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LISBOAN

Linking Interdisciplinary Integration Studies by Broadening the European Academic Network

Fifth Guest Lecture

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Fifth LISBOAN Guest Lecture, 23 May 2012, University of Cologne

Prof. Meltem Müftüleri-Baç, Sabanci University

Date: 23 May 2012

Venue: University of Cologne, Neues Seminargebäude, Tagungsraum/Stehkonvent

Hosts: Nicole Ahler and Wolfgang Wessels, University of Cologne

In the framework of the LISBOAN Guest Lecture programme, Professor Meltem Müftüleri-Baç, Jean Monnet Chair at Sabanci University, visited the University of Cologne. Hosted by Professor Wolfgang Wessels, Professor Müftüleri-Baç held a LISBOAN guest lecture on 'The Lisbon Treaty: Challenges of European Integration and Enlargement'. The lecture was aimed at BA and MA students from all areas studying at the University of Cologne and was also attended by a number of doctoral students. The audience consisted of 30 students, mainly from the fields of social and political sciences.

After a brief welcome, including an overview of the LISBOAN network in general and the lecture series in particular, Professor Wessels introduced Professor Müftüleri-Baç and the general topic of her guest lecture.

Professor Müftüleri-Baç's lecture started from the current the crises affecting the euro area and the EU and their consequences for the future of European integration and for the enlargement process from a Turkish perspective. Using the 2004 enlargement and the negative referendums on the Constitution Treaty as a starting point, she underlined that, apparently, further integration was not possible as long as it was handled as an elite project without involving the public. She argued that the lack of a European public space and the Union's democratic deficit had been major challenges for Turkish accession, despite the fact that the Lisbon Treaties tried to overcome these problems by, for instance, strengthening the role of the European Parliament.

Professor Müftüleri-Baç described it as somewhat paradoxical to see a number of Balkan countries, some of which were still in a state-building process including border problems, firmly en route to join the EU while accession negotiations with a stable Turkish state were in deadlock. However, she underlined the fact that Turkey, due to its large and growing population, would indeed have a major impact on the Union, comparing its accession to the one of the United Kingdom. In this context, Professor Müftüleri-Baç also mentioned the current asymmetric visa regulations imposed by the EU on travelers from Turkey, which presented a huge obstacle for closer cooperation across borders.

These considerations notwithstanding, Professor Müftüleri-Baç argued that EU membership had lost much of its appeal to Turkey in economic terms due to its internal problems and lack of consistency. Moreover, the soft application of the economic criteria towards Romania and Bulgaria, and the fact that both became members in spite of their problems such as widespread corruption reduced the EU's credibility towards the candidate countries. Her analysis of Turkey's economic growth potential and key indicators of EU countries led her to conclude that Turkey was able to meet the Maastricht criteria better than a lot of current member states.

Professor Müftüleri-Baç noted a decrease in the EU's worldwide prestige and influence resulting from the debt crisis and the emergence of cleavages within Europe both between the Northern

and Southern member states, and the elite and the public. In this context, she mentioned the European uniqueness that allows national governments to blame a supranational layer for internal conflicts.

As for the changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaties, Professor Müftüler-Baç argued that the possible accession of Turkey as a highly populated country was not incorporated in the LT procedures, such as the double majority. Considering the Lisbon aim of creating an EU which is closer to its citizens and better prepared for future enlargement, Professor Müftüler-Baç opined that further treaty changes to the fundamental legal framework will be necessary in order to continue the integration process.

The lecture was followed by a lively discussion. The students were in particular interested in the actual Turkish intentions, the degree of Turkish enthusiasm towards accession and the credibility of the Turkish government's pro-EU course against the background of declining public support. Professor Müftüler-Baç stressed the fact that Turkey had already contributed financially to EU projects, such as education and science related ones, and therefore had already proven its capacity and willingness to be part of the European integration process. She also argued that Turkish relations to other countries in the region couldn't replace the accession to the EU, which she called 'unique'.

Professor Müftüler-Baç also used the opportunity of her stay in Cologne to give presentations in an introductory course to European politics for Bachelor students and in a seminar on the relations between the EU and Turkey at the Master's level.