

CHAPTER 4

Debating Turkey's accession: National and ideological cleavages in the European Parliament

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Introduction

Assessing the role of EU institutions in the enlargement process towards Eastern Europe, Karen Smith (1999: 169) affirmed that the European Parliament (EP) was more a follower than an initiator in the policy-making process. This is not exactly true for the Turkish case. Even when the Council and the Commission have played a more decisive role than the EP regarding EU-Turkish relations, compared to other enlargement rounds the EP has been particularly active. Gamze Avci (2002: 99) noted that “Turkey appears to be a ‘comfortable’ tool in the EP’s search for a legitimate role in foreign policy, enlargement as well as human rights”. This was the case in 2004.

On December 13, the European Parliament held a very heated debate regarding the Eurlings Report, that is, the report that would recommend --or not-- the opening of negotiations with Turkey. Despite the fact that the report’s conclusion was not binding, the EP attracted the EU’s and Turkey’s attention for several reasons. First, because EU-Turkish relations appeared to be the most important topic, together with the Constitutional Treaty, on the EU agenda in 2004 and triggered heated debates in several EU countries.

Second, because the debate and the voting session took place only a few days before the beginning of the European Council that was to decide on the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey. And, third, because the voting was secret, an unusual practice that was harshly criticised by some parliamentarians who held posters in different languages showing the

orientation of their vote. In the end, the favourable votes (407) largely surpassed the negative (262) and the abstention (29) ones. This ended being a strong signal that the Council could not ignore. Hence, it was one more episode in the increasing role of the EP in the EU's decision-making process.

This chapter attempts to analyse with further detail such an important event, focusing, firstly, on whether the voting within the EP expressed different national and ideological cleavages. Second, this article tries to find out to what extent is there a link between those cleavages and the existence of differentiated interests, identities and ethical considerations.

Because the vote was secret, not only for the full report but for some critical amendments as well,¹ it is much more complicated to trace the voting patterns. However, the analysis of selected public and nominal amendments together with the list of those who asked for the secret vote is an alternate way to figure out who was in favour and who was against. Beyond the analysis of such documents, field research was carried out in January 2005, mainly in Brussels. Aiming to respect the privacy of some of the interviewees, the name of the opinion giver is not specified. However, a detailed list of the interviewed actors is provided at the end of this chapter.

This chapter begins with some preliminary considerations on what has been the role of the EP in EU-Turkish relations until now. Then it assesses if the 2004 discussion on the Eurlings Report has represented a turning point for the role of the EP and what has been its impact on the Council decision of December 17. Likewise, it analyses to what extent the EP may influence the negotiation process due to start on October 2005.

The EP's Role in EU-Turkish Relations

The European Parliament has been seen more as a handicap than a facilitator of Turkey's integration in the EU (Dodd 2002). It has traditionally been very critical of the human rights' situation in Turkey and also has been very outspoken on issues such as the Kurdish problem and the Armenian demands. The latter have not been as present in the Council's or the

¹ For example, the eighth amendment (offering a special partnership, proposed by Toubon, Sudre, Nassauer, Ferber and others) and the seventeenth one (rejecting Turkish accession, proposed by Werner Langen and others).

Commission's decisions. For instance, in 1987 the European Parliament stated in a resolution that

[T]he refusal by the present Turkish Government to acknowledge the genocide against the Armenian people committed by the Young Turk government, its reluctance to apply the principles of international law to its differences of opinion with Greece, the maintenance of Turkish occupation forces in Cyprus and the denial of existence of the Kurdish question, together with the lack of true parliamentary democracy and the failure to respect individual and collective freedoms, in particular freedom of religion, in that country are insurmountable obstacles to consideration of the possibility of Turkey's accession to the Community.²

Some years later, in 1994, the European Parliament suspended for two years the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee as a protest against the way the Turkish government was dealing with the Kurdish issue (Arikan 2002: 27). In December 1995 the European Parliament finally consented on establishing a Customs Union Agreement (CUA) with Turkey. This was not an easy decision because an important number of MEPs, particularly from the left wing, raised their protests due to the human rights violations, the democratic deficit, and the conflict with the Kurds, as well as the role of the military, and the lack of the rule of law.³ However, the pressure exercised by some governments on their MEPs, the support of the Christian-Democrats for this Agreement and Tansu Çiller's speech affirming that this agreement could hamper the electoral victory of Erbakan's Islamists ended up gaining the approval of the EP for the CUA.

The Parliament's approach towards human rights in Turkey has been harshly criticised by some Turkish observers. Gunduz Aktan (1999) argued, for instance, that the EP had focussed exclusively on the Kurdish issue. More moderately, Çiğdem Nas (1998) pointed out that "the EP's observance and advocacy of the furtherance of democracy, the rule of law, human and minority rights in the EU's external relations is a policy choice which is hard to negate. However, the choice of instruments and the language and style used to convey the EP's point of view is not constructive and may lead to resentment in the target countries."

² European Parliament, *Resolution on a political solution to the Armenian question*, A2-33/8, 18 June 1987.

³ For further information see Krauss (2000).

The European Parliament has been the most critical among all European actors regarding Turkey's accession during the last few years. The Morillon, Lamassoure and Oostlander Reports, as well as the recent Eurlings Report, have raised a high level of criticism but have also recognised the extent of the progresses made by the successive Turkish governments, particularly since the reforms introduced in August 2002, and, even more so, under the AKP government since the November 2002 elections.

As stated before, the EP's vote on the Eurlings Report, that is its recommendation to open negotiations without delay but also without changing or reducing EU standards regarding the political criteria, was not binding for the European Council. However, the EP's assent will be necessary at the end of the negotiation process when, together with the Parliaments of all EU Member States, it will have to ratify Turkey's accession treaty. Erkan Erdoğan (2002: 43) said that "given its position on Turkey's human rights record, the Parliament's ratification couldn't be taken for granted".

Moreover, along the process, the EP has other means of influence. It exercises an important role when controlling the EU's budget and the different financial packages of accession, pre-accession and others.⁴ The EP's declarations, reports and other documents may also have an indirect impact on the Council or Commission decisions. This is particularly true as the Joint Parliamentary Committees supervise the rhythm of the accession negotiations or the performance of the association agreement itself and can even call for its suspension.⁵

When the EP has acted in foreign affairs and enlargement issues it has mainly adopted the role of the EU's "democratic conscience" and, more specifically, it has put a particular emphasis on minority rights. This is even more evident in the case of EU-Turkish relations. However, along the fifth term (1999-2004) a new phenomenon arose: the opposition to Turkish membership was not sufficiently founded on democratic or human rights concerns; rather, it had to do with cultural and religious incompatibilities. Thus, once the beginning of negotiations became a feasible scenario, an important minority within the EP, coming mainly from Christian-Democrats

⁴ Regarding Turkey, the EP vetoed the remittance of funds to that country several times in 1987, 1988 or 1996 (Erdoğan 2002, 44). MEDA funds were not delivered either between 1999 and 2001.

⁵ This was the case, for instance, in April 2002, when the European Parliament backed a resolution urging the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

parties and from the far-right groups, unsuccessfully attempted to slow down Turkey's accession. This was the case, for instance, of Markus Feber's amendment to Elmar Brok's 2002 report on enlargement, asking for the elimination of any reference to Turkish accession while proposing the establishment of a special partnership. This amendment was rejected by a substantial majority of 376 votes, against 156.⁶

While the opponents to Turkish membership have not disguised their identity concerns, they have also started to support their argument with a discourse based on the persistence of a democratic deficit in Turkey in order to legitimise their opposition. This explains why some sectors of the EPP and other right-wing parties have stressed human rights and cultural minorities issues when discussing Turkey's EU accession, as the voting patterns of several amendments concerning Armenian and Kurdish claims reveal.

Quite the opposite, the Socialists and the Greens, who traditionally have denounced the violation of human rights in Turkey, have tended to accept that this country has sufficiently fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria. One of the best examples of this attitude is that of the former French Minister for European Affairs and current socialist MEP, Pierre Moscovici (2004: 65), who wrote that in 1995 he voted against the Customs Union since it was contradictory with his democratic conception, while, little by little, he has become an advocate of Turkey's EU membership.

The Eurlings Report: a critical support to starting negotiations

Before analysing who voted what or, more precisely, who might have voted what, it is important to provide some brief information on the Eurlings Report: what is the profile of the *rapporteur*, what was the evolution of the report, which are the main lines of the final report adopted in Strasbourg and what kind of debate took place in the days previous to the voting session.

Camiel Eurlings is a young Dutch MEP of the *Christen Democratisch Appèl*, integrated into the EPP, who was elected for the first time to the EP in 2004. He is said to be a rising star among Dutch Christian Democrats, with possibilities of reintegrating himself to domestic politics in the near future. Eurlings has assumed important responsibilities, particularly taking into

⁶ *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, n° 8344, 21 November 2002, p. 3.

account that 2004 was his first year in the EP. He is the chairman of the EU-Russia delegation and a member of the very disputed Foreign Affairs Committee. He personally asked to be the rapporteur on Turkey's progress. The other political groups accepted the EPP's willingness to be in charge of this report, since it could be a positive element to facilitate its approval. It has to be noted that the previous report on Turkey's progress was attributed to Arie M. Oostlander, himself a member of the same Dutch party as Eurlings, who successfully obtained a similar and large majority for his report.⁷

Eurlings presented a first draft of his report on October 21, 2004. Later on, nearly five hundred amendments were presented and a second version was adopted by the AFET Committee on December 3, by 50 votes against 18. There was a significant evolution from the first to the second version of the report. Several socialist, liberal and green amendments were included as well as a penultimate article which explicitly urged the European Council to open negotiations without delay. The former version was quite ambiguous on this respect. There were two other significant differences between both reports. As for the tone, the second one was much more dulcified; regarding the content, the second version included further references to Turkey's foreseeable contributions to the European construction, particularly from a strategic and long-term perspective. Regardless of this evolution there was a clear constant between both texts: the fact that there have been significant progresses on the Copenhagen political criteria, but that much more remains to be done.

Despite the fact that Borrell himself would have preferred to hold the debate at an earlier date, it was not until December 13 that the report was discussed in the EP's plenary session.⁸ This was a tense and critical moment, since the European Council had to decide only four days later on the eventual start of accession negotiations. That is why both the debate of December 13 and the voting of nearly ninety new amendments and the full report of December 15 were passionate and gave way to polemic statements,

⁷ It is said that, due to the good relationship between Eurlings and Oostlander, the latter may have had some influence in the writing process of the report.

⁸ According to *EUobserver*, Borrell, speaking to journalists during a meeting of EU heads of State and Government, announced his decision to hold a vote and travel to Turkey to deliver the verdict, whatever way it went (*EUobserver*, 4 November 2004). However, due to the Buttiglione crisis, all parliamentary activities suffered unexpected delays.

particularly among some Polish MEPs.⁹ The content and terms of this debate are not, however, the main focus of this analysis. Nevertheless, the climate in which the voting took place may have influenced some decisions.

Who and why

Several works have been based on whether the MEPs' vote corresponds with their political affiliation or nationality.¹⁰ Donatella Viola (2000) studied these voting patterns for foreign policy issues. It is important to know to what extent ideology or nationality were determinant factors in the voting results of the Eurlings Report, even if such an analysis is not an easy task, due to the authorisation of the secret vote. However, the very list of the petitioners for the secret vote will throw some light on that query.

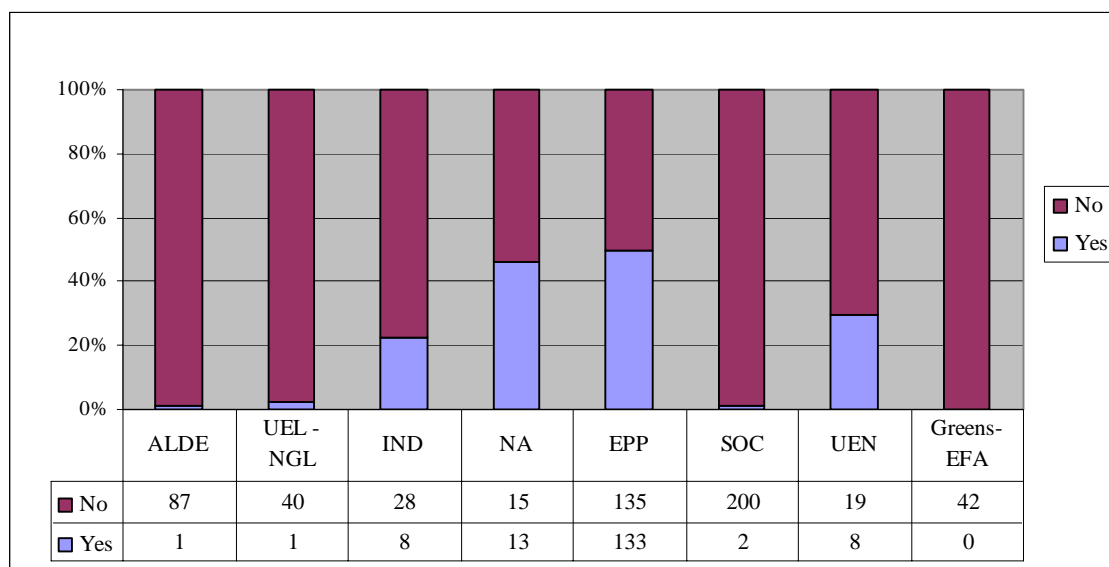
As mentioned before, the President of the European Parliament, Josep Borrell, authorised the secret vote on the Eurlings Report and on two of its amendments. Borrell received a petition signed by 166 MEPs for the full report and by 175 and 173 MEPs for the eighth and seventeenth amendments, respectively. Due to the exceptionality of this demand, Borrell asked for the advice of the EP's juridical service and it found some precedents of authorised secret voting procedures. Taking into consideration those precedents, and in order not to appear as too favourable to Turkey's membership, he authorised the secret vote. This triggered a harsh debate before proceeding to the vote. The President of the EPP, Hans-Gert Pöttering, was severely criticised by the other presidents of the main political groups, in spite of not having signed this demand himself. However, as the next graph shows, most of the signatories belong to the EPP (133 of them), and were supported only by a few deputies from right wing or far right parties.¹¹ This fact confirms the existence of a correlation between political group membership and the secret vote demand.

⁹ As an example, the Polish far-right MEP, J. T. Masiel, stated that: "the question has been phrased incorrectly. It is not a matter of whether Turkey does or does not already meet the EU's requirements. It is a matter of whether we want a Muslim Turkey in a Europe that was built on Christian values."

¹⁰ See, for instance, the Working Papers collection of the European Parliament Research Group at the London School of Economics <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/EPRG/>>.

¹¹ As well as by two other MEPs, one from the former communist PDS, André Brie, and another one from the FPD, Alexander Lambsdorff.

Figure 4.1. Secret vote demand (full report), by political groups¹²:



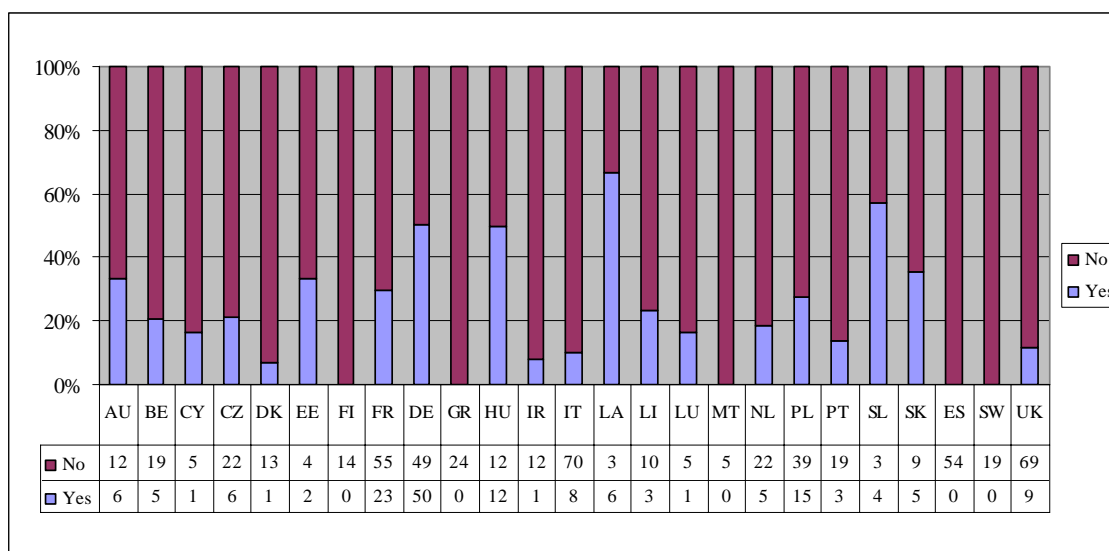
Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

Besides the ideological factor, there is also a correlation between nationality and the demand for the secret vote. As the next graph shows, there were no Spanish, Maltese, Finnish or Swedish MEPs in the list, while, for all other nationalities, their MEPs were more or less divided according to ideological lines. This fact gives a first insight about the profile of the opponents to the Eurlings Report. Taking into account that nearly everyone asking for the secret vote was also going to oppose the report, it can be asserted that German, French, Austrian and most of the Eastern European EPP members may have voted against it. Some Italian, British and Portuguese EPP deputies probably did the same, against their party's line. In fact, several different versions have circulated about who started the campaign for the secret vote. The most plausible one is that some French and German EPP deputies learned that some of their Greek, British and Italian colleagues were suffering pressures from their party directions to have them vote in favour of the report even if they were personally against it. This is why they launched the signature campaign to request the secret vote, hoping that it would help

¹² The acronyms used in this paper for EP Groups are the following **ALDE**: (Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); **UEL-NGL**: (Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left); **IND**: (Independence/Democracy Group); **NA**: (Non-attached); **EPP**: (Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats); **Soc.**: (Socialist Group in the European Parliament); **UEN**: (Union for Europe of the Nations Group); **Greens-EFA**: (Group of the Greens-European Free-Alliance)

persuade other EPP deputies, but also other undecided MEPs from the Socialists, the United Left Group and the Liberals to vote against the report.

Figure 4.2. Secret vote demand (full report), by nationality



Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

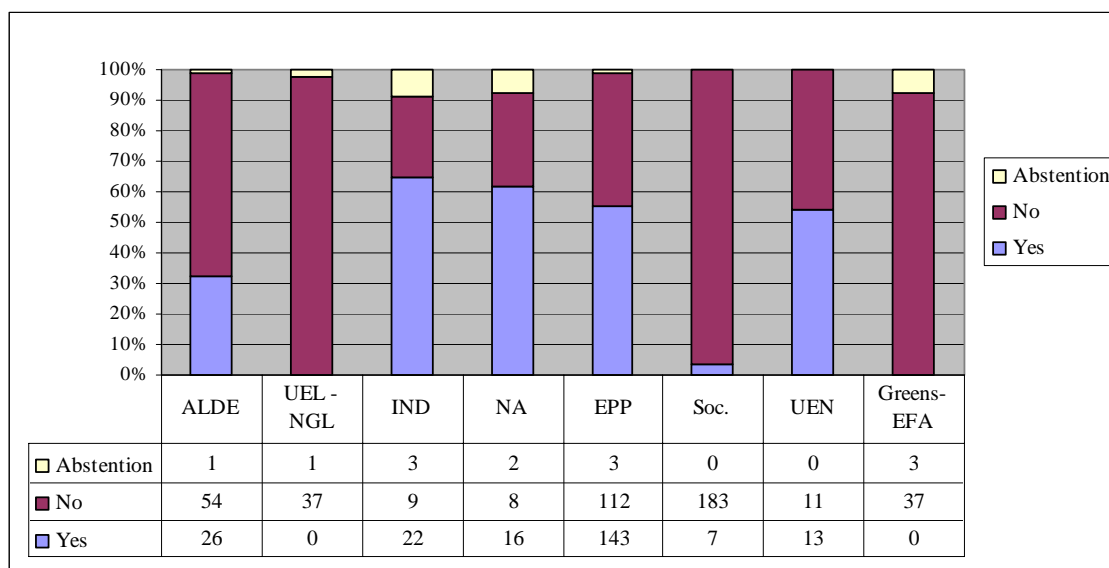
Nevertheless, once the results of the vote were made public, several observers said that the secret vote initiative could have had perverse effects. The controversy that the demand for the secret vote triggered is said to have convinced some of the reluctant MEPs to vote in favour of the report. Furthermore, the image of a significant number of MEPs holding posters announcing the direction of their vote (nearly all in favour) ended up being a powerful political message for both the European Council and Turkish public opinion. The EP, who has been seen as the most reluctant EU institution as far as the deepening of relations with Turkey is concerned, stood then as a firm supporter of starting negotiations with this country.

While the analysis of the secret vote list helps to draw a first profile of the opponents to the Eurlings Report, it does not provide a complete picture. Only 166 MEPs signed this demand, and 262 voted against it in the end. That is why it is necessary to look elsewhere in order to fill this information gap. If nominal amendments are considered (those where the voters' names are public), it can be seen that amendment 65, due to its content, may have been backed by the same MEPs who voted against the full report. This amendment, proposed by Toubon (UMP), Posselt (CSU) and Tannock (British Conservative), reminds that the negotiation process has risks and asks to take in consideration the existence of other ways to integrate Turkey in the

European structure, such as through a “special status”. This amendment, which is close to Giscard d’Estaing, Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy’s proposal of “privileged partnership”, was rejected by 451 votes against 227. Only 25 votes separate these 227 negative votes from the 262 that were cast against the whole report.

As was the case for the secret vote signature campaign, the next graph shows that there is a clear ideological cleavage between those who backed the amendment and those who rejected it. Thus, nearly all the United European Left, Green and Socialist Group MEPs stood against the 65th amendment. On the contrary, a significant minority of the Liberals, as well as more than half of the EPP and most of the right or far right MEPs were in favour of the “special status amendment”. This confirms the importance of the ideological factor in the EU-Turkish relations debate.

Figure 4.3. Amendment 65: “special status”
(Posselt, Toubon, Tannock *et al.*) by political groups

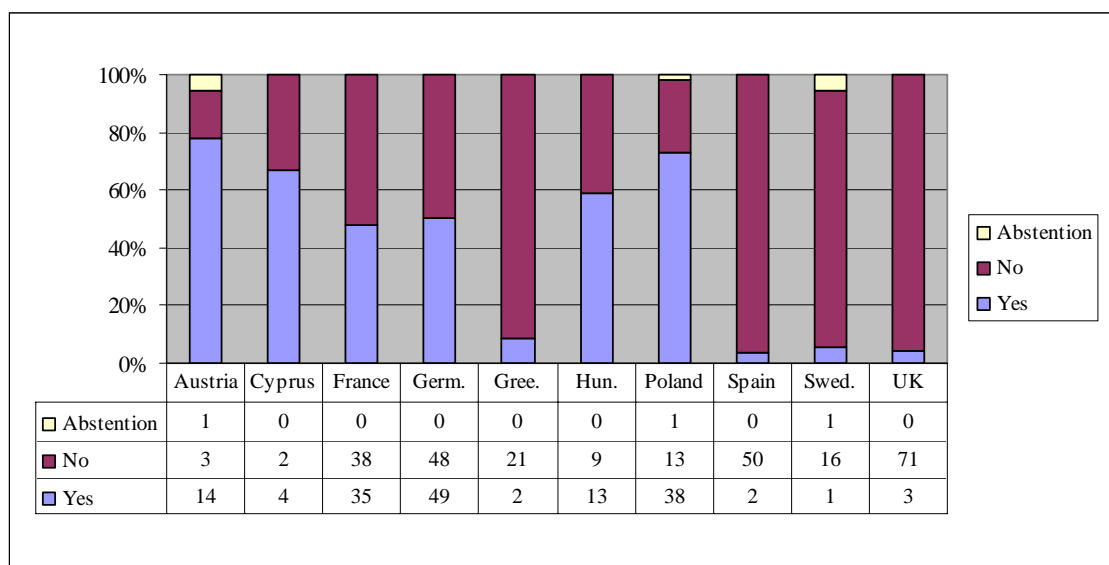


Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

In spite of the importance of the ideological correlation, this is not the only determinant factor for the final vote. As discussed for both the secret vote and the 65th amendment, some political groups, among them the EPP and the ALDE, were divided. This division can be explained mainly by different national voting patterns, as evidenced in the next graph. For instance, nearly all Austrian MEPs supported the amendment, meaning that the Austrian Socialist Party MEPs behaved differently vis-à-vis their other

socialist colleagues and followed a national sensitivity. The same happened with the Greek, Spanish, Swedish and most of the British MEPs that voted against the amendment, regardless of ideological cleavages. On the other hand, the division among Cypriot, Polish, Hungarian, French or German MEPs is consistent with their party membership.

Figure 4.4. Amendment 65: “special status”
(Posselt, Toubon, Tannock *et al.*) by nationality



Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

While this was the general behaviour, it is important to highlight that there were several MEPs who did not follow these trends. Turkey's membership has become one of the most polemic issues at the EU level and even within member states. Testimonies obtained while performing field research reveal that this debate was qualified as emotional and even visceral. For several MEPs, their vote for or against the Eurlings Report was difficult to accommodate within the line established by their political party. This was the case, in France, of Ari Vatanen, a Finn elected in the UMP lists, who is the only one supporting Chirac's position against its own political party's view. In Austria, Hanes Swoboda was the only socialist voting against the 65th amendment.¹³ In Poland the Liberal Party, *Unia Wolnosci*, was divided

¹³ Swoboda has been in charge of the Turkish dossier for a long time.

regarding this issue: while Geremek and Kulakowsky voted against it, Onyszkiewicz and Staniszevska opted for the “special status” formula.¹⁴

It would be inexact and unverifiable to affirm that all of the 227 MEPs that backed the 65th amendment also voted against the whole report. However, taking into account the message of the amendment, it would be feasible for an overwhelming number of them. Who are the other 25? Some of those that signed the secret vote demand do not appear in the list of those that voted for the 65th amendment. This is the case, mainly, of several British, Italian and Greek conservative MEPs. Some leftist MEPs who did not vote for the 65th amendment may have also rejected the Eurlings Report, although their motivations may have been different to those of their EPP colleagues. This was the case, for instance, of some Greek Communists who opposed the very idea of the European Union and, consequently, its enlargement.¹⁵

Hence, crossing the results of the secret vote and those of the 65th amendment, and complementing such information with the reading of the debate on the Eurlings Report and also with some information obtained during field research, the methodological problem posed by the secret vote has been overcome and it is possible to identify who may have voted what regarding Turkish membership. In the next section, the same procedure is followed for the Kurdish and the Armenian issues.

The Kurdish and the Armenian issues

The EP has been particularly sensitive to human rights, democratization, cultural rights and minority issues when dealing with EU-Turkish relations. The centre-left and left wing groups have traditionally been the most sensitive and outspoken regarding these issues. However, the 2004 debate was not ordinary and, as stated before, the opponents of Turkish membership did not hesitate to use these aspects to legitimize their position against Turkish membership. This is why this chapter pays particular attention to the Kurdish

¹⁴ It must be recalled that Geremek participated in the “Independent Commission for Turkey” under Ahtisaari’s direction.

¹⁵ The MEP Pafilis stated during the discussion on the Eurlings Report that “The Communist Party of Greece opposes the European Union and its enlargement and, in this sense, we do not agree with the accession of Turkey, not for ethnic, chauvinist or cultural reasons, but on the same political grounds on which we also disagreed with Greece’s accession to and its remaining in the European Union.”

and the Armenian issues. Several amendments were proposed regarding both cases. Two of them have been selected to analyse if ideological and national cleavages played a role.

Regarding the Kurdish issue, the EP has maintained a very firm stance towards their situation in South Eastern Anatolia and towards Kurdish cultural rights. The episode of the suspension of the Joint Parliamentary Committee was an emblematic sign of protest in 1994, but several resolutions and symbolic acts such as the concession of the Sakharov price to Leyla Zana in 1995 have abounded in the EP's record since then. This has not prevented the EP from recognising the noticeable advances achieved in recent years, of which the most important one are the August 2002 reforms, by which education and broadcasts in the Kurdish dialects were authorised, even if some deficits subsist in their implementation.¹⁶ As Çigdam Nas (1998) has pointed out, analyzing EP resolutions since 1991 it is easy to see that the EP has not agreed on a systematic terminology: "in the resolutions adopted on 14 March 1991, 18 April 1991, and 12 June 1992, the EP refers to the rights of the 'Kurdish people' in Iraq, Iran and Turkey. In the resolutions adopted afterwards, the following terms are used interchangeably: Kurdish minority, Kurds in Turkey, Kurdish parliamentarians, and Turkish parliamentarians of Kurdish origin." Regardless of these taxonomic concerns that, however, have deep political consequences, it must be said that the Eurlings Report maintains and even reinforces the EP's demands on the Kurdish issue. Some of its points appeared already in its first draft, while others were incorporated through amendments drafted in the Foreign Affairs Committee or in the plenary. Furthermore, most of the issues raised in this report already appeared in the last Oostlander Report. This is the case, for instance, of the EP's worries regarding the eventual disappearance of the pro-Kurdish political party (DEHAP).

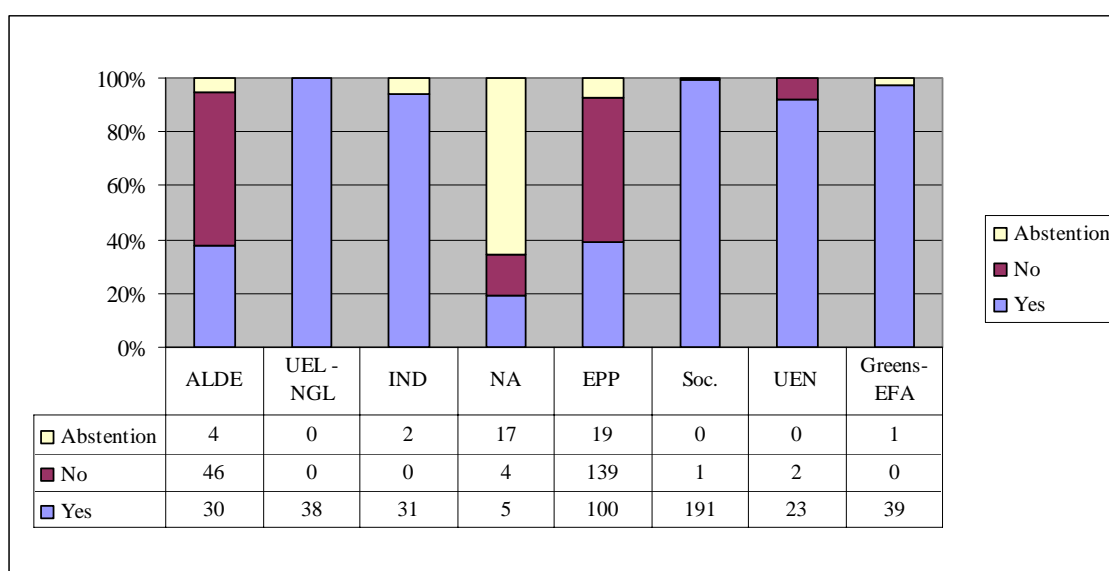
Not all political parties have traditionally been equally concerned by the Kurdish issue. Both the Greens and the Communists have been the most outspoken in this regard as well as some socialists. If the results of the 70th amendment, presented by the Greens-ALE group, are analysed, it is obvious that this dynamic remains. This amendment urged to consider that the Kurdish people represent an important component of Turkish society and that, consequently, their rights have to be respected. It was approved thanks

¹⁶ In 2004, the visit and speech of Leyla Zana, the 14 October 2004, in front of the EP confirmed the EP's attachment to the Kurdish claims.

to 457 favourable votes. The following graph shows that the traditional proximity of the left regarding the Kurdish issue remains. Curiously, only the former President of the European Parliament and German socialist MEP, Klaus Hänsch, voted against this amendment.

On the contrary, most of the right and far right MEPs also voted for the amendment or abstained. This was not due to a special sympathy for the Kurdish claims but to some sort of “Turkophobia,” which makes them vote in favour of anything and everything that criticises Turkey. However, those that opposed to the amendment were members of the EPP (139) or the ALDE (46) groups, confirming that, compared with the leftist parties, conservatives and liberals are much less sensitive to Kurdish claims. There is, thus, an ideological cleavage.

Figure 4.5. Amendment 70 “Kurdish people”
(Lagendijk, Özdemir, Joan i Mari) by political groups



Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

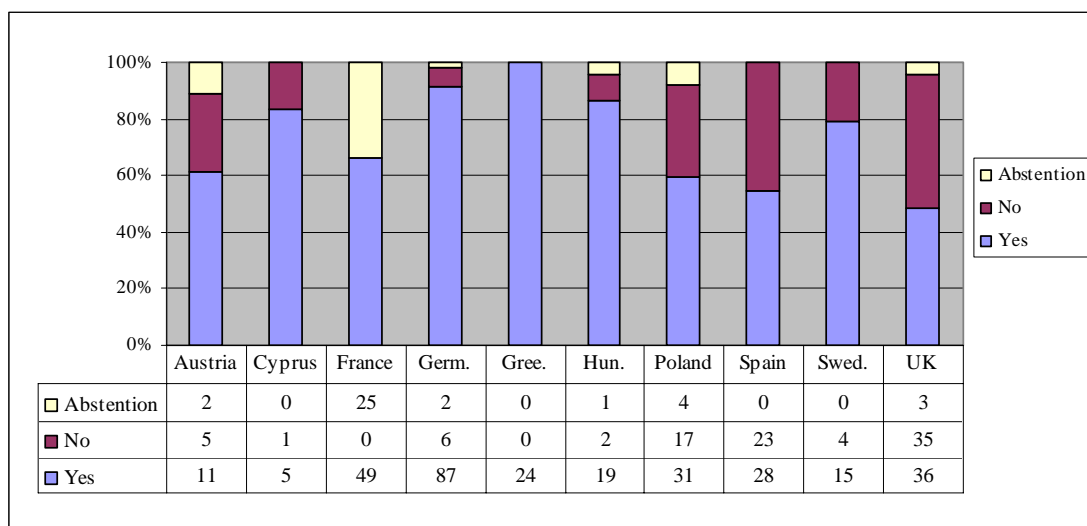
The division among some groups (mainly EPP and ALDE) indicates, though, that ideology is not the only determining factor for being sympathetic towards Kurdish claims. National approaches have traditionally been a determining factor as well. Greece and Sweden have been seen as two of the countries that have a stronger sympathy for the Kurdish issue.¹⁷ As seen in the next graph, nearly all the MEPs of these two countries have maintained their

¹⁷ The assassinated Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anna Lindh, was particularly outspoken in this respect.

attachment to the Kurds' situation and backed the 70th amendment. Among the new EU member states, it is quite interesting to compare the Polish and the Hungarian MEPs' position. While the Hungarians unanimously backed the amendment, the Poles were divided, following the afore-mentioned ideological cleavage. This was due to a consolidated understanding of minority issues on the part of the Hungarians, due to the existence of large Magyar minorities in its neighbouring countries. Not in vain, the EP's inter-group for traditional national minorities is chaired by a Hungarian socialist. Domestic politics dynamics also polluted the sense in which several parties voted regarding the Kurdish issue. For instance, Spanish deputies of the *Partido Popular* voted almost in bloc against this amendment, reflecting their own concerns regarding peripheral nationalisms in Spain. It is also fruitful to compare the different voting patterns of the CDU-CSU and the French UMP regarding this amendment. While the Germans voted in favour, the French opted for the abstention, reflecting a traditional French lack of enthusiasm towards minority issues. To sum up, regarding the Kurdish issue, both the ideological and national factors, as well as personal considerations in some cases, are determinant.

Figure 4.6. Amendment 70 “Kurdish people”

(Lagendijk, Özdemir, Joan i Mari) by nationality



Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

Even if Turkey's policy towards the Kurdish issue has substantially evolved during the last years, fewer progresses have been made in the Turkish approach towards the Armenian Diaspora claims. The Eurlings Report recognised “that the re-opening to pilgrims of the ruined Armenian churches

of Ani, near Kars in Eastern Anatolia, and the remarkable work carried out by the Turkish historian Halil Berktaş on the genocide and the re-establishment of state relations with the Republic of Armenia represent vital steps forward.”¹⁸ However important criticisms remain concerning the closure of the Turkish-Armenian border and the unwillingness of the Turkish government to accept the genocide claims. In fact, the Eurlings Report included three points regarding this issue, in clear continuity with the EP’s stance since its 1987 resolution. The three points are:

39. Calls on Turkey to promote the process of reconciliation with the Armenian people by acknowledging the genocide perpetrated against the Armenians as expressed in the European Parliament's earlier resolutions with regard to Turkey's candidate status (from 18 June 1987 to 1 April 2004)

40. Believes that the Governments of Turkey and Armenia have to continue their process of reconciliation, possibly with the assistance of a bilateral committee of independent experts, in order to overcome explicitly the tragic experience of the past, and requests the Turkish Government to re-open the borders with Armenia as soon as possible;

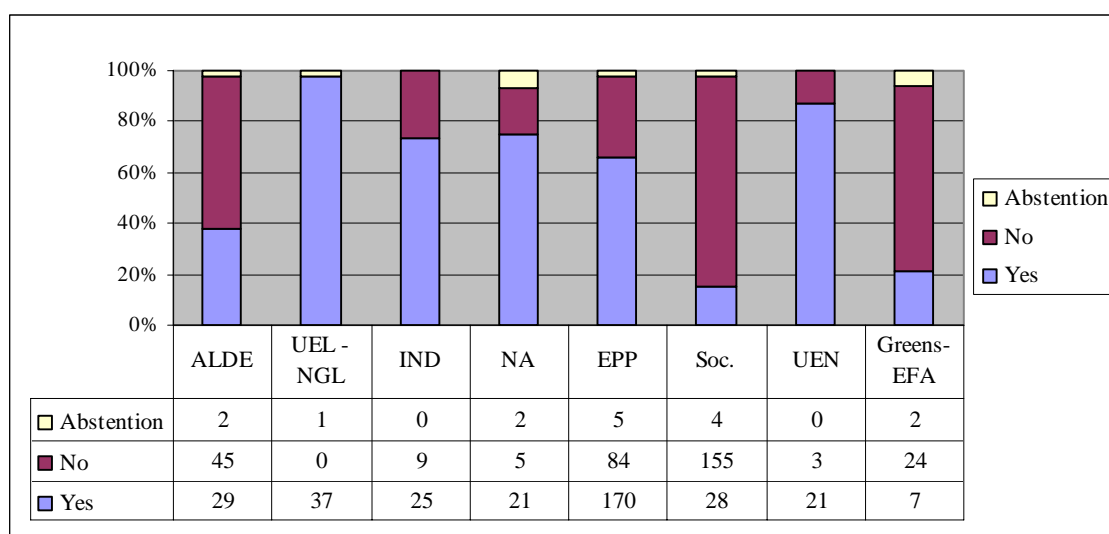
41. Calls on the Commission and the Council to demand that the Turkish authorities formally acknowledge the historic reality of the genocide perpetrated against the Armenians in 1915 and open the border between Turkey and Armenia at an early date, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the European Parliament between 1987 and 2004;

Like with the Kurdish issue, the purpose of the following analysis is to underline the existence of national and ideological correlations with the support to the Armenian genocide claims. Several amendments were introduced: two of them were nominal (the 18th and the 83rd). The first one obtained a broader support than the second one. Nevertheless, this chapter analyses the 83rd because it uses harder terms, urging the Commission and the Council to demand the recognition of the genocide. As seen in the following graph, only the United European Left Group unanimously supported this

¹⁸ Point GG of the text adopted by the EP on December 15, 2004.

amendment. As far as the rest of the groups are concerned, they were divided even if the support for it was stronger among the conservative and right wing parties. It could be argued that the increasing support for the Armenian Diaspora by the rightist parties represents an important tendency change. During the Cold War, these claims were seen as a communist manoeuvre (Armenia being a Socialist Republic), in order to destabilise a NATO ally. However, as soon as the Turkish membership became feasible, some parliamentarians from conservative and Christian-Democrat parties became interested in the issue. Some felt a sincere empathy towards the Armenian tragedy. For others, it was just another episode of Christians being killed by Muslims in the Middle East. Last, for an important segment of the MEPs it became an instrumental issue to hamper Turkey's EU membership. All these reasons have put the United Left Group and a majority of the EPP in the same boat. The ideological reasons behind their position are, however, very different.

Figure 4.7. Amendment 83: Armenian Genocide Recognition (Toubon), by political groups

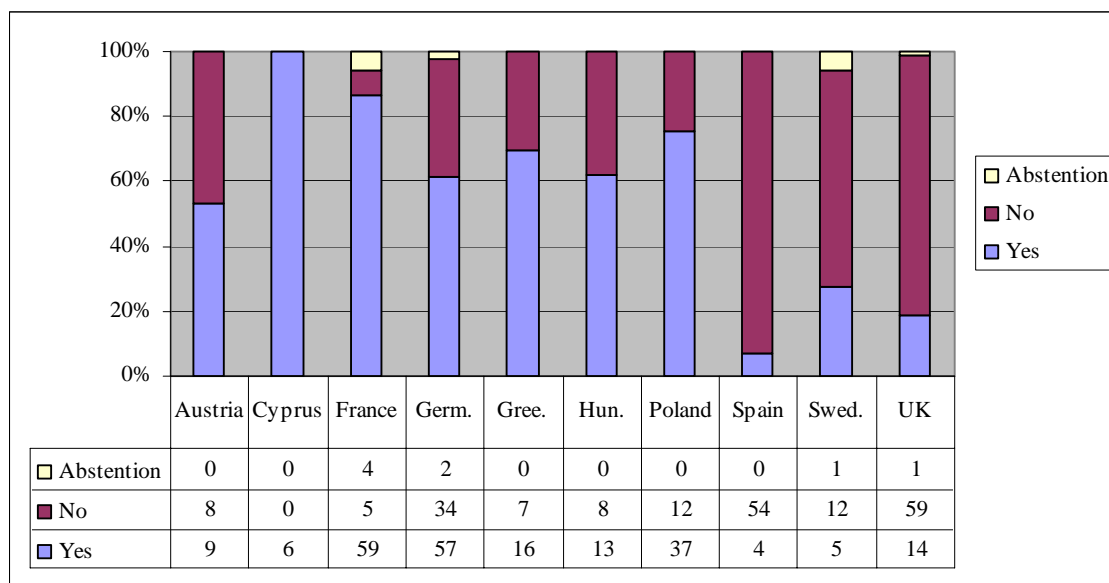


Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

As previously stated, several political groups are divided regarding the Armenian claims. These divisions are based on national cleavages. As seen in the next graph, Cypriot and French MEPs stood as the most supportive of the 83rd amendment. For the French it is a national issue, as was evidenced in 2001 with the French National Assembly's adoption of a law recognising the genocide. Furthermore, several French political parties, among them the

Socialists, have acquired the compromise with their electorate that it will be a *sine qua non* condition for Turkey's accession. Quite dissimilar is the situation in Spain, where this amendment was only backed by four MEPs.¹⁹ The scarce presence of the Armenian diaspora in this country, together with a national political consensus in favour of Turkey's EU membership, may be important factors for explaining this differentiated behaviour.

Figure 4.8. Amendment 83: Armenian Genocide Recognition (Toubon), by nationality



Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

Once more, in this case some personal stances should be pointed out. In fact, the Armenian lobby is important not only in Brussels, but also in several EU member states.²⁰ For instance, it is interesting to note that fourteen British MEPs supported the 83rd amendment, among them a significant minority of the Conservative Party. Probably an important part of these MEPs correspond with those British parliamentarians that the German and French EPP deputies were trying to attract with the secret vote. There are also remarkable dissensions in the other camp. Perhaps the most noticeable is that of the former French Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, who voted against the amendment in contrast with the overwhelming majority of his party. It is even more significant as far as the recognition of the genocide is a

¹⁹ Specifically, Ignasi Guardans (CiU), Josu Ortuondo (PNV-EAJ), Willy Meyer (IU), and Bertnat Joan i Marí (ERC).

²⁰ The *Fédération Euro-Arménienne pour la Justice et la Démocratie* is the organisation in charge of lobbying in Brussels.

compromise acquired by the French Socialist Party and because Rocard was elected for the *Rhône-Alpes-Provence* electoral district where a huge Armenian diaspora lives. In fact, Rocard has become one of the most outspoken defenders of Turkish membership and was a member of the aforementioned Independent Commission for Turkey. He was the socialist shadow rapporteur of the Eurlings Report as well.

In conclusion, as was the case with the full Eurlings Report, the analysis of the Kurdish and Armenian issues, through a detailed study of the amendments, show the existence of both ideological and national cleavages. The strength of the personal element acquires, though, a special significance because several MEPs, when voting on these issues, feel to be voting on “conscience issues”.

Interests, identity or moral considerations

Helen Sjursen (2002: 494) has proposed to apply three of Habermas's categories to analyse the arguments used to justify the enlargement of the EU to one country or another. These arguments can be pragmatic (gains and costs), ethical-political (values represented by a specific community), or moral (sense of justice, of what is appropriate). In other words, the things that matter are interests, identities or moral considerations. The following is an attempt to explain to what extent the different cleavages, both ideological and national, are related to diverse interests, dissimilar identities or different moral approaches.

As for the interests, it may be said that the EP has put, in 2004, much more emphasis on Europe's long-term interests than in former debates. September 11 and the war on Iraq have forced the re-evaluation of the potential contribution of Turkish membership in the EU. The argument that Turkey's membership will serve as a bridge between Europe and the Islamic world has seduced several EU leaders and also an important number of MEPs. One of the most outspoken among them was Michel Rocard, who in his intervention in the debate asserted that this point, beyond the symbolic dimension, has a major strategic importance. Those against Turkey's membership have also used the strategic interests argument and some wonder if it is indeed in the interest of the EU to have common frontiers with Iraq. Economic and financial interests have also been taken into account. The ones

opposing Turkish membership argued that it would need unaffordable financial assistance and the ones in favour praised the dynamism of the Turkish economy. Both the nationality and ideology of the MEPs naturally shape their perceptions on how Turkey's membership challenges European and national interests. Simultaneously, domestic partisan interests have also conditioned the MEPs' votes. In several countries, mainly in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands, Turkey's membership has become a major issue in domestic politics. This explains why some conservative and populist parties from these countries are opposing so harshly to starting accession negotiations with Ankara. This also explains why Austrian socialists did not hesitate to join this camp, since they know how unpopular it is to support Turkey's candidature in their country.²¹

Identity considerations differ from one country to another. The French are particularly concerned by the Armenian issue; the Hungarians, more broadly, express their interest on minority problems. To some extent it could be said that for the French and the Hungarians these issues have become a defining part of their own national identity. At the same time, identity issues impact on the ideological cleavage. In fact, an important segment of the EPP, particularly those belonging to Christian-Democratic parties, sustain, in public or more often in private, that Turkey does not belong to the European cultural sphere, that Turks do not share the same values and the same political culture. This was, in fact, an argument used by Hans Gert Poettering during the plenary debate of 13 December, arguing that Turkey's accession "might prove fatal and Europeans might lose their identity, that it might be detrimental to the sense of being 'us' on which solidarity in the European Union is founded". The tone of this sort of comments was, of course, much more aggressive when coming from MEPs from far right parties. Those opposed to Turkey's EU membership, however, have not been the only ones using the identity argument. There is another kind of identity argument used by the proponents of its entry into the EU, which highlights the virtues of cultural diversity and considers that Islamic culture is part of the European past, present and future. In fact, these arguments have been intensively used

²¹ Interestingly, only the far right leader, Jorg Haider, has publicly supported Turkey's EU membership. The Greens seem to be evolving from their former critical attitude towards a more favourable position regarding this issue. However, their MEPs do not follow the evolution seen in Vienna.

by some green and liberal MEPs, particularly after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Finally, ethical and moral considerations have also been behind the discourse of those that backed the Eurlings Report. It has been argued that the EU cannot have double standards and that promises have to be fulfilled. In fact, this is an argument that was very much repeated by the very rapporteur, Camiel Eurlings. One could speculate about to what extent is this related to Dutch political culture, which puts considerable emphasis on ethical considerations. Nevertheless, the opponents to Turkey's membership have also put these considerations on the table. Several MEPs have argued that the EU is making a decision despite the fact that the majority of its public opinion is against Turkey's accession. In this line, French and Austrian conservatives, as well as the Flemish far right, have argued that this decision cannot be made without previously holding a referendum. A more sophisticated moral argument used by some opponents is that these negotiations will most certainly fail and that, therefore, it would be unfair to create misleading expectations among the Turkish people, risking subsequent frustration.

Going back to Helen Sjursen's classification, the three types of argument --pragmatic, ethical-political and moral-- need to be taken into account when analysing the EP's decision on the Eurlings Report. It is only by considering all these arguments simultaneously that there can be a sound understanding of the EP's position and it is possible to trace its evolution in this field. On the one hand, pragmatic arguments have been more present in the 2004 debate than in previous ones, and mainly promoters of Turkey's membership have used them. On the other, identity concerns, which are also becoming more widespread, are the main argument behind those against Turkey's accession. Finally, moral considerations, which in previous debates had more centrality, are still part of the discussion; however, they are not the reason behind the stance of the MEPs anymore, but an argument used and instrumentalised to defend either position.

Concluding remarks

The debate and later vote on the Eurlings Report are good examples of how difficult it is to identify the exact position of EU actors regarding Turkey's membership. As far as the EP is concerned, the research results presented

here indicate that nationality, ideology, and occasionally personal stances, are determinant factors to explain the MEPs' position regarding the accession of Turkey. Both nationality and ideology have an influence on the perception of interests, identity and moral considerations.

However, in these concluding remarks it is important to answer two questions that go beyond the limits of this chapter. The first one is whether the debate and decision made by the EP regarding the Eurlings Report had an impact on the decision of the European Council. The second corresponds to whether the main lines of this report will be incorporated into the negotiations, due to start this fall.

Regarding the first question, during her speech on the Eurlings Report, the Swedish MEP, Cecilia Malmström, stated that "this is an extremely important report that comes at a time when the leaders of the Member States have still not put the finishing touches to the conclusions from the weekend summit. It is not easy to interpret what will happen if the President-in-Office of the Council is listened to. That is why it is important for ourselves in the European Parliament to send out a strong and clear signal". The signal was even stronger thanks to the secret vote and the amazing image of the MEPs holding posters with their vote in different languages, most of them with the word *evet*, 'yes' in Turkish. This image caught the attention of the media all over Europe and gave a great visibility to the EP's advice recommending the start of negotiations without delay. It also reinforced the position of those EU member states that are more favourable to Turkey's membership. Likewise, it took away a powerful argument from the most reluctant countries, which have repeatedly shielded themselves behind the presumption that most EU citizens are against Turkey's accession. The EP is considered the EU institution that best reflects the views of the EU's citizens, and this time it spoke loud and clear.

One could also wonder what would have happened if the EP had voted against the report or if this report have not contained an explicit recommendation to start negotiations. In that case it would have been much easier for the reluctant governments to toughen their position by asking to include, at least, the possibility of establishing a 'special partnership.'

As for if and how will this report influence the negotiation process, it must be said that it will largely depend on what position the Commission assumes. During the field research carried out in Brussels, several MEPs explained that the Commission is considering incorporating the report to the

negotiation process. This would have two major consequences. First, it would imply the recognition of the increasing role of the EP in the EU's external affairs, which goes beyond the EP's formal powers. Second, it would complicate the negotiations since the report is very critical of human and minority rights, not to mention the explicit demand to admit to the Armenian genocide. In the end an intermediate solution may be found and even if not all the report recommendations are incorporated, some may be included in the Commission's agenda.

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