

Young Researchers' Section

The Romanian-Turkish Relationships: The View of the Romanian Students

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Abstract

This article aims to provide an image on the Romanian-Turkish relationships from the perspective of the Romanian students. The rationale of the research lays on the importance of the perception the host country has about different groups of diasporas in the evolution of the relationships between countries. The study has an explorative value and adds to the existed empirical studies that investigate the image of the bilateral relationships between countries. The research surveyed 187 students from different universities from Romania. The main results identified a good image of Turkey, despite a less good opinion on the relations between the two countries over time; the students consider that the Romanian-Turkish relations have a good development potential; students are relatively reluctant about Turkey's accession to the European Union; the image of the traditional Turkish minority in Romania is a good one.

Keywords: Turkish diaspora; country image; Turkey-Romania relations; Turkey's accession to European Union;

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to identify the students' views on some aspects of Turkey's economic presence in Romania and on the prospects of the Romanian-Turkish economic relations. The recent economic Romanian-Turkish relationships are less studied by the literature, although the issue gains more and more importance. An important role in developing these relationships has the way the Turkish diaspora is seen by the Romanian citizens and the image Turkey has among Romanian people. Knowing how Turks from Romania are perceived and identifying how Turkey is viewed by the Romanian citizens offered valuable information to all those interested in developing, in a mutual benefit these relationships.

The paper starts with a brief literature review that offers an overview on the modern Turkey's evolution. The paper explains the key points in present Turkish diaspora birth. The most important moment in this process was the signing of agreements between Turkish authorities and the governments of different countries from Western Europe mostly for allowing Turkish workers as guest workers in the '60s. What was wanted to be a short-term movement of labour force has transformed into a long-standing migration process. The paper provides some aspects related to the integration of Turkish minority in their adoption countries as these aspects are provided by studies.

The paper continues with the direct research conducted on 187 students from different universities from Romania regarding their opinion about the relationships between

Romania and Turkey. The study has an explorative value and adds to the existed empirical studies that investigate the image of the bilateral relationships between countries. The methodological aspects of the research are presented. The paper further presents the findings and discusses the results. The main results identified a good image of Turkey, despite a less good opinion on the relations between the two countries over time; the students consider that the Romanian-Turkish relations have a good development potential; students are relatively reluctant about Turkey's accession to the European Union; the image of the traditional Turkish minority in Romania is a good one.

2. Some remarks on the Role of the Turkish Diaspora in the Host Economies

The Republic of Turkey has a population of 82.9 million people, ranking 17th in the world (Worldometers, 2019a) and an area of 769.6 km², ranking 36th in the world (Worldometers, 2019b). In terms of economic development, Turkey's performance also ranks 17th in the world (as in the case of the population), with a GDP of \$ 961.6 billion. From the perspective of GDP per capita, Turkey registers 11,582 USD / per capita (World Population Review, 2019). The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, after the War of Independence that followed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. At the time of its foundation, Turkey was an economically underdeveloped country, the main economic branch being a non-mechanized agriculture based on feudal relations, which also provided almost all exports. Industry accounted at that time for about 10-12% of the GDP, with the vast majority of industrial facilities (about 85%) owned by foreigners and non-Muslim Turkish citizens. In addition, over three quarters of Turkey's manufacturing industry was concentrated in only two cities: Istanbul (55%) and Izmir (22%) (Berberoglu, 1977, pp.62-63). Turkey started impressive social, economic and political transformations (known as Kemalism) under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the first president and the founding father of the modern Turkey.

Despite economic and social progress registered by Turkey in the '60s, a large number of Turks, mostly from poorer area, decided to migrate towards some European countries, like Germany, Austria, Netherlands, UK, USA, Australia. Agreements signed between Turkish authorities and the governments of those countries allowed Turkish citizens to go to these countries as guest workers for a limited period of time. However, what was considered to be a short-term migration, it proved to be a long-lasting phenomenon. Most of the Turkish migrants (mostly young single men) brought later on their wives and children and remained in their adoption countries. Today, Turkish diaspora is estimated to be around 6.5 million, most of them living in Western Europe (MFA, 2020).

Given the size of the Turkish diaspora, studies conducted focused on many aspects: the contribution of Turkish diaspora to the economy of Turkey and/or host economy, Turkish diaspora integration into the host economies, nationals' opinion on Turkish communities, etc. The results are mixed. For example, Arslan's study (2016, p.261), conducted by an online survey of a sample of 110 Turkish migrants from the US, shows that Turks living in the US estimate that they make a greater contribution to the progress of the host country than to the progress of the country originating. In addition, they consider that neither the ethnic organizations to which they belong in the USA, nor the Turkish state's diaspora policy contribute to Turkey's development.

Another complex, qualitative and quantitative study by Kaya and Kentel (2004, p.67) on the degree of integration of Turkish migrants from Germany and France concluded that they “do not pose a threat to the political system of the host countries, but rather have the readiness to incorporate into those systems”. Following the study, three groups were identified: liaison groups (just over 40% of Turkish immigrants - those who feel like they belong to both groups in the country of origin and groups in the host country, as well as those who do not feel part of any ethnic, political or religious group), break-up groups (just under 40% of Turkish immigrants - those who still have a strong homeland orientation and who are part of ethnic or religious enclaves or are part of from traditional mutual support groups) and assimilated groups (about 20% of Turkish immigrants - those who are integrated into the society of the host country and have a higher economic and social status) (Kaya and Kentel, 2004, p.67).

Other studies pointed out a lesser integration of the Turks into the host economies, underlying a strong sense of belonging to the home country culture and religion. For example, 90% of the Turks born in Germany marry a person of Turkish origin, and the fact that they live in relatively closed communities is also reflected in the lack of knowledge of the German language, leading to a vicious circle in the integration process. At the level of 2016, only 47% of first-generation Turks considered that they mastered German language very well, the percentage increasing to 94% in the case of second- or third-generation Turks (Pollack *et al.*, 2016, p.8). According to the same study, 67% of Turks living in Germany consider themselves religious, 28% of them declaring that they go to the mosque weekly or more often than that, and 45% that they pray several times a day (Pollack *et al.*, 2016, p.12). Turks are religious people, but they do not have fundamentalist tendencies, proving understanding towards other religions. For example, 49% of Turks associate Christianity with tolerance, while only 41% of the total German population makes this association (Pollack *et al.*, 2016, p.19).

As from the perspectives of nationals, studies investigated the views the host countries citizens have about Turkish minority, the opinions being influenced by many variables. For example, in the study conducted by Chand and Tung (2011) on 139 students from Vancouver, in the context of the financial crisis from 2008 and the increasing protectionist feelings, the results confirm the importance of ethnicity in affecting attitudes toward different countries, and, implicit, towards different ethnic groups, including the impact of political/cultural ties and current/historical events on their formation. In a similar spirit, a study directed by Ozretic-Dosen *et al.* (2018) concluded that a good image of Turkey as a tourist destination and the positive associations linked to the effectiveness of soap operas broadcast abroad and promotional investments into the creation of the country image in foreign markets compensate, in a way, negative perception Croats citizen have about Turkey related to human rights and gender inequalities.

An important body of literature has developed in the recent years regarding the image of different groups of immigrants and the voting preference (the Halo effect): “...Accordingly, it is not so much the local size of the local population, which is perceived as foreign, but rather its relative proportion in the surrounding countryside, which leads to a diffuse feeling of threat” (Martig and Bernauer, 2018, p. 27). The Halo effect can be used as a tool for positioning in order to strengthen the country's image, able to influence the situation in business and politics (Krasnyuk and Mouzikant, 2014, p.111).

3. Methodology

This research aims to identify the students' views on some aspects of Turkey's economic presence in Romania and on the prospects of the Romanian-Turkish economic relations. It was carried out among students from several universities from Romania and has as main objectives: (i) determining the opinion on Turkey and on the Romanian-Turkish relations; (ii) assessing the consumption of products of Turkish origin and their quality; (iii) estimating the number of Romanian students who visited Turkey and the influence of this experience on their opinions about this country; (iv) determining the opinion about companies with Turkish capital in Romania; (v) identifying the potential of involvement of Romanian students in joint activities with organizations in Turkey; (vi) determining the opinion on the perspectives of the Romanian-Turkish relations; (vii) determining the opinion on Turkey's accession to the European Union; (viii) determining the opinion on the traditional Turkish minority in Romania.

The secondary objectives of the research result from the correlation of the main objectives mentioned above with some socio-demographic variables of the respondents (level of education, field of study, university where they study, gender of the respondent).

The target population is represented by students of Romanian citizenship, who study at Romanian universities. The research tool used was a structured questionnaire, consisting of 27 closed questions.

The information collection method was the self-administrated questionnaire, in the presence of an interview operator. The questionnaires were completed in physical format, within the selected universities, between October and November 2018.

Regarding the sample size, a sample of 250 respondents was desired, but, following the subsequent verification of how the questionnaire was completed, the sample size was reduced to 187 respondents.

A combination of convenience sampling and cluster sampling was chosen as the sampling procedure. In fact, four of the most important universities in Romania were selected: the University of Bucharest, the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, the Ovidius University of Constanța. Then one or more groups of students were chosen in each university, the questionnaire being administered to all members of these groups. The aim was to have opinions from students of different field of studies and level of studies. Thus, students from six fields of study (economics and business, law, letters, history, European studies, political science) and from three levels of studies (undergraduate cycle, master's degree and doctoral studies) have been interviewed.

4. Findings and Discussions

Starting from these studies, the perception of students about the Romania-Turkey relations adds to a still scarce literature in the area. To follow the objectives of this research, an investigation on a sample of students from different universities from Romania was performed in October and November 2018.

The structure of the sample was as follows:

- regarding the level of university training at which the respondent is a student: 117 respondents (62.6%) are undergraduate students, 67 respondents (35.8%) are master's students, 3 respondents (1.6%) are doctoral students.
- by field of study: 91 respondents (48.7%) are students of economics and business, 56 respondents (29.9%) are students of letters, history or law, and 40 respondents (21.4%) are students of European studies or political sciences.
- depending on the university: 91 respondents (48.7%) are students at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, 41 respondents (21.9%) are students at the University of Bucharest, 34 respondents (18.2%) are students at Ovidius University in Constanța, 21 respondents (11.2%) are students at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași.
- by gender: 109 respondents (58.3%) are females and 78 respondents (41.7%) are males.

In what follows, we will present and discuss the main findings of our research.

a. Determining the students' opinion regarding Turkey and the Romanian-Turkish relations

Regarding the general opinion about Turkey, on a scale from 5 (very good opinion) to 1 (very bad opinion), the average score was 3.53, which indicates that the respondents' opinion about Turkey falls into the “good opinion” category.

Given the very small number of PhD students (only three respondents), their opinion has less statistical significance. Therefore, the answers of master's and doctoral students were grouped into a single category for this question. The undergraduate students opted to a more extent than others for the intermediate option (“neither good, nor bad” opinion), which may suggest a possible uncertainty about the opinion expressed. Calculating the average score, it was found that there are no significant differences between the two categories of respondents, undergraduate students having an average of 3.55, and master's and doctoral students an average of 3.51.

Depending on the field of study, the average score leads to the following ranking: Economics and Business - 3.62, European Studies and Political Science - 3.50, Law, Letters, History - 3.41. Students in Economics and Business have the best general opinion about Turkey, but the differences from the other fields are not important.

By universities, the “ranking” of students in relation to their opinion about Turkey is the following: ASE Bucharest - 3.62, University of Bucharest - 3.54, Ovidius University of Constanța - 3.38, A.I. Cuza from Iași - 3.37. It is found that the opinions are favourable in the case of all four universities, but there is a difference between the two universities in Bucharest, which get an average score of over 3.50, which places students' answers in the category "good opinion" and the two universities from other cities, which obtain an average score below 3.50, which places the answers in the category "neither good nor bad opinion". Even so, the opinion of the students from the universities of Iași and Constanța are much closer to the “good opinion” category, than to the “bad opinion” category.

Depending on gender, it is found that female students have a significantly better opinion about Turkey (score 3.67, which includes the answers in the “good opinion” category), compared to male students (score 3.35, which includes the answers in the category "Neither good nor bad opinion"). There may be some explanations for this difference, as some authors (Ozretic-Dosen *et al.*, 2018; Yoo, Jo and Jung 2014) mention the influence of television in promoting the country image (eg. Turkish soap operas) or the “romantic view” of Istanbul.

Regarding the Romanian-Turkish relations throughout history, the average score is 2.60, which indicates that the respondents consider these relations as “neither good nor bad”, but closer to the category “bad relations” than to the category “good relations”. The explanation of this opinion is related - most likely - to the numerous conflicts between the two nations mentioned in the history books, which have remained in the collective memory. Noting that the last major conflict was almost a century and a half ago, and history books, most often, do not highlight interpersonal relationships, which may not have been as tense as the battles fought over the centuries.

Things change substantially for the better when it comes to the opinion on Romanian-Turkish relations after 1989. The average score of the answers to this question is 4.19, which places the average opinion in the category of “good relations”, not far from the category of “very good” relations. In addition, none of the respondents said that the recent relations between Romania and Turkey would be “very bad” and less than 3% of the respondents said that the relations would be “bad”. This proves both a remarkable improvement in the relations between Romania and Turkey in the last 30 years compared to what happened several centuries ago, and the ability of the respondents to notice this change. For this question, there are no significant differences depending on the level of studies, the average score being 4.24 in the case of undergraduate students and 4.11 in the case of master's and doctoral students. Concerning the field of studies, the average scores are not very different (Economics and Business - 4.24, Law, Letters, History - 4.21, European Studies and Political Science - 4.03), but there is still a lower score from students at European studies and political science, compared to the other two fields. By universities, the ranking is as follows: ASE Bucharest - 4.24; Ovidius University of Constanța - 4.22; University of Bucharest - 4.16; A.I. Cuza University from Iași - 3.94. Finally, there is practically no difference between male (4.18) and female (4.20) regarding the opinion on the Romanian-Turkish relations after 1989.

b. Estimation of consumption of products of Turkish origin and assessment of their quality

Almost 8 out of 10 respondents recalled that they consumed or used products made in Turkey, which we consider to be a very good percentage for this country's exports.

When asked about the quality of Turkish food, the average score was 3.10, which is reasonable, the average opinion being at the top of the category "neither good nor bad opinion". On the other hand, almost a quarter of the respondents could not or did not want to respond, and it could be hypothesized that some of them were polite and did not want to express an unfavourable opinion.

Regarding non-food products made in Turkey, it seems that they are less appreciated than food products by the Romanian consumers. The average score is 2.89, but this also falls into the category of "neither good nor bad opinion".

In the case of Turkish catering establishments (restaurants, shawarma shops, pastries, oriental sweets, etc.), the opinion is substantially more favourable than in the case of products imported from Turkey, the average score being 3.61, which falls into the category of "good opinion". This is a proof of the success enjoyed by small public catering units (shawarma shops and oriental sweets, in particular) among the public in Romania, but also around the world. Of course, there is a possibility that the people who produce and market such products may not necessarily be from Turkey, but we appreciate that most of the owners are Turkish. And in any case, it is a good note given to the products of traditional Turkish gastronomy.

c. Estimation of the number of Romanian students who visited Turkey and the influence of this experience on their opinions regarding this country

Almost a quarter of respondents (22.5%) have visited Turkey in the past. It is interesting to know if this visit influenced the opinion about this country, and, if so, in which direction the change took place. To this end, a correlation was made between the answers to this question and the two other questions (one concerning the opinion on Turkey and another on about its prospects of joining to the EU). There was a significant difference in the general opinion about Turkey between those who visited this country (average score 3.98) and those who did not visit it (average score 3.40). It can be assumed that the visit to Turkey and the direct knowledge of the realities from there contributed to the improvement of the respondents' image of this country. The conclusion would be that it is in the Turkey's best interest to attract as many visitors as possible, not only to obtain revenues from tourist expenses, but also to create a better image abroad. On the other hand, somewhat surprisingly, the visit of Turkey does not influence at all the opinion about the country's accession to the European Union, the differences of opinion between those who were in Turkey (average score 2.94) and those who were not in Turkey (average score 2.97) are insignificant. The explanation could be related to the more rational nature of the opinion on Turkey's accession to the EU, including the consideration of possible negative implications (real or presumed) for Romania.

The vast majority of those who visited Turkey (92.9%) did so as a tourist, the other reasons for visiting, of a professional nature, having low weights. These answers suggest that Turkey is a holiday destination rather than a business destination for young Romanians.

The vast majority of those who visited Turkey (90.5%), regardless of the reason for the visit, included Istanbul as one of the places visited. We consider it a natural situation, not only because it is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, but also because it is a hub of transport infrastructure, which connects virtually all areas of Turkey. Also, almost half of those who visited Turkey (and just over 10% of all respondents) visited the resorts on the shores of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. Regarding "other tourist attractions" visited in Turkey, Cappadocia, Pamukkale, Ankara and Troy were mentioned.

Respondents who visited Turkey seem to be satisfied with the experience lived on this occasion, with over 57% of them declaring themselves "very satisfied" or "satisfied". The average score of the answers is 3.83, but it should be emphasized that no respondent is "very dissatisfied", only two are "dissatisfied" and two others do not want to express their opinion.

d. Determining the students' opinion regarding certain activities of the companies with Turkish capital in Romania

The first question related to this objective of the research, asked the respondents to say if they know any company or any entrepreneur from Turkey that has business in Romania. The question required not only a positive or negative answer, but also - in case of an affirmative answer - its / his nomination. Eight out of ten respondents said they knew a Turkish company or an entrepreneur. However, being asked to nominate a company with Turkish capital, only 32 of the respondents (17.1%) gave a correct answer, mentioning the name of a company operating in Romania. Among the most frequently mentioned companies are Arctic, Kanal D, as well as Credit Europe and Garanti Bank. There were quite a few wrong answers (those companies belonged to investors from other countries) and there were many answers like "shawarma shop on X Street" (which can be considered a correct answer, admitting that, as a rule, shawarma shops are owned by Turkish citizens).

There were also many respondents who stated that they knew Turkish companies but did not remember their names at that time.

The respondents' assessments regarding the volume of Turkish investments in Romania are quite diverse, the opinion being rather slightly favourable, with 22.4% of the respondents leaning towards a high level and 18.2% towards a low level. The average score is 3.13, slightly above the intermediate level of 3.00. It should be noted that 41.7% of respondents cannot appreciate, and another 17.7% consider the level of investment “neither high nor low”, which suggests that six out of ten respondents do not have an opinion formed in this regard.

In general, a very large share of respondents does not have enough information to assess the level of Turkish investment in Romania, which we consider to be normal and a sign of the sincerity from respondents. In addition, in Constanța, where two thirds of the interviewees could not assess this indicator, confusion is possible to be made between the investments of Turkish citizens and those of Romanian citizens of Turkish ethnicity, which led many respondents to refrain to express an opinion.

Economics and business students (who, in theory, are best informed on this subject) are those who consider Turkish investments to be high (average score 3.19), while students of Law, Letters and History (3.08) and those from European Studies and Political Science (3.00) perceived investments as smaller. But, once again, the differences are not important.

There is also a difference between the opinions of master's and doctoral students, on the one hand, and those of undergraduate students, on the other hand, regarding the level of Turkish investments in Romania. The former appreciate that investments are higher, but the difference of opinion it is not very relevant (average score: 3.23 vs. 3.07).

Likewise, there are no significant differences between respondents according to gender (male - average score 3.11, female - average score 3.15) in relation to the opinion about the level of Turkish investments in Romania.

Respondents' assessments of the promotional activities carried out by Turkey and Turkish companies in Romania are somewhat similar to those on the level of Turkish investment, in that the average score is slightly above the intermediate level (3.25) and opinions are quite divided. Also, as in the previous question, the cumulative share of respondents who cannot express an opinion and those who consider promotional activities "neither good nor bad" is high (over 60%).

e. Determining the potential of involving Romanian students in joint activities with organizations in Turkey

When asked about the willingness to work for a company in Romania whose owner is a Turkish citizen, as expected, most respondents (41.2%) are indifferent about the nationality of the owner of the company in which they would work. Among those who express a preference, many more are open to work in a Turkish company (35.8%) than those who are reluctant (11.8%).

Regarding the willingness to travel in Erasmus+ mobility to a university in Turkey for a semester, the respondents are rather favourable, 34.8% of them expressing themselves in this respect, and only 7.5% having a negative attitude. On the other hand, 39% of respondents chose the “I don't know” option, which could reflect certain reluctance, either towards a scholarship in Turkey or towards an Erasmus+ scholarship, in general.

f. Determining the students' opinion regarding the perspectives of the Romanian-Turkish relations

To the question regarding the evolution of the economic relations between Romania and Turkey in the next 10 years, most respondents (40.6%) did not offer a concrete answer, preferring the "I can't appreciate" option, which proves that Romanian students are not very interested in this subject. However, they are rather optimistic, 26.2% of them considering that economic relations will increase; almost double than those who think they will decrease (13.9%).

The opinion on the evolution of the economic relations between Romania and Turkey in the next 10 years does not differ radically according to the level of studies: bachelor's degree - average score 3.25, master and doctorate - average score 3.21.

Instead, a difference to be taken into account depends on the field of study of the respondents, those from European Studies and Political Science (average score 2.58) being much more restrained than students from Law, Letters, History (average score 3.38) or from those from Economics and Business (average score 3.37).

Also, a significant difference regarding the opinion on the evolution of the economic relations between Romania and Turkey in the next 10 years is registered between the students from ASE (average score 3.37) and those from Ovidius University of Constanța (average score 3.13), on the one hand, and those from the University of Bucharest (average score 2.60) and A.I. Cuza University from Iași (average score 2.58), on the other hand. A possible explanation for the more optimistic vision of the students from ASE Bucharest could be the higher degree of information, which can be presumed by the nature of the field of study, while the students from Ovidius University Constanța could be positively influenced by the proximity of the traditional Turkish community.

The differences according to the gender of the respondents are - as usual, in this research - insignificant. And just as usual, female have a slightly more favourable opinion (average score 3.29) than male (average score 3.17).

The students' opinions on the areas in which Turkish businessmen should invest in Romania were quite similar among students, being relatively difficult to highlight the recommended areas in relation to those not recommended. In all cases, the percentage of those who did not express an opinion was between 20% and 30% of respondents. The most indicated fields were considered tourism (71.7%), sports (67.9%) and medical clinics (63.6%), the explanation being probably related to the experience of Turkish companies in these fields. On the last places were investments in the field of education and the financial-banking domain.

g. Determining students' views on Turkey's accession to the European Union

Turkey's accession to the European Union is a sensitive issue and, unfortunately, it has reached a stage where the chances of it to happen are very low. The opinions expressed by the Romanian students are somehow in line with this trend, the average being in the area of "neither yes nor no" (average score 2.96), those who are rather reluctant being slightly more numerous than those who positively assess Turkey's accession to the Union EU.

The main argument in favour of Turkey's accession to the European Union, according to the Romanian students, is related to the country's economic potential, with almost two thirds of respondents mentioning this. The second argument is one of principle: 38.1% of those who are in favour of Turkey's accession believe that any European country wishing to join the EU must be accepted, and in the third and in the fourth places, at a short distance from each other, are political-military arguments ("it would increase the politico-military force of Europe and its influence in the Middle East" - 28.6%) or those regarding human rights ("it would contribute to the observance of human rights and the rule of law in Turkey")

- 23.8%). “Increasing Europe's cultural diversity” was not an argument that attracted many options, with only 14.3% of respondents motivating their attitude in this way.

Paradoxically, the main argument against Turkey's accession to the EU is also of an economic nature, being related to the costs of accession. Among respondents who do not consider Turkey's accession to the EU, 68% argue that "Turkey is a relatively poor country and the costs of its development would be very high." The paradox is even greater as the level of development of Turkey is quite comparable to that of Romania. "Turkey is a predominantly Asian country, and its culture and civilization do not belong to Europe" is the second argument, in importance, far from the first one (32% of respondents chose it). The other three options offered ("Europe is not in a prosperous period now and the enlargement of the Union should be not a priority", "Turkey is located in a conflict zone (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Kurdish population) and would increase the danger of instability in Europe, as well as the terrorist danger", "Turkey's population is very large and Turkey's influence in the European institutions would be incorrectly high") are less important arguments, each considered by 18% to 24% of the respondents.

The differences of opinion depending on the level of education are not important, master's and doctoral students (average score 3.04) being slightly more favourable to the idea of Turkey's accession to the European Union than the undergraduate students (average score 2.92). Regarding the field of studies, there are some differences between the respondents, the most favourable opinion of Turkey being registered in the case of students in Economics and Business (average score 3.09), followed by those from Law, Letters, History (average score 2.91), those less favourable being, as in the case of the opinion on the evolution of the economic relations between Romania and Turkey in the next 10 years, the students from European Studies and Political Sciences (average score 2.72).

As in the case of the opinion on the evolution of the economic relations between Romania and Turkey in the next 10 years, there is a cleavage between Ovidius University of Constanța (score 3.18) and ASE Bucharest (score 3.09), on the one hand, and the University of Bucharest (score 2.75) and A.I. Cuza University from Iași (score 2.41), on the other hand. As usually, female (score 3.04) have a more favourable attitude towards Turkey as male (score 2.85).

h. Determining the students' opinion regarding the traditional Turkish minority in Romania

The opinion about the traditional Turkish minority falls into the “good opinion” category, with an average score of 3.54, given that almost half of the respondents (48.6%) have a good and very good opinion, and only 10.2% have a bad or a very bad opinion. 41.2% of the respondents either do not express any opinion or opt for the intermediate “neither good nor bad opinion”.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The exploratory nature of the research has led to the revelation of some interesting aspects, which can be deepened through further research, or may be considered as possible actions for the decision-makers involved in the process of developing the relationships between Turkey and Romania.

In general, the opinions of young Romanians about Turkey and about the Romanian-Turkish relations are rather good, but not very good. There is a remarkable difference between the respondents' opinion about the relations between the two countries in the last 30 years, after the restoration of a democratic regime in Romania (score 4.19), compared to the opinion on the historical relations between Romania and Turkey (score 2.60). We believe that it can be said that the evolution of bilateral relations between Romania and Turkey in recent decades is a model of how to improve relations between two countries that have had numerous conflicts in their history.

On the other hand, a concerning conclusion could be that both the general opinion about Turkey (score 3.53) and the opinion on bilateral relations after 1989 (score 4.19) are much better than the opinion on the further evolution of the Romanian-Turkish relations (score 3.23). This means that the authorities from the two countries should do more to promote bilateral relations, the perception being that there is great potential in this direction, but the optimism about exploiting this potential is moderate.

An important thing highlighted by the research is that the opinion about Turkey is significantly better among those who visited the country, compared to those who did not visit it (average score 3.98 in the first case, average score 3.40 in the second case). The conclusion would be that the tourism, performed in a professional way, is a very good way for improving the image of a country and for promoting bilateral relationships.

Another conclusion that deserves further study in the future is that the traditional Turkish minority in Romania could play a more important role in the bilateral relations, taking into account the good image it enjoys among the majority Romanian population (score 3.54). Of course, it is difficult to make a comparison between a minority that has existed for hundreds of years and a minority that emerged only 50-60 years ago, but it is a reality that the Turkish minority in Romania has a significantly better image than Turkish minorities in Western European countries. And this situation can be better capitalized on in the interest of developing relations between the two countries.

Also, some punctual conclusion can be drawn according to the structure of the respondents:

✓ It seems that female have a slightly better opinion about Turkey compared to male. If this finding is confirmed by further studies, it could be used by the Turkish authorities in more effectively targeting the promotion of the country (for example, using women's magazines to promote holidays in Turkey);

✓ Students from the schools of Economics and Business have a better opinion both about Turkey and about the present and future of the Romanian-Turkish relations, compared to those from European Studies or Political Science, which leads to the hypothesis that Turkey has a better image from an economic perspective than from a political one;

✓ In general, students from the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest and those from Ovidius University in Constanța have a better opinion about Turkey, compared to those from the University of Bucharest and Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași. Given that the first two universities received sponsorships from the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), while the last two did not receive such sponsorships, it can be assumed that this had a positive influence on students' views, which means that TIKA's activities have been effective, and that they should be expanded.

Without absolutizing the results obtained, we consider that they can be a starting point for further theoretical studies, as well as a source of inspiration for the managerial decisions of those able to make such decisions.

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