



MONTEUS Public Lecture

“Narratives of Europe, Narratives for Europe – Turkey”

By Dr Ebru Turhan

Tuesday, 25 June 2019

Annex building Physics (326), Seminar Room 0.03, University of Cologne

On 25 June 2019, Asst Prof Dr Ebru Turhan from Turkish-German University gave a public lecture on *“Narratives of Europe, Narratives for Europe – Turkey”* as part of the Jean Monnet Chair for Turkey and EU Studies (MONTEUS). She mentioned that EU-Turkey relations are at a major crossroad. As to her, there are many crossroads in the contemporary history of EU-Turkey relations because the relationship is dominated by a vicious cycle of ebbs and flows. Phases of conflict have been followed by phases of rapprochement and good neighbourly relations between the EU, followed again by another period of conflict, estrangement and dispute. She pointed out that this recent crossroad is the most critical because compared with the past, periods of conflict and estrangement started to last longer, while periods of rapprochement, cooperation and good neighbourly relations started to last shorter. Furthermore, Ebru Turhan emphasized that the relationship is being increasingly formulated outside the accession framework. For this reason, the narrative approach is so important to understand how this particular status quo in EU-Turkey relations arrived. She describes *“Narratives”* as the way actors, governments and regions perceive a specific subject and its evolution over time and the key actors, (institutional) mechanisms, drivers and their very own relationship with the respective matter.

Ebru Turhan applied the narrative approach to the Turkish case by mapping two master narratives in different periods. Besides, the mapping is based on two criteria: The first one is the periodization of EU-Turkey relations because of important U-turns, shifts and milestones. The second one is focused on interest-based or normative arguments, especially the key drivers of these particular narratives in EU-Turkey relations. Accordingly, the periodization of EU-Turkey relations and Turkish master narratives of the EU encompassed five key periods of the relationship: 1963-1987 European Integration as *“economic and security provider”*; 1988-1999 European Integration as *“unconditional right”*; 2000-

2005 European Integration as *“democratic transformer”*; 2006-2010 European Integration as *“partly unreliable process”* and 2011-present European Integration as *“ambiguous goal without a Plan B”*.

In her conclusion, Ebru Turhan stressed that these narratives of the last periods still exist both on side of the EU and Turkey. Accordingly, they are not competing narratives but convergence narratives and there is a dichotomy within the narratives themselves. On the one hand, they address alternative partnership framework (options) and on the other hand, they are still bound with other narratives and statements to the full-membership option of turkey. In addition, there is still no full commitment both by Ankara and Brussels and other member states to full membership. However, both Ankara, Brussels and other member states do not wish to have a ‘divorce’ from this accession framework for now. One explanation might be that there is no plan B right now which is as good as the accession framework, which allows a continuous dialogue between both parties. Until this plan B is found, there would not be any change in the current narrative for the next few years.

