, sexual crimes were considered crimes against individuals and their penalty was aggravated; the woman/girl distinction was abolished; with regards to sexual abuse of children, those under the age of fifteen were considered children; rape for the purpose of marriage was considered a crime; polygamy was forbidden; criminal sanctions were brought against those who practices religious marriage ceremony without an official marriage first; the practice of cancelling the penalty in case the abductee and the abductor gets married was abolished; aggravated life imprisonment was brought for honour killings. However, when interpreting the new Penal Code, judges frequently abated the penalties of the perpetrators of honour killings claiming that the murders were committed under instigation or that the suspect demonstrated good conduct. The Code does not eliminate this practice.

Under the Labour Law which entered into force in 2003, no discrimination based on sex or similar reasons is permissible in the employment relationship; the principle of equal pay for equal jobs has been adopted; it was also established that female employees cannot be dismissed due to pregnancy or birth and nursing leaves. Maternity leave was increased to sixteen weeks, which is the standard in EU. Thus, new arrangements were introduced to prevent the violation of women's rights which are prevalent in the working life, and to increase women's participation in the workforce.

In December 2004, at the 2004 Brussels Summit, Presidency Conclusions stated that Turkey satisfactorily fulfilled Copenhagen political criteria, and that the negotiations would be started on 3 October 2005. There was an expectation that the EU's democratic conditionality would continue to affect the political reform process. Accession negotiations with Turkey officially launched on October 3, 2005, and Turkey's Negotiating Framework Document was approved. The document stresses that the shared objective of the negotiations is accession, however, this is "an open-ended process", the outcome of which could not be guaranteed beforehand. It is further stated that if Turkey is not in a position to assume all the obligations of membership, "it must be ensured that Turkey is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond". In addition, it was stressed that in case of a serious and persistent breach in Turkey of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law on which the Union was founded, the Commission would, on its own initiative or on the request of one-third of the Member States, recommend "the suspension of negotiations".

The negotiation process also suffered because of the accession of Cyprus to the EU. Turkey does not recognize Cyprus, however, needs to extend the Ankara Agreement to all new members that joined in 2004. It was decided that Turkey was going to negotiate the 35 chapters of the EU acquis for full membership. However, the Council decided on December 2006 that Turkey failed to fulfil its commitments under the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement, and therefore, the opening of eight chapters with Turkey was suspended. The decision went further, claiming that that no chapter would be closed although there is full alignment in its contents. In 2007, France announced that it unilaterally blocked five chapters on the grounds that they were "directly related to membership". In 2009, Cyprus unilaterally declared that it

linked progress in six chapters to the condition of normalization of relations between Turkey and Cyprus. As a result, since October 2005, only 14 chapters could be opened for negotiations, one is provisionally closed, and no new chapters could be opened since 2013. Turkey fulfils the opening criteria of the Chapter titled “Social Policy and Employment”, which includes comprehensive legislation on gender equality, however does not want to open the chapter without a membership perspective. Meanwhile, as the European Commission’s President Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker’s stated that there will be no further enlargements during his term in Office, the EU has clearly lost its leverage on Turkey.

Conclusion

So far, this article has shown that Turkey’s candidacy for EU membership has given the EU an important chance to force Turkey towards political reforms. Turkey has been committed to many reforms especially on human rights, including gender policies. However, as can be seen from the resistance to reforms in the Civil and the Penal Codes, patriarchy is still strong in Turkey, and the EU’s leverage is necessary at this point.

Several developments in the field of gender equality since the slowing down of the EU reforms are striking. In 2012, with a new regulation in the education system, the 8 year compulsory education was increased to 12 years, however, divided into three 4 year period. This means that, a student can leave school after 4 years of the first period or second, can marry, and return to school later. This is a problematic approach given the high instance of child marriages in Turkey.

Secondly, the ruling elite had some remarks on women’s social status. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey, claimed that women and men cannot be equal because it is against the laws of nature, and “our religion has defined a position for women: motherhood. Some people can understand this, while others can’t. You cannot explain this to feminists because they don’t accept the concept of motherhood.” He went on to say that women and men could not be treated equally “because it goes against the laws of nature”.

(<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/24/turkeys-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-women-not-equal-men>)

In 2012, in the closing session of the Parliamentarians' Conference of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), held in Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, then the Prime Minister of Turkey claimed that abortion is murder, and thus is totally unacceptable. He added that he was also personally against Cesarean deliveries. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18297760>)

The deputy prime minister, Bülent Arinc, claimed in 2014 that women should not laugh loudly in front of all the world and should preserve her decency at all times. In July 2015, he said to a female MP: "Madam be quiet! You as a woman, be quiet!" (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/11771966/Turkish-deputy-PM-embroiled-in-new-sexism-row-after-saying-As-a-woman-be-quiet.html>)

Thirdly, in its ruling in May 2015, the Turkish Constitutional Court has legalized the right to be religiously married without obtaining a civil marriage; which is in contrast

with the Civil Code of 2001, which was adopted with the EU's support. Meanwhile, as it reflects to the media, at least 1134 women were killed by their male family members in the last 5 years (<https://bianet.org/bianet/erkek-siddeti/161582-erkek-siddetinin-2014-grafigi>).

In conclusion, it can be stated that the reform process is at a halt due to the technical problems raised by the Cyprus issue and the reluctance of the European political leaders. However, it the EU's political conditionality has proved itself as a useful tool in producing change in Turkey's human rights record. Without a prospect for membership, it seems that gender equality reforms will not be carried out by the conservative government of Turkey, which usually refers to the religion and traditions for female conduct.

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