

Who is Who in the European Debate on Turkey¹

Austria

5 September 2005

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¹ This collection of opinions is part of a wider project carried out in cooperation between ESI (Berlin) and EDP (Istanbul) to assess the state of debate on Turkey and further enlargement in different EU member states. It will be followed by a full analysis of the Austrian debate to be published before the end of September and further research in the Netherlands and France.

I. ***POLITICAL PARTIES***

Popular understanding of the Turkey position of different Austrian political parties according to a “Turkey barometer” one year ago in **autumn 2004**². At the time, the Austrian People’s Party was seen as the party most supportive of Turkish accession, followed by the Greens.

Scale: 1 = *Party is clearly for the EU-accession of Turkey*
6 = *Party is clearly against*)

ÖVP (Austrian People’s Party):	2,9
Greens:	3,0
SPÖ (Austrian Social Democratic Party):	3,6
FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party):	4,5

A. **The ruling *Austrian People’s Party* (ÖVP, *Österreichische Volkspartei*)**

Firm on the start of negotiations on 3 October 2005, but insisting on the absence of a “membership guarantee” and on “open-ended” negotiations. Full membership as possible outcome of negotiations was never excluded.

On 17 December, the People’s Party Executive (*Bundesparteivorstand*) passed a resolution endorsing the position of the Chancellor: “Yes to a European Turkey, yes to special modalities as agreed upon in the European Council resolution, and yes to a referendum in the question of EU accession for Turkey.” Chancellor Schüssel has also reiterated his insistence on an Austrian referendum upon conclusion of the accession negotiations.

Party coherence: Despite rhetoric suggesting otherwise, policy coherence on the start of accession negotiations has been firm within the national leadership and in line with the European council resolution.

Some influential voices within the party who deviate from the official line are demanding a harder stance on Turkey. Opposition from the right within the party includes the mayor of Graz, the capital of Styria province, the nominally independent but *de facto* ÖVP-close member of

² On 11 October 2004, the political weekly *profil* published the survey results of a poll of 500, undertaken by the OGM institute. People were asked to locate the Austrian parties’ position on Turkey on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 meaning “The party is clearly for an EU-accession of Turkey”, and 6 meaning “.. it is clearly against.” Note the poll was undertaken in the very days of the European Commission’s publication of its report and its opinion on Turkey. At that time, the BZÖ party had not yet been founded. All of its members were still members of the FPÖ party.

government, Karlheinz Grassler, the finance minister, and five out of six People's Party Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

Wolfgang Schüssel, Austrian Chancellor (People's Party) since 2000. In his capacity as Austria's foreign minister, Schüssel had signed the 1999 Helsinki resolution granting Turkey candidate status. Schüssel also signed the 2002 and the 2004 European Council resolutions on Turkey.

“Turkey's EU accession would cost as much as the recent accession of all ten new members. Before saying there is full membership for Turkey, someone has to explain to me how to finance that. We have to keep the absorption capacity of the EU in mind. This is what we owe to the anxieties and worries of our citizens.”

(Der Spiegel, 21 August 2005)

“I support a referendum in Austria, should an EU accession of Turkey happen.”

(Kurier, 4 June 2005)

“The summit is not about membership. The summit is about the start of membership negotiations. And I believe that is something everyone wants.”

(Austrian Press Agency, 16 December 2004)

Ursula Plassnik, Austrian Foreign Minister since December 2004:

“Turkey also plays an exceptionally important role in our relationship with the closer and more distant neighborhood area of the European Union. (Turkey) is a significant factor of stability for the Caucasus, for Central Asia, and for the whole Middle East. The start of negotiations with Turkey is looming. The European Council has decided to start on 3 October. Until then, we will have to find agreement upon a common negotiating framework within the European Union. Everyone knows that Austria has been very active in its support to protect the openness of the negotiating goal. It is now a question of working through the negotiating process step by step, chapter by chapter, in a professional and conscientious manner. The European Council has reiterated the Union's ability to take in new members as a condition, alongside compliance with the accession criteria on the part of the candidate. At this occasion, I would like to refer to the remarkable process of reform that has taken place in Turkey in the past years. Yesterday, Abdullah Gül and I had the opportunity to comment on that before the media, but I also want to acknowledge this before him: these reforms are far-reaching, they will be sustainable, and we will accompany (Turkey) supportively in this process, even if we know the negotiations with the European Union will take their time, and they will perhaps not always be very easy.”

Ursula Plassnik's speech at the Europa-Forum Wachau in the presence of Abdullah Gül, Turkish foreign minister. Stift Göttweig, Austria, 4 June 2005

Soon afterwards, **Ursula Plassnik** hinted upon a possible amendment of the EU negotiation framework:

“I see no reason for the Austrian government to change our position. At the end of a very long process of negotiations, there can be membership, but there does not have to be... Austria will continue to support an alternative to EU-membership. We have always been thinking that it might be clever to explicitly mention such an alternative. The absorption capacity of the EU has to be taken into account. I would expect that these aspects are being reflected more clearly in the framework of negotiations.”

Der Standard, 19 July 2005

Reinhold Lopatka, Secretary General of the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP):

“We say ‘yes’ to negotiations, and it is thanks to chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel that, at the end of the 10–15 year-long negotiating process, there will not be a guarantee of EU membership for Turkey.”

Austrian Press Agency, 19 December 2004

Andreas Khol (People’s Party), President of the Austrian National Council:

“And chaos is complete if some governments do not deal properly with their population in a fundamental question like Turkey’s accession. I think that Turkey was the main question in France (in the referendum decision). President Chirac was the main proponent for Turkish accession at the summit... Turkey is a special case. The question of accession is not on the table in the next 15 or 20 years. The EU Commission has also to take some criticism. It confirmed, for instance, that Turkey was ready for Europe because reforms had been carried out. The population in the EU countries saw that differently.

...

To pledge a turnaround in European policy, which the Social Democratic Party is doing, makes me uneasy. The consensus on European policy has been firm through all different governments. There was also consensus over the European constitution. It has always been clear that there are at least three parties that share one opinion, most of the time even four. If one says now, we want to change all that, then this is dramatic.

Profil: The terms of a turnaround have been defined: freezing enlargement until the constitution is amended.

Khol: “What (trade union) president Verzetnitsch sketched out in his speech, turning to a social Europe, a Lisbon-Europe – that is where we are fully on board. But ratification stop, enlargement stop – this is a turnaround I would deplore.”

profil magazine, 23 July 2005

Benita Ferrero-Waldner (People's Party), EU commissioner for external relations. From 2000 to 2004, Ferrero-Waldner was Austria's foreign minister.

“There should be adherence to the start of negotiations on 3 October. There is, however, no guarantee for full membership.”

News magazine 32/2005, 11 August 2005

Franz Fischler (former People's Party politician), EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, (and Fisheries, from 1999) from 1994 to 2004. He is now an independent consultant.

“*[In my letter to enlargement commissioner Günther Verheugen in July 2004,]* I did not ask to postpone the start of negotiations with Turkey. I wrote my letter without previous coordination with Austria. My aim was to avoid a hasty debate and last-minute decisions within the European Commission... I believe it is cynical to force Turkey into Europeanization, when everybody strongly believes that, at the end, there will be countries vetoing Turkey's membership. We can only progress once the EU can present a fair and attractive offer within its European Neighborhood Policy. I am personally convinced that even the Turks will soon start to question the costs and gains of full membership. Still, I am 90 percent sure that negotiations will start on 3 October 2005. Maybe one will still find a compromise formula to be incorporated into the negotiation framework. Such a formula could then be interpreted to the satisfaction of their population by all involved parties, including the Turks.”

ESI telephone interview, 11 August 2005

Franz Fischler at the May 2004 *Wallfahrt der Völker* in Mariazell, Austria, on the EU-ambitions of Turkey:

“We have to thank the church for enhancing the feeling of cooperation within Europe. However, one should keep a clear dividing line between issues for the churches, and their task in our society, and questions of political leadership... We should not mix up things now. Religious arguments are not called for in this issue.”

Fischler's statement at the *Wallfahrt der Völker*, *ORF Online*, 22 May 2004

Othmar Karas (People's Party), a MEP who has been opposing a national referendum on Turkey's EU accession. He was the only Austrian People's Party MEP to endorse the Eurlings report on 15 December 2004.

“The ÖVP-MEP Othmar Karas is criticizing the current domestic debate on the EU, and voices his opposition to the suggestions of Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel. He firmly rejects a national referendum on Turkey, as announced by the Chancellor. I have always supported European referenda – however, just regarding new treaties of the community... As long as the rules of the EU are being adhered to, no one had to demand a halt to enlargement. Because there would not be an accession of Turkey

before 2019 (anyway). It should be made clear that Austria has had a vote on all these EU-decisions.”

Die Presse, 29 July 2005

Karl-Heinz Grasser is the Austrian finance minister. Although nominally independent, he is a de facto minister of the People’s Party.

“It would be wrong to negotiate full Turkish membership of the EU... I will make sure to communicate clearly to Turkey that we have every interest in economic and social stabilization, but we cannot envisage full membership. I think, too, that the heads of state and government have recognized that the Turkey question has become too removed from the people... In the past, negotiations have always led to actual full membership. I want to redefine that. We cannot get hopes up too high.”

Financial Times, 18 July 2005

A revealing document is the party information paper produced by the ÖVP leadership in the wake of the December 2004 summit explaining the stance of the government and party chairman Wolfgang Schüssel. It strongly defends the position taken by the EU at the 2004 summit (*ÖVP Party Information Paper, EU-Verhandlungen: Beitritt der Türkei?*- „*Es ist wichtig, dass das Volk das Sagen haben wird!*“, *ÖVP-Bundespartei Abteilung Politik, 21 December 2004*). It also outlined that only if Turkey does not fulfill all criteria should there be consideration of alternatives to full membership.

“Membership as the goal, but an open-ended result – Negotiations from 3 October 2005 onwards. – No accession before 2014 – Turkey has to be given a perspective for membership. Whether Turkey achieves membership has to be rigorously tested... Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel achieved a tight safety net for level-headed negotiations which... ensures that no rash decisions will be taken and that all possible developments in Turkey will be taken into account:

1. The political criteria of Copenhagen
2. “Benchmarks” for the negotiation process
3. A constant supervision and “stop-button”
4. Absorption capacity of the Union
5. Transition periods and a security clause
6. Alternatives have not been lost out of sight

Regarding point 6. Alternatives have not been lost out of sight.

The formula by which Turkey, in case of a failure of negotiations, will be tightly integrated into the European structure is de facto an alternative to full membership. That means *in case Turkey cannot fulfill all preconditions as an EU member*, alternatives to full membership have to be devised.

Is the Cyprus question resolved? If Turkey wants to accede to the EU, it has to recognize every country of the EU. The council resolution welcomes the declaration by Turkey to sign the relevant international law documents before the start of negotiations. And the Cypriots declared clearly that they expect that the relevant agreements will not just be signed but also in force before the start of negotiations.

Full membership, or an alternative? The possibility of membership exists, but there is no guarantee. Through membership negotiations, Turkey should approach Europe, but there must not be excessive demands on the EU and on Austria. *If Turkey changes fundamentally, membership cannot be excluded.* Clearly, many problems still remain. It must not be underestimated just what kinds of societal changes and administrative demands will be necessary in Turkey. What has started is a large and important process of change for Europe and Turkey.”

B. The junior coalition partner *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich (BZÖ)*:

The BZÖ, Austria’s youngest political party, which comprises the liberal right-wing majority of the former Freedom Party, pledges an “enlargement stop”. Coherence among the party is quite firm, even though some voices point out the position remains fluid. The party has two out of eleven ministers in the current government. Hubert Gorbach is the Deputy Chancellor and Minister for Infrastructure, and Ursula Haubner is the Minister for Social Affairs.

Jörg Haider, leader of the BZÖ party and governor of Carinthia. On 4 April 2005, the Carinthian governor and most national representatives of the FPÖ set up a new party, the BZÖ. Until June 2005, Haider was in favour of Turkish EU-membership, diverging from the FPÖ and later, the BZÖ party lines. In June 2005, he changed his position, asking for the modalities of talks to be “corrected”, to make sure they were open-ended. On 25 July 2005, his party released a 15-point program on European policy for Austria. Point 14 states that “Austria actively supports an immediate halt to negotiation and enlargement.” Haider reiterated in the ORF *Summer Talks*, a live interview, on 26 August 2005 that “I am now in favour of stopping any further enlargement.”

“Apparently, we are led by a bunch of idiots in this republic,” said Jörg Haider, referring to the generally opposing stance towards Turkish EU-membership. Haider criticized the attitude of EU commissioner Franz Fischler “and others in the Austrian government who were first endorsing accession and now warn against it”, as “opportunism” and a “cynical game.” Haider criticized the opponents of Turkish accession for seeking to “win easy political merits.” The Turkish electorate in Vienna would also be a constituency for the FPÖ, because, in reality, the Turks are rather conservative people and no leftists.”

Haider as the FPÖ-governor of Carinthia, Format, 23 September 2004

Ten months later, **Haider**, in his capacity as the national BZÖ-chairman and the BZÖ-governor of Carinthia, had switched his views on enlargement, arguing:

Concerning enlargement: previously you were in favour of negotiations between the EU and Turkey. Now you are opposed. Previously you stated that concerns about Turkey reflected the „lack of courage of the ruling classes“.

Haider: The mood has changed in the wake of the negative referenda in France and the Netherlands. People had been promised new jobs. This did not come about. Now people have pressed the stop button, and I accept this.

Do you go along with every change of mood?

No. However, it is important to take the concerns of people seriously. I do this, as opposed to other politicians. Europe is ill, lies in bed and is fed artificially. In this situation you cannot expect the patient to undertake another enlargement marathon. (*Kurier*, 27 July 2005)

Hubert Gorbach (BZÖ) is the Austrian Deputy Chancellor and Minister for Infrastructure.

“If Turkey does not recognize Cyprus as a sovereign member of the European Union with its borders determined according to international law, full entry will not be possible.”

Bloomberg News, 2 August 2005

C. The opposition Social Democratic Party (SPÖ)

The national party is firmly against the start of *membership* negotiations on 3 October 2005 and, since late spring 2005, the party has been demanding a general halt to enlargement. Turkey should be brought closer to Europe along the model of the European Economic Area, or some other kind of special relationship. (No details concerning these proposals.) Six out of seven Austrian social democratic MEPs rejected the 15 December 2005 Eurlings report in the European parliament.

Party coherence: Policy coherence has been quite volatile within the national leadership and among the majority of MEPs. Deviating voices are *influential* and ask for a *more open* stance on Turkey and enlargement. These voices include the Austrian president, Heinz Fischer, the mayor of Vienna and his Viennese branch of the social democratic party, Michael Häupl, and the outspoken social democratic MEP, Johannes Swoboda.

Alfred Gusenbauer has been the chairman of the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) since 29 April 2000. He has been a member of the Austrian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE since 1991. He has also come out strongly against negotiations:

“Turkey in the EU would mean the end of the EU, if that does not happen before anyway. What I understand as integration might not even be possible with 25 member states anymore. The speed of enlargement has been too high.”

ESI Interview 23 May 2005

“It would be a huge mistake to push away countries like Ukraine or Turkey.” The question was whether cooperation could only work via EU-membership or whether other modes of association might be possible. Gusenbauer pledged again to “negotiate an enlarged association agreement.”

Austrian Press Agency, 14 July 2005

Josef Cap (Social Democratic Party), leader of the party in the parliament, is the strongest Austrian social democratic opponent of Turkey in the EU:

“The Austrian government is requested not to consent to the start of accession negotiations with Turkey at the European Council on 16 and 17 December 2004, and to support instead further intensification of relations between the EU and Turkey in the form of a strategic partnership, oriented along the EEA-model, for which negotiations should start immediately.”

Request for statement according to Art. 23e Abs. 2 B-VG of representative Dr. Cap and other MPs concerning the summit of the European Council on 16 and 17 December 2005 on the decision on the start of accession negotiations with Turkey, presented in the main committee of the National Council)

On 2 August 2005, Cap reiterated his fundamental opposition to Turkish EU membership and called upon Wolfgang Schüssel and Ursula Plassnik to “incorporate the goal of a privileged partnership in the negotiations framework between the EU and Turkey.”

Die Presse, 2 August 2005

Norbert Darabos, Secretary General of the Austrian Social Democratic Party

“The SPÖ endorsed negotiations with Turkey on a closer association with the EU – along the model of the EEA – but against negotiations on EU accession of Turkey, reiterated SPÖ-Secretary General Norbert Darabos... The EU had just taken in ten new member states and had to process this step first. The focus had to be on deepening integration now... The population’s skeptical stance should be taken very seriously and one should “lend an ear to the people.” Darabos said he would not exclude EU-membership negotiations for the future. It could be possible to ponder those ten years down the road.”

Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) Press Release, 28 September 2004, summarizing Darabos’ interview on Austrian radio

Heinz Fischer (Social Democratic Party) is the President of Austria.

“I believe the agreement of the heads of states and governments with regards to accession negotiations with Turkey is right. One has to work responsibly and fairly on the realization of these decisions now.”

*Ansprache von Bundespräsident Dr. Heinz Fischer anlässlich des
Neujahrsempfangs für das Diplomatische Corps, 18 January 2005*

Six months later, **Heinz Fischer** co-authored and signed a letter of seven European heads of states on European Integration:

“The EU’s ‘open door’ policy proved to be successful. The accession of new members has given Europe new momentum and new possibilities... As regards the enlargement agenda, the principle “pacta sunt servanda” must apply. What has been agreed has, of course, to be respected. Potential accession candidates need realistic perspectives, which will also create additional incentives for deeper domestic reforms and adoption of European standards. Membership criteria, including democracy, the respect of human rights and the rule of law, have equally to apply to all applicants.”

Der Standard, 15 July 2005. This is an excerpt of a joint letter by seven European heads of states, published in several European newspapers.

Johannes Swoboda (Social Democratic Party) is a vice president of the PES group in the EP, and has been a MEP since 1996. He is a member of the EP’s foreign affairs committee, where he has been active on Turkey, enlargement, the Balkans and the Middle East. Swoboda was the only Austrian social democratic MEP to endorse the Eurlings report on 15 December 2005.

“I find it a pity that the Social Democratic Party chose (the anti-Turkey stance). I do not think it won the party many votes in Austria... [Faction leader] Josef Cap is a populist, and let himself be pushed into this negative stance.”

ESI Interview on 20 May 2005

“One should start open-ended negotiations with Turkey... The social democratic party should stand firm on decisions that were endorsed by former SPÖ-led governments... Any party acting in the national interest should stand firm on certain fundamental assumptions. One of these fundamental assumptions was that we start negotiations with Turkey, open-ended negotiations.”

Austrian Press Agency, 28 July 2005

Michael Häupl has been the Mayor and Governor of Vienna since 1994, and the Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Vienna since 1993. Häupl and the Viennese branch of the Austrian social democratic party do not follow the national party’s opposition to starting negotiations with Turkey. Vienna will hold elections for the district and city councils on 23 October 2005.

Kurier: The (social democratic) clientele is known as xenophobic.

Michael Häupl: People are not xenophobic, but they are worried. I take their worries seriously.

Kurier: What do you hear from people on Turkey?

Häupl: I do not fool myself. People do not want Turkey in the EU, nor the Balkans. I understand that, but I do not hide my opinion on negotiations with Turkey either. However, in terms of regional peace, the Balkans are more important to me than Turkey.

Kurier: You are in support of open-ended Turkey negotiations. That can cost you votes.

Häupl: That is where I stand, and I cannot do otherwise.”

Kurier, 29 July 2005

D. The opposition *Green party* (Die Grünen):

Firm support for the start of negotiations on 3 October 2005. On 25 September 2004, the national party board, or “Erweiterte Bundesvorstand of the Greens” (EBV), approved a resolution to support the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey and treat the country like other EU accession candidates. Like all other Austrian parties, the Greens also note that South-Eastern European countries should remain a priority for Austrian enlargement policy.

Party coherence: Relatively firm, although public perception has been heavily influenced by the fundamental opposition to Turkey’s EU-accession by the most prominent Austrian Green MEP, Johannes Voggenhuber.

Alexander Van der Bellen, Chairman of the Austrian Green party

“Treaties are to be respected. That is the most important principle for negotiations with Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria... Accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia are agreed upon... Turkey has been sitting in the EU’s waiting room for 40 years, and negotiations are to be started. I cannot sign the accession of Turkey right now due to shortcoming prerequisites – but who knows about the situation ten years down the road.”

News magazine 32/2005, 11 August 2005

Johannes Voggenhuber (The Greens), Austrian MEP. On 15 December 2005, Voggenhuber and the second Austrian MEP from The Greens rejected the European Parliament’s “Eurlings report”.

“The discussion on Turkish EU membership is dominated by an instrumental way of thinking which assumes that Turkey can be democratically transformed, and that the EU shall take over the geopolitically exposed role of Turkey. Yet these arguments have nothing to do with the question whether Turkey has the same European project in mind as we do. It is eerie to witness the acceleration of a process [of accession] whose foundations have never been discussed in a public, democratic and parliamentary way.”

ESI Interview, 17 May 2005

E. The opposition *Freedom Party* (FPÖ, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*)

Firm against the start of negotiations on 3 October 2005 and against the prospects of Turkey's EU membership. Since 4 April 2005, when the overwhelming majority of the FPÖ switched to the newly founded BZÖ, the political clout of the jettisoned right-wing core of the FPÖ has been dramatically reduced in terms of elections. However, the party has started a campaign for a petition for a referendum which will most likely be carried out during the Austrian EU presidency in early 2006.

Party coherence: firm

Heinz-Christian Strache, chairman of the FPÖ:

“Turkey has no business to be in Europe.”
ORF Summer Talks, a live interview series on national TV, 23 August 2005

II. COMMENTATORS IN MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Christian Rainer, publisher and editor-in-chief, *profil* weekly magazine:

“Turkey will have 90 million inhabitants soon... Sure, accession of Turkey might be fostering peace. But even if the EU was, in its roots, founded as a European peace project, people overlook that the EU has long become an economic project... This economically determined Europe – which can only later become a political entity – is endangered by the accession of Turkey. A country with 90 million people, who, per capita, even in 2015 will only generate a third of the average EU GDP, is a huge risk. Disparities in the realms of income, job markets and industrialization can cause our achievements to crumble. This economic dimension is overlooked by the advocates of Turkish EU accession at the cost of the peace debate.”
profil, 11 October 2004

Peter Michael Lingen, a commentator with *profil* and founder of this weekly magazine in 1970:

“Where, exactly, lies the special risk if the EU assesses for at least ten years whether the reforms, which Turkey has indisputably been carrying out, are really worthy and prove sound against any reaction, from, say, the military or Islamic fundamentalists?... The argument that ‘negotiations’ have so far always ended in ‘accession’ is not obligatory at

all (nothing prevents the EU from acting differently with Turkey). Most importantly, this argument leads to the conclusion that doubtful candidate countries have been worthy of the test after all. Against an EU accession of Ireland, for instance, one could invoke its poverty, religious fanaticism and the terror of the IRA – but the rapprochement with the EU ended poverty, fanaticism and terror... Other two key examples are... Slovakia and Romania... But the most compelling example of the EU's appeal of reform is Turkey itself. As long as the carrot of membership was not on the table during the 1990s, criticism of the situation in Turkey was quite futile. No single party pushed reforms. But in 1999, Turkey was accepted as a candidate country, and the reform process was kicked off. Already in 2001, 34 constitutional changes demanded by the EU were carried out."

profil, 11 October 2004

Armin Thurner is editor-in-chief of *Falter*, a weekly, left-liberal newspaper read mostly in Vienna.

"We do not have a debate here, but rather a mess on one side, and clenched teeth on the other. The longer this situation prevails, the more I think we could use these Turks quite well in the EU. It is hard to bear the self-righteousness of a country where slavery was abolished 150 years ago, and which devoted itself to a Christian-fundamentalist dictatorship 70 years ago, then to the Nazis, and, which only arrived at today's status after 1945 with the energetic help from the West and the Marshall plan."

Falter, 4 October 2004

Hans Rauscher, an influential freelance commentator for the daily, left-liberal paper *Der Standard* and the liberal weekly news and business magazine *Format*, among others.

"Accession (of Turkey and Ukraine), because only that enables transformation, and therefore risking that Turkish nationalism endangers the EU's self-understanding as a "soft power"? Or, rejecting [those countries] and therefore risking that large states like Ukraine and Turkey are lost for the West? Can Turkish nationalism, the intensity of which has apparently been underestimated, be alleviated through accession, or would we be importing infinite troubles?"

Der Standard, 30 April 2005

Andreas Unterberger is the editor-in-chief of the daily *Wiener Zeitung* and an influential conservative commentator. Until fall 2004, he was the editor-in-chief at *Die Presse*, where he had written the following op-ed in September 1999, three months before Turkey was granted candidate status.

"Taking Turkey into a community as close as the EU would mean the end to European integration. Turkey is (just like Russia) too big, too populous, to fit into the European

balance. Turkey is in large part a third-world country, and had therefore a structure not built for Europe. Despite all its efforts at secularism, Turkey will remain culturally absolutely different from the EU-Europe for a long time to come. Helmut Kohl was the last one to dare spell out this 'no'. Since then, different motives have taken over."

Die Presse, Page One, 14 September 1999

Paul Lendvai is a Hungarian-born Austrian television and print journalist, book author, and a prominent expert on Eastern Europe. He is a commentator and manager of the "Europastudio" on ORF television, editor-in-chief of the "Europäische Rundschau", a quarterly magazine, and a regular columnist at the daily paper "Der Standard."

"All EU-top politicians – whether social or Christian democrats – who passed the former resolutions on Turkey have always been aware of the immense economic and human rights problems of a country with 70 million inhabitants (of whom nearly 99 percent are Muslims!). Yet, today, little is being said about the fact that EU policy has been achieving undisputed success in Turkey. The Islamist premier Erdogan has pushed the rapprochement to Europe in a relatively short period of time, more than any other government before him. Should the Turkish experiment – the co-existence of Islam and modernity – turn out well, then this would be a success with immense repercussions in the fight against the fundamentalist wire-pullers of global terror."

Der Standard, 1 September 2005

Erhard Busek (People's Party) is the Special Co-ordinator for the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe in Brussels. He is also the director of the IDM think tank, and the president of the annual "European Forum Alpbach" convention. From 1991 to 1995, he served as Austrian Vice-Chancellor and as the leader of the People's Party. From 2000 to 2001, he was the Austrian government's enlargement representative. He enjoys a reputation as a liberal thinker of the People's Party and a European visionary, and as a long-standing activist on Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. While opposed to Turkish accession negotiations, ("but still less so than Franz Fischler", according to an ESI conversation on 23 May 2005), Busek believes European leaders should hold to their resolutions.

In June 2005, he criticized Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel on his Turkey signals. Schüssel had endorsed "all steps leading to that point in the earlier phase." It would "not be smart" to step on the brakes now. (*Der Standard, 22 August 2005*)

"I do believe that the European Union is not up to membership of Turkey because we would be neighbors with Syria, Iraq, Iran, as well as the Caucasus and Central Asia. For that to work, we would need a European government and, most importantly, a European army... This means a 'no' to negotiations at this point of time, because the EU has failed to do its homework."

Austrian Broadcasting Corporation, OE1 Abendjournal, 16 December 2004

Oberösterreichische Nachrichten: You were a skeptic on EU enlargement and said it came too early.

Erhard Busek: I still believe that. It helped created the current woes in the EU. People had not been prepared at all. This is also the problem with Turkey. I think one should behave properly and not start negotiations.

OÖN: How would one thwart negotiations now?

Busek: I support saying 'no', because I do not deem it proper to say, we start negotiations but you will not become a member."

Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, 5 August 2005

Albert Rohan, Rapporteur of the "Independent Turkey Commission". In early 2004, Rohan joined forces with eight other influential former politicians and diplomats to create an "Independent Turkey Commission" and highlight the possible gains and pitfalls of Turkish membership on a tour through European capitals. The group came out asking for Turkey to receive the same treatment as other EU candidates in the accession process. Rohan is the former director general of Austria's ministry of foreign affairs.

"Our goal was to allow for objectivity in the debate. We wanted to raise negative and positive aspects while at the same time endorsing the start of negotiations... We want to offer an early warning system to the Turks, in order to point out possible dangers in the Turkish process and its ramifications in the EU. Erdogan needs political help now. It is important to make sure within the EU to give him presentation opportunities and to embark on fair treatment... Turkey needs to be accepted, and this will keep us busy for the next ten years."

ESI interview, 3 May 2005

Ewald Nowotny is a Viennese economist, a former deputy director of the European Investment Bank, and a former social democratic MP.

"I believe taking in large, poor countries such as Ukraine, Belarus or Turkey would destroy the EU. I think it is impossible to envisage membership [in these cases]. These countries should seriously be offered a privileged partnership, but it is a path into ruin of the EU to work towards membership. Such a large EU would not be governable anymore; too many differences within would make consensus impossible, and the economic disparities are too big as well. The burden on the current member states would be too immense to expected from the populations. It is a fundamental mistake to see the question of EU enlargement primarily from a foreign policy angle. As shown by the referenda on the EU constitution, approval of the EU is a function of people's life circumstances, and these would be negatively influenced by the accession of large, poor, countries."

Alpbach News, 23 August 2005

III. BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Christoph Leitzl is the current chairman of *Eurochambres*, the president of Austria's chamber of commerce, the chairman of the People Party's powerful "Wirtschaftsbund" grouping. He is a publicly known opponent of Turkish EU membership, but usually runs with the official government line, especially in meetings with Turkish counterparts.

"Without a stable foundation, Europe cannot – financially and politically – cope with the accession of new member states, especially of the size of Turkey. Therefore, our motto can only be: Deepening before enlargement... If negotiations start – as planned – on 3 October, given Ankara has by then conducted the necessary reforms, then they have to be led with open-ended results, and alternatives to membership have to remain possible."

Press Release, Austrian Chamber of Commerce - WKO, 29 June 2005

A year earlier, **Leitzl** said the following:

"The EU should not enlarge further in the next two decades... Given 40 million Anatolian peasants, and 14 million unemployed within the EU, one should not encourage hopes for membership which the EU cannot live up to."

Kurier, 4 May 2004

Franz Rössler is the Austrian Foreign Trade Promotion Organisation's Regional Manager for South-eastern Europe at the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (*Außenwirtschaft Österreich, AWO* at the *Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKO*).

"Austrian business people are driven by a large number of irrational considerations towards Turkey, and we try to sit them down and talk about facts... But also the Turkish embassy and business community in Austria do not take a lot of initiative. While other countries are pushing us, I have to initiate events on Turkey by myself. Even the Austrian-Turkish Business Cooperation Council does not openly support Turkish EU-membership. At their annual meeting, only one person stood up and encouraged the council to state their support openly, but he was immediately voted down by the rest."

ESI Interview, 4 May 2005

Christian Konrad is the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Raiffeisen Zentralbank, the international branch of which is very active in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. In Austria, Raiffeisen has traditionally been affiliated with the People's Party.

"I cannot imagine full membership, because it is politically not feasible. Many European countries will hold referenda, and the whole thing will collapse. Needless to say a peace project cannot be ambitious enough. But full membership of Turkey is not possible due to national-political reasons... I believe rapprochement towards the EU will be realized through a special partnership."

trend, monthly business magazine, 1 December 2004

Hannes Androsch, a former social democratic finance minister, is now one of Austria's leading industrialists and an influential voice.

“Due to the low birth rate, Europe's population will stagnate and decline, also here in Austria. The question of an EU-membership of Turkey has to be seen against this background, but also in the light of the traditional cultural, spiritual, and historical relations of Central Europe with Turkey, where we find the roots of Christian and therefore Occidental history... The discussion around the EU-membership of Turkey, which I support under certain prerequisites, has been influenced by xenophobic attitudes.”

Speech in the series, Wiener Vorlesungen, „Österreich Zweite Republik: Befund, Kritik, Perspektive,“ 26 January 2005

Willi Hemetsberger, a member of the BA-CA Managing Board since 2001, is responsible for the International Markets business segment (treasury and capital market activities) of the Bank Austria – Creditanstalt:

“I don't quite understand Austrian hesitations towards Turkey. CEE and Croatia were basket cases just five years ago, and the whole Eastern success story looks much better in hindsight. Yet with Turkey, I watch other European banks buying banks, while the Austrians watch idly... None of my friends is for an EU-membership of Turkey. People think of this as a perfidious gambit by the U.S. and Great Britain to destroy the EU.”

ESI Interview, 24 May 2005

Julius Meinl V., presides over Meinl Bank AG, one of Austria's leading private banks with international operations.

“If we, as Europe, want to play a role in this world between China... and the U.S., we have to take Turkey into the Union. Contrary to a popular prophecy, this enlargement will not spell the end of the Union. A formula between the church and Islam will be found. Historical, strategic and, most importantly, peace considerations turn the accession of Turkey – a clearly Western-oriented country – into an imperative.”

Format magazine, 17 February 2005

Wilhelm Hörmanseder is Chief Executive Officer of the Austrian Mayr-Melnhof group. In 2004, the company built a cardboard factory in Izmir, and started to produce cigarette boxes there in 2005.

“One does not have to rush straight to China in the search of growing markets... European markets are saturated while Turkey boasts an attractive growth rate. We should not skip such a chance.”

trend monthly business magazine, 1 December 2004

IV. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

The central institution of Austria's Catholic church is the 15-member Austrian Bishops' Conference. Its chairman, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, as well as its European Integration 'minister', Franz Eckert, and its Council on World Religions, have put forward arguments in favour of Turkish membership from a religious perspective. Egon Kapellari, the bishop of the Diocese of Graz, has been a fervent opponent to full membership.

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the Chairman of the Austrian Bishops' Conference:

“Answers in black or white are usually too simplistic. It is not a question of faith; these are political questions, where Catholics can have different attitudes. Secondly, we say clearly, for membership negotiations to prove fruitful, it has to be ensured that the legal criteria, the human rights criteria, which are valid for Europe, are also fully adhered to in Turkey. Asked about a Christian 'leading culture' and its meaning for Muslims, Jews, and other non-Christians in Europe, Schönborn said, “a Christian leading culture (*leitkultur*) means for instance the Christian image of humanity. If, today, we are proud of the freedom of religion in Europe, then this is for sure also the fruit of the Christian image of humanity, and the foundations of the gospel, the bible, enshrining absolute respect for the conscience of the other, for the freedom of the other, even if the churches have not always practiced that in the past. But, according to the gospel, and to Jesus Christ, the message is clear: Respect for the decision of conscience, and the attitude of conscience, of the other. This is, for instance, a point which obliges us Christians to a tolerant attitude. This also asks from other religious communities to be convinced about this principle of the freedom of conscience, and the freedom of humans, and to adhere to these convictions.”

ORF OE1 Mittagsjournal, 23 December 2004

Franz Eckert, deacon, is the Austrian Bishops' Conference 'minister' for European Integration. He came out saying that,

“Despite continuing shortcomings, and discrimination, regarding the equal status for Christians, the opportunities of EU-membership negotiations with Turkey would outweigh the possible negative outcomes of a refusal (of negotiations). Religious- and minority rights would only exist on paper so far, and would not yet be fully lived up to in practice, but Turkey's Europeanization could not happen overnight. According to

Eckert, the clear vote of Christians in Turkey – the Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartolomaios I., and the protestant church in Turkey had been supporting membership negotiations – bore more weight than the skeptics in the current debates over the EU-Turkey issue. Eckert also said, "it is horrible, and sometimes even shameful, with how little factual knowledge, and with how many emotions, these debates are being conducted."

*Radio Stephansdom, "Perspektiven" feature series, 7 October 2004,
summary by kathpress and the Austrian Press Agency on 8 October 2004*

Already on 25 June 2004, the Bishops' Conference's *Council on World Religions* issued a lengthy official statement, appealing for an open, enlightened, and communicative approach to the Turkey question. However, the statement remained on the margins of the debate.

"Refusing... the start of membership negotiations with Turkey at this point of time would not only be problematic in geopolitical terms, but it would also have disastrous consequences under the religious aspect... The self-perception of the EU is reflected in the non-negotiable standards for membership, and must be accepted by Turkey as by any other candidate. Fulfillment of these criteria is imperative for any candidate country, regardless of its population and the religious faith of its citizens. The policies of the EU should be guided by trust in its own political concept and its underlying principles, rather than by unreflexive fears... It is in the hands of Turkey whether it accepts this offer... Austria has traditionally played an important role as a broker of religious, cultural and political values towards the Islamic world. It would be high time to follow this tradition, forgoing populist temptations, especially regarding the discussion of the EU-accession of Turkey and the intensification of relations to countries of the Near East."³

Egon Kapellari, the Bishop of the Diocese of Graz:

"Turkey is no part of Europe. Turkey is large and unstable within, and its secularism is only skin deep, with seething unrest lingering beneath. The EU would not be able to cope with Turkey's accession. I do not only say that because I am a Catholic bishop. I would be just as fervently against accession if I was a liberal agnostic, since I would fear an intolerant society."

This should not be understood as discrimination against Islam, underlined the bishop. "We have to do everything possible to have a good relationship with the Muslims living in Europe, and with Turkey. But I do not think full integration is possible!" An

³ Stellungnahme zu den Beitrittsverhandlungen der Türkei mit der Europäischen Union aus religiöser Perspektive. Österreichische Bischofskonferenz, Kontaktstelle für Weltreligionen, 25 June 2004. For full text online, see http://www.irf.ac.at/docs_expert_d.php?radio_detail_d=869 (in German). The statement was signed by Father Petrus Bsteh, Walter Dostal, Siegfried Haas, Franz Kangler, Rüdiger Lohlker, Gerhard Luf, Heinz Nußbaumer, Richard Potz, Stephan Prochazka, Gisela Procházka-Eisl, and Iwan Sokolowsky.

alternative might be an “intensified partnership”. “Let’s abandon the project of full integration, and let’s stay close anyway. This would be an honest way to go.”

*Kathpress 21 Juni 2005, summarizing an interview Kapellari
Granted he “Kleine Zeitung”)*

The **Islamic Community in Austria** under President Anas Schakfeh (*Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*; Islam enjoys constitutional status in Austria since 1912) responded to an inflammatory newspaper interview by then-Bishop Kurt Krenn, who had been suspended from office in the meanwhile on different grounds:

“It is hypocritical to invoke the religious argument against an EU accession of Turkey. EU accession should rather be seen as enrichment.”

*Press Statement of the Islamic Community in Austria, Islamische
Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich, at www.derislam.at, May 2004)*

Some months later, on 24 January 2005, the **Islamic Community in Austria** responded as follows after the Viennese mayor Michael Häupl had invited Austrian Muslims to celebrate the Islamic Festival of Sacrifice (*Eid al-Adha*) in the Vienna City Hall (there have been two previous Ramadan feasts in the Viennese City Hall).

“This celebration is a symbol of a kind of cooperation which is probably unique across Europe. Regarding Turkey’s EU membership perspective, Anas Schakfeh paid due respect to the realistic opinion of the Viennese mayor. There was an often rough climate in Austria regarding a possible EU membership of Turkey, also within the Social Democratic Party. It was therefore with enhanced satisfaction and benevolence to hear Häupl, who stated that whoever fulfilled the criteria should be treated like all other (EU candidates).”

*Press Statement of the Islamic Community in Austria, Islamische
Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich, at www.derislam.at, January 2005*