

## **POLITICAL AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION OF TURKISH WOMEN IN THE NETHERLANDS SINCE THE MID-1990s**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Today, women of Turkish origin who form a heterogeneous structure related to the socio-economic, political, ethnical and religious positions have become active social and decisive actors of the Netherlands. Particularly, second and third generation women of Turkish origin have achieved the integration with the social, political, economical and cultural life in the Netherlands. The traditional life-style of the second and third generation of Turkish women has changed and developed in the modern Western society in Europe. The goal of this study is to examine the political participation of second and third generation Turkish women in the Netherlands and to analyze the concrete data obtained from the inquiries and questionnaires in the light of existing observations. The reason for the evaluation of the period after 1990s of the nearly 45-year-old integration process is to demonstrate that immigrant Turkish women have shown a more tendency for the adaptation to the rules and norms of society, its social and political life in which they live in this period. Consequently, in this study, political and legal developments of Turkish women are analyzed in terms of their participation to local and national policies in the Netherlands. This study aims to research for the participation of women of Turkish origin to the public and political life; as the method of collecting data, an inquiry of 47 questions performed by 239 women participants has been preferred.

**Keywords:** Women of Turkish Origin, the Netherlands, political participation, integration, integration policies

### **INTRODUCTION**

Turkish migration which began in 1961 to Europe has become one of the important realities of social, economical, and political life of Europe with over 5,2 million mass today despite the certain measures in certain periods. Among the immigrants, Turks<sup>1</sup> constitute the most crowded national community with this population. In the member states of the European Union (EU), the European Turks with their current population took place 19<sup>th</sup> and have passed eight the members of the European Union (Estonia, Ireland, South Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, and Slovenia). 53,0 percent of 5,2 million Turks, living in the boundaries of EU have the citizenship of the country in which they live (TAM, 2007: 18)<sup>2</sup>. Today, immigrants of Turkish origin and their children in Europe form a heterogeneous structure in relation to social, economical, political, ethnic and religious manners. On the other hand, it is essential to say that immigrants of Turkish origin and their children of second and third generation became integrated with the social, political, economical and cultural life of the country in which they live. Particularly, second generation Turkish immigrants have become today active social and decisive actors. As a natural consequence of this, many Turkish citizens have achieved to be selected to the national and international parliamentary by succeeding in the elections in local and national level.

Today, the political identity of Turkish immigrant that entered into the party programs of big political parties with a serious voter mass and began to be felt in the Netherlands political life started to make

<sup>1</sup>‘Turks’ (or ‘women of Turkish origin’) refers to first, second and third generation immigrants or women of Turkish origin, regardless of their nationality. This terminology follows that of the Dutch administrative definition (also see website of Statistics Bureau (CBS) [www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl)).

<sup>2</sup> The objectives of the Turkish Research Center (TAM) on Turkey are to promote German-Turkish relations and the level of knowledge and information about Turkey and Turkish migrants in Europe, to advance the cooperation between Turkey, Germany and other European countries and also to support research and public relations’ (also see website of TAM: <http://www.zft-online.de/index.php?site=43>).

the Netherlands political outlook gain variety. It is important to pay attention to especially the achievements of second and third generation women of Turkish origin among Turkish society that add colorfulness and variety to the Netherlands political life recently. The increase in the education level of women in Turkish society has made politics attractive for women and has increased the political representative power of Turkish society in the Netherlands. Consequently, the interest in socio-economical and political problems of these second and third generation women of Turkish origin who know two cultures well, completed their education in this country and were brought up in the Netherlands is increasing day by day. In this respect, women of Turkish origin express the social and political problems in different political platforms with the socialization and increasing education level and they struggle for the production of concrete solutions. Besides, women of Turkish origin struggle with social ailments like racism, discrimination, Islamic phobia that trigger revenge and hatred, do harm on communitarian peace and prosperity. On the other hand, Turkish women who have these qualities are the nominees for the break of some prejudices with an approach to society through a gentle and protective vantage point and her openness for all the cultures and world views. In conclusion, the modern roles of women that change and develop with the education in the traditional Turkish family structure and her social and political participation that develops with her possession of equality values are the peak points of this study.

In this study of the political development of Turkish women in the Netherlands; it is impossible for us to make a generalization by ignoring the differences between the generations. Since the first, second and despite its limited area the third generations have so much difference in them that to express them in the same line and mutual share is not a good approach. The point in the existing situation with the great analysis of the change between the generations will supply the targets that will be reached with an explicit vision. In nearly 45 year-old migration process, the manner and degree of the young generations that are replaced with each other to be influenced by the elements of communitarian life have varied. Thus, the positions, living standards and futurity visions of the second generation women that are born, brought up and get educated in the Netherlands will be different from those of the first generation women. Before all the evaluations that will be made on the situation of the socio-economical positions of Turkish women in the Netherlands, which generation she belongs to, the environment she is brought up, her education level, her adaptation grade with the environment should be scrutinized. The majority of mass that this study focuses on consists of these second generation and the third generation women.

In general, in the first parts of this empiric study the demographic structure of Turkish community and the historical process of migration have been surveyed briefly in the Netherlands. In the second part of study political participations that change in the 45 year-old migration process of second generation women of Turkish origin have been analyzed with the statistical data. While surveying the political participations of the women of Turkish origin, the subject has been deeply surveyed by making use of the term of political participation, its definition and the changing factors that determine the political participation. In the third part of this empiric study, the political participation of the second and third generation Turkish women that become a source for this study have been discussed with the theoretical and empiric results of standard questionnaire study that has been done with the participant subjects. In general, in this part, the participation of women of Turkish origin in the Netherlands into local and national policies and their political and legal development have been analyzed.

### **1. Demographic Characteristics of Turkish Women in the Netherlands**

In the wake of the Second World War, the demand of foreign labor came out in the Western European countries where the industrialization process gained speed, yet the need for labor was not supplied by the native resources. As an answer to this demand; Turkey in 1961 to Federal Germany, in 1964 to Austria, the Netherlands, and Belgium, in 1967 to France and in 1968 to Australia exported labor to these countries by signing mutual treaties (Doyuran, 2006). While Western European countries went on their enterprises to get labor from foreign countries, an interior migration activity was experienced towards the cities from the rural areas thanks to the sudden change in agriculture sector in Turkey.

With the effect of interior migration, to create a decrease in the increasing unemployment rate and to make contribution to the solution of employment problem; sending employers abroad became an activity which was controlled by the government. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2004),<sup>3</sup> the labor treaty between Turkey and the Netherlands in 1964 constantly increased, until 1973, the working Turkish. Yet, after the energy crisis that was influential around the world in 1973, the mutual migration treaties between the governments were ceased one sided by the Western European countries. Until the date in which the mutual treaties were cancelled, a great part of 775 thousand people who went to the Western Europe mostly from Turkey kept on this migration process by taking their families to these countries. Turkish migration to Europe that began in 1961 is one of the most important realities of economic, social and political life of Europe with a mass over 4, 2 million today despite all the measures that were taken in certain periods. Today, nearly 1, 5 million of 4, 2 million Turks that live in European countries have become the citizens of Europe (ÇSGB, 2007).

According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2006), while the number of Turks who have workpermit in the Netherlands was 22 in 1960, this reached 200 in 1961 and increased to 4.300 in 1964. The labor treaty that was signed between Turkey and the Netherlands in 1964 had an important role in this increase in the population; and the migration activity continued upto 1974. Known as the second wave of migration between 1976 and 1981, the immigration movement had increasingly continued in the form of family unification that has particularly the youth and women. In 1974 and after then, the Netherlands and other European countries came up against economic crises brought the serious limitations that related to migration and there was a partial decrease in the migration to the Netherlands. Just after the crisis, the migration was almost at a standstill begun again with the move of the partners and children in Turkey to the Netherlands. Especially between 1980 and 1990, this process went on with the marriages under the name of imported bride and groom and with the political migrations (Küçükcan and Güngör, 2004). After 2000s, the applications between two countries like adaptation exam and the efficiency in language changed the migration vision in a broad sense. Today there is an increase in the number of returns to Turkey, the increase rate in population of Turkish community in the Netherlands have been shaped according to the demographic structure of the permanent population. The immigrants of Turkish origin in the Netherlands form the biggest immigrant group of the Netherlands with a population of nearly 372 thousand.

## **2. Political Participation**

According to Martiniello (2005: 2-3), the political integration has four dimensions. The first dimension of political integration is the guarantee of the rights that are given to immigrants by the host society. The goal in the protection of the rights that belong to immigrants by political organs is the adaptation of immigrants to the society in a good way. The second dimension of political integration is the definition of the identities of immigrants within the identity of the host society. According to this, the existence of the immigrants who define their identities with that of the host society have been shown as an achievement of political integration. The third dimension of political dimension is the acceptance of democratic norm and values by immigrants. In a report that has been published by Block Commission in the Netherlands, it is stated that; "Group or an individual will supply the adaptation to the Netherlands with the possession of equal legal position, to take part in socio-economical space equally, to speak Dutch, to respect existing norms, values, and behaviors" (UETD, 2006).<sup>4</sup> The last and fourth dimension of political integration is the guarantee of the main rights like activity, political participation that belong to immigrants. Of all the dimensions that the political

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<sup>3</sup>Statistics Netherlands (CBS) is responsible for collecting and processing data in order to publish statistics to be used in practice, by policymakers and for scientific research. In addition to its responsibility for (official) national statistics, Statistics Netherlands also has the task of producing European (community) statistics.

<sup>4</sup>Union of European Turkish Democrats is short name UETD, was founded to contributing to and encouraging active participation immigrants living Turkey origin for political, economic and social life in the Western European countries. In addition, aim of the UETD has been established to activities for the purpose the in the European Union-Turkey process of integration.

integration has, the last one is one of two main titles that this study focuses on political participation. Political participation takes part in literature as an active dimension of citizenship. On the other hand, practically, political participation means that immigrant individuals take part in the administration works of the host society in different ways as a political community. Thus, political participation includes to be a candidate and to vote that are the traditional forms of participation as well as less traditional types like boycott, to be in hunger strikes, to participate in demonstrations, and to protest the political facilities.

### **2.1. Definitions and Scope**

From the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century on, 'political participation' that is one of the concepts that is often used in the field of politics is one of the most important features of the participant modern government. Because of this feature, many politics scientists said that the most important discrimination between the participant modern community and traditional community was the participation of the public into the politics (Huntington, 1968: 36-37). In the last century when the public and democratic institutions related to modernization and urbanization, the term "political participation" has been defined in different terms. For instance; Kapani defines political participation as a term, 'that determines the attitudes, matters and behaviors of individuals and (citizens), being member of community against the political system' in the seventh chapter of his book titled "The Entrance into Politics Science" (Kapani, 2003: 130-131). The participation in a political system is defined as a changing process to influence the administrators by being administrated, to change their mutual decisions in relation to their profits and choices. Eroğul also defines political participation 'as having the right in administration through the ones being administrated'. Thus, the participation depends on the existence of those who govern and those being governed. The active and passive matters of the ones being governed can be accepted as political participation to get the existing aims by making use of the ways of the existing political participation (Eroğul, 1991: 13-14). Consequently, political participation involves not only voting in the elections but also joining in political activities in different ways and types.

On the other hand, Robert Dahl divides the dimensions of political participation in his book, "Modern Political Analysis" into four categories. In his work, the author mentions four different political participation levels, to be interested in, to give importance, to be informed and action (Dahl, 1963: 57). Most of the citizens that form the basic object of the participation are contented with their interest in politics in a limited way. In the phase of giving importance that is the second dimension of participation, the citizens take the political events as a responsibility besides being interested in them. In the informing dimension that is one of the political participation phases in these different levels, connected closely; there is the pursuit of political events from massive means, attendance in demonstrations as a listener and discussion of political subjects in privacy. Beyond these three participation phases, there are activities against problems and political incidents both by behaving in favor or against. Thus, in the phase of action that is the active dimension of the political participation, the citizens play an active role in the incidents and become a direct side by being influenced from the political incidents (Milbrath, 1965: 18-20).

In democratic regimes, the political participation emerges in three levels in general. First of all, it is an individual leveled participation in which the citizens are interested in political incidents and vote in elections. This level in which the participation ways are not various is more limited than the other participation levels. In the participation that emerges in group, the individuals try to direct and influence the political decision makers in groups where they activate within the mutual profits. In this participation level, the political life becomes a part of the lives of the group members. In the third leveled political participation that comes out with the political parties, the individuals try to influence the whole political system with the participation in political parties (Çaha, 2004: 54-55).

In this respect, the usage of the term, citizenship for bigger and more economic political communities by getting beyond the national states makes another truth come out. Nowadays, to become a citizen, a nation loses its validity to become a member for the government. The participation into the mutual

projects that foresee the political mechanisms such as EU becomes an inevitable necessity of citizenship. Thus, getting over the boundaries of national identity of the term, citizenship makes the participation of the ethnic minorities into local, regional, national and over national institutions legal. For instance, if a citizen who is from Dutch origin and a Dutch citizen from Turkish origin express their ideas related to EU Law through referendum freely, it means that the participation gets an important unification aspect. In other words, the participation of the adults of Turkish origin, living in the Netherlands into national and over national institutions is a necessity to become a citizen. Shortly, from the aspect of minorities, political participation is the precondition to become a citizen.

## **2.2. Factors Influencing the Political Participation**

Modernist approach that develops from the beginnings of 1960s on handles political participation as the result of the factors such as massive communication means, socio-economic matter, vocation, education, urbanization and political participation. Besides these factors that determine the level of political participation, 'gender' and 'age' factors are the determiners of the participation (Çaha, 2004: 58). One of the factors that influence the political participation is "city life" related to "modernization" (Özbudun, 1976: 217-218; Kalaycıoğlu, 1983: 27-29). In other words, urbanization, a dimension of modernism forms a space where the communitarian and grouping interaction are intense; this also influences the political participation positively in grouping. In this sense, in traditional and patriarchal Turkish family structure; we can say that social and political participation of the women increase in the Netherlands with the modernization and socio-economic development. The results that are obtained about the women of Turkish origin in the Netherlands reveal that there is a positive relation between modernization and political participation.

A few politics scientists that see urbanization as a reflection of modernization argue that the factors that complete the city life such as grouping organization, access to massive communication means, and access to education opportunities increase political participation (Lerner, 1958: 111; Milbrath, 1965: 113-114). Another factor that influences political participation is 'education'. Education, that provides ability, knowledge and capability to comment on and follow the events for the individuals, supplies the development of the conscience of duty. The educated individuals who see the political participation as the inevitable part of the citizenship internalize political culture much more than the ones who do not get enough education (Baykal, 1970: 53-55).

The cities are the places where people have an access to education, thus, an opportunity to have a profession. 'Profession' comes first of all the factors that influence the political participation. For Kalaycıoğlu (1983: 230-231), profession and social status that are obtained with education level and urban conditions are among the communitarian factors that influence political participation. The variety of the communication network that depends on profession and socio-economic situation make valuable the public opinion that develop by political decisions and social events in the way of political powers. On the other hand, the communitarian classes that develop with profession and the organized level of the politicians' mutual affairs make political participation much intense and conscious.

Apart from political parties, in participant democracies; a means that provides the political participation is social groups (Saribay, 1994: 118-119). Social organizations that cause the political culture to develop in communities is one of the most dynamic and vivid existences that mobilize the individuals within the common targets. Social activities that organize the actions in groups and social organizations cause the notion of political participation to settle and develop with the opportunities that the democracy supplies. These organizations contribute to the development of political culture and provide the variety in the ways of political participation at the same time. Social groups try to influence the political power by demanding a policy on behalf of their own profits and get suitable decisions for their own norm and values. The social, cultural, economical and political organizations that Turkish community organizes in Western Europe increase their activities day by day on behalf of opposition parties and powers.

For Kalaycıoğlu (1983), the personal factors that influence the political participation are 'gender' and 'age'. Nowadays, in the analysis of political behavior based on field studies; women attend politics less than men (Tekeli, 1981: 128-129). The causes of this difference in political participation are gender, marital status, employment, education and ages (Yuva, 2005: 45). The women who do not get enough education, who do not work, who are married and who have children attend politics less than the women in the opposite side. Since the women who get education and have a high economic income feel freer, they are more interested in political activities (Alkan, 1981: 48-49). On the other hand, the political participation of the groups such as women, teens and the old-the ones who do not involve in social life actively- have less political participation (Çam, 1995: 171).

In conclusion, income, education level, profession, gender, age, the house and personality structure, psychological, cultural and environmental factors influence the behavior of the individuals to the political systems (Kapani, 2003: 132-133). In this study, a field study reveals that there are affairs in certain levels among the factors that influence the political behaviors of the individuals regarding the political participation. So, it has been observed that the ones who have a high education level and income related to profession among the participants are much more interested in political activities than the ones who have a low socio-economical status. On the other hand, the ones who have a high economical level have a tendency to direct and influence their environments and behaviors and their own actions.

### **2.3. Political Participation of Turkish Women in the Netherlands**

There are four different elections in four different levels in the political system of the Netherlands. In municipalities, 150 chaired the House of Representatives and the States- Provincial elections that are made four times a year, the deputies and members are elected by parties or directly by the public. The elections of European Parliament are made five times a year. In the European Parliament, consisting of 27 nations, the Netherlands is represented by 27 deputies. Everyone who is a citizen of the Netherlands is an EU citizen at the same time. The most important political aspect of EU citizenship is the possession of the right to vote and be voted for in the local elections as in European Parliament. The most important regulation of EU citizenship that is enlarged with 1997 Amsterdam Treaty and accepted with 1982 Maastricht Treaty brought in political space is the right to participate in Parliamentary elections. In this respect, the immigrants who get EU citizenship as the other native citizens obtain the opportunity to participate in regulations that will be made and in the decisions that will be made about the future of EU. Emine Bozkurt who is the member of Labor Party (PvdA) is one of the 27 deputies who represent the Netherlands in European Parliament. She is one of two women of Turkish origin who get this opportunity. The other woman member in AP is Filiz Hüsmenova, being elected in July, 2009 from Bulgarian Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). In conclusion, everyone who is a citizen of the Netherlands has the right for these four different elections in different four levels. Yet, the ones who dwell in the Netherlands for five years, but who are not a citizen of the Netherlands just join in the elections of Municipality Assembly.

According to the laws of the Netherlands, everyone who is 18 year-old and has proficiency in voting is accepted as a voter. In the Netherlands, only in 1985, the foreigners had the right to vote and to be voted with the changes in the law (Waldrauch, 2003: 17). Turkish community that had the right to vote and to be voted for the foreigners went to the voting box for the first time in 1986. After this date, the voters from Dutch citizens and of Turkish origin who went to the voting box in 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010 voted seven times in the elections. Thus, the immigrants of Turkish origin, being the citizen of the Netherlands could vote as a voter in the elections, the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer), the States- Provincial (Provinciale Staten) and Municipalities (Gemeenteraden) that are made once in every four years. The voters who are foreign or native citizens of the Netherlands in the multicultural Dutch community determine 150 members of the National Assembly, the members of the States-Provincial and through these assemblies; they determine 75 members of chamber (Eerste Kamer) and the members of municipalities which form the other wing of the parliament. In the Netherlands the foreigners with a settlement permit and five-year-legal-stay in the country have an

important role in the local elections. Turkish community in which the women form the half of it has a considerable number of voters. According to 2005 year-data by Central Statistics Netherlands Department (CBS), in the Netherlands where 358.846 of Turkish origin live, there were 240.460 people who have the right to vote and to be voted in local level. For the voter mass, in the classification, the first one is Turks; the second one is Surinamese, 237.546 voters; Moroccans with 154.664 voters in the third turn.<sup>5</sup>

In general, in local elections, the voters of foreign voters attend less than those of Dutch origin. The reason of this is that there is a low education level and less interest in local election campaigns. The only group in the participation into local elections is Turkish voters. In Amsterdam and Rotterdam where Turkish population is intense, the voting rate of Turkish voters in local elections is the highest one among the other ethnic groups. In the last local elections, the participation rates of Turkish voters were %51 and %56 in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the two big cities (See; Table 1.1). On the other hand, in the local elections in Amsterdam, Labor Party (PvdA), in ideology left side, managed to get the votes of Turkish voters (Turks 87%, Moroccans 77%, Surinamese 82%). In 1998, in local elections in Amsterdam, 18% votes of Turkish voters were for GroenLinks (GL) and 18% for Christian Democrats. After Amsterdam, in Rotterdam where Labor Party (PvdA) is powerful, 83% of Turkish voters voted for this party (Heelsum, 2008).

**Table 1.1. Turnout Rates of Five Ethnic Groups at the Local Elections, 1994-2006**

Background of Origin of Voter	Amsterdam				Rotterdam**				The Hague		Utrecht	
	1994	1998	2002	2006	1994	1998	2002	2006	1994*	1998	1994	1998
Turks	67 (%)	39	30	51	28	42	53	56	-	36	55	39
Moroccans	49	23	22	37	23	33	39	58	-	23	44	26
Surinamese/ Antilleans	30	21	26	26	24	25	27	41	--	27	-	22
Cape Verdeans	-	-	-	-	34	33	33	39	--	-	-	-
Overall turnout	56,8	45,7	47,8	50,8	56,9	48,4	55	57,8	57,6	57,6	59,8	56,5

**Source:** Tillie, 1994; Tillie and Van Heelsum, 1999; refer also to Tillie, 1998; Michon and Tillie 2003; Michon, Tillie and Van Heelsum 2007.

\* The Hague 1994: no data, \*\* Data from COS

After 2006 national elections in the Netherlands Parliament, 3 of 5 deputies of Turkish origin are women and 2 of them are men. Of these 5 deputies in Representative Assembly, 2 of them are the members of Christian Democrat Party (CDA), 1 of them is the Labor Party (PvdA), and the other 2 belong to People's Party For Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and Democrats 66 (D66), the party of Fatma Koşer Kaya. The States-General of the Netherlands, Emine Bozkurt is another woman of Turkish origin who obtains a place for herself in the political arena. Generally, in local elections, Emine Bozkurt, a member of Labor Party (PvdA) who is supported by Turk voters was in charge in European Parliament, representing the Netherlands. On the other hand, after the general elections of November 22, 2006; Nebahat Albayrak was appointed to the post of Government Secretary in coalition government that was established by PvdA, CDA and CU parties in February, 2007.

The ethnic communities who are living in the Netherlands and the other Western European countries had increased their interests in the politics; one of the most important reasons of this interest is being

<sup>5</sup>Doğan, Basri "Hollanda yerel seçimlere hazırlanıyor", *Zaman Hollanda*, (06.05.2009)

succeeded of individuals. In the term 1998 and 2002, the three deputies from Turkish community increased the interest in the local and national politics of the Netherlands. Turkish community, today with 240 thousand voters mass, is a candidate to bring up politicians who are active. Turkish community started to pick up the interest of big political parties which entered into the power contest especially after 2002 elections with the successful examples both of its own and of its potential voters mass. In this respect, despite the negative communitarian atmosphere that September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks created, the parties gave more place for Turk candidates than that of the first in the deputy candidate lists in 2002 general elections. Albayrak, Çörüz and Örgü, three candidates of Turkish origin who were elected in 1998 and 2002 periods also succeeded in being elected directly in the general elections in 2002. From the substitute lists of parties in 2002 general elections, Fatma Koşer Kaya from Democrats 66 (D66), Nihat Eski from Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and Nevin Özütok from Green Left entered into the Dutch Assembly. Thus, after 1998, 2001, 2002 elections, the number of deputies of Turkish origin who entered into the House of Representatives of the Netherlands increased to six. Therefore, there are six deputies of Turkish origin in the House of Representatives of the Netherlands, 4 of those are women and 2 of those are men. Beside the 6 deputies of Turkish origin, 4 women and 2 men, Saadet Karabulut from Socialist Party (SP) which raised swiftly in November 2006 elections entered into the House of Representatives.<sup>6</sup> Of 7 deputies who managed to enter the House of the Representatives, 5 of those are women; this illustrates the interest of woman in the politics in Turkish community of the Netherlands. These numbers show that the political participation and interest in politics of the women in Turkish community is so high.

The right to vote and to be voted for in local elections given to foreigners in the Netherlands, 1985 made the politicians of Turkish origin had seen frequently in the Municipalities (Waldrach, 2003: 17). The ones of Turkish origin who took part in local administrations with a few members from Rotterdam and Amsterdam in the Netherlands in 1986 for the first time began to enter into the Municipalities more frequently from 1990s on. From 2000s on, the number of the members, entering into the assemblies was over 100. For instance, in 2002 elections, over 145 Dutch citizens of Turkish origin gained the right to enter into the town and central municipalities. In November 2006 elections after four years, the number of the members reached 180 in States-Provincial by adding 30 members to this number. Except the normal membership, the members of assembly of Turkish origin in many local administrations raised up to the assistantship of mayor.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1.2. Number of Councilors of Foreign Origin in The Netherlands, 1994-2006**  
Year of Elections

Country of Origin	1994	1998	2002	2006
Turkey	32	74	113	157
Morocco	7	21	26	66
Surinam	21	33	36	38
Dutch Antilles	1	8	5	6
Other	12	14	24	35
Total	73	150	204	302

**Source:** IPP, 2006:8/Michon at al., 2007

In Table 1.2, the numbers show that the most participant and active group in local politics among ethnic groups of the Netherlands is Turkish community. The half of assembly members of foreign origin consists of assembly members of Turkish origin. Yet, the number of assembly members of foreign origin is not sufficient in all the national parties of the Netherlands. A large part of assembly members of foreign origin gathered in Labor Party (PvdA) (IPP, 2006: 9; ISS, 2002; Heelsum, 2008).

<sup>6</sup>“Avrupa siyasetine yön veren Türkler”, *Zaman*, (10.01.2008)

<sup>7</sup>“İşte Avrupa siyasetine yön veren Türkler”, *Zaman*, (10.01.2008)



To sum up, as in the whole world, in Turkish community of the Netherlands, the women have a less interest than the men do in every level of participation. Particularly, exclusion in social, cultural and economic fields that are applied to the first generations show itself in political decision makers and elections. Turkish women who do not get enough and qualified education and who do not have economic independence did not take part in public spheres until 1990s. Besides, the duty to be a wife and a mother, as a part of traditional Turkish family structure keeps Turkish woman away from politics. Thus, the number of women in Dutch politics is insufficient even though there is equality between men and women. Socio-economic status of Turkish women which develops with education and profession makes her be in a close relation with political system. Turkish women within ethnic origin have been replaced as the most intense group of participants, because they see vote as one of the most important responsibilities of citizenship for the local, regional and national elections. Turkish woman who does not refine the political participation with voting gets the representative power in every phase of politics.

In conclusion, Turkish woman is being represented well day by day in the political arena in the multicultural Dutch community. Today, in the House of Representatives of the Netherlands with 150 members, the examples like Sevilay Akkaş, Songül Akkaya, Nebahat Albayrak, Fatma Koşer Kaya, Fatma Örgü and Emine Bozkurt who took charge in the States-Provincial and European Parliament as the member of assembly and deputy are the ones for the existence of Turkish woman in the political life. In addition to this, 180 local politicians of Turkish origin take charge in city and provincial assemblies (Pilancı, 2004: 1-3). In conclusion, the participation and interest of the second generation women of Turkish origin who gained the citizenship of European Union and the Netherlands in the general and local administrations of the Netherlands increase day by day.

### **3. Political Participation of Turkish Women in the Netherlands: Research Findings**

This study has been prepared in order to make use of primary and secondary resources in European languages. The secondary resources consist of articles and books firstly on the Netherlands country reports, various national statistical reports and EU reports. The primary resources are based on the analysis of the supported interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. Firstly, in the big cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht in many settlement regions, there are studies of semi-structured questionnaire with women of different socio-economical status. Among the women being interviewed, there are civil servants working in public and private spaces, personnel in service sector and women in self employment branches besides ordinary person from the public. In our field work that aims to research the political and social participation of women of Turkish origin, the data was collected by means of face to face interviews. Women interviewed face to face have been selected from the participants who have different education levels, demographic features and socio-economical status. In the interviews which are applied through questionnaire form and face-to-face method, two different exemplification models have been employed. In the first one, questionnaires are for the head of the family, his partner and daughters. In the second one, questionnaires are for the women who work in formal and informal institutions in open and closed areas. In the both cases, visits were performed with advance notice to the participants.

#### **3.1. Political Participation and Voting & Voting Behavior**

The interest of the voters of Turkish origin who gained the citizenship of the Netherlands in the political life of the Netherlands increases day by day. As the socio-economical status and education level of the women among Turkish community increase, the sensibility on their political participation and representation also increases. 94 percent of 239 women participants mutually interviewed have the right to vote in local and national elections. 6 percent of the participants are women of Turkish origin who did not complete their fifth year in the Netherlands and are not the citizens of the Netherlands. We can easily say that awareness of citizenship on the representation and participation of the women who have the right to vote. To our question, "What does it mean to vote in local and general elections to you?" Halime N. who works in a private cooperation as an accountant reveals the importance of the issue with this original answer:

*... I voted in both of the elections in March and November 2006. Since voting is a citizenship responsibility. Besides, this is a responsibility at the same time. Some Turkish friends who are around me remain insensitive to vote, because they claim that nothing changed for many years. If we want to change something for ourselves, we should catch the attention of the politicians and league together against politicians and political parties. In time, achieving of these goals will be possible with the active participation of us as voters and selected politicians. I should say that: some politicians we choose forget the expectations of the community and they leave the community on its own way. Our own politicians who do not protect our profits make us alienated, yet, we should go to the front of the voting box by being powerful...*

From the aspect of the number of voters, the high participation of Turkish community that forms the second big mass of the Netherlands in local and national elections keeps on attracting the public and parties. In the Netherlands where the multicultural integration policies are laid aside, the minorities come face to face with the exclusion policies that reach serious dimensions. In such kind of a place, the votes that are used actively and the high participation in the elections are seen as an answer to the exclusion policies. The most effective example of this is that 75 percent of Turkish voters have supported the candidate from the same ethnic origin in 2002 elections after September 11 attacks. Undoubtedly, the struggle with the exclusion, discrimination in social, political, economic area is not with only voting. First of all, the construction of the civil community organizations that teach the collective action and increase the socialization should be common and the subsidiary organizations that will be effective around the country should be founded. Thus, in the determination and introduction of the candidates that will represent Turkish community, the civil institutions will function significantly. Party memberships and increase of non-governmental organizations are increasing awareness of civil. The membership for parties among minority groups is not common. The reason for this is that the trust for parties and politicians has decreased by less than 50 percent. In the last ten years, the political discussions on minority groups and the discussions of the coalition partners have decreased this trust. However, according to a study made in Amsterdam, the immigrants of Turkish origin among ethnic origins have the lowest rate on the issue of political distrust. Only 36 percent of the population of Turkish origin does not trust the political institutions of the Netherlands, this rate is 41 percent in the ones of Dutch origin, 60 percent in Moroccans, 61 percent in Surinamese, and 75 percent in Antilleans. Thus, in many countries including Amsterdam, Turkish voters participate in local elections much than the other ethnic minorities and trust local political institutions (Fennema and Tillie, 1999: 7). These results show that the development of multicultural democracy and the increase in the quality are possible with the high political participation and trust.

According to our latest research data, while 18 percent of the women participants state that they are members of a party, 82 percent of them state that they are not members of any party. In modern democracies, the rate of the efficiency in party and the number of members in political parties are accepted as the indication of political participation. In conclusion, the political participation is one of the important indications of the adaptation. Currently, Turkish community has representatives in municipality, province, national parliament and the European Parliament can increase number of representatives and get legal position with an active participation much higher than the previous ones.

“Which party will you vote for in the next election?” question to participants revealed the answer of another question at the same time. This question is “will you vote in the next election?” 179 of the participant answered that they voted for a party. 32% of the participant women are not interested in elections and voting and 28 women have not decided yet. For the participants, in the next election, the rate of voting changes according to age groups. For this, 22% of 2-20 age group participants would not vote and 22% of those would not know. 56% of women participant in this age group stated that they would vote in next election. On the other hand, 12% of the participants in 20-43 age groups stated that they did not want to vote and 8% of those stated that they were indecisive and 80% of those stated that they wanted to vote. 26% of the woman participants over 43 age group said that they did not want to vote and 74% of those said that they wanted to vote in the next election. These rates show that the

participants in 43 year-old group are more interested in politics and the rate of the indecisive ones has decreased. Another result from these rates is that the woman participants in middle age group are more active in voting compared to old and young.

I have stated that there is a close relation between the education level of the individuals and political participation. This is the most important hypothesis. Education supplies the active participation in political activities by developing citizenship of individuals. Accordingly, as for that education level of the women participants; propensity to vote of the women participants in turn primary school graduates is 70%, high school graduates is 73%, college graduates is 87%. These results show that as the education level of the women increases, the rate of political participation increases. On the other hand, as the income level of the individual increases, there appears to be a political participation in every level. Thus, there is a positive correlation between the income level and voting behavior of the individual, in short; as the income level increases, we can say that the tendency to vote and the advantage for political representation increase. In conclusion, it is clear that there is a close relation between income level related to profession and the tendency to vote. Besides, the ones who have a high income level also are the members of the parties. Also, it is noticed that the participants who follow media are interested in every level of the participation and they do not support a party for a long time.

The policies of the parties that were successful in November 22, 2006 elections and the behaviors of the women of Turkish origin for these policies show variety. Labor Party (PvdA) defends the demanded price is violation of human rights for the adaptation course for foreigner. On the other hand, it defends that all the schools based on religion must accept all the native and foreign students. Labor Party (PvdA), the partners of the government is against European Constitution. On the other hand, it demands that the retirement law and the subvention business opportunities be modernized. For its policies, subvention should be provided of the salary outcome by the employers that will recruit the unemployed for a long time. It defends the limitation of mortgage interest of the ones of high income and the provision of the subvention for the ones who will buy house for the first time. On the other hand, it defends that the young who have tendency to commit a crime should be regained for the community and in some occasions, the young should be punished with a stay in prison only for the nights. According to the result of the interview, the primary sources of this study, 37 percent of 239 participants said that they would vote for Labor Party (PvdA) in the next elections because they included the rights of minorities into their programs (See; Figure 3.22).

According to the interview results, 6 percent of 239 women participants will vote for Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA). It defends the harsh policies for the minorities and it is not supported by the minorities. According to a study, 7,5 percent rate of participants in local elections supported Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), the party got 13 percent of the votes (Fennema and Tillie, 1999). On the other hand, in 1994 Amsterdam municipality elections, 37 percent of Turkish origin, in 1998 18 percent, in 2002 2 percent and in 2006 1 percent supported Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA). By years supporting of Turkish voters has decreased to Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), but supporting of Turkish voters has increased as much as to Labor Party (PvdA) (Tillie, 2000; Michon and Tillie, 2003; van Heelsum and Tillie, 2006). Democrats 66 (D66), the partners of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Balkenende government, defends the protection of the workers' rights. It wants all the foreigners to learn Dutch. In family unification, the contribution money should be given including the course prices if they pass adaptation exam. 5 percent of 239 women participants that consist of the sample group of this study will vote for Democrats 66 (D66).

People's Freedom and Democratic Party (VVD) defends that the migration and family unification should be stopped especially for the ones who come from non-western countries. It wants everybody to know Dutch and to enter an exam that will show their acceptance of norms and rules of the Netherlands. On the other hand, for Green Left Party (Groen Links), there should be a general amnesty for the refugees who have not committed any crime, living in the Netherlands for five years and they

should be given the right of citizenship for the foreigners. According to the party policies, the ones who do not get the income condition should take their families if they have not committed any crimes. For Socialist Party, the Netherlands citizenship should be made easier and free. The foreigners should participate in municipality elections in 3 years instead of 5 years and this right should be given in the provincial elections. The obstacles should be removed for the ones who return and the current return application should be expanded. The participation into course should be compulsory and the attendance should be observed. For Socialist Party (SP), 100.000 retired should return to business market and the incomes should be balanced and the social funds should be increased. The soft drugs should be legal, yet hard drug commerce should be banned.<sup>8</sup>In this study, 8 percent of 239 women participants said that they would vote for Green Left Party (Groen Links), and 20 percent of women participants for Socialist Party (SP) in next elections. On the other hand, 5 percent of the women participants will vote for People's Freedom and Democracy. Two parties Labor Party and Socialist Party that are supported by Turkish voters defend the democratic rights and remove the minority votes due to the support of social state applications.

Christian Democratic Appeal, Labor Party and Christian Union were scored positively by the participants with their three year-old policies. 38 percent of 239 women participants score the policies of the state positively, 26 percent score negatively. The rate of the ones who find the government policies to be good are much more than the ones who find them to be bad. The policies in favor of minorities and discrimination issues are the reason of the positivism to the policies. Secondly, the support of the steps in housing sector and struggle with the unemployment is the reason. The policies of the coalition government for the minorities are less appreciated by women participants. On the other hand, the rate of the ones who evaluate the general policies and minority policies of the government is almost the same. The rate of the ones who see the policies of government for the minorities worse is much than the rate of the ones who see the general policies worse. One of the reasons of that difference is Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) does not defend the minority rights and request strict rules and policies against them.

There are two factors that influence the elections. These are ideological choices and the choices that are shaped according to the party's position in the coalition. In the first occasion, the ideological choice is forefront in the right and left parties. The left parties are the middle-left parties and liberal parties (Tillie, 1995). The behaviors of the minorities in the Netherlands are determined according to ideological and strategical choices. The choices of the minorities are determined by the policies of the parties that protect the socio-economical rights and profits. The strategical choices are determined by the existence of the candidates of the same ethnic origin in the cities. The most vivid example for this is the candidacy of Albayrak and Çörüz by their parties in several terms. In 2006 elections, four deputies including three women were elected by the votes of Turkish citizen. Turks also support Labor Party. The Moroccans' approach is more ideological, and they prefer the parties of the left. The voting choice of Surinamese and Turkish is not determined by the ideological attitudes. The party policies of central parties concerning people of Turkish and Surinamese origin and the current political developments are the determining factors. Thus, the strategical and ideological attitudes determine the voting color of the women of Turkish origin. Whether there is a candidate from the same ethnic origin or not is also a determining factor.

### **3.2. Political Participation and Representation**

Labor Party (PvdA) who decreased its deputy number to 33 by losing 9 chairs in November 2006 elections is the party which Turkish voter gave great support in local elections. Nebahat Albayrak who is the second candidate of Labor Party from Rotterdam in November 2006 elections got 122.779 votes

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<sup>8</sup>'Hollanda'da seçim macerası başlıyor', *Gurbetport İnternet Gazetesi*, [www.turkiye-avrupa.net](http://www.turkiye-avrupa.net) (21.05.2009)

including Turkish voters. Nebahat Albayrak goes on her duty as a Government Secretary of the Ministry of Justice as the member of the Netherlands cabinet. Saadet Karabulut who is the third candidate from Amsterdam got 17.333 votes that Turkish voters gave in majority in November 2006 elections. Coşkun Çörüz who is the 35th candidate from Haarlem of Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) got 1.076 votes those almost all Turkish voters. Lastly, Fatma Koşer Kaya who is the sixth candidate from The Hague of Democrats 66 (D66) got 34.564 votes including Turkish voters. On the other hand, for the elections of 2004 European Parliament elections, Bozkurt who joined from the eighth place of the list from the Labor Party (PvdA) became the woman candidate of Turkish origin for European Parliament for the first time with 25.000 votes she got instead of the candidate in the seventh turn. Emine Bozkurt became the spokesman of Labor Party against the discrimination by passing to Justice Commission from Social Duties and Employment Commission. At the same time, in Turkey, she worked as the member of culture and education commission, areporter on the women issues in Turkey. Bozkurt protected her place in AP by being elected again and joined as the second candidate of Labor Party for AP elections in 2009.

After the Representative Assembly, another political organ where the politicians of Turkish origin became successful is the Provincial Assemblies. From 2006 on, in Provincial Assemblies, there are 15 members of Turkish origin who takes in charge. There are six members of Turkish origin in different provinces including 3 women from Social Democrat Labor Party, the partners of coalition. In total there are three male members of Turkish origin from Christian Democrat Party that big partner of the government in Provincial Assemblies. There is one male member from Green Left Party and Democrats 66 (D66); there are two men members from Socialist Party and Liberalist Party in Provincial Assemblies. Thus, there are 15 members of Turkish origin representing Turkish community including 3 women in 12 the Provincial Assembly.

In March 7, 2006, in the Netherlands, the Municipality Assembly elections for the membership of assembly of 458 local municipalities were held. In these elections, 178 of 403 candidates of Turkish origin were successful and they were elected for the assembly membership to take charge in four years in towns, cities and districts. With a legal regulation in 1983, the minorities, the citizen of the Netherlands were given the right to vote. In 1986, the minorities who dwelled for at least 5 years in the Netherlands- they are not the citizen of the Netherlands- were given the right to vote in local elections. The voters of Turkish origin showed an increase in local, national and regional political mechanisms from in 1986 elections they joined for the first time just after this regulation. In 1986, while 10 of 60 candidates of Turkish origin were elected, this number increased to 37 in 1994; to 108 in 1998 and to 140 in 2002. In addition to the national parties, which the local parties joined, in the Municipality Assembly elections that were held in March, 2006, about 180 municipality assembly members represent a successful to Turkish community in their regions. In Amsterdam where Turkish population is dense, from 1990 to our day there are 19 councilors of Turkish origin including 11 men and 5 women. On the other hand, in 2002 and 2006 elections, there were 48 councilors of Turkish origin, consisting of 11 women and 37 men related to 9 sub-municipalities dependent on Amsterdam. Before 2006, there were 61 councilors of Turkish origin of sub-municipalities and Amsterdam city whose 31 councilors were also the members of Turkish civil community institutions (Michon and Vermeulen, 2009). These results show that the interest in politics and the socialization with the civil organization increases.

In March 2006 elections, around the country, Labor Party (PvdA) got the great part of the votes and also as first party was obtained the number of Turkish candidates and support of Turkish voters. 111 candidates of Turkish origin that take part in Labor Party achieved to be elected in local elections. 22 candidates from Green Left Party (Groen Links) lists and 19 from Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) lists were elected as a candidate. On the other hand, in these elections, 10 candidates of Turkish origin from local parties, 8 from Socialist Party, 7 from People's Freedom and Democracy Party (VVD) and one from Stabilized Netherlands Party (DN) became successful in the elections.

## Conclusion

According to the data of this study, the Turkish community in the Netherlands is the most active group among the other ethnic minorities on the political and civil organization participation. The interest of the women of Turkish origin in local and national elections is a good indication of political participation. In 2006 general elections, the rate of the participation of the women of Turkish origin approaches to that of the Netherlands. This shows that Turkish community is a group that defends the democratic rights and joins in the decision making processes. From the aspect of political participation, the women of Turkish origin is the group mostly trusted by the governmental organs and the political system of the Netherlands, among the ethnic minority groups. As a matter of fact, the political participation and trust of the minorities of the Netherlands is an indication of the socialization level. The most important indicators of this level are the common organization networks in the host country and the number of civil institutions. Today, the number and prevailing situation of Turkish civil organizations around the Netherlands is the most common among the ethnic groups.

In the Western European countries, Turkish women try to get a place in half a century migration history. The Turkish woman rejects to be assimilated and she criticizes her own cultural elements. Culture, as a dynamic and changing phenomenon, experiences a revolution. Surely, the traditional cultural elements are also criticized.

Recently, the representation and political participation of the women show themselves in every part of the community. In democratic communities, the status of the women is a symbol of development and improvement. The data of the survey show that the women of Turkish origin in the Netherlands do not reach the desired level of participation in economic and social life, but their participation in political life and representation shows that they are all successful. As a matter of fact, the political representation of the women is a new event for Turkish community. The political representation of women is higher in the Netherlands, yet, their perception of politics as a duty of men decreased their existence in politics. To show many candidates in the regions in limited numbers is not an easy path for the women to participate in the elections as a candidate. The discrimination, political concept, ethnic participation and political organization influence the women negatively in their participation in the city administration. In conclusion, Turkish civil institutions and the governmental organs in the Netherlands should take measures to remove the obstacles and to focus on the structural obstacles.

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