

VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF EURO-TURKS AND TURKEY'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 2014

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Preface

As a political scientist who carried out a number of electoral studies in regard of the Turkish electorate (see *Anayasa ve Seçim Hukuku açısından 1965 Seçim Tahlilleri*, SBF, 1966 and others) and as a researcher on migration movements to Europe since 1963, the announcement of the extension to vote abroad for Turks living in Europe on May 18, 2014 has been the reason for me to use this new opportunity for a small scale election research.

As time was relatively short and Boğaziçi University where I am actually teaching has so far not established an outspoken "Migration Studies Center" comparable to MiReKoc at Koç university, I undertook personally a number of contacts in order to secure the necessary funds for a small, exploratory study. During all these preliminary contacts I was accompanied by one of our young colleagues, namely Dr. Selcan Kaynak and Dr. Volkan Çıdam. As a result the only tangible result I was able to obtain from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in July 2014 has been the granting of four airfare tickets for our researchers, the organization of a roundtable and a publication. In this respect I would like to underline the very helpful support of Alexander Geiger, the acting representative.

The first researchers were graduate students, namely Ms. Bahar Özay and Mr. Sercan Taş; the after-election researchers were Assistant Professors Selcan Kaynak and Volkan Çıdam. The two first went to Berlin and Hanover/Hamburg; the second group went to Berlin and Cologne. Since there were no funds to cover the daily expenses of the two graduate students I had to use my personal relations. I was able to find lodging for Ms. Özay in Berlin through the courtesy of a relative of mine Mr. Oktay Tesar; similarly it was through manifold contacts that I have been able to find a sponsor for Mr. Sercan Taş first in Hannover and then in Hamburg. In case of the two members of our the department, namely Dr. Selcan Kaynak and Dr. Volkan Çıdam, it has been possible to allocate a per diem through the intermediary of Prof. Dr. Lale Akarun, Vice-Rector. In other words, the project which I labeled AVANTI I was carried out thanks to personal commitment, endurance and perseverance of the team.

The findings of our investigation have immediately indicated the major difficulties Turkish voters faced. This confirmed my expectations in regard of an extreme low turnout. At the moment Turkey is

expecting to realize its general elections in Spring 2015. Whether the Supreme Election Board (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*) will modify certain conditions in the Electoral Law is for the moment not yet clear. This preliminary report will no doubt require a re-evaluation. Nevertheless the below stated observations and elaborations will certainly cast light on one aspect so far not experienced in the history of Turkey's voting behavior: THE VOTING PATTERN OF EURO-TURKS LIVING ABROAD. It is absolutely necessary to design a Five-Country Electoral Study on Turkish voters. The five countries with the largest group of voters with Turkish background are: Austria, Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Thus, the report is representing a new facet in the field of Turkish political science and in spite of the fact that the interviews are not generalizable, due to the use of the snowball technique, it still deserves careful assessment.

Prof. Dr. Nermin Abadan-Unat

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Summary

A total of 530,135 citizens of Turkey, registered as external voters, cast their votes in Turkey's presidential elections in August 2014. More than those who voted in their country of residence (232,795) were those who voted at the polling stations at the borders (297,340). Given a total of 2,798,726 registered external voters, the general turnout of external voters – when the votes at the borders and those cast in countries of residence are added – was around 19 percent. This study examines the election process during Turkey's Presidential Elections of 2014 and analyzes the factors that influenced turnout rates of external voters. Although turnout rates in the polling stations set up abroad are pretty low in comparison to turnout rates in Turkey, non-resident citizens of Turkey have always had a turnout rate less than 10 percent.

The focus of the study is Germany. In aiming to understand the voting behavior of citizens of Turkey residing in Germany, this study also provides insights on the political behavior of these individuals, albeit in a limited fashion. This study is an exploratory case study and aims to generate hypotheses and research questions for further research on external voting. The findings from this study will help our research team design a more systematic and comparative research of external voting in relation to citizens of Turkey residing abroad and their political behavior.

External voting is not a new phenomenon but its implementation has expanded over the years and currently more than 100 countries allow a form of external voting to be practiced. Turkey had provisions for external voting since the 1980s but voting for non-resident citizens was possible only at the borders until the presidential elections of 2014. Political parties had high expectations about the external vote and mass rallies and campaign trips were organized in a couple of European countries. Germany with the largest non-resident Turkish citizen group was the target of such political campaigning. Political parties can only be organized as civil society organizations in Germany and they used such platforms to mobilize and organize their followers. The external electorate abroad was expected to vote because this would provide the only right to vote especially for those who are not citizens in their host countries. Transnationalism and circular migration, which have become important concepts for

analyzing recent migration trends, would project that external voters would be interested in voting in their home countries' elections. However, as the literature on external voting has shown, turnout at external ballot boxes is usually significantly lower than turnout rates at the home countries. Although low turnout is not an unexpected result for external voting, it came as a surprise to the observers and political parties who were expecting a higher turnout.

This study provides some potential explanations for this result based on a qualitative fieldwork in Germany. To collect the data for this exploratory study, four researchers visited Germany between August 4 and August 23 to conduct a total of 78 in-depth semi-structured interviews with a variety of immigrants from Turkey and citizens of Germany ranging from civil society leaders, journalists, parliamentarians to religious leaders, opinion leaders, experts and academics. The researchers also carried out participant observation in a variety of meetings organized by civil society organizations as well as conduct occasional conversations with contacts in different contexts such as shops, mosques and public transport.

This study examines the potential explanations for low turnout at the polling stations in Germany under five categories. The first is the need to be registered in the list of external electorate to be able to vote. Only those who have been resident abroad for more than 6 months and who has a connection with a consulate/embassy in their country of residence were registered as external voters. The lists were announced prior to elections and individuals could apply to be included if they had checked their names on the list. The second and very important problem was the difficulties experienced with the online appointment system. The voting took place between a Thursday (July 31) and a Sunday (August 3) and individuals had to make an appointment to get a day and time to vote. This required digital skills and many individuals logged off from the system without getting confirmation. Those who went to the ballot box on a day and time different from those specified in the confirmation given by the system were not allowed to vote. Furthermore, the system assigned different days for members of the same family in some cases. This made it unlikely for these voters to go since it is costly to travel and sometimes required a day off from work. The third problem was the lack of trust in the counting system whereby the votes would be transported to Turkey in order to be counted on the evening of the

voting in Turkey. Many of our interview participants declared that they would have preferred to see how their votes were counted and given their lack of trust in the system, abstained from voting. The fourth reason for low turnout in the case of Germany was the timing of the election which coincided with the holiday season in Germany. Especially those who do not go to Turkey for their vacations missed the possibility to vote in the election. The last and very important reason for abstention of many voters is the disconnect between their day-to-day problems and politics in Turkey according to our interview participants. Political parties and politicians from Turkey are not seen as responsive to issues pertaining to education, integration and racism according to our study findings. This disconnect might be addressed by providing representation to external voters in general elections: there could be one or two members of parliament elected by the external voters to represent non-resident citizens in the parliament. This, however, is not the case for Turkey at this point.

The last section of the report provides further reflections on voting behavior of external voters in Germany and their candidate preferences. The study identified that while the first and second generations follow politics in Turkey on a daily basis, the third and fourth generations are less likely to be very interested in Turkish politics. Furthermore, the more educated external voters were, the more interested they were with German politics rather than Turkish politics. The study revealed that even though civil society organizations are important for fostering transnationalism, some of these organizations were more successful in reaching and mobilizing the electorate than others. Some even provided logistical support to external voters for the online appointment and transportation to the election sites. Cultural identity plays a significant role in the voting patterns of the electorate in Germany. When people are asked to identify themselves, CHP and MHP voters usually note that they are 'Turks'. Among them usually MHP supporters also emphasize their Muslim identity. While MHP supporters understand their Turkish identity in ethnic terms, CHP supporters tend to refer to a citizenship based national identity. AKP supporters foremost define themselves as Muslim before their Turkish identity.

The main questions addressed by this study were whether external voters follow politics in Turkey, whether they voted in the presidential elections of 2014 and what the reasons for voting or

not voting were. There were high expectations from external voters – especially the Euro-Turks of Germany – but the turnout was very low when compared to turnout in Turkey. This study claimed that given the literature on external voting this outcome could have been predicted. Furthermore, the fact that the election coincided with the vacation time of some voters, problems with the appointment system, logistical costs of taking a day off from work, traveling to the election site and the lack of trust in the system led to low turnout. The feeling that politicians in Turkey are unable to respond to their daily problems was another cause of the abstention from voting in some cases. These problems could partially be addressed in order to provide a smoother election process and representation to external voters in the general elections. Authorities should also consider the advantages and disadvantages of allowing the right to vote for external electorate: the cost of organizing external polling stations are very high and turnout is low.

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List of Abbreviations

ADD	Association of Kemalist (Atatürkist) Thought
AKP	Justice and Development Party
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CHP	Republican People's Party
Die Linke	The Left Party
HDB	Populist Revolutionist Union
HDP	People's Democratic Party
HUGO	Hacettepe University Migration and Politics Research Center
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
MHP	Nationalist Action Party
NSU	National Socialist Underground
SGK	Social Security Institution
TBB	Türkischer Bund in Berlin-Brandenburg
TGB	Türkisches Gemeinde zu Berlin
TGD	Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
UETD	Union of European Turkish Democrats
YSK	Supreme Election Board

I. Introduction

A total of 530,135 citizens of Turkey, registered as external voters, cast their votes in Turkey's presidential elections in August 2014. More than those who voted in their country of residence (232,795) were those who voted at the polling stations at the borders (297,340). Given a total of 2,798,726 registered external voters, the general turnout of external voters – when the votes at the borders and those cast in countries of residence are added – was around 19 percent. This study examines the election process during Turkey's Presidential Elections of 2014 and analyzes the factors that influenced turnout rates of external voters. The focus of the study is Germany. In aiming to understand the voting behavior of citizens of Turkey residing in Germany, this study also provides insights on the political behavior of these individuals, albeit in a limited fashion. This study is an exploratory case study and aims to generate hypotheses and research questions for further research on external voting. The findings from this study will help our research team design a more systematic and comparative research of external voting in relation to citizens of Turkey residing abroad and their political behavior.

External voting refers to “provisions and procedures which enable some or all electors of a country who are temporarily or permanently outside the country to exercise their voting rights from outside the territory of the country” (IDEA, 2007:248). In Turkey, voting for citizens registered as residing abroad was made possible for the first time in 1987 through an amendment of the Law on Elections and Electoral Registers (Law No. 298, 26/4/1961) but citizens could only vote at the polling stations set up at the borders (Okuy, 2014). This did not satisfy the definition of external voting as those residing abroad had to travel to Turkey to cast their votes.

“The Amendment (no. 4121) to Article 67 of the Constitution in 1995 aimed at opening room for new legislation enabling citizens residing abroad to exercise their right to vote from there. This amendment also gave the right a constitutional basis. The 1995 Amendment (no. 4125) on the election law assigned the task of organising and managing elections abroad to the Supreme Election Board (YSK). Nevertheless, it also stated that if ‘factual or legal obstacles’ were encountered before carrying out elections abroad, the existing method of voting at the border stations should be maintained.

In the four general elections from 1995 to 2007, voting at the border remained the only method, justified with the presence of such legal and factual obstacles. Turkish lawmakers considered mail ballots as breaching the secrecy of the vote, whereas setting up polling stations in the emigrants' countries of residence met objections raised by some of these countries (mainly of Germany) which feared political protests and fights between rival political groups" (Okyay, 2014).

The Law on Elections and Electoral Register was amended again in 2008 to enable Turkish citizens living abroad to vote in general elections, the election of the president and referenda in Turkey. There were four different methods of voting inscribed in the law: postal voting, at the borders, at the representations abroad and electronically. The Constitutional Court of Turkey cancelled the postal voting as it could violate the secrecy of voting. "Before the 2011 general elections, government officials made declarations about on-going negotiations with Germany for implementing absentee voting through enabling voting at the diplomatic representations. However, the Supreme Election Board's February 2011 decision (no.120) ruled out that possibility for the elections of 2011. The Board referred to the insufficiently prepared infrastructure and the resulting unequal treatment between Turkish citizens in Germany and those residing in other countries if external voting were to be applied only in Germany. A final amendment (no.6304) to the electoral law from May 2012 regulated methods of external voting (taking out the postal voting option), the creation of an overseas voters' registry, and defined the tasks of the YSK and the diplomatic representations in the organisation and management of external elections" (Okyay, 2014).

The above description of how external vote was introduced and developed over the years is illustrative of the importance of Germany in this process. Being home to the largest group of immigrants from Turkey, Germany is an interesting case where studies have shown that citizens of Turkey are active politically in both their home and host countries (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003). There is a variety of migrant associations which have been active in the past in pressuring both states to modify their laws and regulations to improve the lives of citizens of Turkey residing in Germany. Some of the modifications to the citizenship law of Turkey are examples of this activism (Kadirbeyoglu, 2009). This study aims to uncover the attitude of external voters towards politics in their home country. Do they follow

politics in Turkey? Did they participate in the Presidential Elections of 2014? What were the motivations for their participation? What does citizenship represent for external voters? Is it a combination of rights and duties? Or is it about identity?

In order to answer the above stated questions and to generate new hypotheses, this report proceeds as follows. Section II provides an overview of external voting throughout the globe and argues that there is an increasing trend of external voting becoming possible and desirable. Section III gives a brief overview of transnationalism and how it would be reflected in the voting behaviour of immigrants. Section IV gives the contextual information on the presidential elections of Turkey followed by a section on the case of Germany. The findings from the fieldwork are discussed in section VI followed by a discussion and conclusion of the study.

II. External Voting

External vote has gained increasing importance as more countries around the globe have allowed a form of external voting. A report jointly prepared by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico, reports that there are 115 countries with provisions of external voting (IDEA, 2007). One reason behind this phenomenon is pressure from emigrant groups to get the possibility to vote in their home countries' elections while residing abroad. New communication technologies have allowed immigrants to maintain vibrant ties with their communities back in their home countries and this activism within transnational spaces (see Faist and Özveren, 2004) has increased demands for the right to vote in country of origin.

Despite increasing numbers of states allowing and implementing external vote, there are criticisms against the possibility of those resident abroad to vote. The most important of these criticisms are: "1) because external voters reside outside of the jurisdictions where their votes will help determine who wields power, they do not live with the direct consequences of the vote and may therefore vote less responsibly than those who do; 2) external voters may lack the information needed to make an informed decision because of difficulties in presenting candidate platforms and positions to non-residents; 3) the costs associated with reaching voters who have

voluntarily chosen to reside abroad and may be widely dispersed places an undue burden on those who remain; and 4) election administrators must confront issues of ballot secrecy and transparency in territories where they lack jurisdictional capacity” (Grace, 2007:38). While some states offer voting rights to all non-resident citizens, others limit the external electorate by limiting franchise to those who have been living abroad less than a number of years. In the case of the UK only those who have been non-resident for 15 years or less are allowed to vote whereas in the case of Canada this limit is five years (Grace, 2007:44).

External voting may apply to legislative elections, presidential elections, referenda and sub-national elections (Fierro, Morales and Gratschew, 2007:16). Out of the 115 countries that allowed external voting, there were 14 which made it possible for presidential elections only, 31 for legislative elections only, 20 for presidential and legislative elections, 7 for presidential elections and referenda, 11 for all three types, 6 for presidential, legislative and sub-national elections, and 67 for legislative elections and referenda. There is a variety of methods used in implementing external voting. According to the IDEA report (Fierro et al., 2007:23), these are:

- personal voting at diplomatic missions or other designated areas;
- postal voting;
- voting by proxy;
- e-voting; and
- voting by fax.

A combination of these different methods is used depending on where the voters are located. Based on the statistics reported by the IDEA report (p.23-34), majority of voting is by personal, postal or a mix of these two. Election boards can determine the minimum number of electorate to be present at a location to set up a polling station in that particular context. These are measures to reduce the cost of organizing elections abroad. In contrast, in cases where a large number of electorate resides, the board may decide to rent halls to make sure the voting takes place smoothly.

Non-resident citizens have to be registered in the external constituencies to be able to vote. Although voter turnout is usually low and the electorate abroad is usually a small minority when

compared with the electorate at home, in some cases external votes can significantly change the election outcome – as exemplified by the case of elections in Italy in 2006 (Fierro et al., 2007:31). The reasons for low turnout are identified as being “the geographical location of polling stations, access to information, and the logistical arrangements for voter registration” (Fierro et al., 2007:32). Given the high costs of organizing external polling, it might be worthwhile to re-evaluate whether it makes sense to implement it in foreign territory given the low turnout rates.

The way external votes are evaluated shows some variation: whereas in some cases external voters cast their ballots for their constituency of last residence, in others they may constitute special non-resident constituencies (Grace, 2007). In the latter case, the external votes are added to the total vote earned by each party in proportional representation systems. Not only do some countries provide the right to vote to its citizens abroad, some even provide representation in their legislatures: “Eleven countries—four in Europe (Croatia, France, Italy and Portugal), four in Africa (Algeria, Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique) and three in the Americas (Colombia, Ecuador and Panama)” (Fierro et al., 2007:28).

Grace (2007:50-51) provides a list of issues that election management bodies should take into consideration when implementing external voting:

- Maximizing opportunities to register;
- Providing sufficient and timely information on the requirements and processes of absentee registration and voting;
- Ensuring that only eligible voters are registered;
- Preventing voters from misrepresenting themselves as other individuals and/or gaining access to more than one vote;
- Guaranteeing the secrecy of the ballot;
- Ensuring that external voters are not pressured to vote in particular ways by political parties, interest groups, or representatives of the government where they reside or by embassy officials;
- Ensuring that to the extent possible external voting rules and procedures reflect in-country practices;
- Protecting sensitive voter information;
- Securing the transport of materials; and
- Guaranteeing access to election observers.

As this section outlined, external voting has become significant throughout the world. Bauböck (2005) argues that contexts where non-resident citizens have unlimited right to vote and where non-citizen residents are not allowed to vote, can be associated with ethnic nationalism. In fact, Kadirbeyoglu (2007) had labeled Turkey's policies towards its emigrants as "national transnationalism" by referring to the rights based discourse when emigrants residing in Europe are concerned but not allowing any space for a debate on the rights of non-citizen residents in Turkey.

III. Voting in a transnational context

The experience of gauging an election carried outside of the national territory has to be examined under the concept of the emerging trends in migration research, namely transnationalism and circular migration, both of which have become increasingly important in the last decade. In other words the Turkish diaspora which was always present, however not noticeable, suddenly emerged as an additional factor in domestic and international politics of Turkey. The 2014 election has served as an additional example enabling us to delineate its field of influence. The concept of transnationalism makes it possible to understand that events in the political, economic and cultural sphere of a given country – in our case the sending country Turkey – are immediately creating repercussions in the receiving country – in our case Germany. Transnational politics today, particularly when attached to social movements, leads to diffusion, domestication and externalization (Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005).

Furthermore another type of migration has been gaining weight in recent years. It has been labeled as "circular migration" and is actually a new version of the "bracero" or/and "guestworker program" of yesterday. Shortly it can be defined as a situation in which migrants are able to move between an origin country and one or more destination countries repeatedly, for stays of varying duration (Castles and Özkul, 2014). The home country climate of opinion may or may not make itself noticeable abroad, the outcome of elections depends as much on the local administrative arrangements –registration, distance to and from polling stations, etc. – as on the season when the election takes place.

In Europe of today and particularly in Germany, which since 1960 has attracted the largest number of Turkish citizens, there is

a fairly differentiated diaspora. Not only the first, second, third generation workers represent a diversified community, there are also a considerably large number of businessmen, artists, professionals as well as small and large entrepreneurs who are living permanently outside Turkey. However their allegiance and attachment to the home country – even in case of acquisition of a new citizenship – is not vanishing. On the contrary it takes new forms and it transforms itself into a kind of multicultural identity.

In cases where transnational ties are significant and circular migration does take place, one would expect a high turnout in the elections of both home and host countries. According to a study by the Hacettepe University Migration Research Center (HUGO) carried out by Erdoğan (2014), one third of three million citizens from Turkey residing in Germany are German citizens and out of this 900,000 German citizens with roots in Turkey 600,000 participated in the federal elections in Germany (Erdoğan, 2014). Therefore, turnout in German elections is higher in comparison to turnout in Turkey's election. In the case of the presidential elections the turnout was 8.15 percent in Germany and 10.79 percent of the electorate registered in Germany voted at the borders. This brings total voter turnout rate from Germany to 18.94 percent. The potential explanations for a low turnout – which is not an unexpected result in external voting as the previous section outlined – are given in section VI. This low turnout was interpreted by the media in the host countries as a sign that immigrants from Turkey were not as interested in the politics of their home countries to go and vote and were well integrated into their host societies in the cases of Germany and Austria. However, the intensity and extensity of transnational ties have been shown to be significant between Germany and Turkey (Faist and Ozveren 2004; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003) and the low turnout should not be interpreted as the insignificance of interaction and attachment to the home country.

IV. The Case of Presidential Elections of 2014

Turkey is a parliamentary system and the president had been elected by the members of parliament at the Grand National Assembly up until 2014. Although the president of Turkey had more than ceremonial duties within a parliamentary system, the introduction of

direct vote for the election of the president was interpreted as a move towards a presidential system in Turkey without even changing the duties of the president. There were three candidates for the election. The candidate of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and had ample opportunity to campaign given that he remained as the Prime Minister of Turkey up until after he was elected president. The Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Action Party (MHP) nominated a single candidate, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu – the former general secretary of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation – whereas the People's Democratic Party (HDP) – the political party affiliated with the Kurdish movement – nominated Selahattin Demirtaş for the presidency. The Supreme Election Board (YSK) had announced that there would be two rounds of elections in case a candidate would not get the majority of votes in the first round. The first round of elections took place on August 10, 2014 in Turkey and external voters could either vote at the borders between July 26 and August 10 or in the polling stations set up in their country of residence between July 31 and August 3, 2014.

There was a total of 2.780.739 voters registered as external voters and were allocated to a total of 1.186 ballot boxes that were available outside the territory of Turkey. An additional 17.987 external voters were not assigned a polling station because they live in countries where polling stations were not set up and they could only vote at the borders. The number of voters in each country is different (see Table 1 below) and in locations with high density of external voters, the organizers appointed by YSK and the representations abroad have rented halls where the voting could take place. Furthermore, in order to avoid all voters to show up on the same day, YSK devised an appointment system where each voter was asked to log into the online appointment system (Oy Verme Günü Belirleme Sistemi - randevu.ysk.gov.tr) and select a date for the first and the second rounds of the elections. The system assigned all those who did not get an appointment to a particular date and time. However, external voters did not know the details of this date and time, had they not logged onto the web page of YSK.

Table 1 gives an overview of the number of voters, total number of votes cast in the external polling stations in countries with the highest number of registered external voters. The highest turnout in host country among these cases was experienced in Northern Cyprus and

is slightly higher than the turnout rate in the USA. Overall, turnout rates in these host countries range between 6.41 and 12.09 percent. Even though some of the registered external voters could have voted at the borders, the general turnout rate is not higher than 19 percent, even when those who voted at the borders are added. Although low turnout is not an unexpected result for external voting, it came as a surprise to the observers and political parties who were expecting a higher turnout. We will mention some potential explanations for this result in Section VI based on a qualitative fieldwork in Germany.

To collect the data for this exploratory study, four researchers carried out visits to Germany between August 4 and August 23 to carry out a total of 78 in-depth semi-structured interviews with a variety of immigrants from Turkey and citizens of Germany ranging from civil society leaders, journalists, parliamentarians to religious leaders, opinion leaders, experts and academics. The researchers also carried out participant observation in a variety of meetings organized by civil society organizations as well as conduct occasional conversations with contacts in different contexts such as shops, mosques and public transport. Snowball sampling was used to reach the interview participants. A variety of gate openers were consulted in order to increase the variety of respondents. Although some interviews were carried out in German, majority were conducted in Turkish. In order to preserve the anonymity of interview participants, their names are not mentioned in this report.

Table 1. Number of registered voters, votes cast and turnout rates for the countries with the highest numbers of registered voters

	Number of voters	Total Votes Cast	Voter turnout rate at the ballot boxes in host country (%)	Voter turnout rate at the border (%)
Germany	1,383,040	112,705	8.15	10.79
France	298,839	24,970	8.36	11.57
The Netherlands	240,315	17,338	7.21	13.30
Belgium	127,514	8,067	6.33	13.71
Austria	105,478	10,507	9.96	11.54
Northern Cyprus	92,171	11,144	12.09	4.85
Switzerland	88,748	8,790	9.90	13.00
USA	88,555	10,450	11.80	5.43
UK	79,614	5,105	6.41	8.06
Australia	40,406	4,254	10.53	2.19

Although turnout rates in the polling stations set up abroad are pretty low in comparison to turnout rates in Turkey, non-resident citizens of Turkey have always had a turnout rate less than 10 percent. As Table 2 shows, the turnout rate in 2007 general elections at polling stations set at the borders was 8.88 percent whereas it dropped to 7.68 percent at the referendum voted in 2010. The turnout was 5.03 percent at the general elections in 2011. In the presidential elections of 2014 more individuals turned out to vote at the borders probably as the election took place in August and coincided with the holiday of many immigrants. This time, turnout at the border polling stations was at 10.62 percent.

Table 2. Turnout rates at the polling stations at the borders for previous elections and referenda

	Voter turnout
2007 General Elections	8.88 %
2010 Referendum	7.68 %
2011 General Elections	5.03 %
2014 Presidential Elections	10.62 %

V. The case of Germany – an in-depth analysis

1960s marks the beginning of migration from Turkey to Germany. Germany's post war economic boom led to a labor shortage and this was filled by recruiting foreign labor from South European countries such as Greece, Spain and former Yugoslavia. Turkey was no exception and a bilateral German-Turkish labour recruitment agreement (*Anwerbeabkommen*) was concluded in 1961 leading to the establishment of a German Liaison Office in Istanbul (Abadan-Unat, 2011:11). The employment of foreign workers in Germany was not planned as part of a permanent immigration policy. Rather, the so-called *Gastarbeiter* (guestworker) should be admitted to Germany on a temporary basis according to the principle of rotation. However, like the Mexico-U.S. Bracero program, the outcome of Germany's guestworker policy, too, highlights that "there is nothing more permanent than temporary foreign workers" or temporary migration (Martin, 2001). While in 1961 there were 686,200 foreign citizens in Germany corresponding to 1.0% of the total population, by the end of 2012 over 6 million foreign citizens constituted 8.2% of Germany's total population (Abadan-Unat, 2011:8; BAMF, 2014:143). The increase in the numbers of Turkish citizens is even more remarkable: in 1961, i.e. more than 50 years ago when Germany and Turkey signed the *Anwerbeabkommen*, 6,700 Turkish citizens living in Germany accounted for 1.2% of the total foreign population; by the end of 2012 almost 1.6 million Turkish citizens accounted for almost 22% of the total foreign population in Germany (BAMF, 2014: 144).

And, yet, statistics based on the criterion of (non-)citizenship are misleading for several reasons. First, the indicator "foreign

citizenship” excludes significant numbers of immigrants who have “changed flags” through naturalization and do not count as foreigners any longer. Second, the same indicator ignores the fact that “foreign citizenship” does not correspond to the personal experience of immigration. Third, children of foreign citizens born in their parents’ country of destination, i.e. the so-called second or third generations, will not be included in data collection about the immigrant population, if citizenship is granted at birth based on the principle of *ius soli*. In other words, the criterion of native vs. foreign citizenship is underexclusive as well as overinclusive. It will be underexclusive as naturalized 1st generation migrants will be ignored when calculating the number of “foreign citizens”, and, it will be overinclusive if birth in territory does not lead to citizenship acquisition for 2nd or 3rd generations, who have never been subject to the experience of migration in terms of crossing borders, but were born in the country, e.g. Germany, as “foreigners”. Thus, since 2005 German population statistics include a further criterion, namely the “migration background” of persons residing in Germany combined with their citizenship status (BAMF, 2014: 134ff).

While according to the criterion of citizenship, there are almost 1, 6 million Turkish citizens living in Germany, the number of persons with a “Turkish background” approximates 3 million. The most remarkable fact is that 50.3% of the 3 million persons “with a Turkish background” did not migrate to Germany at all, but were born in the country (BAMF, 2014:138).

Whether we take the criterion of national citizenship or the criterion of “migration background”, Turkish migrants, their children and grandchildren constitute the largest group of Germany’s increasingly diverse immigrant population. The growth of the population in Germany with a Turkish background occurred despite a halt of active recruitment policies back in the early 1970s. The so-called oil price shock in 1973 followed by severe economic recession in North/Western European countries profoundly changed attitudes towards the employment of guestworkers. Germany not only officially stopped admission of further guestworkers to the country, but also took initiatives to facilitate the return of already settled guestworkers to their home countries. For several reasons this attempt failed and the numbers of Turkish citizens continued to increase particularly due to family reunification and following the 1980 military coup in Turkey

an increasing number of asylum applications of political refugees from Turkey, predominantly Kurds. Despite a growing immigrant population settling permanently in Germany, the official attitude of Germany towards being a “non-immigration country” did not change for many years to come.

As for the Turkish part of the troubling migration-integration-nexus between the two countries, we first need to emphasize that the German-Turkish *Anwerbeabkommen* of 1961 was a welcome option for Turkish state-controlled “surplus labor export” (Abadan-Unat, 2011:11). In other words, while labor shortage in Germany created the demand for the employment of foreign workers (among others) from Turkey, sending or exporting “unskilled workers” abroad (Abadan-Unat, 2011:12) was a welcome strategy for Turkey in coping with unemployment. In the long run, not only remittances, which were of particular importance for Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s, but also investments by emigrants back in Turkey and the increasing lobbying potential of Turkish citizens residing in the European Union motivated successive governments in Turkey to ask their citizens abroad not to “assimilate” and maintain ties with their home country. Yet, at the same time, Turkish citizens in Germany were also encouraged by Turkish politicians to apply for German citizenship.

Concerning the naturalization of foreign citizens, for several decades the German citizenship policy was based on the “*Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*” of 1913 (Hailbronner, 2012; Davy and Çınar, 2001). The 1913 law was dominated by the principle of *ius sanguinis*, i.e. the principle of descent; for the naturalization of adults it required (among others at least 10 years of residence in Germany, prohibited dual/multiple citizenship). In addition, *Einbürgerung*, that is the granting of German citizenship, required “*Einordnung in deutsche Lebensverhaeltnisse*” (integration into the German way of life) together with the condition that there is also a “public interest” in granting German citizenship to foreigners (Çınar, 1994:9). Compared to other North/Western European countries the German citizenship policy was particularly restrictive and contributed to increasing numbers of “foreigners” born and raised in Germany (Hailbronner, 2012:3).

Starting in the late 1980s/early 1990s the need to reform the German citizenship legislation became a dominant topic on the

political agenda. Two particular issues, namely the introduction of *ius soli* for children born in Germany and the abolishment of the ban on *dual nationality*, occupied for several years the minds of academics, policy-makers, German citizens and immigrant associations. Since 1993, the German citizenship legislation has been amended couple of times in order to address the challenges of permanent immigration and the integration of millions of partly native-born “foreigners” as citizens. The most important step in this respect was taken in 1999/2000 when a limited version of the principle of *ius soli* was introduced.

Since then, children born in Germany to foreign parents have the right to acquire German citizenship if one of the parents has lived for 8 years in Germany prior to the birth of the child and has had a permanent residence permit for 3 years. This new regulation meant at the same time that the child would become a “dual national” at birth. Thus, in order to avoid increasing incidents of dual/multiple nationality, the new legislation introduced at the same time the so-called “optional model”. According to this still disputed solution, children born in Germany as “dual citizens” have to opt between the ages of 18 and 23 for German citizenship or the citizenship that they may have inherited from one of their “foreign” parents. If a dual citizen declares to keep his/her foreign citizenship, such a declaration leads to the loss of German citizenship. Note that if no declaration is made before reaching the age of 23, the consequence will be the automatic loss of German citizenship as well. Thus, debates about the meaningfulness of the “optional model” still continue and there is currently a draft law which attempts to modify this necessity and allow for dual citizenship for those who acquired it at birth.¹

The lack of legal provisions concerning increasing numbers of children born in Germany as “foreigners” and the ban on dual/multiple citizenship that deterred many 1st generation immigrants from naturalization in Germany, occupied for several years the political agenda in Germany. In this context, immigrant groups lobbied both the Turkish and German authorities in order to make amendments in both contexts that would expand their political rights in their host country. One such amendment was the possibility of relinquishing citizenship in Turkey without losing most of their rights: this was

1 See “Entwurf eines Zweiten Gesetzes zur Änderung des Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetzes” Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/1312, 05.05. 2014.

made possible by a proposal drafted by the prominent lawyer Rona Aybay and consisted of granting the citizens who relinquished their citizenship with a “blue card”. These individuals could then get access to German citizenship which did not tolerate dual citizenship.

The presidential elections of 2014 in Turkey were definitely a turning point. For the first time, Turkish citizens living abroad were granted the opportunity to participate in Turkish elections. Following a decision of the Supreme Election Board on May 18, 2014 Turkish citizens living abroad were declared authorized to vote abroad at designated centers.² As already mentioned, the largest immigrant population from Turkey is located in Germany. Observing the voting behavior of this group of Turkish citizens was therefore particularly relevant. Given the heated and lasting debates about a “lack of integration” of the Turkish community in Germany, repeatedly expressed claims about the Turkish immigrant population’s tendency to form a so-called “*Parallelgesellschaft*” in Germany and claims about their lack of interest in German media and politics, one would expect that significant numbers of Turkish citizens would make use of the opportunity to engage in transnational homeland politics. And, in fact, prior to the elections, there were politicians and journalists claiming that the “vote from abroad” would be decisive in the presidential elections of 2014. Yet, immediately after the elections it became clear that the number of Turkish citizens living abroad and who made use of this “first-time-opportunity” remained extremely limited. Does this mean that we need to re-think our academic assumptions about “transnational homeland politics”? Does this mean that “Turks in Germany” are sufficiently integrated so that they do not have interest any longer in spending time and energy to influence politics in Turkey? Or, does this mean that the astonishingly low voter turnout rate has to do with technical obstacles?

VI. Findings from the field study

Table 3 shows the number of electorate and the voter turnout rates for the polling stations in Germany. The voter turnout rate for Germany was 8.15 percent meaning that only around 112,705 voters

2 For Germany seven centers were foreseen: Residents of Hessen, Rheinland Pfalz, Saarland had to go to Frankfurt; residents of Berlin and Brandenburg to the Olympia Stadium in Berlin; residents of Nordrhein Westfalen could vote either in Essen or Düsseldorf; residents in Bavaria had to go to Munich, those from Baden-Württemberg had to go to Karlsruhe.

cast their votes out of 1,383,040 voters. However, when this figure is revised with the votes cast at the borders by those who are registered as voters in Germany, the turnout of Turkish citizens living in Germany increases to a total of 18.94 percent. This section addresses the potential reasons for the low turnout in Germany. First, we elaborate on the expectations before the elections in order to understand the factors that made political parties and observers expect a high turnout. Second, we examine the reasons behind the low turnout and third, we provide further reflections on voting behavior and party affiliation of the electorate in Germany.

Table 3. Election results for Germany according to different districts

	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (%)	Selahattin Demirtaş (%)	Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (%)	Number of Ballot Boxes	Number of Voters	Total Votes Cast	Valid Votes	Voter Turnout Rate (%)
Germany	68.63	7.63	23.74	500	1,383,040	112,705	111,933	8.15
Berlin	54.43	10.96	34.61	51	140,521	11,133	11,,067	7.92
Dusseldorf	72.72	6.87	20.41	92	254,886	23,739	23,517	9.31
Essen	79.44	5.31	15.25	78	214,561	17,692	17,589	8.25
Frankfurt	64.48	9.43	26.10	69	190,933	17,326	17,202	9.07
Hannover	65.76	10.3	23.94	66	182,493	10,223	10,167	5.60
Karlsruhe	70.14	7.82	22.03	81	224,678	18,660	18,544	8.31
Munich	64.52	4.74	30.74	63	174,968	13,932	13,847	7.96

1. Expectations before the elections:

The citizens in Germany as well as elsewhere were expected to participate in the elections with this first time opportunity to vote in a Turkish election without having to travel into the country. The turnout did not meet these expectations; the reasons for the low turnout will be discussed shortly. A general sense of excitement regarding the opportunity to vote was expressed by some of the participants in the study. For example, the representative of Hürriyet Berlin Office, said that to participate in the Turkish elections was a sincere wish on the part of many citizens living abroad, as this would allow them to experience their right as a citizen. Some of these citizens do not have

dual citizenship and therefore could neither vote in Germany nor in Turkey.

The ex-spokesperson for Berlin-Brandenburg Türkiye Toplumunu (TBB) claimed that it was a good feeling to have a say on an issue through one's vote. The fact that the President is elected by the citizens for the first time and to participate in such an election is a historical experience, he added. This sense of being taken seriously or to matter as a citizen living abroad has been expressed by other voters in Germany. M. K. said that the population, which has historically been referred to as only "Almanca," now feel like they are recognized as citizens.

Empowerment through the opportunity to vote, thus, has been expressed by our interview participants. To what extent that was a collective and general sentiment and whether it will manifest as higher participation rates in future elections remain to be observed. However, an overall sense of empowerment through a connection to Turkey which is projected by state authorities as a "strong state" appears to be sincerely embraced by a significant number of participants. Particularly those who expressed support for Erdoğan in the elections report admiration for the economic growth in Turkey. A shop owner in Berlin said that he could not understand how people stay blind to many infrastructure projects accomplished by AKP. Another shop owner narrated how his real estate investments in Turkey increased in value within the last 10 years thanks to Erdoğan. A young cashier in a small shop, also in Berlin, stated that he wanted to go back to Turkey as there is a higher chance of finding jobs there as compared to Germany. He added that thanks to Erdoğan he is now very proud of his Turkish identity. A store owner at Kreutz Strasse, Cologne, who lives half of the year in Turkey, said that he prefers medical treatment in Turkey, as the health system is easier to handle there.

Some participants, although not necessarily supportive of Erdoğan or the current government in Turkey, reported that they find themselves in a position to defend Turkey and its politics as they are often pressed by their German acquaintances on the current state of affairs. B. – B. E., a married couple in Cologne, said that Erdoğan's rally in Cologne forced many Turks either to be in or out of the stadium. They were uncomfortable with either position, or rather, being forced to take a position. They did not support Erdoğan and nor did

they want to go to the meeting, but they were also uncomfortable amidst the heavy criticism by the German media and their German acquaintances regarding Turkey's problems with democracy. The couple's remarks, perhaps, express many others' discomfort in having to address Turkey's political problems just because they are Turkish. They said that they had to respond to questions or criticisms regarding the political situation in Turkey at all times. The questioning ranges from genuine interest in what happens to snide comments—they felt that those who could not express their negative attitudes towards Turks let out such sentiments via their thoughts about Turkish politics.

A related theme connecting to Turkey's politics is the discomfort in having to take a side among the polarized positions within the Turkish political arena. B. and B.'s interview revealed discomfort in having to respond to Germans, but at the same time, reaction to the polarization among Turks – having to be either 'in or out' during the rally in Cologne symbolized the stress in having to take a side among the already established political positions. Other participants also expressed that the polarized political scene in Turkey is replicated among the Turks in Germany. The President of TGD Platform said that many young people are uncomfortable with the polarization and that their platform aims to form an alternative to this situation.

All in all, a range of sentiments regarding the connection to Turkish politics has been expressed by the participants. The elections and the opportunity to cast a vote from the country of residence brought up expectations on the part of all political actors regarding non-resident citizens' votes. The turnout rate surprised many observers, however, the registration system as well as the overall procedure to vote had problems and participants in our study testified to these challenges. These problems are discussed in the next section.

2. The reasons for the low turnout rate

In the case of Turkey, an individual would be registered as an external voter belonging to a particular constituency if they had been living abroad for more than six months and they had a contact with the consulate/embassy in their country of residence. The list of the external electorate was announced prior to the appointment system being set up and individuals who were not registered could apply to be registered. One of the main reasons for not casting a vote was

challenges experienced with the voting appointment system. Not only the system required at least some level of digital skills and access to a computer, it has been reported to be not user friendly. Some participants said that members of the same family were assigned different voting dates, thus, it became costly and inefficient to travel to the voting place. Some others forgot to get a print-out of the date and thus could not vote at their appointed slot. Although those who did not obtain an appointment via the Internet could vote at ballot boxes since the system automatically assigned dates to those who did not get one. Majority of the voters, however, were not aware of their appointment and failed to vote as they would have found out about this automatically assigned date and time only if they logged into the system after the appointment system was closed.

Some participants complained that they did not receive adequate and timely information from their consulates regarding the appointment system; as a result, they missed the deadline. However, officials interviewed at the Consulates report the contrary: The official at the Berlin Consulate said that they followed the official procedure and did what they could to help, but the criticisms regarding the system should be addressed to YSK. The Vice consul at the consulate in Cologne stated that the Consulate informed all those who were registered in their system. They have emailed information about the online appointment system and posted announcements through their website. In addition, the election coordination team, including the staff from the Consulate and Diyanet, provided help on questions regarding the election system and voting procedure at the site of the voting (for instance, the ISS Dome in Dusseldorf).

The Vice Consul acknowledged the problems experienced with the online appointment system. She said that the Consulate did provide adequate information and support before and during the elections, however, low education levels and limited social skills on the part of the electorate also created a barrier against the effective use of the system. She added that long distance to the election site meant that private means of transportation had to be arranged; furthermore, the commute required a day-off from work as voting took place between a Thursday (July 31) and a Sunday (August 3). The costs imposed by the logistics of voting were not affordable for many citizens. This second challenge, that is, the logistical cost of travelling to the election site has been reported as a major problem by

many participants. A CHP İstanbul MP said that some citizens asked for a bus to be arranged to go to the voting site. For many, the travel for 400 – 450 km was impractical and un-affordable.

A third problem often stated was the distrust in the election system. Some participants said that their votes were not counted where they have been cast, had to be transported to Turkey, and this left them with a sense of being detached from the whole procedure. Why could they not observe the opening of the ballot boxes and their counting? Several participants in Cologne, for example, stated that they did not trust the election system, particularly the counting of the votes back in Turkey. They suggested that possibly many others did not vote due to a similar suspicion about the transportation and counting of the votes. Y. I. said that the votes were taken to the ministry of Foreign Affairs, many people had questions (doubts) about who would count the votes. Similarly, some other participants also expressed doubts about the transportation system and questioned whether or not those carrying the votes could be trusted.

A fourth problem stated is the timing of the elections. Similar to Turkey, many Turkish citizens living abroad take their vacations in July and August, which coincided with the appointment and voting period. Some said that they did not have a chance to get an appointment because they were on vacation and others were away during the time of the voting. An interviewee in Cologne said that this timing excluded Turks who take their vacations abroad but not in Turkey and claimed that these people are typically the not conservative, not-religious demographic.

Aside from these logistical problems and issue of trust regarding the appointment and voting system, a larger problem of a “disconnect” with the Turkish political system has been expressed as a reason for not turning out to vote. When asked about the reasons behind the low voter turnout, most of the interviewees argued that Turkish politics is not responsive enough to the concrete problems of the immigrant population in Germany. Interviewees were aware that the problems that they face in Germany regarding their minority status are to be solved within the framework of German politics. However, they also claimed that Turkish approach to politics perpetuates the existing problems rather than contributing to their solution. As expressed in the first section, larger issues regarding polarization in Turkish politics

and not being taken seriously until very recently as a voting citizen block have been expressed with respect to reasons for not voting.

Some of the participants stated that the identity-politics of the governing party, AKP, was in fact successful in mobilizing the masses for political rallies. It was the Turkish government's formal recognition of the existence of a Turkish minority living in Germany in this manner that raised the expectations of this community. However, the lack of any further concrete steps resulted in a general sense of disappointment. Especially those who are active in civil society organizations and in politics complained that over the years the issues and problems that have constantly been raised by them have been largely ignored by Turkish politicians, who responded only with abstract and general solution proposals. There seems to be almost no communication between Turkish politics and the socially and politically organized Turkish immigrants in Germany. According to the interviewees, the Turkish immigrant community in Germany has a number of concrete problems that can be analyzed under three interrelated categories: Education, Integration and Racism. Before moving on to an overview of these problems we should point out that this disconnect between the issues Turkish citizens face in Germany and the lack of responsiveness of Turkish political parties to such difficulties might be addressed by providing representation to external voters in general elections: there could be one or two members of parliament elected by the external voters to represent non-resident citizens in the parliament. This, however, is not the case for Turkey at this point.

The conservative education system of Germany, which aims for social stability, rather than establishing the conditions for an equal distribution of cultural resources has been criticized by local Turkish organizations for years. They argue that the hindrances that the immigrant populations face in education and hence in social mobility are structural, and not cultural. Germany has a three-tiered secondary school system, which assigns students into the appropriate level according to their academic aptitude. Gymnasium is the highest level and the students earn a high school diploma that enables them to continue their education at a university. Realschule is designed for less successful students. After the 10th grade the students can either go to a Berufsschule (technical school), get an apprenticeship or in rare cases transfer to a Gymnasium. Hauptschule is the lowest level. After

the 10th grade the student joins the workforce as an unqualified worker. The problem with this system is mainly that the decision about a student's academic fate is given at a very early age. In such a system, those who are underprivileged in society may end up with a lower level school. This may also be the case for the students with an immigration background.

Turkish immigrant-organizations point to the fact that teachers' unfavorable assessments are often culturally biased, if not all together based on racist prejudices against immigrant families. Very often Turkish students are held up to higher standards compared to their German counterparts. As Ms. C (teacher) observes, particularly male students are subject to discriminatory practices in the education system so that they end up in getting a technical/blue-collar job. This is because immigrant boys are viewed as potential problems and judged relentlessly. Over the years Turkish immigrant organizations, such as TGB, have raised their voices against the discriminatory practices, issued reports about them and gave their support to the reform proposals for the educational system, which are still viewed with great suspicion by the German status quo. In contrast to the highly differentiated approach of the Turkish immigrant organizations to education-system, Turkish political parties take this issue mainly on culturalist terms: Religiously oriented parties underline and criticize the presumably Christian-bias of the German education system, whereas secular parties claim that the lack of enlightened-interest among the immigrant population causes the failure of the Turkish youth in education. Similarly the demands of the Turkish immigrant community for the recognition of Turkish as an official secondary language in schools, is given an anti-assimilationist turn by the Turkish politicians: Turkish politicians argue that Turkish language education is necessary to preserve the Turkish culture, whereas Turkish-immigrant community demands the same in order to realize equal opportunity in education and later on in the job market. In other words, demands of the Turkish community regarding the educational system are part of a more embracing demand for a better social and political integration and of a more general struggle against racism and racial discrimination.

The culturalist and anti-assimilationist rhetoric of Tayyip Erdoğan is severely criticized by German politicians and Turkish organizations that do not support the AKP line of cultural politics. Such a discourse

is, according to their view, harmful for political integration. And yet, the fact that Tayyip Erdoğan's anti-assimilationist rhetoric finds resonance among Turkish immigrant population can at least partially be explained by the failure of the discourse of immigration in Germany. Despite structural obstacles and discriminatory practices, Turkish and Kurdish immigrants do hold positions in society that require a significant volume of cultural capital. Turkish/Kurdish community in Germany does not consist merely of immigrant workers anymore. Third and – by now – fourth generation of immigrants make significant contributions in cultural and artistic fields of production. All parties, including the conservative CDU and the socialist LINKE, have recruited politicians of Turkish/Kurdish descent.

Nevertheless, the failure of integration makes headlines periodically in the German media. Thereby, negative examples of violence, a non-egalitarian conservative worldview shared only partially by the Turkish-immigrant population, and exotic representations of Islam are generalized and presented as an overall failure of integration: "Evidently we do not share the same values", this line of argument concludes. Hence, the rightful demand of political integration implicitly devolves into a demand for cultural integration, which is hardly distinguishable from cultural assimilation. Therefore many of our interview participants objected to the use of the word "integration" and said that they prefer the word "participation" instead of integration: All members of the German Society should have equal rights in helping to shape the social world in which they live in, provided that they fulfill their duties and responsibilities as citizens specified in the constitution. In other words, what they demand is political integration.

This understanding of the demand for (political) integration or participation involves also a struggle against racism and all forms of racial/cultural discrimination. Turkish/Kurdish immigrants are subject to racial discrimination at different levels of society and in different forms. In order to illustrate the pervasiveness of racial discriminatory practices, a member of parliament from the Left Party gave the example of his own experience of being asked to show his ID-Card each time he enters the parliament, even though he is a well known person, while other MPs enter the building without any extra controls. An artist and poet Z., who has grown up in Germany and thinks of herself as culturally German, realized that her citizenship status was

relativized, when she became famous: “Suddenly I realized that I was not simply a German; they called me German with Turkish ethnic roots”, and added with a bitter irony: “Today they are politically more correct; they would call me a German with immigration background.”

However, discriminatory practices are not limited to these subtle, subjective forms: A recent study conducted by the Institute for the Study of Labor proves that a job applicant with a Turkish name has less chance in the job market than a person with a German name. The extreme form of racism is murder. Interviewees were particularly concerned by the National Socialist Underground (NSU) murders. The process revealed state’s complicity in the brutal crime, while initially the murder series was taken to be a simple mafia-conflict. The brutal crime outstripped understandably the scandalous book *Germany does away with itself*, written by Sarrazin, a member of social democratic Party. Sarrazin had argued that the Integration policy should be considered as a failure, not because of integration policies, but because the immigrants were unwilling to integrate due to their cultural background, and religious beliefs. Arguably this is one of the most dangerous forms of racism and was perceived by the Turkish community as such. The book targets the middle classes as potential readers and naturalizes a racist discourse. And yet Turkish politicians do not have much to say on this issue, either. They respond to it with a counter-nationalist discourse, which does not present any solution to the concrete problem of racism.

These larger issues certainly need to be taken into account if Turkish politicians aim to take the citizens in Germany and their needs seriously. Further discussion of these problems and how they can be addressed require further fieldwork and is beyond the scope of this report. The next section provides an analysis of the Presidential Elections and patterns in voting.

3. Further Reflections on Voting Behaviour and Party Affiliation

This section will discuss further issues with respect to voters’ choices during the elections. Regardless of whether they turned out to vote or not, the participants in our study expressed some affinity with the candidates. We first discuss broader demographic factors that shape attitudes, and then move on to a more specific analysis of party choice.

a. Generational differences

The interviews illustrate that first and second generation Turkish immigrants (aged 40 or above) are interested in Turkish politics, which they follow via satellite receivers, Internet and social media on a daily basis. Third and fourth generations identify themselves as German rather than Turkish and have consequently less interest with Turkish politics. In contrast to first and second generations, they do not have immediate material interests in Turkey and they are socialized in German and / or in German-Turkish culture. Although Turkey still presents for them an important reference point at the cultural level, cultural resources do not readily provide enough motivation for an engagement in Turkish politics. Among the few who are interested in Turkish politics, however, there is more sympathy either for the leadership of Erdoğan or Demirtaş, rather than for party politics in general. CHP, being unable to propose a candidate with charismatic qualities, seems to be in a disadvantaged position in reaching the younger generations.

b. Women Voters

Especially during the last few decades, marriage has been one of the few means for Turkish immigrant women to settle in Germany legally. Though there are skilled laborers among them, they mostly work in poorly paid unskilled jobs on the lowest levels of the occupational and social hierarchy due to their low level of German language skills. Most of the immigrant women work in domestic services as caregivers for children and cleaning women³. This is partially due to the fact that the increasing employment rates of German women lead to an increase in the demand for these domestic services.⁴ There are still significant numbers of women moving to Germany by means of arranged marriages. They live in very conservative and highly cloistered communities. The interviews in Aachen included accounts of several religious orders maintaining secluded communities in which women are not able to interact with those outside their family or immediate community. They are not able to learn German or have a chance to get familiar with the social system; they are dependent

3 Uluştaş, Ç. 2013, "Almanya'yı Temizliyorum" 1: Almanya'da Göçmen, Kadın ve Temizlikçi Olmak, <http://calismatoplum.org/sayi37/ulusstas.pdf>, accessed on October 21, 2014

4 Mattes, M. 2009, "Female Labour Migration from the 1950s to the 1970s, http://migrationeducation.de/22_1.html?&rid=129&cHash=29ce7848beb64592d2d07e6813071f2c, accessed on October 21, 2014

on their husbands in every way and they have problems helping their children's education.

Turkish migrant women who vote for AKP are proud of their hard-working engagement before and during the elections. They exhibit an intensive admiration for Erdoğan and argue that AKP has contributed to a significant increase in the living standards in Turkey. Accordingly, their relatives in Turkey benefit from the financial aids of the party, from health-care reform and from the reforms in education. The recognition of headscarf in the public sphere and, related with this, lifting legal educational barriers to devout Muslims are seen as achievements of AKP and viewed positively. Conservative Turkish women voting for AKP are mostly housewives, but even if they work and obtain a degree of economic freedom, patriarchal structures at home remain intact.⁵

Women voting for other parties criticize AKP's ideological discourse and policies targeting women's bodies. They criticize AKP's disinterest in the issue of violence against women. Similar to women supporting AKP, CHP-voters also claim that they have worked hard during the elections. They are critical of their party's deficiency in technical preparations for the elections. Supporters of CHP are generally well-educated women who are now retired and dedicate their time to politics. Ethnic and political identity plays a more significant role among HDP voters, rather than issues that are immediately related to the policies addressing women.

c. Educational differences

While constituting the largest immigrant community in Germany, Turkish immigrants have the lowest rates of graduation from higher education and are represented also with a very low percentage in the upper levels of school education within the German education system (Gymnasium and Gesamtschule) (Von Below, 2007). The varying levels of educational achievement among Turkish immigrants depend on generation and social background. Most Turkish families in Germany come from a working class background, and while they motivate their children for higher education, a prospective increase in

5 Nermin Abadan-Unat in her study "Implications of Migration on Emancipation and Pseudo-Emancipation of Turkish Women (1977)" illustrates that achieving economic independence is not sufficient for Turkish women to be saved from the impact of traditional patriarchy. She argues that the illusion of economic freedom creates a pseudo-emancipation among Turkish immigrant women.

their living standards seems to be the most prominent criterion. Our fieldwork findings indicate that individuals with a higher education tend to vote less for Erdoğan and are more interested in German politics than Turkish politics.

d. Role of civil society associations or religious organizations

The number of transnational roof organizations formed by Turkish citizens – with German or without German passport – has increased and their influence has tremendously grown. The spokesperson of TGD explains the transnational character of their activities with the following words: “Our hardware is Turkish, our software German!”

A number of interviews carried out by Yaşar Aydın (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, S 14, September 2014) have revealed that while the influence of these different associations are limited, they converge on three major issues:

1. The maintenance and strengthening of political, economic and social relations within the Turkish migrant community.
2. Their commitment for the endorsement of integrative values of Germany while still strongly defending the preservation of the cultural identity of Turkish migrants.
3. The strong support of these organizations in regard of Turkey's EU membership.

Some of these organizations were influential in impacting turnout rates as they organized transportation to voting locations and helped individuals to make an appointment through the online system. These organizations are not new. They have a relative long past (Amelina and Faist, 2008). But the scope of their influence increased.

The organization of Turkish political parties in Germany is illegal. All parties therefore organize under the banners of civil society associations or use religious organizations for their propaganda aims. A CHP party member indicated that in Berlin they have been organized under the name CHP Berlin Union. CHP's attempt to organize voters in Germany is relatively new. According to this party member, the organizers are meeting people all around Europe for two years now. Their dialogue partners are usually associations organized on the basis of regional, religious or ethnic communities. CHP supporters concede that they were not very successful in their election campaign.

Organizations like HDB (Halkçı Devrimci Birliđi) and ADD (Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneđi) have given their support to CHP. And yet their influence on voting behaviour is very limited due to ideological inflexibility and organizational deficiencies. In fact, in terms of self-critique, most interviewees primarily mentioned that they need to develop new tactics for organization. According to A.I (Member of HDB), for example, one needs to take the small-community based socialization of the voters into consideration; it is very difficult to reach people in these regional, religious and ethnic communities. The CHP party member accepts that they were unsuccessful in using social media for election propaganda. CHP supporters blame election defeat also at least partially on the surprise-candidacy of Ekmeleddin İhsanođlu. Those who have voted for him, according to the CHP party member, did so only reluctantly. This made it very difficult to mobilize people who are not identified with the party. Alevite associations did not give their support to AKP. And yet they were also reluctant to vote for CHP, because of the candidacy of İhsanođlu according to most of the interviewees. Finally, nationalist-Kemalist and elitist base of the party (organized mostly around ADD) criticize the corruptive means of AKP, and refer to the "ignorance" of the electorate, while typically taking these as the main reasons behind their defeat.

AKP was officially organized around a new association called UETD (Union of European Turkish Democrats) which is financially supported by the business circles close to AKP. And yet the main thrust of support for the AKP came from the long established organizations like Milli Görüş and traditional communities organized around the local mosques. It was not possible to ascertain, whether organizations like TGB (Türskisches Gemeinde zu Berlin), which allegedly sympathizes with the Gülen community, gave their support for any party. And yet they were very careful in using a constructive, non-alienating language towards AKP.

HDP was not only able to mobilize its supporters with Kurdish ethnic-background but was also successful in appealing to people from Turkish and even German left. The Left Party (*Die Linke*) openly supported the candidacy of Demirtaş and at least in Berlin, Demirtaş posters were much more present than all the other candidates. Even in mosques Demirtaş was successfully organized according to the CHP party member we interviewed. Some argue that the Alevite electorate, being disappointed by CHP, also gave their support to Demirtaş.

e. Cultural Identity

Cultural identity plays a significant role in the voting patterns of the electorate in Germany. When people are asked to identify themselves, CHP and MHP voters usually note that they are 'Turks'. Among them usually MHP supporters also emphasize their Muslim identity. While MHP supporters understand their Turkish identity in ethnic terms, CHP supporters tend to refer to a citizenship based national identity. AKP supporters foremost define themselves as Muslim before their Turkish identity. Muslimhood is a more distinctive category for AKP supporters; they also count, however, their Turkish identity as relevant.

The most important divide among the electorate in Germany is between those who define themselves as secular and those who are religious-conservative. Secular people are worried about the transformation of the image of Turkey into an authoritarian-Islamic state. This might have direct consequences with respect to how Turks are viewed in the German public sphere. The very same transformation has a different meaning for AKP supporters. For them Turkey is economically developing, which has an overall positive effect on how Muslims are viewed in Germany.

f. Voters' preferences

The Turkish people living in Germany have also been divided in two (as pro- and anti-AKP) as in Turkey. Most of the interviewed people argue that the impact of the events taking place in Turkey is felt in Germany. This fervent emotion to advocate or criticize AKP has been observed during the interviews. The AKP voters explain Erdoğan's success through the economic growth and infrastructural developments in Turkey since AKP came to power in 2002. They often claim that though there was a major economic crisis in the world and in Europe, Turkey did not suffer from it thanks to AKP policies. They argue that Erdoğan improved the country's living standards significantly via high-speed train, metro lines, Marmaray, double-lane roads, new job opportunities, ameliorated conditions in state hospitals through patient-friendly systems, the unification of the three social security institutions under SGK, etc. They believe that his economic policies led to a decline in inflation rates, and allowed people to buy their homes through a new system with low interest rate and long term loans. They also view him successful in lifting the

ban on wearing headscarves in public offices and in the Parliament, initiating reforms advancing Kurdish cultural rights, and easing the reintegration of Kurdish community into Turkish society (here, they refer to TRT Şeş and Kurdish language teaching private schools).

With respect to the corruption scandal, the pro-AKP voters believe in Erdoğan's innocence and consider him as a devout Muslim. They argue that Erdoğan came to power and became a beloved leader thanks to his 3-Y policies against poverty, corruption and bans (*yoksulluk, yolsuzluk, yasaklar*). Hence, they asserted, he would not commit any illegal act. They blame the external forces that are jealous of Turkey's successful progress and that desire to undermine Erdoğan. They also accuse the AKP critics who misunderstand and misjudge Erdoğan's policies. Most of them restate Erdoğan's elections slogan of being the "voice of the silent people" (*sessizlerin sesi*) and they believe that Erdoğan bravely voices the rights and needs of Turkish citizens living abroad and gets them to be heard by the European and world leaders. These individuals were proud of their Turkish identity.

The interview participants who were critical of AKP, mainly claimed that Erdoğan benefits from the democratic rules and uses autocratic methods to stay in power. They are disturbed by Erdoğan's discriminatory and divisive discourse. They believe that it leads to polarization and fragmentation of society. Erdoğan's aggressive and insulting attitude towards his rivals, his interference in private lives and his discourse of "New Turkey" frighten them. They fear the reversal of democracy towards an authoritarian system of one-man state, where there is no system of checks and balances. In short, they accuse Erdoğan of establishing a "majoritarian dictatorship regime." They also blame the inability of the opposition parties in developing strong arguments and policies.

Pro-CHP and MHP voters seem to comply with the preferences of their party. CHP voters appreciate İhsanoğlu's international acclaim, but think at the same time that his biography does not fit CHP's Republican (nationalist) and Kemalist ideology and that he does not represent the CHP grassroots. Pro-MHP voters share a similar view: Although İhsanoğlu was an adviser of Türkeş (the founding leader of MHP) in the past, he is unknown for the MHP community. Both CHP and MHP voters seem to understand the rationality to cooperate against AKP. And yet, they are not satisfied with the choice of

Ihsanoğlu and do not hide their apparent reluctance towards the candidate who is considered to be a “soft copy of Erdoğan.”

Pro-HDP voters are generally but not exclusively from Kurdish ethnic origin. They are very well organized to bring their supporters to the ballot box. They even mobilized Hodjas/İmams speaking Kurdish and Arabic to convince the people. The leftist and social democrats who left Turkey in the 1980s also vote for HDP in support of the ongoing Peace Process.

Table 4 shows the differences in the votes received by each candidate in Turkey and in Germany. As Table 4 shows, Tayyip Erdoğan received a much higher vote share in Germany than in Turkey. As this section made clear, voters in Germany did not pay attention to accusations of bribery and graft in the party. For the majority of the voters the dominant factor remained the image of Erdoğan as a leader who criticizes openly Western powers and speaks up in favour of a minority group which feels itself looked down and potential target of a growing Islamophobia. Despite the efforts to mobilize Euro-Turks to come to the voting places, turnout has remained minimal. Out of 2.8 Million legally admitted voters barely half a million used their citizenship rights.

Table 4. Number of votes cast for the candidates of Presidential election of 2014 in Germany and in Turkey

	Turkey		Germany	
	%	Number of votes	%	Number of votes
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	51.65	20,670,826	68.63	76,817
Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu	38.57	15,434,167	23.74	26,578
Selahattin Demirtaş	9.78	3,914,359	7.6	8,538

Conclusion

The main questions addressed in this study were whether external voters followed politics in Turkey, whether they voted in the presidential elections of 2014 and what the reasons for voting or not voting were. There were high expectations from external voters – especially the Euro-Turks of Germany – but the turnout was very low when compared to turnout in Turkey. This study claimed that given the literature on external voting this outcome could have

been predicted. Furthermore, the fact that the election coincided with the vacation time of some voters, problems experienced with the appointment system, logistical costs of taking a day off from work and traveling to the election site, and finally the lack of trust in the system led to low turnout. Despite the low turnout, however, many interviewees were interested in the state of affairs in Turkey and maintained ties with their home country. Whether the Turkish politicians are able to respond to their daily problems was questioned by some participants and this could be considered as another cause of abstention from voting. These problems could partially be addressed through providing a better organized election process. Offering the opportunity for representation to external voters in the general elections will also help for higher turn out.

This report reveals several insights into the process of external voting. On the one hand, the extension of the right to vote to external voters has been a progressive development for the state of democracy in Turkey. Furthermore, this first experience provided valuable lessons to be learned for future elections. For example, executing the election system across a wide range of geographies had its own challenges. Given that this was the first ever such experience, this and similar problems will be minimized in the upcoming elections. We presume that the current imbalance in the turn out rates between the homeland (85%) and the external voting polls (19%) will prioritize efforts to increase external turn out rates. In short, this first experience will help smooth out the future external voting processes. On the other hand, the critics of the external voting system will strengthen their arguments based on the conclusions of this study and the discussion thus far. The financial cost of external voting system is considerably high; in addition, the dictates of the local conditions (such as working conditions, climate, means of transportation, etc.) make it highly challenging to coordinate election efforts across a wide range of contexts.

Finally, a strong interest in and ties with the politics of homeland might not be directly correlated with an interest to participate in elections: The problems, expectations and demands of the citizens living abroad are shaped by their own unique conditions as well as the cultural-political environment of the country they live in. To understand such conditions and develop effective policies will require a long-term and comprehensive analysis of the relevant

contexts. The existing political dynamics and election campaigns in Turkey are far from such a sensitivity. Future studies will be critical to identify the significant features of external voters' conditions, their demands and thus possible political actors who might meet them.

Interview List

1. MHP head of Berlin region (06.08.2014)
2. CHP head of Berlin union (07.08.2014)
3. Avrupalı Türk Demokratlar Birliği (UETD) secretary of Berlin region (08.08.2014)
4. President of Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği - Berlin (05.08.2014)
5. President of Türk-Alman İşadamları Derneği - Berlin (07.08.2014)
6. Ex-president of Avrupa Türk Toplumu - Berlin (07.08.2014)
7. Representative from Gurbetin Oyları Berlin and election monitor - Berlin (12.08.2014)
8. Berlin-Brandenburg Türkiye Toplumu (TBB) ex-spokesperson (09.08.2014)
9. Employee of a Turkish bookstore - Berlin (06.08.2014)
10. Psychologist - Social worker - Berlin (06.08.2014)
11. Member of board of a corporation - Berlin (07.08.2014)
12. Hürriyet newspaper Berlin representative (05.08.2014)
13. Aydınlık newspaper Europe representative (05.08.2014)
14. Independent journalist - Berlin (05.08.2014)
15. Doğan News Agency Berlin representative (06.08.2014)
16. Köln Funk Radio producer - Berlin (07.08.2014)
17. Berlin Merhaba Magazine - chief editor (09.08.2014)
18. Director of Communications of a German MP - Berlin (07.08.2014)
19. An MP from Germany with Turkish background - Berlin (08.08.2014)
20. CHP İstanbul MP - Istanbul (26.08.2014)
21. An ex cabinet member of Turkey - Berlin (27.08.2014)
22. CHP representative from Turkey - Berlin (08.08.2014)
23. An engineer - Berlin (29.08.2014)
24. A retired male - arrived in Germany in 1970 - Hannover (09.08.2014)
25. A male worker - arrived 22 years ago (09.08.2014)
26. A retired male - Hannover (09.08.2014)
27. Imam from Hannover (09.08.2014)
28. A representative of Gurbetin Oylari - Hannover (08.08.2014)
29. A representative of Gurbetin Oylari - Hannover (08.08.2014)
30. Female second generation - Hannover (08.08.2014)
31. Male second generation - Hannover (08.08.2014)
32. Male migrant in Hannover - arrived from Australia in 2010 (10.08.2014)
33. Second generation nationalist (ülkücü) male from Hannover (08.08.2014)
34. Undergraduate male student -Hannover (08.08.2014)
35. Male who came to Germany through marriage - Hannover (09.08.2014)
36. Advertising Expert male - Hannover (09.08.2014)
37. Funda: Hannover, 37 yaşında, ikinci kuşak, avukat (CHP)

38. Second generation male - Hannover (09.08.2014)
39. Second generation male - Hannover (09.08.2014)
40. Retired male from Hamburg (11.09.2014)
41. Second generation male from Hamburg (12.08.2014)
42. First generation male from Hamburg (12.08.2014)
43. Second generation male from Hamburg (12.08.2014)
44. Male member of Hamburg Alevi Kültür Derneği (20.08.2014)
45. Second generation male member of Haak-Bir Alevi Derneği - Alevitische Gemeinde Hamburg (Union of Hamburg Alevites) (13.08.2014)
46. Retired psychiatrist - Hamburg (13.08.2014)
47. Second generation female - Hamburg (11.08.2014)
48. President of Kuzey Avrupa Türk İslam Birliği (12.08.2014)
49. Male member of Hamburg Düşün İnsanları Grubu, Cumhuriyet Gönüllüleri Grubu (13.08.2014)
50. M.K. artist, Kurdish descent, German Citizen, new comer (17.08.2014)
51. E.Y. café owner - Berlin - Turkish and German Citizen (17.08.2014)
52. O. T., engineer, Turkish and German Citizen, first generation (19.08.2014)
53. Z. Ç. poet and artist, Turkish Decent, German Citizen, first generation (19.08.2014)
54. M.L., retired teacher, translator and civil society activist, Turkish and German Citizen, first Generation (19.08.2014)
55. S. Ç. and A. D. TGD (Türkische Gemeinde Deutschland) (20.08.2014)
56. M. T. (journalist – Kültür Sanat ve Medya Ajansı), M. Tb (journalist – Doğan Haber Ajansı) and F. A. (Bar owner in Kreuzberg) (20.08.2014)
57. Turkish General Consulate in Berlin, B.K, (21.08.2014)
58. T. S., Milli Görüş Activist, Turkish and German citizen, second Generation, (21.08.2014)
59. A İ, HDB (Halkçı Devrimci Birliği) and Board Member of SPD, local representative, Turkish and German Citizen (21.08.2014)
60. H.T., parliamentary member from Linke Partei (Links Party) (22.08.2014)
61. B.Y., TGB, Türkisches Gemeinde zu Berlin, (22.08.14)
62. Ö. T., Correspondent in die ZEİT, Turkish German Citizen, Third Generation (25.08.14)
63. B. and B. E. Cologne. (18.08.2014)
64. S. Consulate of Cologne (19.08.2014)
65. H. Ü. Psychologist (19.08.2014)
66. L. T. President of Türkisch-Deutsche Studierenden und Akademiker Platform. (19.08.2014)
67. A. Journalist for Ihlas Ajansi (20.08.2014)
68. S.G. Owner of jewelry store at Keup Strasse (20.08.2014)
69. Y. store owner at Keup Str. (20.08.2014)
70. A. Köln Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Alevi Cemevi. (20.08.2014)

71. Y. I. Owner of a bakery/coffee chain (21.08.2014)
72. M. E. (22.08.2014)
73. S. D. Freelance journalist (21.08.2014)
74. U. Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği (DTİB) Köln, (21.08.2014)
75. Hotel Manager Königshof (21.08.2014)
76. Aachen, teacher (22.08.2014)
77. M.E's wife. Instructor at a local gym (22.08.2014)
78. N. Instructor at a local gym. (22.08.2014)

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