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Introduction

This report represents the intercultural sensitivity of Turkish youth concerning Balkan countries and the EU.

Aim of the research

The research aims to understand the perceptions of young people living in Türkiye concerning the Balkans and the EU. This report consists of five sub-sections: History Curriculum Overview, Workshop I: Imagine Europe; Workshop II: Rewriting the History of First World War; Questionnaire 'Me and Europe' and Group interviews with students, teachers and youth.

The research questions are:

1. What is the intercultural cultural sensitivity level of young people in Türkiye?
2. Does the intercultural sensitivity level differ according to age and gender?

Methodology

A mixed research method was used in the research. Mixed studies are studies in which both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used together. In this study, two group interviews (focus group interviews), one with 14-18-year-olds and one with 19-30-year-olds, were used to collect qualitative data; the Delphi technique was used to collect teachers' views on history intercultural sensitivity levels. On the other hand, the document analysis method was used to examine the history books. After the data collected by the methods mentioned in this study were combined and the data obtained were analysed, the research was finalised.

Sample of the research

The research questionnaires were sent to 119 young people via google forms, and 115 completed the questionnaire. Twenty-three young people participated in workshops, and four teachers responded to the questions.

Turkish History Curriculum Overview

The Turkish government mandates that schools adhere to a uniform curriculum created and distributed by the state, leaving teachers with no choice but using the textbooks provided. All textbooks strictly follow the national curriculum in Türkiye, and teachers are provided with detailed guidelines on how to teach the subjects. Çayır (2015) argues that both government-



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produced and private publishing house textbooks in Türkiye share the exact portrayal of the national narrative.

From as early as primary school, history textbooks in Türkiye highlight that the history of the Turkish people extends beyond the boundaries of the Republic of Türkiye and can be traced back to Central Asia. The textbooks maintain the 'Turkish History Thesis' from the 1930s, which argues that Turkish history is the story of a continuous and uninterrupted Turkish-Muslim nation that has existed since the arrival of the Turks in Anatolia in the eleventh century. Furthermore, that thesis posits that the birthplace of Turkish nationalism was in Central Asia, where an environmental change led to the migration of Turks towards the West, as Keyder (2005) stated.

The textbooks in Türkiye aim to achieve two objectives: establishing a strict ethnic component of citizenship and presenting the Republic's territory as the original homeland of the Turks. According to Keyman and Kancı (2011), the term 'Turks' in textbooks refers to individuals who can trace their origins back to Central Asia. In addition, the history books highlight the adoption of Islam by the Turks as a crucial aspect of Turkishness, and the textbooks depict Turkish national identity as a fusion of ethnic and religious elements. In this understanding, the term 'Turks' represents an ethnoreligious identity encompassing the descendants of tribes who migrated from Central Asia, settled in Anatolia, and embraced Islam.

Based on his examinations of history textbooks (Millas, 1991) and interviews with high school students (Millas, 1995), Millas has reached the following conclusions about history education in Türkiye. First, students appear unaware of the world's art, religion, and intellectual movements. History textbooks show only about 5% interest in world and European history outside Turkish and Islamic history. With an ethnocentric approach, emphasis is placed on 'Turkish' history, causing students to become alienated from world history and unable to understand Ottoman and Turkish history within the context of world history. Students do not know to which centuries Alexander, Rome, Byzantine, and Seljuk Empires belong. The same topics in high school history textbooks are disjointed and confusing, without a sense of time or continuity. Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Ancient Greece are narrated as a geography belonging to states that lived in the same period. Since history is not presented within a framework of meaningful relationships and continuity, memorisation becomes the only method for retaining information for students.

According to Gürleyen (1998), the history taught to high-school students in Türkiye is a specific version of history created in the 1980s and influenced by the Kemalist and Turkish-Islamic Synthesis ideologies. Consequently, the textbooks contain elements of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis discourse, especially evident in the 'Turkish Republic History of Renovation and Atatürkism' textbooks developed after the 1980 military coup d'état to promote Kemalism to students. Even the names of the textbooks have been changed in the curriculum. For instance, history and geography courses were taught under 'National History' and 'National Geography'.

Gürleyen (1998) proposes that the increasing influence of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis on history textbooks has various interpretations, but the most crucial aspect is the 1980 Military



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Regime's ideological position. She argues that the regime viewed leftist political movements as a menace to Turkish society and used Islam to counterbalance their influence. This argument was aligned with the beliefs of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis supporters, and the regime accepted their views as long as they upheld the principles of secularism and Atatürkism of the Republic.

However, Turkish-Islamic Synthesis supporters in Türkiye attempted to reconcile their ideas with Kemalism, as is familiar with other political discourses in the country. In examining the textbooks used for the subject 'Turkish Republic History of Renovation and Atatürkism' from 1980 to 1990, it becomes clear that the seemingly contradictory ideologies of Kemalism and Turkish-Islamic Synthesis converged. Despite the dominance of Kemalism, the role of Islam in official discourse increased due to the influence of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. These textbooks emphasise the themes of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, such as national pride, the army, and the idea of the threat. The chapters on establishing the republican regime highlight the interdependent relationship between a good citizen and Kemalist ideology.

These textbooks depict the Republic's early years as highly significant to contemporary Turkish politics. They reflect a specific political perspective by highlighting the actions and objectives of the Kemalist government, which the military perceives as its guardian. The textbooks depict this era as a time of advancement and modernisation, and the achievements of the Republican government are presented as fundamental principles that must be safeguarded for the nation's survival. Students are taught to become Turkish nationalists, devoted to a history of a robust national identity, a brave military, and a strong state tradition while adhering to Atatürk's principles and secularism. However, the type of secularism that these textbooks promote does not exclude Islam. According to this view, the individual is equivalent to the people, and the people are identical to the state. Thus, in the end, the individual's will must be in harmony with the state. Therefore, the ideal citizen values nationalist, religious, secular, and statist ideals.

The textbooks utilised in Türkiye promote a specific idea of citizenship based on Turkish ethnicity and the Islamic religion. As a result, individuals who do not belong to either group are excluded from the collective identity. This nationalist viewpoint, which is exclusive and narrow, remains prevalent in the current textbooks, with no or little acknowledgement of minority groups such as Jews, Armenians, Greeks, or Assyrians who are Turkish citizens. Non-Muslim names may be referenced in some textbooks, but only as an element of folklore from the past.

According to Çayır (2015), the current textbooks used in Türkiye have not undergone significant changes in depicting the national self and ethnic minorities. The textbooks still assume that all individuals in Türkiye are of Turkish ethnicity and practice Islam, thereby perpetuating the ethno-religious concept of national identity. This exclusionary perspective dismisses or ignores anyone who does not fit this category. Furthermore, the textbooks fail to acknowledge identity-based claims to recognition and instead reinforce the cultural capital that benefits the dominant groups. As a result, this perpetuates inequality and reinforces the marginalisation of non-dominant groups.



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Recent textbooks in Türkiye have shifted their portrayal of the Ottoman Empire, praising its supposed fair treatment of minorities based on the principle of tolerance, a stark contrast to the image of the Empire in earlier Republican-era textbooks as corrupt. However, these textbooks fail to contextualise the multicultural policies of the Ottoman Empire and instead present the idea of ‘tolerance’ as a defining quality of Turks that shapes their history. Moreover, despite this rhetoric of tolerance, the textbooks still do not fully integrate the cultures, lifestyles, and records of ethnic and religious minorities, perpetuating the dominant position of Turkish Sunni Muslims while marginalising minority groups.

As Türkiye faced increasing demands from minority groups who were not Turkish or Muslim for equal citizenship, the need for national education to meet their demands became urgent. According to some scholars (Gür and Çelik 2013), the Turkish government took steps towards democratising the education system by recognising minorities, such as allowing non-Turkish languages to be taught as electives and including Alevism in Religious Culture and Morals textbooks (Adar 2013; Kaya 2013). Furthermore, in 2005, Türkiye reformed its curriculum to align with EU norms, with new textbooks aiming to adopt a student-centred approach at all grade levels. These actions were seen as indications of progress towards acknowledging the diversity of the Republican nation (Kaya 2013). It was an opportunity to move away from the tradition of creating a homogenous nation through education, but unfortunately, it was not fully realised.

According to Tunçay (2015), the scope of history textbooks should be expanded in three ways: geographically, the history taught should not be limited to the history of Turks or Türkiye but should include comparative global history. Regarding the time dimension, the topics covered should not be limited to the First World War, the Turkish War of Independence, and the early Republican period. Still, they should be brought up to the present day. Finally, a holistic history approach should be adopted conceptually, including culture, economy, and society, rather than a narrow political history based on memorising figures and names and emphasising wars and conquered or lost territories.

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Workshop I: Imagine Europe

Twenty-three people (high school students and young people) attended the Imagine the Europe workshop at the Izmir Katip Celebi University meeting hall on April 25-26, 2023. For the workshop, students and young people were divided into groups of 4-5 people. Twenty-five cards comprising 15 symbols representing Europe, five representing partner countries, and five representing Türkiye were distributed to each group. First, they were asked to create a story by placing the cards they had in their hands. Afterwards, they were asked to explain why they made such a card arrangement. The ‘concept map’ created by four different groups is shown below.

The first group stated they did not put any cards in the centre for their narratives. Instead, they grouped the cards they found related to each other. As seen below, they placed all the cards symbolising Türkiye to the far right. They also added a card showing the Cyrillic alphabet next to the cards related to Türkiye. As a reason, they argued that Türkiye had been a Balkan country since the Ottoman period. While clustering the EU founders, the EU Parliament, Erasmus, and Tolstoy in the bottom left corner, they also placed Mozart and Picasso together with the European cards. They put Hitler, Lenin, and the Berlin Wall under the European artists to represent the wars in Europe and placed the cards of saints to their left, representing the Christian religion. As seen in the picture below, they placed the Olympic torch in the centre of the cards representing Europe, reasoning that it represents the unity of countries. They also put other cards, such as the Colosseum and the Eiffel Tower, which they found representative of Europe, to the far right of their created table.



The second group divided the cards into three clusters. As seen below, they placed the cards symbolising Türkiye in the top left corner. They set the cards representing Europe to the right of the Maiden's Tower card in Istanbul. They created a separate group for the European Parliament, the founders of the EU, and placed the Colosseum and the Monument of Peace cards underneath it. They put the Olympic torch and Tolstoy's War and Peace in the centre of Europe. They placed Picasso, Mozart, Erasmus, Copernicus, Cyrillic Alphabet, and Saint cards around these centre cards. The third group of cards was placed on the left side. They stated that these cards represented the wars in Europe. Therefore, they grouped the cards of Napoleon, Hitler, Lenin, and the Berlin Wall.



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The third group did not make a distinction for symbols specific to Türkiye. They brought together all the places, locations, and monuments they found historically significant. As seen in the picture below, they placed the Eiffel Tower next to Anıtkabir, the Colosseum next to the Mevlana Museum, and Romania's Peace Monument next to the Adıyaman Statues. They created a separate group for Saints, the Cyrillic alphabet, and Vikings. They did not place any group of cards in the centre or at the top. They kept together the Napoleon, Lenin, Hitler, and Berlin Wall cards, which they thought symbolised war in Europe. They placed Picasso, Tolstoy, Mozart, Descartes, and Erasmus together, expressing European art, literature, and science. They placed the Olympic torch and the European Parliament building as separate cards, which they found to symbolise the unity of nations.



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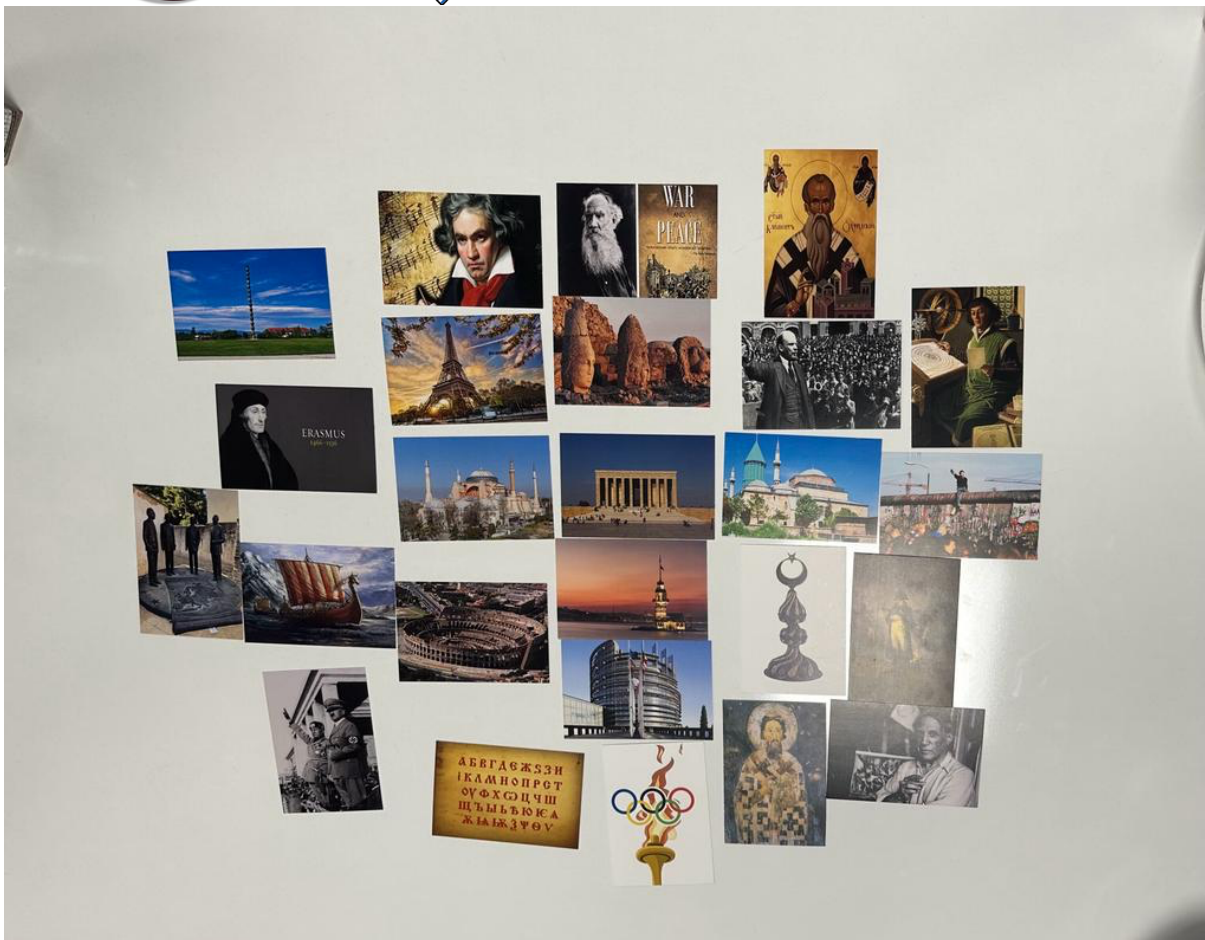
The fourth group placed Anıtkabir, located in the capital city and has historical importance for the Republic of Türkiye, where Atatürk's mausoleum is in the centre. They also placed other symbols of Türkiye around Anıtkabir. Finally, they put the places and monuments they found important near the centre and the historically significant figures such as Mozart, Tolstoy, Copernicus, Erasmus, and the founders of the EU on the edges of their picture. Unlike the other groups, this group did not sharply separate national, Balkan, and European symbol cards from each other. Instead, as seen in the image below, all cards were placed relatedly.



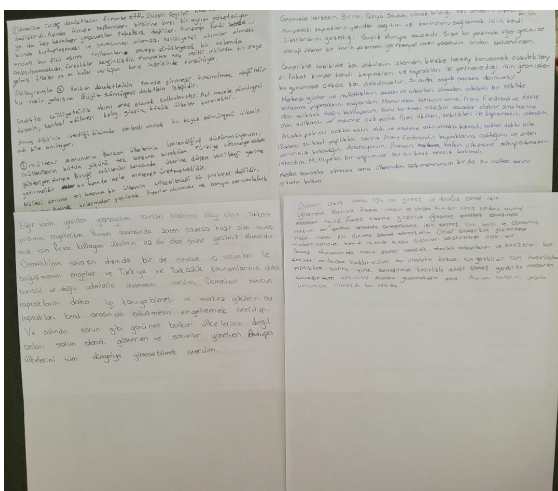
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Workshop II: Rewriting the History of the First World War



This workshop was realised, on April 25-26, 2023, with both high school students and young people. In total, 21 essays were written. In addition, they were asked to rewrite a text about World War I and explain which events they saw historically as turning points. A selection of



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the essays written by the students, along with a photograph, is presented above. Upon general evaluation of the pieces the students wrote, it can be concluded that the following points were mentioned.

The prevention of assassination attempt, which triggered the start of World War I, could have prevented the war and allowed the Ottoman Empire to protect its existing territories better if it had not entered the conflict. Therefore, the idea of the Ottoman Empire remaining neutral and avoiding involvement in World War I to prevent the loss of its territories and people, and to promote global peace, was a prevalent viewpoint expressed in the essays.

One of the essays expressed the belief that Russia could have initiated the war without the assassination. As a result, a war between Russia and Europe could have broken out, thus making it possible for the Ottoman Empire to avoid dismembered. Another essay supported this perspective, contending that the primary consequence of the First World War was the dissolution of Balkan countries. Finally, in yet another essay, it was argued that the Christian religion and belief were responsible for the wars in the world, as Christianity was accused of pursuing an expansionist policy.

Three essays stated that Romania, Greece, and Bulgaria should not have entered World War I. History could have taken a different course if these countries had not entered the war. It was emphasised that Balkan countries should act together. It is believed that there was no problem among Balkan countries and that Europeans were the ones who created these problems.

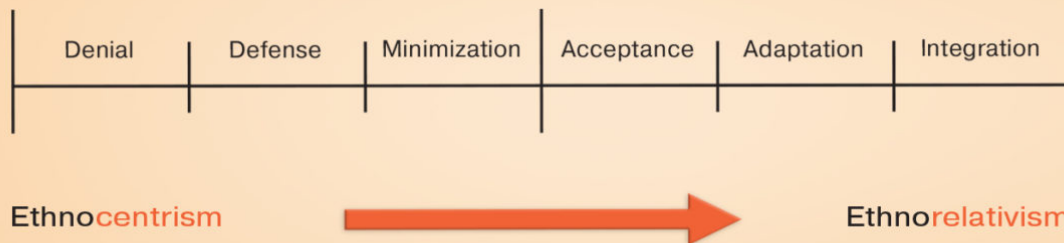
Some essays also believe that the main problem is not in Europe but that America financed the war. It is claimed that differences between the Balkans and Europe do not prevent coexistence but that colonial states threaten peace by using nationalist movements as a tool. In some essays, the establishment of the Arab League is evaluated as a threat, and it is emphasised that it must be prevented for world peace. The theme of history repeating itself is seen as a dominant theme in most essays. It is claimed that powerful imperial states will continue to exploit their resources, and therefore there will always be war in the Balkans.

Questionnaire ‘Me and Europe’

This research used Milton Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity scale, which describes the developmental stages along which people can progress toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of cross-cultural differences. Initially developed by Milton Bennett in 1986 and updated multiple times, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity is one of the more influential models in intercultural communication. Sometimes called the “Bennett Scale,” the model describes how people experience, interpret and interact across cultural differences. It proposes a developmental continuum along which people can progress toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural variance and a more excellent social facility when negotiating cross-cultural dissimilarity.



Experience of Difference



Presented as a developmental continuum that progresses from ethnocentric (denial, defensiveness, and minimisation) to ethno-relative worldviews (acceptance, adaptation, and integration), the model has been widely used as an educational tool to help people progress toward a deeper understanding of cross-cultural difference.

DENIAL

The questionnaire's second and third questions align with the denial stage in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, characterised by an inability or unwillingness to recognise or acknowledge cultural differences. Someone who scores highly on this question may be in the denial stage, indicating that they are not yet aware of or willing to recognise the influence of culture on communication and behaviour.

DEFENSE

The questionnaire's fourth, fifth and sixth questions align with the stage of polarisation in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, characterised by defensiveness and protection of one's culture. Someone who scores highly on this question may be at the polarisation stage, indicating that they are aware of and value their cultural identity but may also be resistant to or dismissive of other cultures.

MINIMISATION

The questionnaire's seventh and eighth questions align with the minimisation stage in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, characterised by a tendency to downplay or minimise the importance of cultural differences. Someone who scores highly on this question may be at the minimisation stage, indicating that they are aware of cultural differences but do not see them as significant or relevant in communication and interactions.



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ACCEPTANCE

The questionnaire's ninth and tenth questions align with the stage of acceptance in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, characterised by an understanding and acceptance of cultural differences. Someone who scores highly on this question may be at the acceptance stage, indicating that they are aware of and willing to respect cultural differences in communication and behaviour.

ADAPTATION

The questionnaire's eleventh and twelfth questions align with the Developmental Model of the Intercultural Sensitivity adaptation stage, characterised by a willingness and ability to effectively adapt and adjust communication and behaviour to interact with people from other cultures. Someone who scores highly on this question may be at the adaptation stage, indicating that they are aware of and willing to adapt to cultural differences in communication and behaviour to facilitate effective intercultural interactions.

INTEGRATION

The questions from the thirteenth to eighteenth align with the Developmental Model of the Intercultural Sensitivity integration stage, characterised by a willingness and ability to integrate and incorporate elements from other cultures into one's own to build a more inclusive and diverse community or society. Someone who scores highly on this question may be at the integration stage, indicating that they are aware of and value the benefits of cultural exchange and integration in building a more inclusive and diverse society.

Findings

Table 1. Distribution of the participants by gender

Gender	Frequency	Per cent
Male	54	47,0
Female	61	53,0
Total	115	100,0

The survey questionnaires were answered by 117 young people, 54 of whom were men and 61 were women. Two of the participants did not prefer to specify their gender.



Distribution of the participants by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
14-18	39	33,3
19-30	78	66,7
Total	117	100,0

The youth included in the study were divided into two groups according to their age. The first group consisted of youth aged 14-18 studying in high schools. The second group includes youth between the ages of 19-30. While 39 participants are in the 14-18 age group, 78 are in the 19-30 age group.

Does the Intercultural sensitivity level differ according to gender?

Sub-dimensions	Gender:	N	Mean	Sig
Total	Male	54	3,2928	
	Female	58	3,2726	
Denial	Male	54	3,0370	
	Female	61	2,7951	
Defence	Male	54	3,1605	
	Female	61	3,0929	
Minimisation	Male	54	2,8056	
	Female	61	2,8279	
Acceptance	Male	54	4,1296	Yes
	Female	61	4,4508	
Adaptation	Male	54	3,2130	
	Female	59	3,2203	
Integration	Male	54	3,3667	
	Female	59	3,3017	

When the averages of the survey results by gender are examined, it is seen that there is no statistical difference between males and females in the total score of the scale and denial, defence, minimisation, adaptation, and integration sub-dimensions. However, when the Acceptance sub-dimension averages are examined, it is seen that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females. Males' mean scores in the acceptance sub-dimension ($X=4.12$) are lower than females' ($X=4.45$). It means that females are more aware of and willing to respect cultural differences in communication and behaviour.



Several factors could contribute to females being more aware of and willing to respect cultural differences in communication and behaviour in Türkiye. One possibility is that females may have a greater tendency towards empathy and social awareness, allowing them to understand better and appreciate different cultural perspectives. Additionally, women may be socialised to place greater importance on relationships and community, which could lead to a greater appreciation for diverse cultures and communication styles. Another factor could be women’s historical and cultural role as caretakers and nurturers. This may have led to a greater emphasis on developing intercultural communication skills to foster positive relationships and promote social harmony. However, it’s important to note that these are generalisations, and there are certainly individual differences in how people of all genders approach intercultural communication and behaviour.

Does the Intercultural sensitivity level differ according to age?

Age		N	Mean	sig
Total	14-18	38	3,2862	
	19-30	76	3,2755	
Denial	14-18	39	2,7821	
	19-30	78	2,9551	
Defence	14-18	39	3,4530	yes
	19-30	78	2,9829	
Minimisation	14-18	39	2,7179	
	19-30	78	2,8526	
Acceptance	14-18	39	4,3077	
	19-30	78	4,2821	
Adaptation	14-18	39	3,2436	
	19-30	76	3,1908	
Integration	14-18	38	3,2526	
	19-30	77	3,3662	

Considering the results of the significance test made according to the age of the participants, it is seen that there is no statistically significant difference in the sub-dimensions except for the Defence sub-dimension. However, when the averages of the defence sub-dimension are examined, it is seen that there is a considerable difference between the averages of youth in the 14-18 age group (X=3.45) and the youth in the 19-30 (X=2.98) age group. The youth at 14-18 may be at the polarisation stage, indicating that they are aware of and value their cultural identity. However, they may also be resistant to or dismissive of other cultures. This observation may be attributed to the fact that young adults are often high school students who are exposed to official history and ideologies taught within the educational system.



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What can contribute to good relations between the Balkan countries in the future?

Responses of Turkish Participants

Balkan Cooperation	N	%
Economic cooperation and exchange	75	22,90%
Cultural cooperation	63	19,30%
Intercultural education in schools	59	18,00%
Increasing awareness of mutual respect and feeling of closeness and togetherness	46	14,10%
Regional association based on common needs and interests	41	12,50%
Non-interference of great powers	18	5,50%
Visiting and getting to know better other Balkan countries	18	5,50%
Demonstrating sincerity, empathy, and friendship with other Balkan nations	7	2,10%
Total	327	100,00%

As can be seen from the questionnaire results, economic cooperation and exchange is the most popular response, with 22.90% of the respondents selecting it, followed by cultural cooperation at 19.30% and intercultural education in schools at 18.00%. The options of increasing awareness of mutual respect and feeling of closeness and togetherness, and regional association based on common needs and interests, also received significant support from the respondents at 14.10% and 12.50%, respectively. The least popular options were demonstrating sincerity, empathy, and friendship with other Balkan nations at only 2.10% and the non-interference of great powers, with only 5.50% of the respondents selecting them. The total number of respondents was 327. According to Turkish youth, the data suggest that economic and cultural cooperation and intercultural education in schools are essential factors in promoting Balkan cooperation.

Distinguishing characteristics that best describe a European according to Turkish participants

EU Characteristics	N	%
Freedom	85	15,90%
Human rights	84	15,70%
High living standards	80	15,00%
Democracy	70	13,10%
Environmental protection and sustainable development	65	12,20%
Equality	46	8,60%
Security	40	7,50%



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Racism	24	4,50%
Support for vulnerable groups and assistance for disadvantaged individuals	16	3,00%
Cooperation	10	1,90%
Conflict	9	1,70%
Dictatorship	4	0,70%
Low living standards	1	0,20%
Total	534	100,00%

As can be seen from the results of the questionnaire, the most frequently mentioned characteristic that Turkish youth associate with the EU is 'freedom,' with 15.9% of respondents selecting this option, followed closely by 'human rights' at 15.7% and 'high living standards' at 15%. 'Democracy' was selected by 13.1% of respondents, while 'Environmental protection and sustainable development' was chosen by 12.2%. 'Equality' was the sixth most frequently mentioned characteristic at 8.6%. 'Security' and 'racism' were selected by 7.5% and 4.5% of respondents. 'Support for vulnerable groups and assistance for disadvantaged individuals' was chosen by 3% of respondents. Other characteristics such as 'cooperation,' 'conflict,' 'dictatorship,' and 'low living standards' were selected by less than 2% of respondents. Overall, the data suggest that Turkish youth associate the EU with values related to personal freedoms, human rights, and a high standard of living.

Distinguishing characteristics below that best describe a Turkish, according to Turkish participants.

National Characteristics	N	%
Low living standards	87	17,40%
Conflict	65	13,00%
Support for vulnerable groups and assistance for disadvantaged individuals	55	11,00%
Cooperation	54	10,80%
Dictatorship	48	9,60%
Racism	41	8,20%
Freedom	39	7,80%
Democracy	29	5,80%
Human rights	25	5,00%
Security	22	4,40%
Equality	15	3,00%
Environmental protection and sustainable development	14	2,80%
High living standards	7	1,40%
Total	501	100,00%



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As can be seen from the questionnaire results, the most commonly identified national characteristic that best describes a Turkish, as determined by the respondents, is low living standards, with 17.4% of respondents selecting this option. Conflict and support for vulnerable groups and disadvantaged individuals were also high, with 13% and 11%, respectively. Interestingly, cooperation was identified by 10.8% of respondents, suggesting a desire for collaboration and unity within the nation. Dictatorship and racism were also identified by many respondents, highlighting the issues of authoritarianism and discrimination in the country. It's worth noting that freedom and democracy, often seen as fundamental values in Western societies, were only selected by a relatively small percentage of respondents, indicating that these may not be the primary concerns for Turkish youth in this context.

Group interviews with students, teachers and youth

Two focus group interviews with 23 people (Turkish students and youth) were realised, on April 25-26, 2023, to compare the quantitative data from the questionnaire 'Me and Europe' with the qualitative data. The following semi-structured interview questions explore different aspects of European identity, values, and the Balkan region. The first two questions inquire about the meaning of 'being European' and its potential as a unifying factor. The third question asks about the EU's adherence to its core values. The fourth question seeks to understand the respondent's view on European borders and whether they want a single European country. The fifth question concerns the EU's potential expansion to the Balkan region. The following two questions ask for five characteristics that best describe a European and specific national identity from the Balkans. The eighth and ninth questions explore potential threats to Europe and individual countries. Finally, the last question aims to identify what can contribute to the good relations of Balkan countries in the future.

Most interviewees defined 'being European' as having a broad perspective on the world, being economically prosperous, and having stress-free access to better living conditions. They could not distinguish between being a European Union citizen and being European and defined EU citizenship more based on having specific standards. European values were defined not so much by Europe's cultural and intellectual heritage but rather by its high standard of living and freedoms. While Europeanisation was viewed positively as a means of attaining Europe's high living standards, the European lifestyle was criticised as imitative. Their definition of Europe based on high living standards and freedoms aligns with the quantitative findings in the survey results.

The tendency was to define the European Union as an interest-based union and the unity among Balkan countries as a cultural and historical union: a type of alliance based on mutual goodwill. It was believed that Europe only respects its values, such as human rights, within its territory. Particularly among Turkish interviewees, anti-refugee rhetoric was observed throughout the entire interview. While formations like the European Union and the Balkan Union were spoken of positively, the drawbacks of a possible formation like the Arab Union were emphasised.



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The proposal for removing borders within Europe was not received positively, as it was emphasised that each country's unique differences must be preserved. Among the factors threatening Europe, terrorism and the interests of other imperial countries were listed, while among the factors threatening Turkey, more emphasis was placed on internal problems. High living standards, human rights, and freedoms were listed as the defining characteristics of Europeans. Turks were defined as having economic issues, low living standards, conflicts and struggles. In this sense, qualitative data from the group interview is consistent with quantitative data from the questionnaire.

We also conducted interviews with four teachers specialising in the fields of history and literature. The primary focus of the inquiry was to assess whether the students of these teachers demonstrated an interest in current events and, if so, to identify the specific topics that piqued their curiosity. Based on the participants' responses, it was observed that students could remain abreast of current events via the pervasive influence of social media and the internet. The teachers recognised the significance of developing opinions on pertinent subjects encompassing politics, economics, and cultural affairs (including sports and the arts) within the framework of their country. They noted that students frequently disseminated their viewpoints to their peers. Social media served as the principal vehicle for students to track the latest news items, with a predilection for following topics of interest on this platform.

Nonetheless, the findings from the interview also revealed that a subset of students demonstrated a complete detachment from current issues. We asked the teachers about their students' tendency towards national history and the origins of their interest in this subject matter. The teachers who emphasised their students' interest in recent history expounded upon the reinforcing role of television series and social media in augmenting this interest.

Furthermore, they cautioned against the potential for misinformation from consuming historical narratives disseminated through the media. The teachers also drew attention to the limited number of students with deep-rooted historical consciousness through their readings or family guidance. Finally, we investigated the domains in which students tend to read more. Their insights suggested that most students fail to cultivate a reading habit, attributed mainly to the pervasive influence of technological devices such as smartphones, television sets, tablets, and computers. Those who read gravitated towards popular literature, well-known writers and foreign authors. Furthermore, teachers reported that a common tendency among young adults was to read fiction genres such as utopian, dystopian, adventure, detective, and thriller novels.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this national report provides an overview of the research findings about the image of the 'other' in the perceptions of Turkish youth. The historical curriculum analysis demonstrated a tendency in Türkiye to prioritise national history over European history,



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presenting a selective and biased version of history. This report recommends revising the history curriculum to incorporate a more comprehensive and balanced perspective on historical events and encouraging the development of critical thinking skills among students.

The Imagine Europe workshop highlighted the limited exposure of Turkish youth to Europe's intellectual, cultural, and artistic aspects. This phenomenon can be attributed to the lack of sections dedicated to the histories of other countries in official history textbooks, coupled with the anti-immigrant rhetoric that permeates current politics.

The Rewriting History WWI workshop also emphasised the prevalence of negative stereotypes and biases towards other cultures and nationalities among Turkish youth. The present report recommends the promotion of increased cultural exchange and diversity education within schools, as well as cultivating critical thinking skills among students, to address the issues effectively.

The questionnaire findings based on the Bennett Scale revealed that Turkish participants tend to espouse a monocultural perspective, exhibiting a preference for the dominant culture with little acceptance of cultural differences. Nevertheless, some participants demonstrated an openness to cultural differences by expressing an interest in learning about other cultures and acknowledging the importance of diversity. The report suggests the need for more intercultural education and awareness in the Turkish education system to facilitate a greater understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures and perspectives.

The group interviews revealed that Turkish youth possess limited knowledge and interest in European history and tend to associate Europe with high living standards, human rights, and freedoms. Conversely, Turkish history is deemed more relevant and vital, emphasising national identity and pride. This report highlights the necessity for a critical and reflective approach to history education in Turkey, which is inclusive, diverse, and receptive to various viewpoints and interpretations of history. Consequently, the present report emphasizes the significance of advocating for a more comprehensive and equitable comprehension of the histories of the Balkans, Europe, and Turkey, and promoting constructive and respectful exchanges among diverse cultures, traditions, and communities.