

# **THE ROMANI MOBILIZATION IN TURKEY**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis seeks to explore the reasons of the weakness of the Turkish Romani mobilization and the factors which spur or hinder this mobilization. In so doing, I analyze the impact of the domestic political opportunity structure and the supranational political opportunity structure (the EU) on the Romani mobilization in Turkey. I also examine the framing done by the Turkish Romani leaders to find out the intrinsic reasons of the weakness of this mobilization. This research relies on in-depth interviews conducted with five Romani leaders and four experts. These interviews were conducted in Edirne, Izmir, Istanbul and Budapest in April 2008. Moreover, although this thesis focuses on the Turkish Roma, a brief comparison of the Romani mobilization in Turkey with the Romani mobilization in Hungary is included. Thus, by looking at a strong case, I aim to display why the Turkish Romani mobilization is weak. I argue that the Turkish legislation on minorities is the main threat hindering this mobilization whereas urban renovation projects appear as an opportunity since they lead to a sense of solidarity among the Roma. Furthermore, the EU acts as both an opportunity and threat to the Turkish Romani mobilization. Based on the framings of the Romani leaders, I conclude that lack of education, lack of experience, prejudices, lack of solidarity, financial problems, organizational fragmentation, clashes in framings, and the fact that they identify themselves primarily as Turk constitute the main factors explaining the weakness of the Romani mobilization in Turkey.

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## List of Abbreviations

CEECs	Central and Eastern European countries
ECHR	The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
EDROM	Edirne Romani Association
ERRC	European Roma Right Center
EU	European Union
hYd	Helsinki Yurttaşlar Derneği [Helsinki Citizens Assembly]
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IGO	Inter-governmental Organization
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSI	Open Society Institute
PHARE	Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
TGNA	Turkish Grand National Assembly
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UYD	Ulaşılabilir Yaşam Derneği [Accessible Life Association]

## Introduction

“Roma” is a political term used as an umbrella for all members of the Romani ethnic community since the 1960s. However, it is acknowledged that the Romani community is extremely diverse, and all Romani subgroups have their own ethnic and cultural features. The UN sees the Roma as a nation scattered throughout the entire world (Klimova-Alexander 2005, 13). The Roma can be defined in three ways: As a historical diaspora (with common historic roots in India and common migration patterns); as a group characterized by a typical culture and lifestyle (nomadism and common cultural practices); and as a biological kinship, group or race (Vermeersch in Klimova-Alexander 2005, 13). According to the Fourth Romani Congress, their number is deemed to be around 10-15 million in the world.

The Roma are among the world's most disadvantaged, most persecuted and least integrated people. Roma populations have been subject to discrimination, racist violence, collective exploitation, elimination, and assimilation through history (Klimova-Alexander 2005, 14). They are often deprived of education, jobs, housing, or social benefits. They produce and receive very little wealth. They are more likely to feel marginality, pessimism, and inferiority. Most importantly, they hardly participate in institutions or politics; they are mostly apathetic. Nevertheless, it is argued that Romani activism dates back to 19th century. The first Romani aspiration for international representation was directed at the League of Nations. Yet, it was 1920s- 30s that Romani organizations started to function regularly in a more collective form in some countries like Poland and Romania (Klimova-Alexander 2005, 15). All in all, it is hard to assert that the Roma are successful in being represented or making their voice heard in the political scene today, except some countries like Hungary which has Romani members in both the national and European parliament.

## **1. The Purpose and the Research Questions**

The main purpose of this research is to provide a study on the Romani mobilization in Turkey. The Turkish Romani mobilization has been a weak mobilization compared to other Romani mobilizations, particularly that of the Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, this thesis asks “which factors hinder or stimulate the Turkish Romani mobilization?” and “why the Romani mobilization is weak in Turkey?” In order to understand that, I state that both external factors and internal factors should be analyzed. In so doing, the domestic political opportunity structure in Turkey and the supranational political opportunity structure, namely the EU should be examined to discern the factors that foster and hinder the Romani mobilization in Turkey. Moreover, the internal factors among the Romani activists should also be analyzed by looking at the framing of the Romani leaders to understand the weakness of the Romani mobilization in Turkey. Although this thesis is not a comparative study, I shall include a brief comparison of the Romani mobilization in Turkey with the Roma mobilization in Hungary. The reason why I chose Hungary lies in the fact that Hungary has gone much further in the codification of collective minority rights than any other country among the CEECs (Vermeersch 2004, 8). Therefore, my aim is to compare a successful case and a weak case in order to display the intrinsic reasons of the weakness of the Turkish Romani mobilization. Nevertheless, as mentioned, the Romani mobilization in Turkey is in the center of my thesis.

## **2. Literature Review on the Romani Mobilization**

This research draws on the book “The Romani Movement: Minority Politics and Ethnic Mobilization in Contemporary Central Europe” by Peter Vermeersch (2007). In his book, Vermeersch aims to answer the question whether there have been any attempts to establish a Romani movement in Central Europe, and he traces the reasons for its successes and failures. He



finds it striking that very few social scientists have examined the Roma as a political movement since the emphasis has been on the economic and social conditions of the Roma. The role of the Roma as political actors has been highly neglected (Vermeersch 2007, 2). He points out that the Roma succeeded in attracting the attention of international organizations, yet, have failed to mobilize into a political mass movement. He chose Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary for his research since they seem to be similar in terms of their communist past and recent histories. Moreover, they all have seen the rise of activists and organizations since 1990s.

To analyze the Romani movement in these countries, he looks at their communist and post-communist domestic political contexts. Moreover, he explores both electoral and non-electoral politics and points out how the Romani activists in these countries frame the issue. He also turns to the international political context, and discusses the impact of the EU, Council of Europe and OSCE on Central European Romani movements. I particularly based my thesis on this book since I find the use of social movements literature very innovative and interesting for the Romani mobilization case. While reading this book, I also agreed with Vermeersch that not much has been written on the political role of the Roma. However, in appreciating his contribution, one also sees that there are already previous studies on the political mobilization of the Central and Eastern European Roma.

Zoltan Barany's book entitled "The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics" (2001) chooses Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Poland, and Macedonia as cases. The book traces how different regime types of these countries denote different minority policies on the Roma, and how these regime changes have influenced the Romani political mobilization, the status, identity and marginality of the Roma (Barany 2001, 3). I find this study interesting since it displays how the level of political mobilization of the

Roma differ/ remain the same as they are dispersed in different countries. Barany also wonders to what extent the Roma conditions and efforts on political mobilization, as well as the activities of the IGOs and NGOs affect the state policies towards the Roma. This book also constitutes a relevant example to my thesis since it is one of the few studies on Romani activism. However, this book is also devoted to the analysis of the Central and Eastern European Roma whose experiences are actually quite irrelevant to that of the Turkish Roma. This fact, on the other hand, has stimulated my interest to make a research on the Turkish Roma.

Ilona-Klimova Alexander's book "The Romani Voice in World Politics: The United Nations and Non-State Actors" (2005) should also be mentioned as another pioneering source in the literature of Romani activism. The book analyzes the Romani representation at the UN fora. The essence of the book is devoted to how the Romani issues are dealt with at the UN and how the Romani activists interact with the UN. This book takes the Romani mobilization from a global standpoint since the Roma are given as an example to non-state action. The author investigates how the political opportunity structure at the UN level influences the non-state global Romani activism. This book is also of great use to my study yet in my thesis, rather than using a global non-state Romani activism, as I mentioned, I aim to analyze the Roma in Turkey. Moreover, although the UN perspective is equally interesting, unlike these three scholars, my study shall solely rest on the analysis of the EU.

When we look to the literature on the Turkish Romani mobilization, the book chapter "Secaat Arzederken Merd: Turk Cingenelerinin Orgutlenme Sorunlari [Organization Problems of the Turkish Roma] (2005) appears as a vital source to address. This article is published in Turkish and it states the problems of the Roma in getting organized. "Turkey's Roma: Political participation and organization" by Suat Kolukirik and Sule Toktas (2007) is another important

source which is published in English. This study aims to display the profile of the political participation, organization, and perception and experience of citizenship of the Turkish Roma. Moreover, their views on Turkey's prospective European Union membership, their self-perception as identity and world view are also analyzed (Kolukirik and Toktas 2007, 764). This study is conducted on an individual-centric approach and is based on data gathered in Tarlabasi district of Izmir. The questionnaire surveys and interviews were conducted with the Roma living in this district in house visits, traditional coffeehouse visits, attendance at weddings, spring advent and funeral ceremonies, ad hoc interviews in the street and household interviews. This article provides valuable hints on the low mobilization of the Roma. Moreover, some remarks on the impact of the EU on the Roma participation and domestic legislation are also addressed, yet these are covered very briefly since the core of the study is devoted to the findings derived from the interviews conducted with local Roma people to demonstrate their political participation and organization tendencies. Admittedly, this research contributes immensely to the Turkish Romani studies; yet, it is solely conducted with local Roma in one district.

### ***3. The Significance of My Research***

Although there are some significant studies on the socio-economic approaches to the Roma, Turkish Roma as an ethnic mobilization group has been almost totally overlooked both by foreign and Turkish scholars despite the considerable number of the Roma in Turkey except the study of Emine Onaran Incirlioglu (2005), and Suat Kolukirik and Sule Toktas (2007).<sup>1</sup> As seen overtly, Turkey hosts one of the biggest Roma populations in the world. In this respect, it is very

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<sup>1</sup> The ERRC report states that the estimated Roma population in Turkey is between 300.000- 500.000 (Petrova 2004, 10). Suat Kolukirik and Sule Toktas argue that the Roma population in Turkey is around 1 million (2007, 763). The International Romani Conference, which was held in 2005 with the cooperation of UYD and EDROM and a recent study in Bilgi University suggest that the Roma population in Turkey is around two million. The EU 2006 Turkey Progress Report reiterates the same number (2006, 23).

interesting to see a gap in the literature regarding the Turkish Roma, most notably the Romani mobilization. I believe that to analyze the reasons of the weakness of the Romani mobilization constitutes not only an empirical but also a theoretical puzzle which should be solved. Therefore, my contribution to the literature is to provide a detailed study on the Turkish Romani mobilization by making a broad analysis which takes both the external (the domestic and the supranational structures) and the internal (the Romani leaders) dynamics which influence it into consideration. Moreover, my research is conducted with the Romani leaders in three cities, therefore, it aims to make an elite-level analysis.

#### ***4. Clarifications on the Terminology***

##### **4.1. What Does Mobilization Mean?**

Ethnic mobilization is defined as “the process by which groups organize around some feature of ethnic identity (for example, skin color, language, customs) in pursuit of collective ends.” (Olzak in Barany 2002, 280). Political mobilization is “the process by which a group goes from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life.” (Tilly 1978, 69). In other words, a group of individuals become active to realize their political goals such as “the cessation of political, social, and economic discrimination; the improvement of the given collective’s conditions and social standing”. Mobilization requires transforming a commitment into action and it can be measured “by the active membership of the organizations created, the amount of resources accumulated, the number of programs established, and the number and size of demonstrations and protests organized” (Barany 2002, 280). According to Peter Vermeersch, political mobilization is the process by which political actors organize collective efforts and find adherents in order to attempt to bring about political change, and attempt to influence the existing distribution of power (Vermeersch 2007, 28).

When we look at the Roma in Turkey, we see that their mobilization is a very infant one having a very short history. During my interviews, when I asked the Romani leaders and researchers on how to define their “mobilization”, most of them agreed that the Romani mobilization in Turkey is a weak one.<sup>2</sup> The Romani associations have only started to be established in this decade, and they are active only for a couple of years. Thus, while defining “weak mobilization” in this study, one should take the past of the mobilization, the active membership of the Romani organizations, the amount of resources accumulated to Romani associations, the number of programs established, and the number and size of demonstrations and protests organized for and by the Roma into consideration. These all remain very insufficient for the Roma in Turkey. Most importantly, the Roma still lack even basic rights, hence it is almost a dream for the Turkish Roma to be granted political representation and bring about political change. Therefore, what is implied in this thesis by “the Romani mobilization in Turkey” is rather a process of establishing associations, breaking prejudices, raising awareness, and demanding rights rather than a strong political change.

#### 4.2. “Roma” or “Çingene”?

The term “Roma”, is the ethnocultural self-appellation preferred by many since “Gypsy” has often negative connotations. “Roma” means “people” in the plural masculine gender in Romani language (Petrova 2004, 7). The usage of the term “Roma” is highly connected with the process of Romani political mobilization (Vermeersch 2007, 13).<sup>3</sup> In Turkey, “çingene” is used to refer to the Roma people whereas for a few years, “Roma” has been preferred as a better

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<sup>2</sup> Only my interviewee Adrian Marsh (2008) argued that the Roma mobilization is currently not weak in Turkey since there are many Romani associations. Furthermore, representatives from these associations attend national conferences on the Roma on a regular basis and exchange ideas.

<sup>3</sup> In various languages, the words “cigan”, “cikan”, “cigany”, “gypsy” are used to define the Roma. More specifically, Bulgarian “tsigani”, French “gitanes”, German “zigeuner”, Hungarian “ciganyok”, Italian “zingari”, Russian “tygane”, Spanish “gitano” are the words used to address the Roma (Petrova 2004, 11).

substitute by the Roma. Yet some Roma still identify themselves as “Gypsies” claiming that the word “Roma” distracts them from their very ethnic identity (Aksu 2006, 127). Furthermore, there are numerous local names used for the Roma in Turkey.<sup>4</sup> In addition to that, some scholars argue that the Roma in Turkey belong to “the Rom” group and thus should be named as so (Marsh 2008).<sup>5</sup> However, in agreeing with this statement, in order to keep the entirety of the international terminology, I shall utilize the umbrella term “Roma” throughout my thesis.

## **5. *Delimitations and Scope***

This study is an attempt to shed light on the Romani mobilization solely in Turkey. In certain parts of the study, the reader might come across the phrase “the Turkish Roma”. Yet, it should be noted that this study does not aim to provide a study on, say, the Turkish Roma living in Bulgaria or Greece. The sole focus of this research is the Roma living in Turkey. However, to illuminate the reasons of the weakness of the Turkish Romani mobilization, a brief comparison with the Romani mobilization in Hungary shall be added in Chapter Six. Moreover, regarding the Turkish legislation on minorities, this thesis seeks to focus on the provisions related with the Roma, therefore, provisions or amendments on other minorities are left out.

## **6. *Methodology***

This study shall draw information from primary and secondary sources. The core of this research rests on the in-depth interviews conducted. Before going to Turkey, my first interview was in February 2008 in Budapest with Mr. Sinan Gokcen, who was one of the founders of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly Turkey and who has been working in the ERRC. I chose three cities

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<sup>4</sup> Please see Chapter One, the section “The Roma in Turkey” for the list of these local names.

<sup>5</sup> “The Rom” is the largest immigrating group among the Roma, moving from India to the west, to the Balkans, and Central and Eastern Europe via Anatolia (Sampson in Kolukirik and Toktas 2007, 762). More detail shall be given in these migration waves in the next chapter.

for my interviews in Turkey: Edirne, Izmir and Istanbul. The reason why I chose them is threefold: First, the biggest Romani population reside in these cities. Secondly, the Romani associations in these cities are quite active. Thirdly, they are closely located to each other which enabled me to conduct interviews in this short period of time.

My first interviewee in Turkey was Mr. Erdinc Cekic, who is the founder and head of the Edirne Romani Association (EDROM).<sup>6</sup> He is also the head of the first and the biggest Romani Federation in Turkey. My second and third interviews were conducted in Izmir with Mr. Abdullah Cistir, who is the head of the Izmir Romani Association<sup>7</sup>, and with Mr. Halit Keser and Mr. Zafer Sulukculer who are the founders and the co-heads of the Izmir Contemporary Romani Association.<sup>8</sup> I then moved to Istanbul where I made a field trip to Sulukule. Although it was not an in-depth interview, I had the chance to attend an international meeting in Sulukule and talk to Mr. Sukru Punduk who is the head of the Sulukule Romani Association<sup>9</sup> and the prominent Romani activist and journalist Mrs. Hacer Foggo regarding the forced evictions. In Istanbul, I continued my interviews with Mrs. Ebru Uzpeder from the Helsinki Citizens Assembly (hYd) Istanbul. My last interviewee was Mr. Adrian Marsh, who is a prominent researcher and scholar conducting studies on the Turkish Roma. I also conducted an e-mail interview on the Hungarian Roma with lawyer and expert Mrs. Anita Danko who has been working in the ERRC. The shortest of my interviews lasted fifty minutes, and the longest lasted around two and a half hours. Although I had prepared questions in advance, I had a chance to ask follow-up questions in all of my interviews. My fieldwork and interviews in Turkey were conducted in April 2008 and all

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<sup>6</sup> Its full name is “Edirne Romani Culture and Solidarity Association” (Cekic 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Its full name is “Izmir Romani Social Cooperation and Solidarity Association” (Cistir 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Its full name is “Izmir Contemporary Roma Social Cooperation and Solidarity Association” (Keser and Sulukculer 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Its full name is “Sulukule Roma Social Cooperation and Solidarity Association” (Punduk 2008).

my interviewees agreed that their names and information derived from the interviews shall be used.

In addition to that, I benefit greatly from the EU regular progress reports on Turkey. My other sources consist of reports of the ERRC and human rights organizations, books, newspapers, academic articles, pamphlets, booklets, bulletins and publications of the Romani associations in Turkey. Finally, I aim to make a comparison of the Romani mobilization in Turkey and the Romani mobilization in Hungary in the context of the “extreme case comparison”. The reason why I chose Hungary is that Hungary is a country where the Romani mobilization is the strongest. Therefore, it is a good case selection to clarify the weakness of the Turkish case.

## **9. *The Structure of the Thesis***

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapter One analyzes the minority regime in the Ottoman Empire and in Turkey. Later on, this chapter takes a closer look at the Turkish Roma and their history. Chapter Two examines the domestic political opportunity structure in influencing the Romani mobilization in Turkey. Chapter Three focuses on the impact of the EU on the Romani mobilization in Turkey. Chapter Four completes the external analyses by turning to the internal dynamics of the Romani leaders and their framings. Chapter Five provides a brief comparison of the Turkish Romani mobilization and the Hungarian Romani mobilization.



## Chapter One: The Minority Regime and the Roma in Turkey

Having chosen the Roma in Turkey as the focal of my research as stated in the introduction, this chapter aims to introduce the Roma in Turkey more elaborately. In order to fulfil this goal, I believe that, brief information on the minority regime in Turkey should be included before starting my analysis on the Romani mobilization in Turkey. Therefore, firstly, I examine the minority regime of the Ottoman Empire, and then demonstrate the alterations undergone in the minority regime of modern Turkey. I believe that this is of particular importance to discern the treatment to the minorities in Turkey. Secondly, I intend to make the reader acquainted with the Roma in Turkey prior to my analysis on their mobilization. Thus, factual information on the Roma is provided. Later on, I move to a history of the Roma in a chronological order.

### ***1.1. The Minority Regime in the Ottoman Empire***

Turkey hosts considerable number of both ethnic and religious minorities in its territory: Kurds, Armenians, Alevis, Ezidis, Assyrians, Laz, Caferis, Roma, Rum (Greek Orthodox), Caucasians, Jews, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Arabs, Africans, Bahais, and Protestant and Catholic Christians. Turkey owes this diversity greatly to the Ottomon Empire, which was a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic Islamic empire. Due to Sharia rule, religion was the main way of identification. Therefore, despite the ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, one identified itself firstly as a Muslim, a Christian, or a Jew before being a Turk, a Kurd, or Greek (Davison in Icduygu and Soner 2006, 449). Within this diversity, the Ottomans established the millet system, according to which people were divided as Muslims and non-Muslims. The Muslim inhabitants were united as members of “nation of Islam” and subjects of the Sultan (Karpat in Ozalay 2006, 5, Kirisci and Winrow 1997, 1). There existed no sub-division, and

ethnic, linguistic and sectarian differentiations among them. Ottoman rulers identified themselves with Sunni Islam, and all the Muslim subjects were uniformized under an all-inclusive category. Therefore, the term Muslim became identical with the term Turk in the Ottoman Empire (Karpas 1985). The heterodox Muslims were not granted official recognition and millet-system-like communal autonomy was extended to them (Ortayli in Icduygu and Soner 2006: 449).

Non- Muslims were further separated as Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish communities. They were granted communal autonomy in religious, social, educational, juridical and fiscal affairs as long as they pay their taxes (Helvacioğlu 2007, 7). Be that as it may, this was a certain version of “justice” which gave these groups a legal status. Yet, this had nothing to do with “equality” or “non-discrimination” concepts. In other words, there was no equality “neither between the rulers and the ruled nor among the different sections of the ruled”. Accordingly, the millet system was not a “minority policy” but an Islamic instrument to rule the “other” (Icduygu and Soner 2006, 449, 552). More specifically, non-Muslims were subject to a lower socio-political and legal status compared to Muslims. The Ottoman Empire bestowed them a protection and tolerance to their belief systems, yet to get this, they were subjected to an inegalitarian treatment exempt from political and military affairs and burden of extra taxes. Thus, although they belonged to the same political community, millet classifications or religious identity of an Ottoman subject appointed his/ her socio-political and legal position (Icduygu and Soner 2006, 450).

Until the nineteenth century, this minority understanding prevailed. In the late eighteenth century, the impacts of economic, scientific and political revolutions and the concepts of equality and citizenship of the Western Europe began to alter the millet system into a new form of

minority treatment based on an a project of egalitarianism (Lewis in Icduygu and Soner 2006, 450). Accordingly, the classical millet system was replaced by an egalitarian political project of “ittihad-i anasir” (union of elements) which aimed to build an Ottoman nation on the basis of civil and political equality granted universally irrespective of one’s religious, sectarian and ethno-linguistic affiliation. The Ottoman reforms of modernization (Tanzimat) also attached significance to the civil, political and legal equality. The eventual goal was a classical centralized state and a community of equal individuals integrated in the notion of Ottomanism transcending ethno-cultural distinctions (Icduygu and Soner 2006, 450-1). One would expect that these egalitarian sentiments would please the minorities in the empire. However, the rise of nationalism with the growing hatred in the national states of non-Muslim minorities changed the circumstances. Greek and Serbian nationalism waves were followed by Rumanians, Montenegrin, Bulgarians, Albanians and Arabs. The Treaty of Sevres in 1920 furthered the disintegration of the Empire along with the minority problem. In this respect, following this unfortunate ending, teh successor state Turkey regarded the issue of minorities and minority rights in a very precarious way; not as a matter of freedom and equality but as a matter of ethnic separation (Icduygu and Soner 2006, 450).

### ***1.2. The Minority Regime of Turkey***

The failure of the policy of egalitarianism spurred ethnic Turkism among some intellectuals. The new leaders were no longer trusting the ideal of different treatment of minorities and national unity based on egalitarian principles. Thus, the new leaders ceased to promote a political definition of Turkish national identity. Yet still, the policy of “ittihad-i anasir was by no means substituted with an exclusivist policy of ethnic Turkism. Instead, national integrity was sought within the imagined unity of the Muslim elements. Therefore, non-Muslim

minorities were not involved in the nation-building process and minority issues and egalitarian regulations referred to non-Muslim minorities without having taken into account sub-religious groups in the Muslim population (Icduygu and Soner 2006, 452). In the aftermath of the national war, in 1923, the Peace Treaty of Lausanne was agreed which was based on principles of citizenship equality and differential treatment. As regards the rights of the non-Muslim minorities, it was stated that their rights would be respected as long as they did not pose a threat to the national unity of the country, and the republican Turkish authorities did not recognize ethnic or linguistic minorities.

The Treaty granted education, religious and cultural rights to non-Muslims within the egalitarian framework of Turkish citizenship (Oran 2004, 56). Moreover, the Lausanne framework aimed to reconcile the notion of citizenship equality with the group-specific particularities of minorities.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, minority provisions of the document referred not to the corporate personality of non-Muslim groups but to “Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities”. Moreover, a strict distinction between “Turkish nationality” (*milliyet*) and “Turkish citizenship” was made, and non-Muslims were placed in the latter category (Icduygu and Soner 2006, 453-4). Besides, contrary to the Lausanne commitments, the Turkish authorities failed to set a harmonious compromise between the policies of citizenship equality and differential treatment.

The Muslim-inclusive formulation of Turkish nationality homogenized (or assimilated) ethno-lingual and sectarian differences of Muslim citizens. In confirming their existence, Atatürk asserted that the ethnic and linguistic minorities like Circassians, Kurds or Laz had shared a long common history in legal and cultural unity; as a result, a separate national existence for them in the established form of Turkish nationality was denied. In this respect, the

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<sup>10</sup> The Treaty of Lausanne will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Lausanne rights has been delimited with the traditional condition of non-Muslim citizens while giving every member of the Turkish-Muslim population legal equality of being treated alike within the indivisible unity of Turkish national entity which aimed formal equality and non-discrimination for Muslim citizens. The principle of equality and universal citizenship became dominant in Turkish politics. Yet, this indivisible unity of the Turkish culture prohibited legal accommodation of Muslim particularities (Toktas 2006, 490, Icduygu and Soner 2006, 454-6).

### **1.3. *The Roma in Turkey***

#### **1.3.1. The History of the Roma**

It is acknowledged that the Roma historically come from India (Hancock 2002). From India, the Roma were involved in various immigration waves. These migrations took place from India allegedly due to famine, poverty, ethno-religious conflicts and several invasions like that of the Huns and the Arabs. The exact date of their departure from India is a highly debated issue among researchers, ranging from the fifth to the fifteenth century. Moreover, their migration is believed to be a process which took long years (Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 11).

Although there is no consensus on the arrival of the Roma to Byzantium, according to some scholars like Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, the Roma reached the eastern boundary of the Byzantine Empire towards the end of the tenth century and separated into three migration groups: The Ben-speaking Dom who took the southern route and settled in Syria, Palestine, and the Northern Africa, the Phen-speaking Lom who went to the north and settled in present-day Armenia and Georgia, and again the Phen-speaking Rom who took the Western

route and settled in Asia Minor and the Balkans (Sampson in Kolukirik and Toktas 2007, 762, Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 13).<sup>11</sup>

Other authors refer to a heretic sect allegedly equipped with magical skills named “Atsingani” who came to Byzantium in 1054 (Soulis in Dimitrova 2004, 11). Today, it is admitted by many Roma researchers that the word “tsingani” is derived from “atsingani” and between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, the name “atsingani” referred to the ancestors of the Roma.<sup>12</sup> According to some authors, the arrival was in 13<sup>th</sup> century, yet, for others, the arrival dates back several centuries earlier (Dimitrova 2004, 11). Although controversial, it is stated that the Roma also penetrated the Balkan lands during the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries from Constantinople. In fact, it is clear that when the Ottoman invasion took place in the fourteenth century, there were already some Roma in the Balkans (Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 21). In addition to the existing Roma, many Roma moved to the Balkans during the Ottoman invasion.

The Roma in Turkey falls under the Rom group which migrated from Anatolia to the Balkans. In the Ottoman Empire, there was a large Roma group that settled in the Thrace region with the name “Liva-i Cingane” (region of the Gypsies) (Gokbilgin in Kolukirik and Toktas 2007, 762). It is known that the majority of the Roma in the Ottoman rule were Muslims. The non-Muslim Roma were not allowed to mix with the Muslim Roma groups. Yet, the civil status of the Roma in the Ottoman Empire was based on ethnic criteria, unlike the religious criteria like the rest of the population (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights Report on Turkey

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<sup>11</sup> The Roma language started to get formed in the sixth or the seventh century and starting from the eight- ninth centuries, it developed as a separate language. Later on, their language was divided into two dialects: “Ben” and “Phen” (Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 12).

<sup>12</sup> There are also many theories on the origin of the word “atsinganoi” such as the name of a holy river in India, the Greek word “atsinganoi” meaning “untouchables”, or the word “asinkar” meaning blacksmith in one of the Persian dialects. Moreover, the word “Egyptian” was often used identical with this word (Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 13, 16, Cekic 2008).

2006, 12, Oprisan 2002). Notwithstanding, the Roma were placed in the dominant Muslim Millet with their Islamic faith. They were not regarded as minorities and they lacked full rights and privileges, being subject to discrimination (Ginio in Kolukirik and Toktas 2007, 762). Nevertheless, researchers point out that the Ottoman Empire was more tolerant to the Roma during the sixteenth and eighteenth century, in comparison to the Western European treatment. An important example is the fact that many Roma slaves escaped from the vassal principalities of Valachie and Moldavia to secure themselves in the Ottoman Empire (Oprisan 2002).

During the Ottoman time, the Roma were named “Kibti” (Copts), “Cingene”, or “Cigan”. The Roma used both Christian and Muslim names, which reflects the syncretic character of their beliefs, changing with circumstances. The first tax documentation mention concerning the Roma was in 1430 in which 431 Roma were recorded. In 1475, laws and regulations were collected relating the population of the province of Rumelia. This collection shows that the Roma, regardless of a distinction of being Muslim or Christian paid a poll-tax, which was collected from only non-Muslims. Moreover, as stated above, the Muslim Roma were distanced from the Christian Roma, however there was no substantial difference between the taxes paid by the Muslim Roma and the Christian Roma (Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 27-9).<sup>13</sup>

It is seen in the 1574 and 1638 decrees that the Ottoman leaders obliged the Roma to choose a Roma “Ceribasi”, a leader to collect the taxes<sup>14</sup> (Oprisan 2002, Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 28, 34). These registrations recorded the number of the Roma households, references about their religion, the area populated by the Roma, their occupations and their legal status. The “Law Concerning the Gypsies in the Province of Rumelia”, issued by Sultan Suleyman in 1530, and the “Law Concerning the Leader of the Gypsy Sandjak”, issued in 1541

<sup>13</sup> The Muslim Roma used to pay twenty-two akche, whereas the Christian Roma used to pay twenty-five akche (Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 33).

<sup>14</sup> “Ceribasi” also refers to Roma leaders who used to lead the Roma during the migration waves (Cekic 2008).

are significant legal documents regarding the Roma in the Ottoman Empire (Oprisan 2002).<sup>15</sup> With these laws, the Roma were entitled to regular income. They were able to serve in the army and more importantly, preserve their ethno-cultural identity. Moreover, they were granted certain rights of self- government and relative legal independence (Marushiakova and Popov 2000, 34). These legal attempts aimed to change the nomadic lifestyle of the Romani people, and in fact succeeded in converting them to a settled life. Yet, in general, the Ottoman society despised the Roma due to their way of living.

In the aftermath of the fall of the Ottoman Empire, a high Roma population immigrated to Turkey after the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1923 (Ari in Kolukirik 2007, 3). One other factor that led to the mass migrations of the Roma to Turkey was fascism in Europe. It is argued that notably in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, vast number of Roma who had already moved to Europe was forced to migrate back to Turkey from the Balkans because of being considered as “spies” of Turkey.

### **1.3.2. The Roma in Turkey**

The Roma in Turkey are named as “Cingene” most commonly. Under this general heading, local names prevail as well, such as “Roma” in Eastern Thrace, “Teber/Abdal” who live across Anatolia, “Posa” and “Kipti” who live in north-east Anatolia, Cankiri, Kastamonu and Sinop, “Mirti/ Mutrib” in Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt and southern part of Van, “Cano” in Adana, “Dom” in Diyarbakir, “Sihbizinli” in Erzurum, and “Haymantos” in Kayseri, Adana, Osmaniye, Sakarya ve Corum (Minority Rights Group International Report on Turkey 2007, 12). “Kocer”,

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<sup>15</sup> Sandjak is not a territorial and administrative unit, but is used in the sense of a group of the Roma population who served in the Ottoman army (Oprisan 2002). For a detailed content of these laws, please see Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire* (Hertfordshire: The University of Hertfordshire Press, 2000).



“Arabaci” and “brunette citizen” are other names used while referring to the Roma. There is also a different group of Greek Christian Roma, named “Balamorons” (Oprisan 2002). The Roma in Turkey use Romani, “Abdoltili” (an Altaic language spoken by the Teber) and Turkish languages, despite dialectical differences from one area to another. Moreover, the Romani language is mixed with Turkish, Kurdish, Greek and Persian (Oprisan 2002). Furthermore, currently, the majority of the Roma are Sunni Muslim (Kolukirik and Toktas 2007, 763). However, there exists also a small number of Rum Orthodox and Protestant Roma in Turkey.

The exact number of the Roma in Turkey is highly disputed. The ERRC report states that the estimated Roma population in Turkey is between 300.000- 500.000 (Petrova 2004, 10). However, many scholars claim that the population of the Roma in Turkey go far beyond the number stated by the ERRC due to fact that most of the Roma live in overcrowded households and many do not possess identity cards. What is even more striking, yet tragic is, many Roma are ashamed of declaring their identity and prefer hiding it (Aksu 2006, 87). Suat Kolukirik and Sule Toktas argue that the Roma population in Turkey is around 1 million and out of the 1 million Roma, it is estimated that around 100,000 do not hold Turkish identity cards (2007, 763). The International Romani Conference, which was held in 2005 with the cooperation of UYD and EDROM, and a recent study in Bilgi University suggest that the Roma population in Turkey is around two million. The EU 2006 Turkey Progress Report reiterates the same number (2006, 23). Adrian Marsh argues that Turkey is the country that has largest Romani population in the world, hosting 4-6 million Roma (Marsh in Yezdani 2005).

Despite the general perception that the Roma in Turkey reside mainly in Eastern Thrace, the fact is that the Roma in Turkey are spread all across the country. Nevertheless, Kırklareli, Edirne, Tekirdag, Istanbul, Duzce, İzmit, Ankara, Afyon, Izmir, Denizli, Tokat, Sivas, Samsun,

Adana, Kahramanmaras, Gaziantep and Mardin are the major cities that the Romani population in Turkey reside. They, like elsewhere, are subject to discrimination, exclusion and stereotyping. The Roma, compared to other segments of the society, experience problems in adequate housing, education, health and employment (The EU Progress Reports on Turkey 2005-7). What is the most current maltreatment against the Roma is their removal and displacing from their settlements in the context of urban renovation projects.

## Chapter Two: The Domestic Political Opportunity Structure Analysis

Having introduced the minority conception in Turkey and how it evolved from the minority regime of the Ottoman Empire to the minority regime in Turkey in Chapter One, this chapter aims to display where the Roma are placed in the minority regime in Turkey. To examine this I shall discuss the domestic reasons, which stimulate or impede the Romani mobilization in Turkey. I shall argue that the legislation regarding minorities is the main factor influencing the Romani mobilization. In this respect, I shall start by describing the legislation on the minorities and then move to the legislation on the Roma. In addition to that, I believe that the ongoing urban renovation projects have also an impact on the Romani mobilization. Ultimately, this chapter analyzes the role of the legislation and urban renovation projects as regards the Turkish Romani mobilization in light of the domestic political opportunity structure theory.

### ***2.1. The Political Opportunity Structure***

The political process approach concentrates on the features of the political context to explain the emergence, course and outcomes of collective action (Kriesi 2004). The concept of “political opportunity structure” is an important element of the “political process approach.”<sup>16</sup> It emerged when American scholars like Charles Tilly (1978), Doug McAdam (1982), and Sidney Tarrow (1983) firmly established the link between institutionalized politics and social movements. In other words, they sought to explain the emergence of a particular social movement on the basis of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system” (McAdam et al. 1996, 3). Tarrow defines political opportunity structure as “consistent dimensions of political environment that provide incentives for people to

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<sup>16</sup> The political process approach attaches crucial importance to the institutional environment (the political opportunity structure) and the symbolic and discursive dimensions of mobilizations (framing) (Vermeersch 2007, 39). Framing concept will be furthered in the next chapter.

undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure” (Tarrow 1994, 18). Therefore, the institutionalized system can provide openness and closure, or threats and opportunities for the ethnic mobilizations.<sup>17</sup> Increased opportunity implies more space and less constraints (Gamson and Meyer 1996, 277). In this sense, opportunities or even threats to social actors’ interests and values can stimulate mobilization, if they come along with perceived opportunities for action. As Gamson and Meyer state, “an opportunity unrecognized is no opportunity at all” (1996, 283). Thus, “perception” is of vital importance in this process: “It only becomes an opportunity when defined as such by a group of actors sufficiently well organised to act on this shared definition of the situation” (McAdam et al. 1996, 8).

McAdam takes political opportunity structure as a combination of variables with four dimensions: the openness/closure of an institutionalized political system, the stability/instability of elite alignments, the presence/absence of elite allies and the state’s capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam 1996, 27). As seen in items two and three, political opportunity structure can emphasize the informal structure of a given system. Yet, in my analysis, I will only refer to the formal institutional structure. Thus, as regards the domestic political context in Turkey, I will focus solely on two issues: The minority legislation on the Roma, and urban renovation projects.

## ***2.2. The Turkish Legislation on Minorities as a Threat to the Romani Mobilization***

I start my analysis with the Turkish legislation on minorities since I believe that it is the main reason that hinders the success of the minority mobilization in Turkey. The existing legislation is discriminatory, which leaves very little room for the Romani mobilization.

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<sup>17</sup> Yet, it should also be noted that there is an interaction between opportunities and movements. As Gamson and Meyer state, opportunities open the way for political action, but movements also make opportunities (1996, 276).

There exists no direct reference to the minorities in Turkish Constitution of 1982. Article 10 stipulates the equality before the law:

All individuals are equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of language, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such considerations. Men and women have equal rights. The State shall have the obligation to ensure that this equality exists in practice. No privilege shall be granted to any individual, family, group or class. State organs and administrative authorities shall act in compliance with the principle of equality before the law in all their proceedings (Turkish Constitution 1982).

Article 24 declares that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction. Acts of worship, religious services, and ceremonies shall be conducted freely, provided that they do not violate the provisions of Article. No one shall be compelled to worship, or to participate in religious ceremonies and rites, to reveal religious beliefs and convictions, or be blamed or accused because of his religious beliefs and convictions (Turkish Constitution 1982).

Articles 25 and 26 are on freedom of expression, and dissemination of thought and opinion by speech, in writing or pictures, or through other media, individually or collectively. However, it is declared that these freedoms may be restricted for the purposes of protecting national security, public order, public safety, the basic characteristics of the Republic, and the indivisible integrity of the state. Moreover, according to Article 66, “everyone is bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk”. Moreover, Article 3 states, “The Turkish state, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish” (Turkish Constitution 1982). These articles put minorities in a precarious situation.

The legal basis for the minorities in Turkey is the Treaty of Lausanne. It is a peace treaty signed on 24 July 1923 between the Entente Powers and Turkey.<sup>18</sup> This Treaty recognizes only non-Muslims as minorities by the Turkish government, as discussed in Chapter One. Therefore, only three minority groups are granted protection: Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. Articles from 37 to 45 of the treaty stipulate basic rights for these minorities, such as educational rights,

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<sup>18</sup> This Treaty was signed between British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, and the “Serbo-Croat-Slovene” State on one part and Turkey on the other.

religious rights, equality rights and cultural rights (Oran 2004, 56).<sup>19</sup> Other minority groups are entitled to no formal recognition and they lack protection of their rights as communities, despite *de facto* tolerance of some of their communal activities (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights Report on Turkey 2006, 1).

Baskin Oran argues that the reasons for the exclusion of Muslim minorities like the Roma, be it ethnic or linguistic, from the scope of the Treaty of Lausanne are threefold: Historically, Turkey is the successor of the Ottoman Empire in many senses. In the millet system, groups were characterized religiously, not ethnically or linguistically. Thus, only non-Muslims were regarded minorities and the others were homogenized under one heading: Muslims.<sup>20</sup> Ideologically, the shrink of the gigantic empire with the nationalist revolts and losses of the territory led to a serious trauma. Therefore, Turkey showed no tolerance to other ethnic identities due to the fear of falling further apart (Oran 2004, 37).

While there are no laws specifically addressing minority issues, Turkey has several laws that do not directly relate to minorities but have been used by individuals to promote their rights, or to address the existence of minorities. These are *inter alia* the Turkish Penal Code, the 1991 Law on the Fight against Terrorism (amended in June 2006), the Law of Political Parties, the Law on Foreign Language Education and the Law of Associations.

Turkey does not possess a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. The ECHR was ratified by Turkey in 1954. Yet, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which entered into force in 1998 as the first legally binding multilateral treaty devoted to the protection of national minorities in general, and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages are not ratified by Turkey (International Helsinki Federation for

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<sup>19</sup> The focus of this study is not non-Muslim minorities. Yet, for a detailed work on these articles, please see İlhan Yildiz, *Minority Rights in Turkey* (Brigham Young University Law Review, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Chapter One already discussed this in detail.

Human Rights Report on Turkey 2006, 6). Turkey also has not yet ratified Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights which provides a schema for the general prohibition of discrimination (ERRC Report).<sup>21</sup> In other words, the Treaty of Lausanne is narrow, yet Turkey exercises even a narrower interpretation by putting forth reservations to international agreements signed. The provisions of Article 27 of the ICCPR and Article 13 of the ICESCR of the UN has been reserved in accordance with the related provisions and rules of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Treaty of Lausanne and its Appendices (Tsitselikis 2004, 5). Before moving to the specific laws on the Roma, I should state that Turkey's very limited and outmoded minority regime constitutes the biggest obstacle for the success of ethnic mobilizations. In the overall minority regime, as the Roma are not even recognized as a minority, they lack certain basic rights.

### **2.2.1. The Turkish Legislation on the Roma**

In Turkish society, the Roma generally perceive themselves as second-class citizens, as my interviewee Erdinc Cekic (2008) notes. In addition to political and social maltreatments, they are highly discriminated against in education and employment. In fact, they are the most discriminated ethnic group in Turkey. The Turkish legislation reflects this exclusion in its provisions regarding the Roma. The Roma activist Hacer Foggo (2008) states that the Roma are the only non-recognized minority involved in the legislation yet in a very discriminatory way. The journalist Caner Canerik (2006) also finds this very ironic since the Roma are the most excluded minority in Turkey.

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<sup>21</sup> According to Protocol 12: "The enjoyment of any right set forth by law shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. No one shall be discriminated against by any public authority on any ground such as those mentioned in paragraph 1." (Council of Europe Human Rights Protocol 12).

As my interviewee Erdinc Cekic (2008) from EDROM stated, the Settlement Act No. 2510 of 1934 has been the most problematic law for the Roma. It explicitly forbids the settlement of the Roma in Turkey. This Law lists “itinerant Gypsies” among groups of persons to be subject to differential treatment. The chapter on “Areas of Settlement” and Article 1 states: “The settlement of immigrants, refugees, nomads and itinerant Gypsies within the country shall be arranged by the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Health and Social Assistance in accordance with the program to be made by the Council of Ministers with a view to ensuring their loyalty to Turkish culture and improving the establishment and distribution of the population” (Council of Europe Report 2005). Article 4 states: “A. Those who are not attached to Turkish culture; B. Anarchists; C. Spies; D: Itinerant Gypsies; and E. Persons deported, shall not be accepted as immigrants into Turkey” (Aksu 2006, 87, Bedard 2003). As Erdinc Cekic (2008) from EDROM stated during my interview, in 1993, the former MP from Edirne, Erdal Kesebir submitted a resolution for the amendment of this clause to the TGNA, yet this resolution was declined by the President of that time, Suleyman Demirel. Consequently, in the context of the EU accession reforms, this law was amended. However, until the amendment of the discriminatory reference to the Roma, for many years, this law remained unchanged and posed a threat to the Roma.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Article 21 of the the Law on Movements states: “The Ministry of Internal Affairs is authorised to expel stateless and non-Turkish citizen gypsies and aliens that are not bound to the Turkish culture” (Danka 2008).

During my interview, the heads of the EDROM and Izmir Romani Associations (Cekic, Keser, and Sulukculer 2008) mentioned how offended they are due to the “The Regulation on the

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<sup>22</sup> One can argue that this law does not pose a threat to the Romani mobilization anymore since it was amended in 2006. However, the amendment took place as a part of the EU reforms. Chapter Three shall look at the legislation changes in the EU reform process thoroughly. Yet, my argument is, until its abolishment in 2006, this law remained unchanged and it hindered the Romani mobilization in Turkey.



Role of the Police in Ceremonies and Groups and On the Organization of Police Stations”. They underlined that this regulation comprises segregationist provisions regarding the Roma. Article 134 states that the police should struggle with and take measures against “the Roma who do not have qualified jobs”, drug addicts, vagrants, refugees, convicts, beggars, benign lunatics, and people who are friends with the mentioned groups (The Regulation). Despite the resolution given by the Republican People’s Party MP from Tekirdag Enis Tutuncu, this regulation is still in force (Radikal 2006b).

Moreover, in 1995, Ministry of Culture published a dictionary, which used the word “Gypsy” synonymous with “immoral”, “impudent” and “greedy” (Aksu 2006, 34). My interviewees Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (2008) from Izmir Contemporary Romani Association concluded that the pejorative use of the word “Gypsy” was removed only in 2001 with the EU reforms.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, in 2002, Ministry of Interior Affairs sent a circular note to the Public Registration Office, which requested a preliminary research for the citizenship applications to find out whether the applicants have relations with the “Roma” and the “beggars”. Yet, after criticisms, this was withdrawn (Aksu 2006, 121).

As seen, minority legislation in Turkey poses a severe threat to the mobilization of the Roma. Firstly, in the overall context, they are not even recognized as minorities. Secondly, the laws on the Roma overtly exclude them. There exists no such protection for their rights, and even they are highly discriminated. Thus, chances for them to get mobilized are highly restricted. Moreover, the legislation also threatens their self-confidence which makes them be reluctant to take initiatives.

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<sup>23</sup> In addition to the EU reforms, Mustafa Aksu, who is a very prominent Roma activist and author states in his book *To Be A Gypsy in Turkey* (Istanbul: Kesit, 2006) that he sent several petitions requesting the change in the dictionaries. Therefore, his personal attempts and contributions should not be overlooked.

### ***2.3. Urban Renovation Projects as an Opportunity to the Romani Mobilization***

The Roma people are exposed to forced evictions through urban renovation projects of historical districts in Ankara (Cincin), Zonguldak (Eregli), Mersin (Turgutreis), Bursa (Kamberler), Izmir (Kahramanlar, Kadifekale, Yali), and Istanbul (Sulukule, Kagithane, Kucukbakkalkoy and Kustepe) for a couple of years (Ntvmsnbc 2008). As part of these urban renovation projects, demolishments in these districts have been triggered one after the other.

Among these Romani districts, Sulukule appears to be the most important one for the Roma population. It is the biggest Romani settlement in Turkey with 5000 Roma living altogether and one of the oldest Romani settlements in Europe (ERRC 2007). Allegedly, according to many, Sulukule is the oldest Romani settlement in the world (Everyone Group 2008). As my interviewee Erdinc Cekic (2008) stated, the Roma have been living there since the 1050s. The area is located nearby the historical Byzantine city walls. Due to its historical and unique nature, Sulukule is a UNESCO World Heritage Sight. Moreover, it is located at the very center of the city. Unlike other Roma in the CEECs, the Roma in Istanbul are not situated at the periphery or in the outskirts, which would otherwise further their isolation (Cekic 2008). Being in the center is also very advantageous for them, since they have an easier access to their jobs. Moreover, Sulukule is a popular spot for the touristic and musical entertainment of the city. Therefore, it is a vital source of income for the Roma. On the other hand, it is a vital symbol for the Romani culture and identity in Turkey, perhaps the most significant Romani image that comes to our minds.

As Hacer Foggo (2008) stated during our meeting, with the setting up of the renovation looking for new areas for renovation, the Fatih Municipality introduced an urban renovation plan in 2005. The Cabinet issued a decree in 2006 which authorised the Municipality to proceed with

the immediate expropriation of certain parts in Sulukule namely Neslisah and Hatice Sultan quarters in the context of the Law No. 5366 on “The Protection by Renewal and Use Through Survival of Historical and Cultural Immoveable Objects Which Are Eroded” (ERRC Report 2007). This plan aims to replace the old houses of Sulukule with new ones. The tenants and house owners in Sulukule can have a leasing agreement with the Municipality to buy or rent housing in the renovated neighbourhood or relocate to Tasoluk built by the Prime Minister’s Housing Development Administration, which is almost 30 km away from the city.<sup>24</sup> As the head of the Sulukule Romani Association Sukru Punduk (2008) stated during our meeting, it is very likely for the Roma to get distanced from their jobs physically if they move to this new settlement. On the other hand, they cannot afford to buy or rent housing in the renovated area (ERRC 2007). Sukru Punduk (2008) stated that so far 450 households were sold, and 100 households did not agree to move to Tasoluk. Hacer Foggo (2008) added that the Law No. 5366 authorizes the municipality in the absence of reconciliation, thus, no alternative is left to the Roma. This decree has been the worst threat ever faced by the Roma in Sulukule. Hacer Foggo and Sukru Punduk (2008) argue that the Municipality does not take the criticisms into consideration like those of the EU. The EU states that these evictions are not conducted appropriately, and the alternatives offered by the government are not suitable for the Roma.

Nevertheless, it is clear that this “threat” has appeared as an utmost impetus for the Roma mobilization in Turkey, leading to massive solidarity among the Roma. It also attracted huge interest from the media, civil society, politicians and ordinary citizens. Accordingly, Roma

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<sup>24</sup> One other remark is; the Roma people in Sulukule have a certain mode of living in houses with one or two flats and huge gardens which is convenient for their carriages. The apartments in Tasoluk are totally unsuitable for the Roma since they are apartment-type of buildings with no place for their carriages or other tools (Punduk and Foggo 2008).

activists, Roma associations, the local residents, non-Roma people, civil society and media have united against the demolitions through various demonstrations.

One of the most influential formations is the “Sulukule Platform”. As Hacer Foggo (2008) states as being the founder of this formation, it was set up with the participation of the Sulukule Romani Culture Protection and Cooperation Association and the Human Settlements Association. The Sulukule Platform started an awareness raising campaign called “We Must Save Sulukule”. Being also a journalist, Hacer Foggo played a fundamental role in making this event heard through news reports, press releases and several campaigns on internet. Moreover, in the context of the project launched by the hYd, the ERRC and EDROM entitled “Promoting Roma Rights”, Sulukule Romani Association sued the Fatih Municipality with the claim that the demolitions are against the Constitution, the Law No 5366, the Law No 2863 on the “Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets” and many international agreements (hYd 2008). However as Hacer Foggo and Sukru Punduk (2008) explained during our meeting, this lawsuit did not halt the demolition plans.

On 31 July 2006, the UN independent expert sent a joint allegation letter to the Government of Turkey, with the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. The Government replied in July that the Law No. 5366 was “a good opportunity to municipalities to restore and reconstruct the structures of the registered protected areas facing the risk of extinction or erosion, in accordance with urban development, to preserve and renew historical and cultural immoveable properties in such areas and to take appropriate action against natural disaster risks” (UN Report 2008, 15). Moreover, representatives of the ERRC and various domestic and international human rights organizations worldwide have requested the government to halt the demolitions and urge people to send

petitions, like the human rights NGO “Everyone Group”. “Save Sulukule” petition campaign has been launched in cooperation with the ERRC, with its partners like hYd and EDROM. “40 Days 40 Nights Sulukule” was another civic campaign launched in Sulukule in 2006. Everyday, several projects were made such as awareness-raising, education projects for the Roma children, painting on the walls of the Romani slums, workshops on the Romani culture, movies and music. Hacer Foggo (2008) stated that they sent eighty petitions to the National Assembly’s Human Rights Commission although the commission reported that forced evictions do not violate human rights.

Moreover, I have also come across many communal and personal blogs written by people who oppose the demolition of Sulukule. I should note that Turkish alternative media has had a big impact in escalating the interest on the Roma issue and make the attempts on Roma mobilization heard, notably after the Sulukule incident. This has mostly been achieved by the alternative media journals like Bianet, Indymedia Turkey, Birgun and blogs. Blogs like “Sulukule Yasasin”, “Sulukule Gunlugu”, “40 Gun 40 Gece Sulukule” and “Romanistanbul” update the news on Sulukule and organize campaigns, collect signatures or petitions. There are also many personal blogs which either solely express their anger and anxiety, or call the other people for action.

Law No 5366 poses a big threat while we analyze it in the domestic political opportunity structure context. However, this threat has appeared also as an opportunity enhancing solidarity and cooperation among the Romani associations. These projects have attracted the politicians’, media’s and people’s interest to the Roma minority in Turkey. Sending petitions, organizing protests and demonstrations are influential ways of collective action. Erdinc Cekic (2008) from

EDROM stated in my interview that they are very happy of drawing attention and he thinks that attracting attention is a big step for the future of the Romani mobilization.

Unfortunately, after the enactment by the President, the demolitions started by February 2008. Although the outcome was very discouraging, this threat has been a very effective mobilizing impetus for the Roma and even ordinary people started to observe that something has been changing recently. Adrian Marsh (2008) confirmed this statement during my interview. Yet, he first argued that campaigns did not involve the tenants that much since campaign have been externally driven. He also stated that the process focused solely on the demolition thus failed to lead to a communal campaign. Yet, he added that these demolitions have engendered a sense of national consciousness and awareness.

On the other hand, I should state that during my research, I saw that there is a serious tendency to think locally among the Roma. In other words, they primarily care about their own region and this region's specific problems. When I asked about Sulukule, four heads of the Romani associations; Erdinc Cekic (Edirne), Abdullah Cistir (Izmir), Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (Izmir) (2008) started to talk about their own problems and experiences. They expressed that the primary goal of their associations is to launch projects related to their own regions and own people. Erdinc Cekic (2008) admits that the Romani associations are not that successful in uniting against the Sulukule demolitions because of their local thinking. He adds that Sulukule incident is too recent to unite all the Roma immediately. Abdullah Cistir (2008) adds that since the demolitions have been continuing in many cities, including his own city Izmir, their first goal is to combat against the demolitions in Izmir.

However, having admitted that, these Romani leaders agree the Roma also cluster around common goals. Adrian Marsh (2008) stated in the interview that, despite the high degree of

disunity among the Romani associations; representatives from these associations attend national conferences on the Roma on a regular basis and exchange ideas as they cope with the same dilemmas: Housing, employment, education, social exclusion, low income.<sup>25</sup> In a similar vein, since demolitions prevail in many Romani cities, all of these leaders feel anger and sorrow regarding the Sulukule case. Abdullah Cistir (2008) added that it is not unusual to think locally in the first place. Yet, he also stated that it should not be overlooked that Sulukule is one of the current events buttressing the Romani solidarity and the media started to devote more place to the Roma in the news. Ebru Uzpeder (2008) from the hYd also stated in my interview that urban renovation projects gathered the Roma around a common goal and enabled them to take an initiative. In conclusion, no matter how tragically the demolitions have appeared in many Romani lives, this tragedy has enabled them to unite for one common goal, which in turn, have tied them together and have made them show their reaction in an organized way.

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<sup>25</sup> The problem of disunity among the Roma associations shall be furthered in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Three: The Supranational Political Opportunity Structure Analysis**

Chapter Two aimed to demonstrate the influences of the domestic political opportunity structure in Turkey on the Romani mobilization. This chapter is in will of completing the political opportunity structure analysis by looking at the other aspect of it: The supranational political opportunity structure namely, the EU. What I aim in this part is to show how the EU creates opportunities and threats for the Romani mobilization in interacting with the domestic political opportunity structure. Thus, this chapter shall analyze how the EU has created both opportunities and threats for the Roma in Turkey after defining the supranational political opportunity structure.

### ***3.1. The Supranational Political Opportunity Structure***

As discussed in Chapter Two, political opportunity structure implies that the system provides openness and closure, or threats and opportunities for ethnic mobilizations (Tarrow 1994, 18). Having explored the domestic political opportunity structure, one should also note that domestic political opportunity structure interacts highly with the transnational one. Tarrow refers to the process of externalization of domestic contention onto international institutions and the formation of transnational coalitions meaning “horizontal formation of common networks among actors from different countries with similar claims” (Tarrow 2005, 32).

In linking local issues with the international dimension, IGOs can act as arenas for movement activities; they are both threats and opportunities. Similarly, NGOs can act as “advocacy organizations” which advocate policy changes and through this way, set a “transnational advocacy network” (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 8). Unquestionably, several NGO such as the ERRC, Helsinki Citizens Assembly, the OSI, and the SIDA have been influencing



the Turkish Romani mobilization with various awareness-raising campaigns, funds and several projects. In acknowledging the role of these IGOs and NGOs, this study yet is an attempt to analyze the role played by the EU in this mobilization. Therefore, I believe that utilizing the word “supranational” instead of “transnational” shall be more appropriate while referring to the EU since in the EU, member states elect representatives. In this sense, member states have power yet they unite with other member states around common goals and interact with them in the decision-making process. Due its very nature, the EU is a supranational formation.

### ***3.2. Turkey and the EU: How It All Started?***

Despite numerous ups and downs, Turkey’s path to the EU has become one of the most significant hallmarks in Turkish foreign policy (Aydin 2003). Baskin Oran sees the Kemalist reform process of 1920s and 1930s and the EU reform process of 2000s as identical in their importance, and asserts that they are the two utmost Westernization acts of modern Turkey (2004, 94).

Turkey’s EU adventure started in 1963 when Turkey signed an Association Agreement and became an associate member. According to this Treaty, after a preparatory and a transitional stage, a final stage would enable Turkey to be a full member. 1970 Additional Protocol foresaw the establishment of a customs union by 1995 (Muftuler- Bac 1999, 241). In 1987, Turkey applied for full membership; however the democratic situation in Turkey, the military coup d’etats in 1971 and 1980, its economic backwardness, the Kurdish and Cyprus problems and Turkey’s human rights record posed crucial obstacles for Turkey’s full membership (Muftuler- Bac 2000, 161-2). Except the Customs Union Agreement signed in 1995, Turkey had little progress. In 1997 Luxembourg Summit, the EU decided not to take Turkey in enlargement process and this led to a crisis for their relations. Helsinki Summit in 1999 appeared as a

historical opportunity for Turkey- EU relations, where Turkey is given candidate status. Five years later, in December 2004, accession negotiations kicked off which had been a vital impetus for Turkey to follow the economic and political norms of the EU. The candidate states are expected to fulfil the Copenhagen Criteria in order to join the EU, whose initiation was brand new in the EU acquis by addressing minority rights explicitly. The Copenhagen Criteria states:

Membership criteria require that the candidate country must have achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic & monetary union (Copenhagen Criteria 1993).

By the same token, Turkey is subject to the conditionality rules stated in the Copenhagen Criteria. In order to abide by the political rules set out in Copenhagen Criteria, several constitutional and legislative reform laws regarding minorities have been enacted (Ozgen 2007, 8). As Caglar Keyder notes, the proximity of the EU (and the possibility of future accession) inevitably stimulates domestic political reforms in Turkey (in Rumford 2001, 97).

### ***3.3. The EU as an Opportunity to the Romani Mobilization***

#### **3.3.1. The Monitoring Mechanism of the EU: The Regular Reports on Turkey 1998- 2007**

First and foremost, the EU institutions play an important role in pushing for the reforms by regularly monitoring the progress made in human rights and minority issues in Turkey. In my opinion, these reports constitute a considerable impetus for further reforms by rightly underlining the weaknesses and strengths in terms of minority rights. Between 1998 and 2007, the European Commission came up with ten progress reports. Now I shall demonstrate how the EU referred to the Roma in its reports since in agreeing with my interviewee Sinan Gokcen (2008), I believe that these reports are of utmost importance for the Romani mobilization in Turkey: These reports

are not only a call for further reforms that change the legal context for the Roma, but also a subtle way to attract the attention to the Roma.

All the reports from 1998 to 2007 constantly criticized Turkey for its different treatment between the officially recognized minorities and other minorities. The reports until 2001 do not address the Roma explicitly; however they include some remarks which are relevant to them. Moreover, what I observed in these reports is, year by year, more attention and space is devoted to the Roma. The first reports criticized Turkey for not ratifying ICCPR, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and the Protocols 4, 6, and 7 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights which are related to minority issues (Regular Report on Turkey 1998, 14-20, Regular Report on Turkey 1999, 14, Regular Report on Turkey 2000: 19).

The Regular Reports of 2000 and 2001 also manifested that the ethnic minorities lack certain basic rights and cultural rights (Regular Report on Turkey 2000, 19, Regular Report on Turkey 2001, 29). The 2001 Report however, welcomed the removal of pejorative discourse used to address Roma from dictionaries published by the Ministry of Culture in 2001 and the ban on the selling of an official book by the same Ministry, containing degrading and offensive language regarding the Turkish Roma (Regular Report on Turkey 2001, 29, Toktas 2006, 495).

The Reports starting from 2001 until the 2006 report criticized the discriminatory articles of the 1934 Law on Settlement (Regular Report on Turkey 2001, 29, Toktas 2006, 495, Regular Report on Turkey 2003, 39, Toktas 2006, 504). It is obvious that the monitoring of the EU thus its criticisms accelerated the amendment of this law in 2006. Moreover, these reports also addressed the restrictions on the right to education in languages other than Turkish (Regular Report on Turkey 2001: 29, Toktas 2006: 495). The problem of social exclusion of the Roma and

adequate housing was also another issue pointed out in the reports of 2003 and 2004 (Regular Report on Turkey 2003, 39, EU Regular Report on Turkey 2004, 44, 49).

The ratification of the ICCPR and the ICESCR despite reservations made on minority rights and education in minority languages was welcomed in the 2003 report (Regular Report on Turkey 2003, 39). Yet, until its last report in 2007, the European Union constantly asserted that Turkey did not ratify the Additional Protocol No. 12 to the ECHR on the general prohibition of discrimination and did not sign the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. The 2005 report also criticized Turkey's reservation to the ICCPR regarding the rights of minorities and ICESCR. Thus, Turkey was said to lack a comprehensive legal framework against discrimination and warned to transpose and implement the EU anti-discrimination acquis based on Article 13 of the EC Treaty (Regular Report on Turkey 2003: 25, 87, EU Regular Report on Turkey: 44-9, Toktas 2006, 506, Progress Report on Turkey 2006, 10, 20- 1, Progress Report on Turkey 2007, 21-3).

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Despite revisions in 2002 and 2003, the limitations of the establishment of associations on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sect, region, or any other minority group were strictly criticized in the reports (Regular Report on Turkey 2003, 32).<sup>27</sup> These criticisms led Turkey to

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<sup>26</sup> The reports starting with 2005 are named "progress reports".

<sup>27</sup> The Law on Associations was amended in 2002 and 2003. The revisions enabled the use of any language in their non-official correspondence and allowed legal entities (in addition to individuals) to become members of associations. The confiscation of associations' declarations, announcements, and other publications required a confirmation by a judge within 48 hours. Moreover, the restrictions on the establishment of associations by people convicted for certain crimes were eased. Various related procedures of associations were transferred from the competence of the police to the newly established Department of Associations within the Ministry of Interior. Restrictions on making announcements or distributing publications by associations were eased. Any decision taken by the provincial administrative authorities regarding the confiscation of associations' declarations, announcements and other publications should be confirmed by a judge within 48 hours. The restrictions on the activities abroad of associations established in Turkey and the activities in Turkey of foreign associations were eased. Restrictions on the activities of foreign associations in Turkey were further eased since the permission procedure would be given by the Ministry of Interior instead of the Council of Ministers. Restrictions on international cooperation between associations were also eased and extended to include non-profit organisations. Penalties for failing to obtain

ratify the new Law on Associations (Law No. 5231) in 2004 which enabled the establishment of associations on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sect, region or minority group yet with constitutional restrictions.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, broadcasting in, and teaching of, languages other than Turkish began for Radio and TV in 2004. One other progress mentioned in the 2004 report was the Regulation issued which stated that school text books should not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, language, ethnicity, philosophical belief, or religion (EU Regular Report on Turkey 2004, 44, 49). The Law on Associations opening a new window for many associations was also welcomed in the 2005 report (Toktas 2006, 504).

The report dated 2006 stated that Turkey's approach to minority rights remains unchanged since the previous report, and no progress has been made in starting a dialogue on the situation of national minorities in Turkey. The Commission yet welcomed the ratification of the revised European Social Charter which stipulates no discrimination in economic and social rights. This report appreciated the establishment of more Roma-led advocacy organisations and two Roma Federations as well as numerous NGO projects working for capacity building of Roma organisations and combatting the problems faced by them. It also stated that Turkey has taken little steps on ensuring cultural diversity and promoting respect for and protection of minorities in accordance with international standards (Progress Report on Turkey 2006, 23).

The reports of 2006 and 2007 raised concerns in terms of cultural rights. Moreover, although the 2006 report welcomed the amendments to the Law on Settlement repealing discriminatory provisions against the Roma, the reports of 2006 and 2007 stated that discriminatory provisions remain unchanged in the Law on Movements and residence of aliens

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permission for contacts with foreign associations and organisations and to fulfil the obligations concerning auditing and declaring real estate in possession were reduced. State interference in the activities of associations was reduced (EU Regular Report on Turkey 2003, 32, Aydin and Keyman 2004, 30).

<sup>28</sup> Further detail on this law will be given in the next section which analyzes the changes in the legislation.

which contains discriminatory provisions on the Roma, notably on extradition. These reports also referred to the discriminatory treatment towards the Roma in access to adequate housing, education, health and employment and forced evictions through urban regeneration projects of historical districts in Ankara-Cincin, Zonguldak-Eregli, Istanbul-Sulukule (Progress Report on Turkey 2006, 20-3, Progress Report on Turkey 2007, 21–3).

The Report of 2007 criticized Turkey for not participating in the 2005–2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion. Moreover, due to the decision by the Council of Ministers in 2006, the Roma neighbourhoods have been demolished particularly in Istanbul and it was stated that shelter, basic sanitary facilities or other social and economic services were not provided after the demolitions (Progress Report on Turkey 2007, 21–3).

Overall taken, all the EU reports state that Turkey's minority regime, as set out in the Treaty of Lausanne, is inefficient to provide a protective framework for other ethnic, cultural and religious groups and communities that fall outside the scope of the Treaty. Moreover, Turkey's reluctance to sign major international documents is criticized in all the reports. We can also see that the reports published after 2001 devoted significant consideration to the Roma. The EU criticisms concerning the Roma focused on social exclusion, plight in housing, social and economic facilities issues and the Turkish legislation which discriminate against the Roma such as the Law on Settlement, and Law on Movements and residence of aliens, and the Law on Associations. The monitoring of the EU however has led to many positive amendments in the Turkish legislation regarding the Roma, as my interviewee Abdullah Cistir (2008) confirms. Now I shall turn to the changes made in the EU reform process.

### 3.3.2. The Changes in the Legislation

Although the last reports conclude that Turkey made little progress on ensuring cultural diversity and promoting respect for and protection of minorities in accordance with international standards, in my opinion, the EU reforms undergone in Turkey concerning the minorities have contributed highly to the hastening of the Romani mobilization in Turkey. All my interviewees also agreed on the considerable contribution of the EU to the Romani mobilization in Turkey, although their opinions on the extent of this contribution vary. I think that in terms of the organization process of the Turkish Roma, the EU accession process has been the most significant breakthrough. Now I shall summarize the changes in the legislation in detail.

First and foremost, with the reform package of October 2001, limitations in the constitutional protection of freedom of thought in the Preamble of the Constitution were removed. Moreover, fundamental rights and freedoms in Article 13 were expanded (Turkish Constitution 1982, Griogoriadis 2007, 424). As stated in the regular reports, the new Law on Associations was adopted in 2004 which restricts the state interference in the activities of associations. This law also restricted the scope of “prohibited activities and associations”. Associations no longer have to take permission before founding an association, but still have to notify authorities. This law also vitiates restrictions hindering the establishment of associations and membership of them. Furthermore, as my interviewee Ebru Uzpeder from hYd (2008) states, foreign associations willing to conduct programs in Turkey are no longer required to receive separate permission from the interior ministry for each activity. However, they are still required to submit detailed reports to the government on each activity (Uzpeder 2008, US Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007). In addition, the establishment of foreign foundations was eased. They are no longer required to inform local government officials of the day /time/

location of general assembly meetings and no longer required to invite a government official to general assembly meetings. Audit officials must only give 24 hour prior notice (Ozbudun and Yazici 2004, 21).<sup>29</sup> Despite these revisions, Erdinc Cekic (2008) claims that in fact, the Romani associations are still subject to surveillance. However, he adds that none of their projects have been cancelled and in fact, have been greatly supported.

In addition to all the revisions stated above, most importantly, this law removed the limitations on the establishment of associations on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sect, region, or any other minority group. This has led to a boom in Romani associations. In fact, the Romani organizations have first burgeoned since the second half of the 1990s. As my interviewees Erdinc Cekic and Ebru Uzpeder report (2008), in 1996 two Romani associations were set up in Izmir and Edirne. However, they were closed down due to the restrictive Law on Associations of 1983. This law stipulated that associations cannot possess names that have religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic connotations and they cannot conduct activities in these fields. In my opinion, first of all, the new law of 2004 is particularly important in strengthening the Romani mobilization since it enabled the Roma to use the word “Roma” in setting up associations and identify themselves freely. This inevitably cultivates the Romani identity.

Secondly, this modification has paved the path for the mushrooming of many Romani organizations across the country, particularly in 2005 and 2006. As the head of the EDROM

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<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, according to the new law, NGOs can open representative offices for federations and confederations internationally; and security forces are no longer allowed on premises of associations without a court order. Specific provisions and restrictions for student associations have been totally removed, and children from the age of 15 can establish associations. The internal audit standards have been upgraded to ensure accountability of members and management. NGOs will be able to form temporary platforms/ initiatives to pursue common goals. Government funding for up to 50% of NGO projects will be possible, and NGOs will be allowed to buy and sell necessary immovable assets (Ozbudun and Yazici 2004, 21). Furthermore, with the new law, the scope of cooperation will no longer be restricted to “beneficial” and “reciprocal” activities. The permission required from the Ministry of Interior to receive funds from organisations or individuals in foreign countries are abolished and replaced by notifications to local government officials. Moreover, the fundraising capabilities of associations are furthered with this law (Aydin and Keyman 2004, 31).



Erdinc Cekic (2008) concluded in the interview, since 2004, Romani associations have been founded in Edirne, Tekirdag, Kırklareli, Balıkesir, İzmir, Mersin, Adana, Ankara, Bartın, Canakkale, Aydın, Samsun, Zonguldak, Manisa, Diyarbakir and Istanbul. Today, there are more than 40 Romani associations in Turkey. Yet according to my interviewee, only one third of them are active. Consequently in February 2006, the Federation of Romani Associations was established by 13 members: Adana, Mersin, İzmir, Bartın, Balıkesir İvrindi, Tekirdag Malkara, Tekirdag Muratlı, Kırklareli, Lüleburgaz, Edirne, Kesan and Lalapasa with almost 5000 members. In the same year, Canakkale, İzmir, Dikili, Aydın and Kusadasi formed the second Romani Federation, namely the Anatolian Romani Federation (Radikal 2006a). As my interviewee Ebru Uzpeder (2008) argues, setting up Romani associations no longer required a professional skill, and this made every ordinary Roma be a potential activist or a leader.

The main activities of these associations can be listed as vocational training, cultural activities, and scholarship programmes for poor students. These associations endeavour to cure the accommodation, health, unemployment, and education problems of the Roma. As Ebru Uzpeder (2008) argues, they are of crucial importance in building cooperation and solidarity among the Roma and to form a sense of collective action, which in turn highly contributes to the Romani mobilization. During my interview, the heads of the İzmir Contemporary Romani Association Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukcüler (2008) stated that this law is the most significant impetus for Romani mobilization. Moreover, since the new law facilitated cooperation and funding activities with international organizations, I believe that Romani mobilization has started to benefit a lot from not only international funding opportunities but also several trainings and exchange of experiences and views.

The amendments to the Law on Settlement adopted in September 2006 repealing discriminatory provisions against the Roma, the removal of pejorative discourse used to address the Roma from dictionaries published by the Ministry of Culture in 2001 and also the banning of the selling of an official book by the same Ministry, containing degrading and offensive language regarding the Turkish Roma are other important developments, as my interviewees Erdinc Cekic, Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (2008) note. Moreover, a circular on the Law on Settlement removing the requirement to state on the citizenship application whether the applicant was a “gypsy” , and a regulation stating that school text books should not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, language, ethnicity, philosophical belief, or religion are other utmost changes in the legislation. In my opinion, these changes are of vital importance for the growth of the Romani mobilization since they not only ameliorate the image of the Roma and thus reclaim their self-esteem, but also give them legal tools to be more represented in the society. My interviewees Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (2008) assert that all of these amendments are of crucial importance for the Romani mobilization.

The 2004 amendment to the 1983 Law on Teaching of Foreign Languages and the Learning of the Different Languages and Dialects of Turkish Citizens and a second amendment to the 1994 Law on the Establishment of and Broadcasting by the Radio and Television Channels also paved the way for the Roma to broadcast programming in the Romani language in the future. Furthermore, Turkey’s ratification of the ICESCR and the ICCPR even with reservations, and its signing the revised 1996 European Social Charter in 2007 expanded the legal scope of protection of discrimination against the Roma.

### 3.3.3. The Extension of the Public Discussion

Apart from the legal revisions, it should be borne in mind that the EU has a crucial role in shaping the public discourse and proliferating public discussion in Turkey, as Ebru Uzpeder from hYd notes (2008). Put differently, the EU has contributed extensively to the democratic atmosphere in the country which has enabled more liberal public and media discussions on ethnic issues. Therefore, I believe that, in addition to the serious reforms undertaken, these reports have attracted interest on the Roma and their problems and have made their voice heard more. As the Progress Report of 2006 indicates, the EU process has facilitated the establishment of more Roma-led advocacy organisations, Roma Federations and numerous NGO projects which not only deal with capacity building and legal projects but also with awareness- rising in the society. In my opinion, the abundance of the newly established NGOs that work on the Roma is due to the liberal atmosphere in the country and the increased interest on the Roma. It is not wrong to conclude that, as my interviewee Abdullah Cistir (2008) says, the EU has also “shaked” the Roma. The Roma have started to discuss this issue more among themselves too.

### 3.3.4. Funding

One other important aspect that stimulates the Romani mobilization in Turkey is the EU funds given to Roma-related projects and associations. As discussed extensively above, the Law on Associations of 2004 has facilitated the funding and cooperation opportunities with international organizations. According to my interviewee Erdinc Cekic (2008), funding has actually been the biggest contribution of the EU to the Romani mobilization. He added that almost all the projects carried out concerning the Roma either by the Romani associations or NGOs like hYd or UYD are funded by the EU. The contribution of these NGOs is also crucial.

EDROM is the most experienced and the most prominent Romani association in terms of its activities. It has been involved in various projects with its domestic and European counterparts. “Promoting Roma Rights in Turkey” is currently the most important project in Turkey concerning the Roma rights.<sup>30</sup> It has been conducted by the ERRC, hyD and EDROM since 2004. The major activities of this project can be listed as organization, capacity- building and human rights trainings for the Romani associations, organizing regular Romani meetings and conferences, legal trainings for lawyers, and informing and awareness-raising campaigns for the society.<sup>31</sup>

The EU funding has also enabled the organization of the first international Romani conference in Turkey. This conference was organized by the UYD in 2005. One year after, this time in Istanbul, the second international Romani conference was held. These conferences gathered many domestic and international Romani leaders, activists, and scholars and journalists working on the Roma. They are of vital importance to discuss the Roma issue openly and attract both national and international interest on the Roma. Moreover, this conference gave the opportunity to the speakers to discuss the major weaknesses and strengths of the Turkish Romani mobilization, its future prospect, and possible solutions.<sup>32</sup>

### ***3.4. The EU as a Threat to the Romani Mobilization***

Having discussed how the EU has acted as an “opportunity” for the Romani mobilization, one should note that it has sometimes appeared as a “threat” too. One can easily ask whether the

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<sup>30</sup> The EU is the main sponsor to this project and for instance, total grant given to the ERRC for this programme was €360,956.5. Additionally, for another project named “Project for Initiating Local Social Policies of Reconciliation in Favor of Roman People”, €53,545 was given to the NGO “Association for the Development of Social and Cultural Life Turkey” to fight the social exclusion of the Roma communities in Turkey (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights Programme on Turkey EU Commission 2008, 12–4).

<sup>31</sup> For further information, please see the website of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly Istanbul at <http://www.hyd.org.tr/?pid=303>.

<sup>32</sup> For the summary of the findings of the conference, please see: <http://www.uyd.org.tr/roman1.htm>

EU itself is successful enough in treating its own minorities. The EU lacks a clearly-defined minority policy (Spirova and Budd 2008, 84). Hence, it is not hard to question the success and the legitimacy of the EU in terms of minorities by looking at its own deeds. My interviewees Abdullah Cistir and Erdinc Cekic (2008) share this concern. They argue that the EU remains weak in combatting discrimination towards the Roma in Europe, and in fact, there is a high degree of racism towards the Roma within the EU notably in Romania, the Czech Republic and the UK. Therefore, one can argue that what the EU proposes Turkey to do in case of the Roma might not be the right thing since the EU cannot cope with the threat itself.

One other striking argument is that, the questions and problems to be dealt with might differ from country to country. Therefore, it might actually be inappropriate to generalize the Roma issue and serve a common policy and solution for the protection of Roma rights regardless of the different extents and scopes of the problems in each country (Vermeersch 2007, 195). During our interview, Abdullah Cistir (2008) also asserted: “The EU is unable to discern the uniqueness of the Roma in Turkey, and thus sometimes comes up with projects or policies that are derived from the experiences of the Roma in the CEECs which hardly suit us”.

One threat brought by the EU is the exclusion of the Roma in the projects. As Abdullah Cistir (2008) argues, many projects held by NGOs like the hYd are conducted by the non-Roma, thus sometimes might exclude the Roma in the very process. Since the Roma lack proper education and experience, it is harder for them to be involved in these projects. Funding opportunities brought by the EU might also create threats for the Roma mobilization. As my interviewees Sinan Gokcen, Abdullah Cistir, Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (2008) put, several Roma-related projects are done by pursuing solely money-oriented goals which not only cause tensions and rivalry among the associations, but also water down the very goal of funding

as well as solidarity and cooperation. Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (2008) have even claim that many Romani associations are getting established due to the expectations of financial assistance rather than cherishing the Romani identity and culture. Finally, one other threat that hinders the Romani mobilization in Turkey might be the fact that the EU sees the issue only from the perspective of their own normative agenda (Barany 2002, 276). As my interviewee Ebru Uzpeder (2008) rightly argues, dependence on funding is a heavy burden which might cause dependence on the funding institutions and this might even shape the objectives and interests of the Romani associations and NGOs according to that of the EU. In other words, the Romani associations or NGOs in Turkey might not refuse the initiation of the projects which are requested by the EU due the dependence on funding.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

As stated in the beginning of my chapter, Turkey's EU bid has been the most important Westernization act of Turkey alongside those of the Kemalist era. In this respect, the EU is of great importance in its influence on the Turkish legislation. In this chapter, I aimed to show how the EU has been acting as a possible opportunity and threat to the Turkish Romani mobilization. As regards the contributions, I argued that regular reports of the EU paved the path for further reforms due to their monitoring function. These reports guided Turkey to adjust the shortcomings in the minority regime and urged Turkey to open more room for the Roma rights. Consequently, many changes have taken place in the minority legislation due to EU accession reforms. Moreover, I put forward that the EU spurred the public discussion on the Roma, which made their voice heard more. Finally, funding from the EU constitutes a major impetus for the Romani mobilization in Turkey. Although I also discussed the cases where the EU can act as threats, I believe that opportunities created by the EU outnumber the threats.

## Chapter Four: Turning to the Roma: The Framing of the Romani Leaders

In Chapter Two and Chapter Three, I aimed to shed light on the external factors that have been influencing the Romani mobilization in Turkey. These chapters discussed how domestic political opportunity structure and the EU underpin or hinder the Turkish Romani mobilization. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the impact of the internal dynamics of the Turkish Roma is tantamount to the impact of the political opportunity structure on the Turkish Romani mobilization. Accordingly, this chapter aims to complete the external analysis with the internal one. In this respect, I shall illuminate how the Romani leaders see and frame the Romani mobilization in order to find out the weakness of their mobilization.

### **4.1. Framing**

Framing is a vital concept in the study of ethnic mobilization. A frame is an “interpretative schema that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action” (Benford and Snow 1988, 197). Framing has been used to signify a schema of interpretation. Therefore, discursive dimension of mobilization is important since framing is a process through which meaning is reproduced in society (Vermeersch 2007, 42). Framing is done by movement leaders to frame issues into claims to mobilize potential adherents and to demobilize antagonists (Benford and Snow 1998, 198).

Erving Goffman, who introduced “framing” in sociology, understood it as cognition. Soon, in understanding framing, the focus on cognition shifted to the power of deliberative framing within the organizational and collective processes that are part of mobilization. This means that they are not only interpretative, but movement leaders use them intentionally to

mobilize adherents (Goffman and Johnston in Vermeersch 2007, 42). In other words, opportunities, interests, resources are not simply out there in the external world, but have to be perceived, constructed, defined, and mediated in public discourses, or be “framed” to become a basis of a collective action (Koopmans and Stratham 2000, 35). Thus, collective action is facilitated by processes of “interpretative frame alignment” (della Porta and Diani 1999, 82).

Framing is hence the way activists perceive and “make sense” of the situation that motivate them to action and it allows individuals and groups to attribute meanings to their experiences. It is the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion a shared understanding of the world, and of themselves that legitimate and mobilize the movement (McAdam et al. 1996, 6). Framing creates, constructs and reproduces collective identities (Jenson in Vermeersch 2007, 43). At this point, it is very much appropriate to refer to the “cultural construction of frames” and “identity frame” as “us”, and “oppositional frame” as “them” (Tilly 2003).

William Gamson identified three basic elements of a frame: Like the identity and oppositional frame of Charles Tilly (2003), Gamson’s first element is “identity”: Through framing, an identity frame of “us” and “them” is created (in McAdam et al. 1996, 261). Second is “injustice” meaning blaming “them” for the problem. The “injustice frame” refers to the fact that the existing conditions are unjust and it accounts for a “strong injustice component in the political consciousness that supports collective action” (Gamson 1992, 31). Third is “agency”, meaning possibilities of change to encourage the “we” to react.

In identifying the process of frame alignment, Benford and Snow (2000) proposed to distinguish between two core framing tasks that social movement leaders seek: The first is “identity framing”: Activists need to define the group to be mobilized by promoting certain



views on the group's collective identity and by defining the limits of that identity. The second is "problem framing": To draw attention to a particular problem and explain the problem in such a way that a collective action would be required and activists would be mobilized. Problem framing can be done in two ways: "Diagnostic framing" meaning identifying the cause of the problem and "prognostic framing" meaning identifying solutions for the perceived problem (Benford and Snow in Vermeersch 2007, 151). In light of these arguments, this chapter shall focus on the framing done by the Romani leaders based on my interviews done with five Romani leaders in Izmir, Istanbul and Edirne.

#### ***4.2. Identity Framing of the Romani Leaders***

Zoltan Barany lists ethnic identity as one of the fundamental prerequisites for ethnic mobilization.<sup>33</sup> He argues that "ethnicity attests to an awareness of collective identity consisting of several attributes like shared history, traditions, culture, and language". Moreover, he states that for many, ethnic belonging is one of the most important markers of identity. He adds that "ethnicity is one of a cluster of identity options whose value is enhanced in some circumstances and diminished in others". Barany attaches significant attention to the preservation and strengthening of ethnic identity in coping with adaptation to outside forces and circumstances (Barany 2002, 282-3).

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<sup>33</sup> Zoltan Barany argues that ethnic mobilization does not occur in a vacuum, and it needs number of ingredients, or prerequisites, in order to succeed. These are: 1) political opportunity, 2) ethnic identity and its formation, 3) leadership, 4) organizational capacity, 5) ideology, profile, and program, 6) financial resources, 7) communications, and 8) symbols. For him, political opportunity, strong ethnic identity, effective leadership, and an organizational profile are the most important prerequisites for mobilization. He argues yet that ideology, resources, communications, and symbols are also important for mobilization, but positive mobilizational outcomes can be achieved if they are absent too (Barany 2002, 281, 288).

The Roma in Turkey are deeply committed to this country and nation, as my interviews showed this clearly. Although the sample is very limited, all the Romani leaders I talked to state that, unlike the Roma in Europe, the Roma in Turkey identify themselves firstly as Turk, then as Muslim and lastly as Roma. Yet, in addition to my interviews, the research of Adrian Marsh on the Turkish Roma confirms this finding (Marsh in Yezdani 2005). I believe that this identification is of utmost importance in analyzing the Romani mobilization in Turkey.

Erdinc Cekic (2008) expresses that without any doubt or concern, they feel that they belong to Turkey and they are a genuine part of Turkish nation. He also asserts that the Turkish Roma have been granted more freedom than the European Roma. Cekic says that the case is not assimilation since the Roma still preserve their identity and traditions. The study of Suat Kolukirik and Sule Toktas also states that the Roma, to a large extent, have preserved their own culture and characteristic (2007, 761). Abdullah Cistir (2008) also notes: “While establishing our association, even some Roma friends opposed to use the word ‘Roma’ instead of ‘Turk’ due to our deep commitment to this country. In agreeing with this, I pushed hard to use the name ‘Roma’ to raise awareness and improve Romani rights”. This quote shows that the Roma, in being aware of their identity, are perfectly integrated to the Turkish society. They are Turks, they are Muslims and they speak Turkish in addition to Romani. Cekic (2008) argues that the Turkish society used to have a nomadic form of life. Since the Roma also have a tradition of nomadism, Cekic claims that these two communities have felt identical in that sense and had no problems of living together. Cekic also argues that this identification rests heavily on the millet system of the Ottoman Empire where the Roma were incorporated into the Muslim millet.

One may easily ponder why the Roma have identified themselves as Turk in the first instance despite severe exclusion and not even being accepted as minority. Cekic agrees that this

has been done intentionally and in a very clever way in order not to leave any room for further exclusion: “If one is strong, the smartest way is to act with the strong. That is what we did”. Abdullah Cistir (2008) also shares this: “For us, the experiences confronted by the Kurds and the Alevis constitute a good example. By looking at these cases, we saw what way of behaviour can be dangerous for us”. However, they emphasized strongly that they are now deeply committed to Turkey with very genuine feelings. All the Romani leaders argued that it is very unlikely for the Roma to have antagonistic sentiments against Turkey, Turkish flag or Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Most importantly, they do this sincerely. Halit Keser (2008) asserts that the Roma are in this territory since the 11th century. Moreover, the Roma came to Turkey with 1923 population exchange, which led to the creation of a Turkish identity for the Roma (Marsh 2008).<sup>34</sup> Therefore, Cistir adds that the Roma embrace this country deeply. In this sense, for him, the Roma should be seen as a model since they have never been rebels.

What is very striking is that the Roma leaders do not pursue to reveal and highlight their ethnic identity. As Zafer Sulukculer (2008) mentions, they never asked for a territory, nor requested separation. Erdinc Cekic and Halit Keser claim that the problem has nothing to do with ethnicity, but it is a problem of humanity: “Even if we were not Roma but Patagonian, but were subject to same inhumane conditions, we would claim the same thing. However, we never argue that we are not Roma. We are Roma, but we are fine with this. We just need our conditions to be ameliorated and human rights violations to be eliminated”, says Cekic. The Roma frame themselves not as “minorities” but an “inherent part” of this society. Zoltan Barany argues that “shared symbols like flag, monuments, and public spaces endowed with historical meaning,

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<sup>34</sup> Turkey, with the 1923 population exchange agreement with Greece, agreed that the Muslims of Greece as well as the Roma could immigrate to Turkey. This agreement ignored any ethnicity or language criteria, but was based solely on religious criteria (Kolukirik and Toktas 2007, 763).

poems, anthems, and anniversaries of historical events strengthen the group's cohesion" (Barany 2002, 287). In the case of the Turkish Roma, one can conclude that, although they preserve their ethnic identity, this is not very strong for them since the identification as the Roma is not their primary identification. Moreover, as Kolukirik and Toktas argue, Turkish has become the mother tongue of the young generations (2007, 763-4). Yet, although their identity framing does not lead to an us/them distinction, these associations nevertheless try to raise awareness on their ethnic identity.

#### **4.3. Problem Framing of the Romani Leaders**

Concerning the "diagnostic framing" meaning identifying the cause of the problem, the first and foremost cause for the weakness of the Turkish Romani mobilization, as depicted by all of the Romani leaders, is lack of education. Erdinc Cekic (2008) as the head of EDROM and the biggest Romani federation expressed modestly that he finds it ironic that he, as a graduate of secondary school who even earned this degree years later, has been chairing the federation. He adds that: "The core of the problem lies here. If in each and every Romani district, one lawyer, one doctor, or one teacher is brought up, then the Roma will get rid of all these problems". He adds that there is not a role model for the Roma. The Roma have a tradition to maintain the jobs of their fathers, so the profession passes from one generation to another.

Abdullah Cistir (2008) from Izmir Romani Association also agrees that education is the biggest hurdle for their mobilization. He states that parents cannot guide their children in many Romani families due to their illiteracy and a vicious circle is created. Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (2008) stress that Romani leaders should have a proper education and they should speak at least one foreign language to be able to be in touch with other Romani associations. During my interview, they stated that despite their immense experience and knowledge, they

elected Ozcan Purcu as the head of the association, a young university graduate. With this example, it can be seen how the Roma attach significant importance to education and university graduates are seen as leaders no matter how unexperienced or young they are. Zoltan Barany lists leadership as one of the vital prerequisites for successful ethnic mobilization and he argues that the quality of leadership may determine the success or failure of the organization. He thinks that a leader should have academic qualifications, economic position, social standing, and political background (Barany 2002, 284). We see in the Turkish case that, although leaders possess all features except education, these qualifications are not enough to be a leader, and the Turkish Romani leaders always see education as the primary requirement.

The Romani leaders are also unexperienced in organizational sense. As stated, the Romani mobilization in Turkey is very infant with a short history. All the leaders I interviewed, except Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer, stated that they possessed no past experience in organization prior to establishing their associations. For instance, Erdinc Cekic dealt with trade and he owned cafés and restaurants. He concludes that his father was an influential person in Edirne and his skills and reputation have passed from his father. This example shows the importance of the profession of the parents in influencing Roma lives. Abdullah Cistir, likewise, has no education and no organizational experience. He was involved in trade before. Sukru Punduk, the head of the Sulukule Romani Association also possessed neither education nor prior experience. Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer have worked in various associations for ten years such as Gurcesme Solidarity Association. Be that as it may, they emphasize that even they find themselves very inadequate. Barany argues that an ethnic community's prior experience in political activism underpins its ethnic identity and the success of mobilization (Barany 2002,

283). In addition to shortcomings in being experienced in the individual sense, the Roma community in Turkey also lack a communal organizational experience.

The third problem for their mobilization is stated as “prejudice”. Erdinc Cekic (2008) argues that the overwhelming majority of non-Roma people believe that the Roma cannot succeed in any profession, except the entertainment business. He continues that the Roma are seen as musicians, dancers, flower-sellers, and there is a wicked mentality among non-Roma that the Roma are incompetent to exist in the political scene. He exemplifies that in Edirne, there is not a single Roma in the local administration. Even if a Roma is willing to be involved in administration and he is competent enough to achieve that, due to prejudices and labelling, the Roma can hardly be active in the society. He convincingly argues that misdeed committed by just one Roma leads to generalizations and the Roma are seen as troublemakers. Moreover, the majority of the people are inclined to think that the Roma are usually thieves, vagrants or smugglers, yet Cekic asserts that these generalizations are very ruthless. Cistir (2008) also argues that the Roma are labelled as “musicians” yet their socio-economic plight is often ignored. In this sense, the Romani leaders make “injustice framing”.

One other point that Erdinc Cekic highlights is that, the Roma themselves also have prejudices in themselves since they lack self-esteem.<sup>35</sup> He says: “The Roma do not trust their children that they will get proper jobs”. All these leaders also argued that in their community, the civil society sense is very weak as the majority of the Roma are afraid to get organized. Since they have been suppressed and excluded for many years, a sense of mistrust and disappointment prevail among the Roma. Therefore, they hardly express their opinions participate in politics or have a will to get organized. Abdullah Cistir (2008) argues that the fear of being further excluded

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<sup>35</sup> Emine Onaran Incirlioglu similarly argues that this is one of the reasons for the weakness of the Romani mobilization in Turkey (2005, 187).

led to this apathy and one of the main reasons of the weakness of their mobilization is lack of self-esteem. According to Barany, ethnic solidarity is another fundamental aspect of ethnic identity. He argues that in general ethnic fellowship may develop as the result of numerous factors like prejudicial state policies in housing, welfare, education, and taxation. Although the case is similar in Turkey, the Turkish Roma are very weak in forming this ethnic solidarity. The success of mobilization also depends on “social capital”; the degree of trust among community members and the degree of engaging in coordinated collective activities (Barany 2002, 284). Therefore, the weakness of Turkish Roma very much depends on this.

The fifth problem is social and economic problems.<sup>36</sup> All the leaders stated that combating socio-economic problems has been the main motive and the goal of the establishment of their associations, as Erdinc Cekic (2008) discusses: “We do not request luxury or higher standards for their people, but at least ‘humane conditions’ ”. Therefore, these associations aim to improve housing, health and job conditions and fight for their rights and equality.

The last problem is financial resources. Zoltan Barany sees this as a significant factor to accelerate ethnic mobilizations. The Roma groups need money to publicize activities, print journals and campaign materials, maintain offices and communication, and pay employees (Barany 2002, 286). Therefore in Turkey more and more associations are getting closed due to financial difficulties. This framing can also be included in injustice framing since the authorities are blamed to ignore the Roma in this sense.

Barany believes that mobilization becomes more successful when an ethnic group clearly defines the profile and goals of its activities. Put differently, when the identification of the

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<sup>36</sup> Emine Onaran Incirlioglu also states that financial problems hinder the Turkish Romani mobilization to a great extent (2005, 183).

collectivity's shared objective is certain, group can easily take on united action (Barany 2002, 286). In a nutshell, the Romani leaders in Edirne, Izmir and Istanbul identify six problems to mobilize their adherents: The lack of education, lack of experience, prejudices towards the Roma, lack of solidarity among them, socio-economic problems and lack of funding.<sup>37</sup>

As regards the “prognostic framing” meaning identifying solutions for the perceived problem, education is seen as a solution. Cekic (2008) states: “Our fight is based on this: We need to show that the Roma do not only sell fruits on the street, do business with the carriages, or play violin on the street. We need to expand our horizons through education”. Cistir (2008) argues that education is the major solution to integrate the Roma in the society, and the more a Roma is excluded due to the lack of education, the more marginalized s/he becomes. Halit Keser, Zafer Sulukculer and Sukru Punduk (2008) also point to education as the sole way of salvation. Therefore, their association activities include scholarship programmes for Romani children and various trainings for adults. Abdullah Cistir also stated that they will establish a fine arts high school.

All the Romani leaders also refer to the socio-economic solutions. They state that one of the most effective solutions, and thus one of the main goals of these associations is to provide job opportunities for the Roma. Abdullah Cistir (2008) states that: “As the government remains inefficient in solving our problems, we, as Izmir Romani Association have to embark on new projects. Our responsibility has increased a lot. We try to raise awareness by arranging meetings with the locals, public education and municipalities”. One solution offered by these leaders is to launch centres and programmes which offer vocational training. Izmir Contemporary Romani

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<sup>37</sup> Please see the study of Suat Kolukirik and Sule Toktas, *Turkey's Roma: Political participation and organization* (Middle Eastern Studies, 2007) for the reasons of the low organization among the Roma individuals.



Association has also conducted a project which provides vocational training to the Roma women aged 16-40 in several branches. This programme is for nine months and will be launched next year.

One other solution underlined by these leaders is the necessity to act altogether. To refer to Erdinc Cekic's framing: "Solution is we have to combat altogether...Everyone from every segment of the society". Therefore, these leaders ask for the participation of the Roma to these associations and they call for a collective action.

The Romani leaders use education, job opportunities and collective action as solutions to their problems. In this sense, they make "agency framing", meaning possibilities of change to encourage the Roma to act. Since the Roma in Turkey lack education, job opportunities and a sense of collective action, these Romani leaders spell out that their associations work for providing scholarships and vocational trainings to the Roma. Moreover, associations require collective action. By underlining the most crucial needs for the Roma, these leaders encourage the Roma to be involved in their projects, hence bring about change.

However, based on my observations, despite the common framings stated above, I should note that framing done by these leaders might differ too. For instance, Abdullah Cistir favours the idea of setting up federations whereas all the others oppose this. Erdinc Cekic, despite being the head of the federation underlines that the associations were not ripe enough to be clustered in one federation. He admits that, before handling their own region's problems, the decision to cover that many associations came a bit too quick, and they have difficulties in accessing all these regions. Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer agree with this statement. On the other hand, Abdullah Cistir argues that timing for a federation was congruent. I believe that one other evidence of the severe disagreement among Romani associations in Turkey is the existence of

two Romani federations. Barany states the institutional context that a mobilization takes place is one of the vital issues to be decided. He points out that a single or an umbrella organization being as the sole representative of the ethnic group most probably increases cohesion in the community. Thus, division and rifts within ethnic elites make their mobilization becomes less likely to succeed (Barany 2002, 284-5). Organizational fragmentation is a serious problem for the Turkish Roma which hinders their mobilization.

Barany states that if the group is divided, leaders should negotiate compromises on at least the basic goals and tactics of the mobilization process (Barany 2002, 284). These leaders agree on basic problems. Yet, one other disagreement among these leaders also arises in their goals. Abdullah Cistir desires to be a MP, yet the other leaders claim that this aspiration is nothing but a pipe dream. EDROM and Izmir Contemporary Romani Association leaders on the other hand claim that the Roma should start being active in the local firstly. In fact, aiming to be a MP sounds very unrealistic for a community like the Roma. Yet, Cistir blames the other leaders for their self-distrust. According to Barany, realistic goals are important to make ethnic mobilization successful and for the achievement of these objectives (Barany 2002, 286). Therefore, it appears more likely that the Roma should start from the local first. These leaders also do not reach a consensus concerning the EU assistance. Some of them like Abdullah Cistir appear to be very skeptical to the EU projects and funding.

In this chapter, I aimed to show that the identity framing of the Turkish Roma might explain the weakness of their mobilization since they do not recognize themselves as a minority. On the other hand, although their identification is not very strong, these associations aim to raise awareness on their identity. Moreover, they make problem framings by identifying problems and offering solutions to mobilize potential adherents. Their problem framings are very important

and these framings such as the lack of education, lack of experience, prejudices, lack of ethnic solidarity, socio-economic problems and lack of funding explain why the Turkish Romani mobilization is weak. Yet, although the Turkish Romani leaders agree on basic problem framings, organizational fragmentation and clashes on objectives among them impede the success of the Romani mobilization gravely.

## Chapter Five: The Comparison of the Turkish Romani Mobilization and the Hungarian Romani Mobilization

Previous chapters dealt with the factors that stimulate and slow down the Romani mobilization in Turkey. These chapters also revealed why the Romani mobilization is weak. However, I believe that the case of the Turkish Roma should be compared with another case which constitutes a successful example in terms of mobilization in order to highlight the reasons of the weakness of the Turkish case. The biggest Romani population in the world is in the Central and Eastern European region. Therefore, it is more plausible to think that countries in this region attach more importance to Roma rights. The estimated number of the Roma in Europe is 8-10 million (Majtenyi and Vizi 2007, 9). Hungary hosts one of the biggest Roma populations in Europe, representing between 1.9–5% of the population in Hungary (Spirova and Budd 2008, 86). Moreover, Hungary stands as a center of activity on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe since the late 1980s. The World Bank states that more and more projects and program activities have taken place in Hungary on Roma issues than in any other country in Europe, with over 1300 Roma projects since 1990 (World Bank 2008). Additionally, Hungarian Roma are the most successful Roma to get mobilized in the national level. Hungary diligently seeks to protect the Roma. The establishment of national Gypsy self-government, medium-term and long-term programmes on the Roma, the existence of Romani parties, and Romani MPs and MEPs attest to the progress undergone in Roma rights. In this respect, the aim of this chapter is to compare a weak (Turkish Roma) and a strong case (Hungarian Roma) to illuminate why the former lag behind the latter in terms of mobilization. However, one should note that the focus of this thesis is the Romani mobilization in Turkey. Hence, my research on Hungary is not as rigorous and detailed as my research on Turkey. It first and foremost lacks a detailed empirical research. I

nevertheless believe that a comparison would be useful. Before moving to the conclusion, this chapter shall first briefly outline the impact of the domestic political opportunity structure, and the EU on the Hungarian Roma mobilization, and the framing of the Hungarian Roma in the post-1989 period.

## **5.1. Hungary**

### **5.1.1. The Domestic Political Opportunity Structure in Hungary**

The Roma in Hungary owe their success in mobilization to the Hungarian legislation to a great extent. The minority regime in Hungary grants profound rights to the Roma. In Hungary, the formulation of group interests on the basis of ethnicity became legally justified in the second half of the 1980s when the state was undergoing a process of economic and political transformation. In December 1988, the rights of association and assembly were established. Moreover, a year later, minorities were granted cultural and religious rights and the use of their mother tongue was allowed in the context of “cultural differentiation” policy (Vermeersch 2004, 9). The Constitution established by Act XX of 1949 is a very comprehensive constitution in terms of ethnic minority rights. According to Article 68 of the Hungarian Constitution:

The national and ethnic minorities living in the Republic of Hungary share the power of the people; they are constituent factors in the State. The Republic of Hungary grants protection to national and ethnic minorities, it ensures the possibilities for their collective participation in public life, and enables them to foster their own culture, use the mother tongue, receive school instruction in the mother tongue, and freedom to use their names as spelled and pronounced in their own language. The laws of the Republic of Hungary ensure representation for the national and ethnic minorities living in the territory of the country. National and ethnic minorities may set up their own local and national government organizations (Hungarian Constitution).

In addition to the Article 68 which entitles various freedoms, Article 32B second paragraph declares that:

The Parliamentary Ombudsman for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities is responsible for investigating or initiating the investigation of cases involving the infringement of the rights of national or ethnic minorities which come to his attention and initiating general or specific measures for their remedy (Hungarian Constitution).

As seen, according to the Constitution, every minority is ensured political representation. The Hungarian National Assembly has 386 seats. In order to enter parliament through regional party lists on the principle of proportional representation, 5% threshold should be passed (Vermeersch 2002, 162). It can be claimed that the Roma population is not represented very well in politics and total number of Romani activists elected to national legislatures on mainstream parties, and the proportion of the Roma included in mainstream party lists are not very high (Vermeersch 2007, 114). Nevertheless, Romani members exist in the Parliament, which is a very noteworthy opportunity to make their voice heard.

The National Assembly had three Romani members of parliaments in 1990-1994. Among them, only one of them could keep her seat until 1998. There were separate Romani parties having candidates in 1990, 1994 and 1998 elections yet they failed to gain representation. There were no Roma in the National Assembly between 1998 and 2002. In 1998, the Democratic Party of the Hungarian Gypsies (MCDP) had a successful candidate, who polled only 1.4% of the vote in his individual constituency (Vermeersch 2002, 161). In 2002 elections, four Roma candidates were elected to the National Assembly (Freedom House 2005).

In addition to this, Hungary has Romani parties. The Hungarian Gypsy Social Democratic Party, the Hungarian Gypsy Solidarity Party, Democratic Party of Hungarian Gypsies and Nationality Forum, Hungarian Romani Party, the Democratic Romani Party, the Democratic Party of Hungarian Roma appeared in the politics arena, yet none of them was successful (Vermeersch 2007, 115). The reasons of their failure are threefold: First is related with the small portion of the electorate. Secondly, thresholds hinder the participation of small parties. Thirdly, these parties fail in mobilizing people in broader spectrums (Vermeersch 2007, 119).

The Hungarian government has also been working to improve Roma rights: Office for National and Ethnic Minorities was founded in 1990s to set out the fundamental principles for policies towards minorities and act as a monitoring office. Act LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities is one of the cornerstones of Roma rights.<sup>38</sup> The Roma were guaranteed “the right to use their language, the right to organize their own educational activity, the right to achieve cultural autonomy through self-governmental bodies and the right to political representation” (Vermeersch 2007, 66). This law is unique in Europe allowing personal autonomy and the establishment of local or nationwide self-governing bodies. Government report J/3670, prepared by Horn government of 1994-1998 stated that this act primarily aimed the “integration” of the Roma to the society (Vermeersch 2004, 10).

With the Act of 1993, National Gypsy Minority Self-Government was established, which granted the Roma “the right to decide within the scope of their powers, ... especially in the field of local education, the written and electronic media, preserving traditions and cultural matters” (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fact Sheet on Roma 2004, 5). It became the official ethnic partner of the government regarding Roma rights. The first local and minority self-governments were elected in 1994-1995 (Vermeersch 2007, 72). There were many self-governments passing from 412 in 1994, to 753 in 1998 and finally to 998 in 2004. Moreover, 545 Roma representatives and four Roma mayors were elected at the local levels in 2002 (Blais 2006, 11). The minority self-government system is of utmost importance since it grants the Hungarian Roma political representation and enables them to organize collectively (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fact Sheet on Roma 2004, 11).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The Act of 1993 recognized thirteen historical minorities: The Roma, Armenians, Bulgarians, Croatians, Germans, Greeks, Poles, Romanians, Ruthenes, Serbs, Slovaks, and Ukrainians (Vermeersch 2007, 66).

<sup>39</sup> Anita Danko from the ERRC (2008) stated during our interview that one should also be critical about the minority self-governments: She states that the minority self-government does not have that strong powers, and its operation is

Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education, amended in 1996 and 2003, aimed to combat segregation in schools. Moreover, Act LIX of 1993 on the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights appointed an Ombudsman who would investigate human rights abuses (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fact Sheet on Roma 2004, 5-6). In 1995, short-term program was launched which prompted the requirement to draw up a medium-term program to provide additional governmental funds through a comprehensive approach (Resolution 1120/1995). Thus, the government established the Gypsy Affairs Coordination Council and the Public Foundation for Gypsies in Hungary, which have been working to promote equal opportunities. In 1995, the first medium-term package of measures (Government Decree 1093/1997) defined the requirements for social integration of the Roma. 1999 witnessed the creation of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Roma Affairs. In 2001, Anti-Discrimination Legal Advice Network, the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities and the National Gypsy Self-Government Body which gives free legal advice were set up. In 2001, a discussion paper on the long-term Roma social and minority political strategy was adopted by the government (Resolution 1078) (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fact Sheet on Roma 2004, 5-6).

In 2003, “Decade of Roma Inclusion” project was launched having been hosted in Hungary. It is a ten-year project (2005-2015) calling domestic governments to develop and implement policies for the Roma. Government Office for Equal Opportunities had been set up in

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at the mercy of the self-government. Other problems may be listed as the question of legitimate representation, the financial basis of the system, and the inability of the system to cope with the real problems of the Roma. As to the legitimacy problem, everyone can vote in local elections regardless of s/he being a minority or Roma. Therefore, it is said that this openness leads to manipulation and misrepresentation. One other argument is, Gypsy self-government is said to illegitimize alternative Romani advocacy organizations that seeks to affect the policy which are not included in the self-government system. Moreover, with the establishment of this system, the state is said to neglect the inclusion of Roma in regular political institutions (Vermeersch 2007, 210). In other words, this system reduces Romani politics to the participation of the Roma in one group-specific domain of political life, the granted place is a marginal one, and the self-governments actually polarise the political landscape (Vermeersch in Cahn 2002, 168).

Nevertheless, in agreeing with its shortcomings, compared to the Turkish case, minority self-governments appear as a vital progress.



January 2004, which was followed by the Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities Act (Act CXXV of 2003). The last medium-term package was adopted in 2004. In March 2004, the government introduced a bill for the election of minority self-government representatives and the amendment of certain acts on national and ethnic minorities (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fact Sheet on Roma 2004, 7-9). Moreover, in 2004 European Parliament elections, Hungary became the first country to have first two Romani MEPs (Vermeersch 2007, 114). According to 2006 Government decision, a new body named the Council of Roma Integration was founded replacing two earlier existing bodies: The Inter-ministerial Committee on Roma Issues and the Roma Council.

Although Hungary is at times criticized for the shortcomings in the protection of Roma rights, for remaining insufficient to combat widespread discrimination, and for not representing the Roma enough in the national level, all in all, domestic political opportunity structure constitutes a crucial opportunity for the mobilization of the Hungarian Roma.<sup>40</sup>

### **5.1.2. The Supranational Political Opportunity Structure: The Impact of the EU on the Hungarian Romani Mobilization**

As stated above, the Central and Eastern Europe hosts the biggest Romani population in the world. Since the fall of the Soviet rule and 1990s, the EU has shown a profound interest for the protection of national minorities in Central Europe. This is due to the concerns on the escalating plight of the Roma since the fall of communism and the flow of the number of

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<sup>40</sup> For instance, according to the ERRC report (2002) public officials in Hungary were engaged in racist speech against Roma. Furthermore, In June 2005, the Hungarian NGO “Chance for Children Foundation” filed a lawsuit against the Miskolc Municipality alleging the practice of school segregation of Romani children (ERRC 2006). Also, as regards the rights of the Roma women, CEDAW condemned Hungary for violating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2006 (ERRC 2006). The Roma politicians are also reluctant to cooperate with the Roma. In the worst cases, political parties such as the Party of Justice and Life (MIÉP) have more extremist stance and they stress the “ethnic” unity and purity of the people they seek to represent. Similarly, it is often stated by the politicians that it is Roma’s own responsibility to be that backward as Hungarian Foreign Minister János Martonyi asserted in 1999 (Vermeersch 2002, 165).

Romani asylum seekers from Central European countries to the EU (Vermeersch 2004, 8). The EU concern on minorities stem also from the blast of ethnic conflicts in this region (Vermeersch 2007, 198). Thus, the issue was related to the failure in preventing the outbreak of violence in the Balkans and the will to maintain political stability (Vermeersch 2004, 7).

The “conditionality” clause was decided in Copenhagen Summit of 1993 as an important mechanism to further reforms in candidate countries. Due to this clause, the EU has a more direct influence on minority policies than any other IGO (Vermeersch 2007, 195). Three years later, the document “The Roma: A Truly European People” was created to raise awareness about the problems that the Roma face in member states. In 1997, the Commission’s Agenda 2000 referred to the Framework Convention and Council of Europe’s Recommendation on minorities dated 1993. Therefore, the EU started to monitor the Roma case more closely in these states and the Commission started to publish annual regular reports which point to the situation for the Roma notably in Central European countries (Vermeersch 2007, 196). This has been a good “naming and shaming” strategy. Moreover, since the Eastern enlargement process of the EU embraced states in this region, the EU has placed further emphasis on the Roma case.

Hungary is seen among the front-runners of democratic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 and a very unproblematic state in the field of minority protection due to the large size of external minorities (Schimmelfennig and Schwellnus 2006, 12). Thus, one may think that impressive progress had already been undertaken before the Copenhagen Criteria. Yet, the EU criticisms and recommendations have had a huge impact on Hungary too. A government report in 1999 stated that “the government programmes since the beginning of the 1990s have clearly undertaken to fully ensure the rights of minorities in accordance with European norms”. Moreover, another government report referred to the role of the European

Commission in putting the issue on the domestic agenda (Vermeersch 2004, 12).

From 1997 onwards, the Commission's annual Regular Reports monitor the minority situation in candidate countries. In the first reports on Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, the Roma are the only minority addressed (Hughes and Sasse 2003, 16). The Roma are actually the largest minority in Hungary. Although the reports address the uniqueness of the minority protection system of Hungary<sup>41</sup>, progress reports constantly referred to the needs to improve the living conditions and rights of the Roma, and this was made a short-term priority in the accession partnership. The 1999 report stated that "while their situation has not worsened, it has not improved markedly (...) Roma suffer widespread prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives" (1999, 13). Moreover, from 2001 onwards the reports highlighted the necessity to adopt legislation in order to transpose the *acquis* by saying "Hungary does not have a unified law on anti-discrimination (...) The current anti-discrimination legislation is fragmented (...) Moreover, there is no comprehensive system to effectively enforce the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation". In 2001, due to the Commission's pressure, Hungary launched a medium-term Roma action program at the national and the local level (Spendzharova 2005, 118). The 2003 report declared that "[a]ttention is to be given to alignment with the anti-discrimination *acquis*, and considerable efforts should aim at improving the situation of the Roma minority" (Schimmelfennig and Schwellnus 2006, 15, Hughes and Sasse 2003, 15).

Apart from conditionality, the EU funding to Hungary considerably influences minority policies. Under the "civil society and democratization" heading, PHARE programme established in 1989 provides minority protection (Hughes and Sasse 2003, 20). Moreover, between 1994 and

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<sup>41</sup> For instance, the 2001 report stated that minorities are "well integrated into Hungarian society" and Hungary has a "well developed institutional framework protecting the interests of its minorities and promoting their cultural and educational autonomy" (Hughes and Sasse 2003, 15). The 2002 report stated that "progress ha[d] been made with the implementation of national action plans to improve the difficult situation the members of these communities are facing" (Spirova and Budd 2008, 87).

2001, Hungary received around 16 million to develop Roma-specific programs. Between 2001 and 2003, PHARE program granted over 77 million euro to Roma-related projects in the then candidate countries (Spirova and Budd 2008, 83-7). Structural fundings represent a big chance for Romani communities in the post-accession countries (Mirga 2005, 5).

Moreover, Hungary is involved in various programmes conducted by the EU. “The Decade of Roma Inclusion” is the most prominent one as an international initiative, which brings together governments, IGOs, NGOs and Romani civil society in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia (Bunescu 2007, 13).<sup>42</sup>

### **5.1.3. Identity and Problem Framing of the Hungarian Romani Leaders**

As regards the identity framing, international Romani activists prefer “a nonterritorial nation” framing for the Roma. They claim that the Roma communities have a common culture and history, hence they should be granted a special European legal status. The fifth World Romani Congress in Prague likewise proposed that the Roma should be considered as a nonterritorial European nation. Yet, most of the Hungarian activists wanted to defend their position as a national minority although they acknowledge the symbolic importance of the idea of the Roma as a transnational people. Yet, none of them supported the idea of a special legal status for the Roma as a European nation without a state. Therefore, the identity framing used by the Hungarian Romani leaders is “the Roma as a national minority” (Vermeersch 2007, 161-4).

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<sup>42</sup> The aims of this programme are to 1) launch initiatives to strengthen Roma inclusion as a high priority on the regional and European political agendas; 2) learn and exchange experiences; 3) involve Roma meaningfully in all policy making on matters concerning them; 4) bring in international experience and expertise to help make progress on challenging issues; 5) raise public awareness on the situation of Roma through active communications (Bunescu 2007, 13).

Concerning diagnostic framing, the most prominent framing done by the Hungarian Romani leaders is ethnic discrimination and prejudice. The injustice framing of “intentional discrimination by the non-Romani citizens and authorities” has been the core motivation in their mobilization. Thus, the Roma desire to get organized to cope with discriminations and prejudices (Vermeersch 2007, 152). The other diagnostic framings are poverty, being uneducated, and unwillingness to get education. The latter framing hence also blames the Roma for their social attitudes (Vermeersch 2007, 154). As regards the prognostic framing, the Hungarian Roma use the “rights” frame by asserting that the plight of the Roma cannot be improved as long as their rights are not protected. Similarly, the Romani leader Aladar Horvath states that minority rights are a necessary supplement to individual rights. Therefore, firstly basic and social rights, then minority rights should be entitled to the Roma. The first independent Romani organization in Hungary “Phalipe” advocates for Roma rights and argues that the Roma should be “recognized as a nationality and protected in a legal framework that granted them minority rights. Moreover, Hungarian Roma also have demands for Romani language and education in Romani (Vermeersch 2007, 156-9).

## ***5.2. The Comparison of the Turkish Romani Mobilization and the Hungarian Romani Mobilization***

Having examined the domestic political opportunity structure in Hungary, it is obvious that the primary factor which leads to the weakness of the Romani mobilization in Turkey is the minority legislation in Turkey. The Turkish Roma have started to be granted rights years later than the Hungarian Roma. For instance, the establishment of Romani associations in Turkey was allowed only after 2004, yet the Hungarian Roma were entitled to this right in 1988. The Roma in Hungary were also granted cultural, religious and linguistic rights in 1989. Secondly, the

Treaty of Lausanne which is the only legal text referring to the minorities remains extremely limited in scope in comparison to the minority legislation of Hungary. Moreover, the Hungarian Constitution not only recognizes the Roma as minority but also ensures them political representation as they can set up their own local and national government organizations. While the Turkish Roma have been struggling with discriminatory legislations for many years, the Roma in Hungary have already possessed social, educational, cultural and political rights. One other point is, Hungary has already ratified major international documents on minorities such as the Framework Convention, Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the Law on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities (Hughes and Sasse 2003, 21).

Although I did not make an empirical research with Hungarian Romani associations, it is not wrong to conclude that the Hungarian Roma are more experienced in terms of getting organized. My interviewees from Izmir Contemporary Romani Association Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (2008) argue that the organization of the Roma in Europe has started in 1950s and thus it is very likely for the Roma in Hungary to be experienced in mobilization.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, although the number of the Roma in these countries is more or less the same, while the percentage is taken into consideration, the Roma are more intense in Hungary and they are the biggest minority. Therefore, they are also more influential than the Turkish Roma.

Regarding the EU impact on the Roma mobilization, one can argue that both countries were subject to conditionality during their candidacy and the EU impact on reforms had been equal on both of them. At this point, it can be argued that a credible membership perspective for the member states is a necessary condition for the adoption political rules. Credibility here means

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<sup>43</sup> Ilona Klimova-Alexander argues that in the 1920s- 30s, Romani organizations started to function regularly in a collective form. The first global aspirations took place in Poland and Romania (Klimova-Alexander 2005, 15). Thus, my interviewees have a point in stating that Central and Eastern European Roma are much more experienced in getting organized compared to Turkey.

“both the promise of membership and the threat of being excluded from the accession process if rule adoption is refused” (Schimmelfennig and Schweltnus 2006, 3). Hungary’s candidacy for the EU membership has never led to serious doubts like that of Turkey (Turkey applied for membership in 1987 and Hungary in 1996). Therefore, reforms undertaken in Turkey might lag behind Hungarian reforms due to the vagueness of the future prospect. Additionally, the EU started to be interested in the Roma in Central Europe well advance. Its regular reports on Hungary started to refer to the Roma in 1997, whereas the Roma in Turkey attracted interest only after the 2001 reports. Hence, Hungary has benefited more from the EU suggestions and criticisms.

Apart from the conditionality, Hungary is now a member of the EU whereas Turkey is still a candidate. In that case, it is not surprising to think that the EU has a more direct impact on the member states in terms of rewards and criticisms. As exemplified above and as my interviewee Anita Danko (2008) notes, the EU funding granted to Hungary for Romani projects as a member state goes far beyond the funding granted to Turkey. Furthermore, it is more likely for Hungary to take part in European documents, projects, programmes and conferences as a EU member. I also believe that since Central European Roma are located very closely and have been sharing similar past and experiences, Hungarian Roma have more opportunities to change views, experiences or be in interaction with their fellow Roma in the region. “The Decade of Roma Inclusion” project is a good example to this. The accession of the countries with significant Romani populations to the EU in 2004 and 2007 also attracted the EU interest in this region. Hence, the Turkish Roma remains more isolated in this sense.

Although the impact of other IGOs and NGOs on the Romani mobilizations in these countries is out of scope of this thesis, it should nevertheless be stated that influential Romani

organizations like the ERRC and OSI are situated in Budapest. Therefore, they are more likely to assist the Hungarian Roma and to conduct EU-funded programs in Hungary. Therefore, associations and NGOs related to the Roma seem to be more vivid in Hungary. These associations or organizations are active since the first half of 1990s such as Roma Parliament, the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, Forum of Gypsy Organisations, the National Federation of Gypsy Organisations, and the Roma Civil Law Foundation (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fact Sheet on Roma 2004, 11, Vermeersch 2007, 45).

Furthermore, the EU accession process ameliorates conditions for the Roma in member states and reduces the unemployment rate compared to the Roma in non-EU states. Most importantly, the Roma in EU-member countries have greater equality in education than their fellow Roma in non-member countries (Spriova and Budd 2008, 94-6). Therefore, the Roma in Hungary benefit more from the EU trainings as well as educational programmes. Erdinc Cekic (2008) from EDROM states that the lack of education among Turkish Roma differentiates them greatly from the Central European Roma. Since education stands as a big obstacle for the Turkish Roma as stated in the previous chapter, Hungarian Roma are more likely to be successful in mobilizing.

Last but not least, concerning their framings, there are not major differences in the problem framing of the Turkish and the Hungarian Romani leaders. Yet, Ebru Uzpeder (2008) argues that compared to the European Romani leaders, the Turkish Romani associations fail to narrow down the scope of the problems due to the vast number of these problems, therefore, their projects remain more inefficient and superficial. However, I believe that the difference in their identity framing is the most vital element shaping the success of their mobilization. As discussed in detail, the Turkish Roma, although not being recognized as minority, do not also have a claim



to be recognized so. They identify themselves first as Turk, then as Muslim and then as Roma. Yet, the Hungarian Roma identify themselves as first Roma then as Hungarian. Therefore, they frame themselves as “national minority”. My interviewee Erdinc Cekic (2008) argues that this is one of the main differences between the Turkish Roma and the European Roma. Moreover, my interviewees Adrian Marsh and Abdullah Cistir (2008) also argue that the European Roma have a strong historical narrative that united them together: The Holocaust appeared as an identity-defining event. The Roma in Turkey have never been subject to such persecutions or genocide, therefore their claims remain mild compared to the European Roma.

## Conclusion

This thesis aimed to focus on the Roma in Turkey and their political mobilization. The reason why I embarked on this study was threefold: First, I found it interesting that the Roma in Turkey, despite their significant number, remains highly weak in getting mobilized, notably compared to the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Secondly, the Roma mobilization in Turkey is an understudied topic which deserves more attention. Thirdly, for a few years, the mobilization of the Turkish Roma has started to become stronger. In my opinion, the analysis of this “recent change” is a crucial area to explore. In this respect, this research focused on two questions: “What factors spur or hinder the Romani mobilization in Turkey?”, and “why the Turkish Romani mobilization remains weak?” To trace these questions, I drew information from primary and secondary sources. The core of this research rested on the in-depth interviews conducted in Edirne, Izmir, Istanbul and Budapest with five Romani leaders and four experts. To understand the factors influencing this mobilization, I aimed to analyze the domestic and the supranational political opportunity structure. In this sense, I aimed to contribute to the literature by making a thorough analysis involving external and internal factors influencing this mobilization, and conducting an elite-based analysis.

Regarding the domestic political opportunity structure analysis in Turkey, I stated that the Turkish legislation on minorities is the main reason that hinders the success of the Romani mobilization. The minority legislation in Turkey poses a severe threat to their mobilization by not recognizing them as minorities due to the Treaty of Lausanne, and addressing them in a discriminatory way in the several laws, such as the The Settlement Act, The Regulation on the Role of the Police in Ceremonies and Groups and On the Organization of Police Stations, and the Law on Movement. These laws impede the Romani involvement in society and attack their self-

confidence. However, I stated that the ongoing forced evictions through urban renovation projects in Romani districts have led to a deep concern among the Roma. Particularly the demolitions in Sulukule which is the biggest Romani settlement in Turkey have attracted immense reaction. I argued that although these demolitions have appeared as a threat to the Roma in the first instance, and despite the fact that the Roma tend to think more locally in general, this threat has turned into an opportunity enhancing solidarity and cooperation among the Roma. These projects have also attracted the politicians', media's and civil society's interest to the Roma minority in Turkey, which is a big step for the future of the Romani mobilization.

I then looked at the EU as a clear example of supranational political opportunity structure creating opportunities as well as threats for the Romani mobilization in Turkey. I displayed that the EU acts as an opportunity to this mobilization firstly by regularly monitoring the progress made in human rights and minority issues in Turkey via its reports. In light of these reports, due to the EU accession process, many essential amendments have been undergone in the legislation which eased the establishment of Romani associations, removed pejorative discourse and expanded Roma rights. The EU also poses an opportunity to the Romani mobilization through extending public discussion on the Roma and granting funds. Yet, the EU can also become a threat to this mobilization: Since the EU lacks a full-fledged minority policy hence fails to combat discrimination against the Roma within its borders, it is not difficult to question the legitimacy of its recommendations. Moreover, the EU is also said to generate projects or policies that are derived from the experiences of the Central and Eastern Roma and which hardly suit the Roma in Turkey. Exclusion of the Roma in the projects, establishment of Romani associations solely due to the EU funding pursuits, and dependency on funding hence normative agenda are other threats created by the EU to Turkish Roma mobilization.

The analysis of the Romani leaders' framing provided me many hints concerning the weakness of the Romani mobilization in Turkey. As regards the identity framing, I concluded that the Romani leaders do not pursue to reveal and highlight their ethnic identity. They have no claim to be recognized as minority and they identify themselves as Turk and Muslim first. Although they preserve their ethnic identity, this is not very strong for them since the identification as the Roma is not their primary identification. As regards the problem framing, I noted six problem framings used: The lack of education, the lack of experience, prejudices towards the Roma, lack of solidarity among them, socio-economic problems and lack of funding. I also argued that the Romani leaders refer to education, job opportunities and collective action while making solution framings. I concluded that serious clashes among them in terms of framing and organizational fragmentation are other factors impeding the success of their mobilization.

I finally compared the Turkish Romani mobilization with the Hungarian one to highlight the reasons of the weakness of the Turkish case. I asserted that the difference in the minority legislation in these countries is the main factor leading to a difference. I also argued that the EU has a more direct impact on Hungary in terms of rewards and criticisms as well as funding. I also discussed that the Hungarian Roma have more opportunities to be in interaction with their fellow Roma in this region due to the similar past and experiences. I added that influential Romani organizations like the ERRC and OSI situated in Budapest are also more likely to assist the Hungarian Roma and to conduct EU-funded programs in Hungary. The EU accession process has also ameliorated the employment and education levels of the Hungarian Roma which contribute positively to their mobilization. Finally, I concluded that there are not major differences in the problem framing of the Turkish and the Hungarian Romani leaders. However,

the difference in their identity framing is vital in shaping the success of their mobilization since the Turkish Roma, although not being recognized as minority, do not also have a claim to be recognized so.

The Turkish Romani mobilization has been a weak one due to the reasons explained above. Yet, one should not rule out the fact that the Turkish Romani mobilization has started to vitalize for a few years. The vital amendments made in the legislation due to the EU process and the forced evictions have initiated a process: The establishment of many Romani organizations, intensifying solidarity among the Roma, the emancipation of the discussion of the Romani issue in the public sphere via conferences, programmes or projects have come one after the other. As Abdullah Cistir (2008) asserts “the wind has now started to blow for the Roma”. Ebru Uzpeder (2008) also argues that these changes have not been undergone overnight. Thus, she continues that the progress shall not be taken in a very short period yet in a very influential way. She foresees that, this is only a start, and rivalry among the Roma as well as the prejudices of the authorities impeding the Romani mobilization shall come to an end through this process. Uzpeder also believes that young Roma who have recently started to become active in associations will contribute a lot to the Romani mobilization in the future.<sup>44</sup> She concludes: “This mobilization might turn into a Romani movement in the future”.

For Erdinc Cekic (2008), first and foremost, the interest has been drawn on the Roma, which is a big step. Furthermore, he states that Romani associations have started to take on solid projects such as scholarship and vocational training programmes, which is of fundamental importance for the Romani mobilization. Cekic, as he stated before, attaches crucial importance to education, and for him, the Roma shall be more educated to be more active. Abdullah Cistir

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<sup>44</sup> For instance, Romankara (Ankara Romani Association) is established by seventeen Roma university students. This association seeks to organize the Roma, and promote Roma rights and human rights.

likewise (2008) mentions, educational and vocational trainings which have started to be carried out are key for a stronger Romani mobilization. According to Halit Keser and Zafer Sulukculer (2008) the Roma shall use their right to be elected in addition to the right to elect in a five years time.

In taking into consideration the progress achieved in this limited period of time, I agree with my interviewees that the future of the Turkish Romani mobilization is very promising. I believe that this process shall play a big role for the Romani leaders to get more educated and experienced, and for the society to break its prejudices. I also agree with Ebru Uzpeder that young, educated and active Roma (like Romankara) are of fundamental importance for the future of this mobilization. Moreover, Turkey's full accession to the EU shall be a groundbreaking development stimulating the Romani mobilization in Turkey. As the Turkey's bid to the EU gets more serious, the reforms are undertaken more rapidly and seriously too. Having seen the impact of the criticisms involved in progress reports on the Turkish legislation, and Turkey's endeavours to overcome the shortcomings in its legislation, I think that these reports shall continue to be of crucial importance in ameliorating Turkey's stance towards minorities, and once Turkey becomes a member, minorities shall be granted more rights. Yet, Turkey's reluctance to sign or ratify the international documents remains as a big obstacle. Therefore, my biggest recommendation is firstly, to put domestic legislation in line with international standards. Secondly, I believe that the Turkish Roma should be in contact and cooperation with the European Roma to benefit from their experiences. Thus, more international gatherings and programmes should be conducted. As regards the future study, I believe that a thorough comparison of the Turkish Romani movement and the Hungarian Romani movement would be a very interesting research. Therefore, my brief comparison can be furthered in future researches.

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