

Internationalization of Higher Education: An Examination of European Higher Education Area And Turkey's Integration With It

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Abstract

Quality of education can provide a positive appearance to an actor of international politics and this can contribute to its international standing and reputation. Higher education in specific can build influence in international relations, which is using by the European Commission as a strategy to extend its power. To determine a European educational space, mass student mobility became visible within Europe. By demonstrating quality in Higher Education Area, the EU aims to become more competitive around the world. This study will examine the theoretical perspective of this strategy by referring to the soft power concept and will provide a deeper look at Turkey's integration into the European Higher Education Area. Further, internationalization of higher education and taking advantage of the high-quality education in its public diplomacy will be other addressed topics of the study.

Key Words: EU, Soft Power, Higher Education, Bologna Process, Turkey

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Introduction

Education and culture seen as key features to future of European Union as President Juncker mentioned during a speech in European Commission's contribution to the Leader's Meeting at 2017. For job creation, economic growth, social fairness and ultimate unity, educational and cultural development will be crucial within the Union as a whole (President Juncker, 14 November 2017). In accordance with the European Commission Strategies, some significant reforms been carried out in tertiary education system. Focusing on the modernization in education can attribute to strategy of Europe 2020, which is aiming to turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy (Europa 2020). According to the researches made in this study direction, it can state that the main purpose behind European Commission's desire to reform higher education through Bologna Process is to become a competitive economy by delivering high levels of employment in Europe.

Further, this study addressing to understand the higher education policies of European Union, and focus on the Bologna Process in particular. It aims to find out reasons for explain EU's intention on funding programs which improve mobility and quality of education. Additionally, it will try to relate increasing mobility through higher education programs, with a political agenda of European Commission. The study been carried out by examining essential declarations, documents and reviewing related articles and dissertations in order to gain qualitative data. It will be referring to the 'soft power' concept

when theoretical approach needed.

According with a structural reform in higher education, ministers of EU have committed to a high degree of policy reform coordination to promote high-quality higher education and employability, as well as to deepen international competitiveness of its higher education system. This will provide mobility and internationalization easier and generate sustainable growth and jobs (The EU and Bologna Process). This paper undertakes a close look at the arrangements on higher education and other programs developed over time to create a secured education area that can bring welfare in and around EU. Three hypothesis constructed through the article. The first one is suggesting that with the Bologna Process and European Higher Education Area, EU seeks to use higher education as a soft power tool in order to sustain a common European Identity within this educational space. The second hypothesis claims that transformation policies of educational quality seen as a key to sustainable wealth in a strong, competitive economy. The last hypothesis on the other side, claims that Turkey specifically, keep its interest for the implementations of Bologna Process in order to benefit from EU's educational quality standards. Doing this will enable Turkish higher education system to infuse its culture by making itself attractive for foreign exchange students or institutions.

It needs to look deeply into higher education system of Turkey. Increasing number of universities put the country in a tremendous need of reform policies especially in the last decade. The process of Bologna would easily maintain a roadmap for those universities to adapt changes simultaneously. Data provided by OECD, UNESCO, Council of Higher

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Education and European Commission examined during the article in order to consider statistics. In conclude, the tendency of this work will guide to understand policies of European Union and its effects on the Turkish higher education system.

Education as a Soft Power tool of European Union

In today's globalized world, policy makers desire to operate in a varied area. Ideational influence -which can be describe as the power over opinion- appear as the significant tool while reaching this aim. Social and economic prospects of individuals, started to seen as focal points of political and economic development of governments. In that sense, policy makers of European Union are aware of that the basic condition of becoming a competitive economy is to meet demands of the people within a welfare system. Education there requires consideration, in order to create well-qualified employability. It would be useful to take a brief look at its theoretical perspective if education policies of EU can be explained with the concept of 'soft power' theory or not.

Culture been taken as the third dimension of "soft power" concept of Joseph Nye (1990) which has been described as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion or payments" in international relations. It can also explainable by "the ability to change what others do or shape what they want". Cultural diplomacy, along with scientific and educational diplomacy, plays an important role in the perceptions and soft power of a country abroad (Vandewalle, 2015, p.4). Being an attraction and persuasion mechanism of international

education enables it to attract people abroad and generate interest in the languages, cultures of other places. EU as an international actor uses the higher education policies and institutions to provide positive image, increase its influence and sympathy in the destination countries (Erdogan, 2018). It also focuses on the education because of its traditional aim of strengthening the European identity.

Culture and education for many scholars can be recognize as significant tools of soft power using by an international actor. Therefore, the concept of the “soft power” which is first used by a foreign policy scholar Joseph Nye in 1990 described as “the ability to influence the behaving of others to accomplish the outcomes one wants”. According to Nye, soft power arises from the attractiveness of culture, political ideals and policies on contrary to hard power (Nye, 1990, p.167). A previous approach taken by Stewen Lukes (1974) which was arguing that there is a third dimension of power. Lukes signified it as the most powerful of all dimensions of power because of its ability to influence the beliefs and ideas of others, inducing them to desire things (Nisbett, 2016). This power can usually maintain through culture, education and diplomacy in order to persuade others for adopting the same goals (Yang, 2010, p.235). That is the point of the standardization policy on education adopting by the EU.

For the last decades, actors started to concentrate more time, energy and money on their educational developments in hopes to “win hearts and minds” (Nye, 2004, p.1) of people on a global scale (Erdogan, 2018). The EU as an international actor puts great attention and funding on its educational programs in order to signify its reputation as a welfare

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system within the international relations. If we think of millions of people who wants to study, live and work in the EU, it would be easy to understand the influence of its education policies. It is creating a better and common understanding of European identity. According to European Agenda of the Commission, which maintained at the Leader's meeting at Gothenburg 2017, education and culture help making Europe an attractive place to live, study and work with its common values and importance on the fundamental rights of citizens. These two, play a crucial role for people to know better each other across borders and making people more aware about the meaning of "European".

According to Martin Lawn, standardization² in education have been crucial in EU's emergence as a cross-frontier area. The production and exchange of standardized data design the future by shaping systems, institutions and people (Lawn, 2011, p.261). Thus, it will be easier for European Union to manage educational programs in order to influence public opinion. ECTS in higher education can be a good example of this standardization, which is creating a common credit system for all institutions included in the European Higher Education Area.³ It enables student mobility between institutions and countries by making recognition process easier. By the Declaration of Bologna Process in 1999 which signed by 29 EU member countries, creating a European Higher Education Area is been selected as the core aim of reforming the education system of Europe. Since than it characterized as a European response to the internationalization of higher education. It would understood that the fundamental purpose of the EU is to develop its capacity to attract students from outside the European Education

Area by focusing deeply on the main objectives of the Bologna Declaration: international competitiveness, boasting mobility and employability (Bologna P. Implementation Report, 2012, p.9). Promoting mobility within the education area wanted to be possible through EU mobility programs along with other instruments such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the Diploma Supplement and the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Those developments seen as the building blocks of the EHEA and encourage mobility by establishing a common language for equivalency (Besgul, 2014, p.531). According to Nye, soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country outside its borders (Yang, 2010, p.235). In this case of European Union- as an international *sui generis*⁴actor- it is evolving as the common policy of all member states to attract people in and outside of the Europe in order to secure quality of education and the welfare system. It is obvious that education and culture were seen essential to develop a more inclusive, cohesive and competitive Europe.

1.1. Internationalization of European Higher Education

*Internationalization in higher education*¹includes all international activities and cooperation within the field of higher education, including student and academician mobility. In the new environment that emerged with globalization, countries started to tend to internationalize in higher education. If the importance of

¹ Internationalization in higher education: transnational and cross-border higher education including mobility of students, staff and institutions.

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internationalizing higher education system considering in terms of the benefits, it would explain the reason of an international cooperation such as the European Union. Because, internationalized higher education students, academic staff and institutions have the characteristics of an academic and scientific interaction tool. This process, which is an important public diplomacy tool in foreign policy, can affect the ideas of the beneficiaries by providing interaction between countries and cultures. For example, when international student - benefiting from a mobility program- return to their country, will have the potential for having a word in determining the country's policies increases.

Internationalized people in academic and scientific sense will become qualified people and help the economic development of countries by increasing their employability. The higher education policies of the European Union may also be more competitive and parallel to achieve a developed economy. Therefore, the importance given to the internationalization process accelerated by the Bologna Process can be explain. Because qualified man- power obtained by higher education seen as the main source for robust and efficient economic development (Council of Higher Education, 2017, p.8).

On the other hand, globalization has altered the international relations through technological developments. Thus traditional ways of relations between states has turned into new version of diplomacy in which people -to people contacts, networks and non-state actors play influencer role (Vandewalle, 2015, p.4). Higher education in that sense became an important influencer of decision-makers. This is why

European Commission put its attention on designing activities to bring an international dimension on its studying, teaching, researching or making policy in higher education. Actually, vision for 2025 including few objectives to achieve of European Commission- a Europe in which learning, studying and researching wouldn't be hampered by borders- can explain its desire to cooperate, especially in education and culture in order to strength its common identity through a shared agenda.

The main objective of the EU education policy is to promote cooperation and solidarity among member states in order to develop European awareness by promoting a common understanding (European Commission, 2018). It prefers a cooperative approach to education policy as a supranational actor because the education would seen as a key factor for it to success in the world politics. In order to create high-qualified population within and around the Europe, Union gives great attention on building high quality education.

The reasons of EU's attention on extended, high quality higher education can be found in its strategies for the future are mainly emphasis on the inclusive and competitive economy. Most currently, the importance of higher education for the EU stated on the Europe 2020 Strategy. Mainly because of increasing population of unemployed youth, EU faces social cohesion and fundamental challenges in its economy. In the meantime, the global economy moving forward. In order to exit from this crisis, European Commission puts its attention to success a sustainable future. They needed to show EU's capacity to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth that is to create new jobs (Europa 2020). Higher education plays a critical role in social and

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economic life, can seen as the main provider of highly skilled human capital. This makes it the main source of the economic development of the Union. Modernized, high- quality and flexible higher education system is going to be easier for research and innovation. Thus, the purpose of internationalized higher education would link to this need of economic growth.

Looking at the a bit past illustrates that, people has identified as the main asset and focal point of Union's policies in Lisbon European Council Summit 2000 and good quality education arises as the basic element to invest in people. That is because highly skilled human capital will provide EU to appear in international order strongly. According with a structural reform in higher education, ministers of EU have committed to a high degree of policy reform coordination to promote quality higher education and graduate employability, as well as to deepen international competitiveness of its higher education system. This will provide mobility, easier and generate sustainable growth and jobs (The EU and Bologna Process). Addition to those aims EU also seeks to be active in shaping the decision-making process of beneficiary countries by establishing mechanisms to facilitate mobility and cooperation such as the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Because all along with these, internationalization in higher education can maintain significant contributions to public diplomacy. Especially, international students- mostly benefiting from exchange or mobility programs- provide advantages for both their home countries and host countries when they become decisive (Council of

Higher Education, 2017, P.8).

Starting from 1987 with the Erasmus program, student mobility funded by European Commission encourage student and teacher mobility, and promotes transnational cooperation projects among universities across Europe. It gives many European university students the chance of living for the first time in a foreign country, and it has reached the status of a social and cultural phenomenon gradually (European Commission, 2007). As result of the mobility of students and staff, it can inferred that knowledge about the European identity increased progressively. The objective is to create new opportunities for people in higher education to learn from one another across national borders and to work together on joint projects to develop good learning and teaching, undertake excellent research and promote innovation (EC, 2017). According to policy makers of EU education, mobility is closely link to the attractiveness of institutions and is a major component of internationalization. Abovementioned reasons can explain the EU intention on funding programs improving mobility and the quality of education.

1.2.Erasmus

The Erasmus is a European Commission Program launched in 1987 as cooperation among EU member states in the field of education. It has been the best-known Community action since than by encouraging student and staff mobility, promoting transnational cooperation projects among universities across Europe (European Commission) Gradually it became more than just being an educational program, it gave many

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European higher education students the chance of living in a foreign country. When it started with eleven member of EU, it was only focusing to promote mobility among university students. After 30 years in road, it became more than this by including 33 countries. It expanded itself to offer a wider range of academic and working opportunities. It gained a social and cultural status. According to 2017 data, the Erasmus Program has helped 9 million to study, train, teach or volunteer in another country during its operation. Evidence with the numbers tell us that the Erasmus itself became the most prominent and famous example of EU mobility programs (EC Contribution, 2017 p.4).

Fundamentally, the central element of the European Commission through Erasmus mobility is to combat youth unemployment by focusing on the skills development. Mobility in that sense helps students improve their personal traits and discover features of themselves.

The Program evolved into Erasmus + in 2014 as one single project integrates seven previous EU programs. By bringing different actions and tools in the same field Erasmus + generates international cooperation of multiple stakeholders effortless and less expensive. It takes into the account the findings of previous programing that highlights the needs in order to strengthen European cooperation(<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus,a.d.02,19>).

Through its Erasmus + programs, the European Union aims to support international exchanges for students, academic staff and researchers, as well as structured cooperation between higher education institutions

and public authorities in different countries (EC). Erasmus program in general, contributes without a doubt to the image of EU in third countries. Mobility enables people from higher education to get well aware of the ideals of Europe. If it is been thinking about the aim of increasing quality and portion in employability within Europe, evidence shows that people who have taken part in Erasmus have excellent chances on the labor market. With the greatest number of participant in Europe, Erasmus programs now matter in social, economic and political means. According to its regular reports, it stated that with significant impact on one's skills, competences Erasmus maintains an increase of career prospects. Through exchange programs and multinational projects, people gain positive academic achievements by developing skills like language, problem solving, self-management and communication. People became more flexible and open to learn more about different cultures. As intended in the strategies of European Commission mobility will provide highly skilled human capital in and around the Europe. In the long term, it will expected to create a more secure, sustainable and competitive economic status to European Union.

From theoretical perspective, data from structural documents illustrates the simple idea of Erasmus program was to implement and translate core European values and ideals within multinational area. Developing mobility and extending it during years, ensure considerable impact on people's attitude towards Europe and the European Union. Thus, it appears to be explain by the concept of 'soft power' with the ability to influence ideas.

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In a general perspective, Erasmus + aims to provide opportunities for millions of Europeans to experience abroad. It is also contributing to creating and developing the Bologna Process, while seeking strong European cooperation with students, teachers, researchers and institutions (Bologna Process Brochure, 2015). It also helps mobility of great amount of information and data among higher education institutions. According to the statistics, it is observed that there is a significant change from the beginning to the present, now mobility seems more common in non-EU countries. While the portion of beneficiaries from non-EU countries takes 85%, the percentage of participants from EU countries took 15% (Eacea, 2017, p.11).

2. European Higher Education Policy: the Bologna Process

In case of higher education, European Commission has attempts to extend its power through high standards of education. In the text of Bologna Declaration signed in 1999, it been stated that “the vitality and efficiency of any civilization can be measured by the appeal that its culture for other countries”. Therefore, the importance of higher education appears and signatories focused on a need to promote the European system of higher education worldwide recognition (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Setting the objectives to reach this purpose came into the Bologna

Process. The roots of current European Higher Education Policy can found in this broader concept of Bologna.

Bologna Process as an intergovernmental cooperation, started with the Bologna Declaration in 1999 signed by ministers from 29 member

states. Reforms planned to be implemented by the institutions of signatory states have been set to improve the quality of higher education institutions and to increase their competitiveness in the international arena (Yalı, 2017, p.144). Main objectives of the Declaration were to create European Higher Education Area, promote mobility and employability and increase the international competitiveness of European higher education systems (Vught, 2011, p.68). Abovementioned objectives of the Bologna Process is to make its education system recognizable through; adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, adoption of a system based on two main cycles- undergraduate, graduate and establishment of a system of credits which is going to promote most widespread student mobility(Bologna Declaration,1999). The Bologna Process- as a reform process in higher education-aims to create a system of academic degrees that are easily recognizable and comparable; promote the mobility for students and researchers; assure high quality learning and teaching. Reforms taken after established objectives will help to make European universities and colleges more competitive and attractive to the rest of the world.

Currently, the process implements 48 countries in the field of higher education and it is not imposing on national governments or universities. As mentioned before it is an intergovernmental, voluntary undertaking by each signing country to reform its own higher education. The Process aims to guide collective effort of public authorities, universities, lecturers, students together with international organizations, stakeholders and quality assurance agencies in order to

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improve the internationalization of higher education (EC, Bologna Process).

Because the number of jobs requiring high skills increases, supporting the modernization of education and training systems through the Bologna Process has seen needed for the EU. This need can also be explain by the increase of who demands higher education within the young population. EU itself tries to meet this need in a high quality way of education, in order to create smart, sustainable and inclusive economy (Europe 2020 Strategy). In the EU-28 there were 19.6 million tertiary education students in 2016. Besides EU member states, there were nearly 44.5 million students participating tertiary education in the average of OECD by data year of 2017 (OECD, statistics). Differing education across Europe was making it hard to find a proper job for one in another country. Thus, the main focus of the Bologna Process appears by creating compatibility between education systems which will make it easier for students and job seekers to move within Europe (European Commission).

In order to achieve the objective of "Recognition and mobility for all" the European Commission aims to strengthen its power through education within the region as international openness is another key focus of the Process (EC; Setting up the EHEA). During its first 10 years, the main purpose of the Process was to establish European Higher Education Area was to make it success in regional cross-border cooperation in higher education. Through Erasmus+ initiatives, the European Commission supports projects to put Bologna Process in action and to turn EHEA dream into a reality (Eahea). The Bologna

Process as a structural reform in education has the potential to boost mobility and internationalization while at the same time generating sustainable growth and jobs.

2.1. European Higher Education Area

The purpose of creating European area of higher education has been set with the Sorbonne Declaration (1998), which was underpinning the importance of universities in developing European cultural dimensions. Reaching this aim will be a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability (Bologna Declaration, 1999). In general, establishing an area of European higher education can be seen as the main element of EU's development policies for overall the Continent. Building an equality between variety and unity has been set as the essential target of European Higher Education (Yalı, 2017, p.144). Ensuring comparable and harmonized institutions without any alteration in their unique attributes will be the way of harmonization in higher education. In this way, it is planned to make the transition from one country or higher education system to another easier. Thus, there will be an increase in the mobility and employment of students and instructors (Bologna Process, accessed in 01.02.19). As stated above, education is seen as the solution to get more people into decent jobs, respond better to the economy's skills needs and strengthen Europe's standing in the highly developed technologic area of globalized world.

In parallel with EC's strategy of Europa 2020, reforms taking with the Bologna Process and creation of a European area of higher education will make Europe more preferred by people from other parts of the world, in terms of education and job opportunities.

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The priorities of the Bologna Process firstly set in the Sorbonne Declaration were including; mobility of students and teachers, a common two-cycled system, the recognition of credits and the establishing of Europe as a knowledge region. In order to promote internationalization of European higher education, the Bologna Process designed to promote easier mobility of students, teachers and institution members. By creating the area of higher education in which the recognition of credits will be easier, it aims to increase transparency and facility exchanges in Europe. Main tools of the recognition mechanism are ECTS system and the Diploma Supplement. Different challenges of higher education institutions between national systems can make the recognition of qualifications difficult.

That is why a credit system designed to make it easier for student to move among countries needed. As being one of the main tools of Bologna Process, ECTS will help this need and to create more student-centered education system. This credit system will make it possible to merge different types of learning within the same program or study (European Commission, ECTS Guide, 2015).

3. Turkey's Integration with the Bologna Process

Nowadays, internationalization is increasingly important in higher education. Many countries are aware of the international student potential and develop new strategies for internationalization in order to benefit more from qualified human capacity. In parallel with the developments worldwide, reforms issued in the higher education

system of Turkey. The inclusion of the European Union-funded Bologna Process, Erasmus and Erasmus + are some key initiatives in this process. (Council of Higher Education, Strategy for 2022). Especially during the last decade, major reforms have been carried out in Turkish Higher Education system and considerable amount of these reforms were made in connection with the Bologna Process (Besgül, 2014, p.530). As mentioned above, the Bologna Process has been characterized as a European response to the internationalization in higher education. Thus, Turkey started to focus more on the internationalization process. An internationalized higher education system will enable the sharing of knowledge in academic and scientific terms, increasing the quality and capacity of countries. This is indirectly the main condition for the country to have a more robust and efficient economy. Being aware of this situation, the inclusion of the Turkish higher education system in the Bologna Process, which develops new educational policies and strategies, requires detailed examination. Fundamentally, Turkey's involvement in the Bologna Process and its new higher education policies can be associated with the need for reform and modernization in the Turkish education system (Besgül, 2014, p.530). In the process of membership to the European Union, especially after the 2000s, the social and economic environment have been trying to keep up with the EU standards and norm. With the inclusion of the Bologna Process in 2001, basic objective of Turkish higher education set as; to increase the quality of higher education system in order to provide graduates who benefit from employment. Accordingly, It has been involved in educational programs developed

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by the EU and has implemented reforms in educational policies. In order to understand the involvement of Turkey into the Bologna Process clearly, the Process itself needs to be examine first. As known, policy makers of the European Union sets policies and strategies in higher education with expectancy in demographic and economic development. Turkey on the other side, aims the same by its adaptation efforts into the Bologna Process.

EU education system based on basic education policy on cooperation and adaptation, works without making any change on different national systems. It aims to provide security in the social and economic system of the Union by increasing communication between higher education institutions and people in either member or non-member countries. In that sense, through the process initiated with the Bologna Declaration of 1999, a number of goals were set for the development of the higher education system. Essentially these are;

-Diploma Supplement: to create easy readable and comparable higher education diploma degrees,

-Two-cycled system: to pass a two-stage system including undergraduate and graduate programs in higher education,

To facilitate and promote the mobility of students and lecturers,

Establish and extend the network of quality assurance systems in higher education,

To strengthen the European dimension in higher education.²

It observed that the Bologna process, which has no legal binding, has given importance to developing policies in line with the stated objectives. The main objective is to create a European Higher Education Area that is in cooperation and harmony. The meeting was held in Prague in 2001 to monitor the Bologna process, was attended by ministers in charge of higher education in 32 countries, and new targets were set for improvement of the process;

-to ensure the active participation of students and institutions in the process, -to make EHEA attractive,
to promote lifelong learning.³

Turkey has been included to the Bologna Process with this meeting held in Prague. In the context of main aims set by the Declaration and additionally with meeting in Prague, Turkey started to create new policies of restoration and harmonization of its higher education. Within the scope of the preparatory period in 2003, pilot applications conducted with the participation of 15 universities (Council of Higher Education).

The Council of Higher Education is the first-degree responsible institution of implementing and controlling the process in Turkey. The Council evaluates the Bologna Process as a suitable tool for the

² Bologna Declaration, 1999, <http://www.ehea.info/> , Date of Access: 02.02.19

³ Prague Communique: Towards the European Higher Education Area, 2001, <http://www.ehea.info/> , Date of Access: 05.02.19

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restructuring of its higher education system and continues its studies to increase the visibility, recognition and quality of Turkish higher education institutions at international level. For Turkey, some of the reasons aiming to fulfill projected activities and arrangements made under the Bologna Process are;

to ensure the recognition of higher education system outside the country,

to create (autonomous) higher education institutions that fulfill their responsibilities towards students and other stakeholders,

to facilitate progress and transition between different levels of progress,

to raise awareness of citizens and employers at national and international level,

To contribute to the development of quality assurance systems and the creation of a competitive education system.⁴

Activities of the Council of Higher Education started to be take in line with the requirements of Bologna Process and its growth plans. In the 9th growth plan for 2007-13, (July 1st 2006), it has been stated that important activities as student and academic staff mobility actions, ECTS and Diploma Supplement have been carried out by Turkish higher education institutions. However, central structure of the higher education system and the problems regarding quality capacities remains unsolved.

Erasmus + Program, which is the new program covering the years 2014-

⁴ Reconstruction in the Higher Education, 2010, www.yok.tr , Date of Access: 29.01.19

2020, continues to be carried out by the Turkish National Agency in Turkey. According to the published data of Council on Higher Education, as of the academic year 2016-2017, 160 out of 164 institutions participate in student and staff mobility activities.

When the statistical data of the countries in the European Information, Culture, Research and Innovation Area, which are attempted to be created with the Bologna Process, are analyzed; Since the incorporation in 2001, the performance of Turkey's higher education system has been observed to increase rapidly (Bologna Process Implementation Report, 2015). As matter of fact that the European Higher Education Area enables Turkish universities to access international high-quality standards.

As mentioned before, the main element of the European economic development is universities. Reforms in higher education made aware of this. Therefore, Turkey's integration in the EHEA would provide many opportunities for its students, universities and teaching staff. Thus policy makers of Turkey, by being aware of this chance, tends to make the necessary reforms to comply with European standards in higher education. In the light of statistical data, it observed that Turkey outperformed the average EU countries. With reference to the Bologna Implementation Report, 'good performance' of it in 2005 increased to the level of 'very good performance' by 2007. According to Turkey's Implementation Scorecards, compile by the Council of Higher Education, in 2009, it appears to be rated as good performance (3.34) due to deficiencies in lifelong learning (Reconstruction in Higher Education, 2010). In a sense, the studies of the Turkish higher education

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system to comply with the Bologna Process can interpreted as positive. Chief Executive of the Council of Higher Education Sarac stated that; "In the European Higher Education Area Ministerial Summit held in France on May 24-25 of 2018, the Turkish higher education system received full marks on three subjects." According to a statement made by him in a speech held in Ankara; it has been specified that , Turkey has made significant process in terms of the 2018 targets set before in the area including abovementioned three subjects- Development of Degree System (Qualifications Framework, ECTS system and the Diploma Supplement Process), Recognition and Quality Assurance- (News, <http://www.yok.gov.tr>). The adaptation works carried out through the Bologna Process in Turkey, provided considerable increase both in terms of quality and the population contributing to higher education. According to UNESCO data, the rate of participation in tertiary education in 1999 increased from 22% to 38% in 2008. According to OECD –Education at a Glance, this ratio increased to 42.5% in 2017.⁵ On the other hand, while it ranked 33rd out of 43 Bologna Process countries in 2005, it was in the 9th place with Germany with the average 5.16 as of 2007. In light of the data apparently, Bologna Process has a good impact on Turkish higher education system. In 2011/12 period of education, the number of tertiary education students was 4.35 million but in 2014/15 it increased to 6.6 million. There were 37.7 million students graduated from tertiary education

⁵ Turkey- Country Note, Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators <https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018/turkey>

within the EHEA and Turkey was the second among involving countries with the number of 6 million. That was giving it a portion of 16% in total(<https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/d.a.02,19>)).

Another important issue is that, despite its reduced interest in fully membership, there has been no reduction in Turkey's relevancy to the European Higher Education Area. Rather, the Council of Higher Education started to show much more effort with new project initiatives to become compliant with European standards of tertiary education. In addition to its increasing interest in mobility programs through Erasmus+, the TURQUAS Project introduced in 2016, would be a good example in this sense. The main point targeted by this project is to ensure that the objectives of Turkish higher education system overlap with the ones of EHEA. Aforementioned project introduced to provide a sustainable system of higher education and quality assurance (YÖK, Turquas, 2016).The important aspect of this project is that it is an evidence of Turkey's efforts to implement requirements of structural transformation through the Bologna Process in order to internationalize education. Mainly, Council of Higher Education's awareness of the importance of internationalization in higher education is the reason of its desire to stay within the EHEA.

The 2020 strategy, set by the European Commission, emphasized the importance of smarter, sustainable and innovative education for a stronger economy (Europa 2020 Strategy, 2010, p.8). Thus, it is understandable that policy makers in Turkey also act targeting economic development while setting the higher education policies. The priority of the country, for a more visible and developed economy is to

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increase the number of qualified people with the modernization of the higher

education system. The point of the study is that, modern higher education system related with economic development may also become a tool of Turkey's public diplomacy. In order to make its higher education system more attractive for foreign students sent from other-non European- countries, Turkey continues to interest in reforms and exchange programs in parallel with the European Higher Education system.

It has been observe that while outgoing students from Turkey mostly prefer European countries as destination, the number of students incoming to Turkey gradually decreased. In that sense, it would be important to look at the table showing the changes in the number of incoming and outgoing from Turkey through Erasmus Program over the last four years.

Number of Incoming and Outgoing Students in the Erasmus Program(2014-2017)

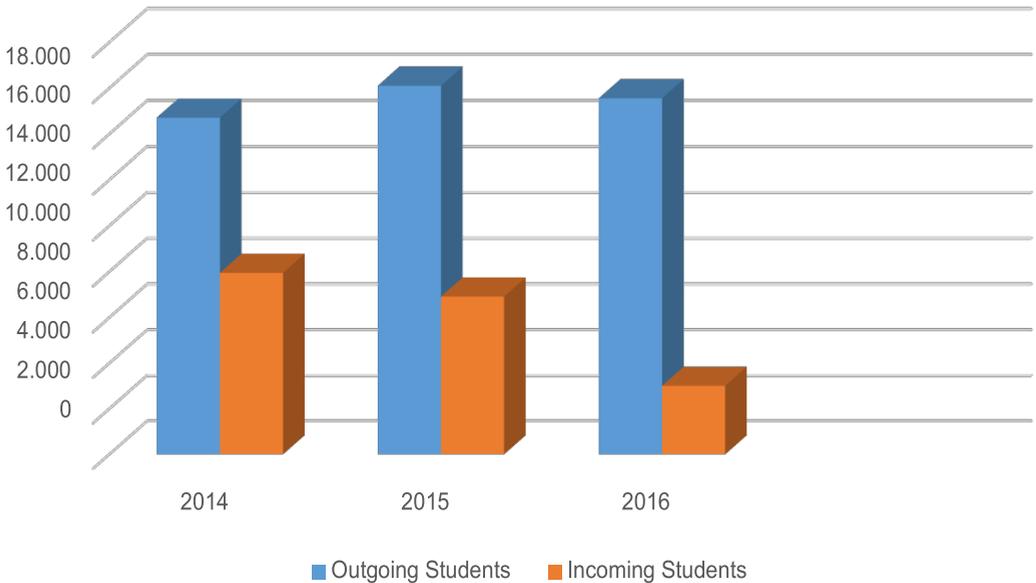


Table 1: Number of Incoming and Outgoing Students in the Erasmus Program (2014-2017)

Source: Compiled from European Commission Statistics.

According to statistical annex of Erasmus annual Report 2016, the number of students incoming Turkey from the program countries was 16,889 while the number of outgoing students calculates as 3,034. In comparison with the numbers of 2015, there is a decrease in the number of students from 6,913 to 3,034 who prefer Turkey as a destination country. That is a considerable change negatively effects the reputation of Turkey's higher education system when it compared with the other

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countries within the EHEA. Although the 2018 report not publish yet by the European Commission, it was observe that this figure further reduced in 2017 when the Council of Higher Education data examined.

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Nevertheless, it can not be said that the Turkish Higher Education System is fully affected. There has been any considerable change in the policy makers' desire to stay involved within the EHEA. Even the number of incoming students from Europe to Turkey decreasing gradually, there is still a major increase in the number of foreign students in Turkey. Indeed, according to data from the year 2018, the number of foreign students in Turkey has reached 110 thousand. This is due to the increase of foreign students in higher education who choose Turkey is taking place mostly from non-European countries. Non-European countries take the first places in the list of student sending countries to Turkey are like Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Afghanistan (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow-Turkey>).

When it examined the nationalities of those students who prefer Turkey in higher education, it can interpret that countries with strong historical and cultural ties are in first place (Cetinsaya, 2014, p.152). The following table illustrates the countries mostly prefer Turkey to send tertiary education students. Apparently, the country with the highest number of students is Azerbaijan with 12.504, Turkmenistan follows it

⁶ <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/> Number of Students Participating in Exchange Programs

with 9.903 students prefer Turkey as destination. Thus, this inference can be made that the long-term intention of Turkey is to use its higher education system as a tool of public diplomacy.

Table 2: Top student sending countries to Turkey

2016/17

Syria	15.042
Azerbaijan	14.878
Turkmenistan	10.418
Iran	6.099
Afghanistan	5.251
Iraq	5.012
Germany	3.755

Source: Complined from Unesco Statistics: Global Tertiary Education Flow

Table 3: Top Student Sending Countries to Turkey- 2018

Azerbaijan	12,504
Turkmenistan	9,903
Syrian Arab Republic	9,689

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Iran, Islamic Republic	5,661
Iraq	4,414
Afghanistan	4,338
Kyrgystan	1,994

Source: Complined from statistics of Unesco

Situated in Turkey's Higher Education Internationalization Strategy Paper based on strategic goals and objectives There are two strategic objectives; Firstly, to become a center of attraction in the means of higher education. The targets determined for this purpose are;

Increasing the number of international students,

Increasing the number of international lecturers,

-Increasing the qualified instructor to the country with brain drain,

Increasing the number of participants in cooperation and exchange programs in the field of international student and faculty exchange,

Increasing the international cooperation potential of universities,

Increasing the international visibility of the area of higher education.

The second strategic objective determined in the same direction; to increase institutional capacity in internationalization.

As it understood from the objectives, the main concentration of policies is to make Turkish higher education system more visible and attractive for foreign students, staff and institutions. The internalization of 'qualifications' and 'quality assurance' systems within the Bologna

Process can be link to political goals. Because, universities and institutions would take the European system as a role model in order to increase quality. Thus, developed standards of higher education system will contribute to increase numbers of foreign students in Turkey from non-European countries. Through this way, Turkish policy makers seek to influence people's mind and opinions about social and economic situation of Turkey. This study, describes the link between Turkey's public diplomacy with the Bologna Process through these inferences.

As of 2017, Turkey has been the fastest growing country within the EHEA by hosting 110 foreign students.⁷ The chief executive of the Council of Higher Education Prof.Dr. Yekta Saraç made a speech in the program for the 30th year of Erasmus and he touched some points to develop higher education. One striking point of his speech was his standing on the reforms through Bologna Process. 'In order to make more visible the values of Turkey' they need to carry out those reforms as fully as possible stated by Sarac (from Erasmus to Erasmus+: 30 Years Story, Ankara, 2017). According to him again; "A country without a strong university system cannot have an industry, technology, medicine, education, art and justice system which will carry it to the future(<http://www.yok.gov.tr/news>).

Last of all, the study can easily illustrate the effects of the Bologna Process within the Turkish higher education system. From the perspective of higher education internationalization, it provide Turkish

⁷ Chief Executive of the Council of Higher Education Yekta Sarac mentioned about the number of foreign students in Turkey within 2017 in his speech on the Erasmus Program. The Program held in Ankara in July of 2017 in order to celebrate 30th year of Erasmus Program.

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and foreign students and universities with a platform of collaboration and change. The Council of Higher Education aims to increase capacity of higher education system in order to attract students outside Turkey. Currently, data shows that for attraction, targeted countries are mainly outside the European educational area.

Conclusion

This article first argued that, policy makers of European Union approach to the higher education as a policy space that includes student-centered and lifelong learning process by widening its area and integrating both institutions and countries. Through standards by cross-border platforms, the EU uses higher education in order to create a common understanding space for European identity that has been link with the term of soft power with its contemporary definitions. It also mainly focused on the internationalization process of education and as for EU, internationalized higher education students, academic staff and institutions have the characteristics of an academic and scientific interaction tool. Through the interaction and standardized knowledge flow, it would be attainable for high quality, competitive economy. Therefore, the importance given to the internationalization process accelerated by the Bologna Process can be explain. As it stated in the study, education seen as the solution to get more people into decent jobs, respond better to the economy's skills needs and strengthen Europe's standing in the highly developed technologic area of globalized world. Turkey on the second part of the article needed to examine by its fast growing intention on integration to educational policies in European

level. Despite, its fast development with becoming more student centered in higher education, Turkey still needs to implement some strict changes to go in terms of internationalization. The study specifies that Turkey continues its intention to stay tuned with the European educational space and examines the fundamental reasons behind it. It particularly look deeper in Turkish higher education system that needs considerable reforms during the last decades. Evidences show that there have been considerable increase in the number of universities and tertiary education students in Turkey. Along with the Bologna Process and integrating with the EHEA, the Council of Higher Education aimed to establish a roadmap for those universities and students to adapt changes emerging through globalization. However, statistics have been highlighted here show something interesting that Its potential to attract foreign students is increasing in spite of the numbers of European students preferring Turkey as a destination decreased gradually. As has been argued in the article, policy makers in Turkey seeks to maximize its benefit from the European educational space, by creating higher quality standards. Through this way, it will become an attraction with its higher education system for mostly non-European countries, especially including historical or cultural bounded ones.

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