

The Idea of Europeanness: Perceptions of Erasmus Students in Turkey and The Netherlands

ZEYNEP AKSOY¹

Izmir University of Economics, Turkey

The European Union Erasmus program enables student exchange between higher education institutions in partner countries. This article focuses on Erasmus students' perspectives regarding Europeanness. Adopting qualitative methods including focus groups and in-depth interviews, the study was conducted in two universities with a comparative approach: Izmir (Turkey) in 2015 and Amsterdam (Netherlands) in 2016. The primary study provided a significant insight into how Erasmus students make sense of Europeanness in Turkey. Moving from this insight, the second study aimed to investigate further the notion of Europeanness in an EU member country. The study reveals that Erasmus students tend to express a strong European consciousness when they meet with the cultural other, whereas they prioritize nationalities in EU borders. The article discusses that the idea of Europeanness still relies on its constitutive outside(s), whereas benefits of mobility stand out as a more powerful aspect when the other is not apparent within the Erasmus context.

Keywords: Europeanness, European consciousness, constitutive outside, Erasmus program, mobility

Since its foundation in 1987, the Erasmus Student Mobility Programme, a prominent strategic initiative of the European Union, has been expanded to 33 countries with approximately 3 million students mobilized across Europe (European Union, 2012). Recently the program has been given a broader vision under the 2014–2020 strategy for education, training, sports, and youth, namely, Erasmus+ (European

Zeynep Aksoy: zeynep.a.aksoy@gmail.com

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Union, 2013). Erasmus+ essentially aims at developing educated and skilled individuals who can fulfill the needs of the globalized labor market. Moreover, the program also claims to be "promoting common European values, and a sense of belonging to a community" (European Commission, 2016, p. 7). As many scholars emphasize, the underlying objective of the Erasmus program is to develop a European consciousness and a sense of belonging to Europe (Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Kuhn, 2012; Mitchell, 2012; Papatsiba, 2005; Sigalas, 2010). The founding document of the Erasmus program, dated 1987, describes this objective as "strengthening the interaction between citizens in different member states with a view to consolidating the concept of a People's Europe" (Sigalas, 2010, p. 243). In this regard, Erasmus student mobility is considered a primary strategy by European organizations to enhance collaboration among partner countries and institutions, and to develop a long-term qualified labor force with a so-called European identity.

An examination of the field reveals an ongoing debate regarding the contribution of the Erasmus program to European identity and consciousness, which involves contradictory thoughts based on various research. The Erasmus program functions as a laboratory for many scholars studying the European consciousness and sense of belonging (Dervin, 2007). For instance, Papatsiba (2005) argues that encouraging student mobility cannot solely contribute to the development of a European identity, claiming that the sense of belonging in Europe "remained a somewhat random result of experiential learning" (p. 183). In his longitudinal study, Sigalas (2009) also demonstrated that participating in the Erasmus program does not significantly affect the development of a European identity. Llurda, Gallego-Balsà, Barahona, and Martin-Rubió (2016) agree that a short-term period of study abroad is not sufficient to change any self-perceptions relating to identity. On the contrary, Jacobone and Moro (2015) suggest in their survey study among Erasmus and non-Erasmus students that student mobility affects developing European consciousness and identity. Furthermore, Mitchell (2015) reports an extensive study concluding that European identification is strongly related to participation in the Erasmus program.

While giving them credit for their valuable findings, it must be noted that the studies often approach Europeanness within the European context from a European perspective. Therefore, I suggest that what it means to be a European must be questioned in different cultural contexts for a better understanding of how Erasmus students interpret their sense of belonging. This is because the notion of identity development is strongly related to describing the self and the other. More particularly, the European sense of belonging strongly involves descriptions of what it "does not" mean to be European.

Rather than examining the effect of the Erasmus program on European consciousness or identity, as has been done in various studies, in the current study, I explored how Erasmus students approach the notion of Europeanness. With this aim, I addressed the following question: How do Erasmus students describe Europeanness, and which values do they refer to to explain their sense of belonging? The research was conducted in two universities: Izmir in Turkey (Aksoy, Uzunoğlu, & Akyar, 2017) and Amsterdam in the Netherlands during 2015 and 2016, respectively. The originality of the study lies in its comparative approach, gathering qualitative data from two different sample groups of Erasmus students in two different cultural contexts. The study began with gaining insights from Erasmus students in Turkey about Europeanness, and further investigated the notion in a EU member country. Revealing a comparative

analysis, the article discusses the significant role of the other in European consciousness and belonging through deploying the notion of the *constitutive outside*.

European Integration and Its Outside

Integration of the nation-states in Europe under an economic, political, and institutional entity is a significant example of regional organizations across the world. Since its foundation as a common market in 1957, the organization has come a long way until today, embracing 28 member states over the continent. The economic partnership has evolved into a political, social, and institutional entity over time, and has been geographically expanded by including Central and Eastern European countries within it. However, the European unification has lately been suffering from the United Kingdom's plan to leave the European Union, which will involve a complex process for both sides. Meanwhile, the Catalan referendum resulting in a majority of votes in favor of breaking with Spain stands as another future case for the European Union. Therefore, the question of European consciousness has become even more crucial, and it seems to intensify the debate about the sense of belonging to Europe.

The idea of an integrated Europe involves definitions concerned with being part of a "civilization" that is historically, politically, and ideologically constructed. The European sense of belonging has been studied in relation to several aspects, such as the correlations between national and European identities (Cinnirella, 1997), the effect of the Euro on identification (Risse, 2003), the influence of the EU's symbols on European identity (Bruter, 2003), the dual conceptualization of European identity (Antonsich, 2012), and in relation with otherness (Cretu & Udrea, 2012; Udrea, 2011). Eder (2009) proposes that identity construction in Europe must be discussed within the context of the narratives of Europe, claiming that "collective identities are constructed through stories" (p. 435). In this regard, European identity relies on a historical background narrating Europe as a civilization from which various regions, people, and cultures, such as Islam or Russia, are excluded (Asad, 2002). Explaining the European identity in terms of its inclusive aspects would not be comprehensive because, as is the case of all forms of identity, it is also dependent on the excluded aspects. The physical, political, ideological, and discursive constitutions of a society rely on the exclusion of those aspects that are opposed to the perceptions of identity.

Exclusion provides a framework for describing the relationship between the self and the other. As Hall (1991) suggests, "Only when there is an Other can you know who you are" (p. 16). Thus, the other remains the most significant aspect of European consciousness, which was constructed on the basis of an antagonism between the Orient and the Occident embracing various descriptions of Asia, Africa, and America (Passerini, 2002). In his famous work, Edward Said (1978/2013) suggests that the discourse of Orientalism is a framework of how the West perceives and represents the East. Accordingly, as an identity, Europeanness is defined on the basis of non-Europeanness. Non-European societies located toward the East are considered the other that is needed to define the self. Therefore, images about the other serve to develop a European cultural identity (Jenkins, 2008). Huntington (1993) indicates that Europeans tend to identify themselves as distinct from other ethnicities and religions. Europe is recognized as a civilization that involves diverse aspects from other cultures.

From a historical perspective, opposition to Islam is fundamental in the development of European identity. Asad (2002) suggests that European identity was ideologically constructed relying on opposed

relationships between "European civilization" versus "Islamic civilization." Islam's oppositional role derives from an "alleged antagonism to Christians" (Asad, 2002, p. 217). In this respect, the notion of the constitutive outside is useful to explain this antagonist relationship between self and the other. Introduced in political theory by Ernesto Laclau (1990) and Chantal Mouffe (2000), the concept of the constitutive outside suggests that social relations involve an antagonistic nature. A constitutive outside is defined based on the antagonism between counterparts; therefore, it is essential for identity development. Describing the self relies on the opposed attributes associated with the constitutive outside. However, the key role of the constitutive outside does not only result from its descriptiveness, but also from its function as an ongoing threat to the identity. The growth of this threat may develop a danger for the identity, which is supposed to be overcome using force. However, if the threat disappears, in other words, if the constitutive outside proceeds to not being an outside anymore, the identity is faced with the threat of destruction again. This is because the self can only exist with the other. In this respect, othering Turkey can be explained in relation with Europe's historical foundation in opposition to the Ottoman Empire and Islam, which represent the constitutive outside of the West.

Members of the European Union are distinct from each other in terms of language, ethnicity, culture, and branches of the church, but they share some common values, traditions, and cultural heritages (Smith, 1992). A common history and secular values are accepted as the unifying aspects of European identification (Tibi, 2013). They may differ culturally from each other, but they are attached to some core values related to the historical background of Europe. However, these core values make sense to Europeans when an excluded other appears significant (Udrea, 2011). A discussion about Europeanness cannot be generated without considering the role of the other, particularly what Turkey represents for Europeans within the context of this study.

Turkey's attempts to gain EU membership go back to 1959. Membership negotiations started seriously in 2005; however, they came to a standstill as a result of internal and external political conflicts. Turkey's accession to the European Union represents a different case, not only related to economic and political issues, but also to historical and cultural aspects. Turkey's cultural and religious dissimilarity with Europe is recognized as an obstacle for membership by many EU citizens (Delanty, 2005; Inthorn, 2006; McLaren, 2007; Thomas, 2017). Despite inconsequential debates on its membership, Turkey joined the Erasmus program in 2004 and Erasmus+ in 2014 as one of the five non-EU member countries (others include the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Lichtenstein, and Norway). In short, Turkey represents a cultural and historical other, whereas it remains an economic, social, and political partner, which makes it more significant than any other country to be investigated in terms of a European sense of belonging.

Method

A considerable amount of research relies on Eurobarometer results to explain the attitudes of EU citizens toward European integration (Gaxie & Rowell, 2011). Opinion polls, surveys, and scales are used as major techniques to present evidence-based results regarding the notion of Europeanness and European identity. Similarly, several studies (Jacobone & Moro, 2015; King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Mitchell, 2015; Oborune, 2013; Sigalas, 2009) have evaluated the effect of the Erasmus program on European

identity and consciousness through quantitative methods. The former studies mostly have consisted of examining whether individuals feel European or not; however, they are insufficient for determining the meanings that citizens associate with their identities (Luhmann, 2017). All of this research obviously provides significant information; however, quantitative methods are limited in terms of reflecting real opinions and experiences. In their comprehensive study, Gaxie and Rowell (2011) emphasized the importance of qualitative methodology in exploring participants' perceptions of EU-related issues. The current study investigated students' perceptions of being a European and how they make sense of Europeanness. Therefore, qualitative methods were adopted including focus groups and semistructured interviews, which enabled an in-depth understanding of the issue examined (Kitzinger, 1995). Focus group sessions allowed exploration of people's experiences and opinions through encouraging group interaction (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). In-depth interviews allowed examination of the phenomenon through open-ended questions that "force interviewees to form their point of view using their own means" (Gaxie & Rowell, 2011, p. 37). In this respect, the methodological approach of the study enabled insight into the notion of Europeanness from a participant perspective.

The data of this study were obtained during two research projects focusing on Erasmus students and intercultural communication. The research projects were conducted with a comparative approach, in Izmir (Turkey) in 2015 and in Amsterdam (Netherlands) in 2016. The primary study (Izmir) did not specifically question European identity and consciousness; however, the data provided a significant insight into the notion of Europeanness (Aksoy et al., 2017). Moving from this insight, I investigated the sense of Europeanness during the second study (Amsterdam). In brief, the additional data, which addressed the sense of belonging to Europe, persuaded me to include relevant questions in the second study interviews to find out how Erasmus students make sense of Europeanness.

Participants

In the spring term of 2015, 20 of 52 enrolled Erasmus students agreed to participate in the primary study (see Table 1).

This study involved two focus group sessions including 10 students and semistructured interviews with the remaining students. During focus groups and interviews, students were encouraged to express their experiences and observations about cultural differences and similarities in the host country.

Table 1. Participant List of the Primary Study.

Name (pseudonyms)	Country
Alexia	Netherlands
Ava	Poland
Benjamin	Spain
Boris	Poland
Carson	Germany
Cristina	Portugal
Ella	Poland
Gabriel	France
Hailey	United Kingdom
Jenna	Poland
Lucas	Romania
Marcel	France
Michelle	France
Miguel	Italy
Monica	Germany
Paola	Spain
Philippe	France
Rebecca	Hungary
Robert	Germany
Stefan	Germany

With the same research purpose, the second study, which was conducted in Amsterdam in the Spring term of 2016, involved semistructured interviews with 19 international exchange students. Of the sample, 11 Erasmus students (see Table 2) were asked to describe how they made sense of being a European, and how they related it to their national identities.

Table 2. Participant List of the Second Study.

Name (pseudonyms)	Country
Adriana	Italy
Camden	United Kingdom
Christine	Germany
Caroline	United Kingdom
Daniel	Italy
Dalia	Romania
Eva	Italy
Heidi	Germany
Kaleen	Poland
Mona	Italy
Sandra	Italy

In both studies, focus group sessions and in-depth interviews were organized at the end of the Erasmus term just before the students' departures from the host country. In short, this article reflects the perspectives of 31 Erasmus students from various EU member countries as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Country Distribution of the Overall Sample.

Country	Participants (<i>n</i>)
France	4
Germany	6
Hungary	1
Italy	6
Netherlands	1
Poland	5
Portugal	1
Romania	2
Spain	2
United Kingdom	3
Total	31

Although the sample size was the main limitation of the study, qualitative methods enhanced the disclosure of attitudes to a certain extent.

Data Analysis

All focus group sessions and interviews were audiovisually recorded and then transcribed verbatim. In this article, pseudonyms are used to protect participants' confidentiality (quotes are given as spoken; however, a few grammatical errors have been corrected without affecting the meaning). Within an inductive approach, thematic analysis was performed on the textual data. Thematic analysis is a common technique used in qualitative studies in various disciplines, which involves revealing emerging themes in the texts (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The process of thematic analysis was managed manually by reading the texts carefully and making notes on them to identify initial codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Each member in the research group read the texts separately to manage an efficient open-coding system. Afterward, initial codes were generated into broader categories. This process provided significant insights into how Erasmus students described being a European, how they related their identifications with Europe and their nationalities, and how they reflected their identification with Europe in relation to the other.

Being a European in Turkey

The primary study aimed to understand how students make sense of cultural differences when they make comparisons between Turkey and their own nationalities. However, it has been observed that students tend to make comparisons with Europe rather than their nationalities. Thematic analysis of the data provided insight into participants' perceptions regarding Europeaness. Cultural comparisons provided by Erasmus students involved strong identifications with Europe, which were explained in opposition to the host culture. A student expressed the following:

At the beginning when I came I was like yeah it is really European. . . . I do not feel like it is Turkey, but after I lived here and talked to people . . . the first image, it looks like European, but after it is not. (Michelle, France)

Having an experience during one semester in Turkey led students to conclude that Turkey cannot be described as European because of its cultural differences. Gaxie (2011a) points out that a significant place is reserved for Turkey in the narratives of German interviewees as they mostly refer to the themes of "human rights, democracy, women's rights, religion, mentality or the economy" (p. 76). Similarly, in this study, the students often emphasized religious aspects as a cultural distinction between Europe and Turkey. Although Turkey was recognized as a secular country by the students, the notion of Islam was used to describe the host culture as a distinguishing factor from Europe. One student clearly stated this factor as follows:

When I hear *ezan* [the call for prayer], I think how it is possible that a country like this can become European because we are so different in that side. . . . I study international relations, I am studying Turkey and European Union, and I do not want to think that because I think all cultures can come together, but for me it is very difficult for a country like this! (Benjamin, Spain)

Another expressed Islam's role in a similar way: "Turkey is in Europe geographically more or less, but you can see for the culture it is maybe closer to the Middle Eastern culture" (Paola, Spain).

There were few students in the group who reflected their initial impressions confirming their expectations about Turkey in relation with Islam. Here, they seemed to favor this relationship because it validated previously constructed images:

I liked it [ezan] I don't know. For me it was my perception of Turkey. I mean it was normal for me. (Carson, Germany)

I felt it was real, that I was actually here. It was my first thought; I'm actually here, this is real. (Cristina, Portugal)

Summarizing the historical background of the relationship between European and non-European identities, Stråth (2002) suggests that Europe and Christianity used to be interchangeable notions until the era of Enlightenment. He states, "with the Enlightenment philosophy, the distinction between Christianity and Islam was in a certain sense relativized because religion lost its absolute position" (p. 392). The Enlightenment provided the precedence of reason; however, it is difficult to reject the underlying role of religion in the cultural roots of Europe. This is obvious in students' images of the self and the other in terms of cultural backgrounds. As is evident in students' narratives, European citizens may define the sense of belonging to Europe based on the characteristics they associate with the other. Thus, the Europeanness or a sense of belonging to Europe was strongly described in relation to the constitutive outside.

Students also described the host culture based on the general appearances of the cities they visited. These descriptions were mainly related to modernity as expressed by the students. The following expressions reveal that Europeanness was associated with modernity in contrast to conservatism:

For me Izmir is probably the most open-minded or European city in Turkey. That's what I felt about this city. And, in the East part, more, in Cappadocia I wasn't only in the touristic place and I travelled a little bit in the town. . . . More traditional, more maybe conservative. And just a little bit less European, but which is not the problem, just a difference. (Gabriel, France)

Istanbul is more religious. Women covered their heads. (Alexia, Netherlands)

We both wore shorts one day and I felt a little bit uncomfortable because nobody was wearing shorts in Istanbul. (Hailey, United Kingdom)

As another student stated, although the city's general outlook gives an impression that it is European, observed differences in the way of thinking were identified as a distinguishing feature from Europe. Therefore, experience and interaction within a relatively different culture for a certain period led participants to define what Europeanness was or was not:

I think for me when I came here I expected something that is very unmodern. And I saw the city a few days, and I see that you have the metro, you have the glass buildings, you have apartment buildings. So, I thought it's like actually very modern. And now, I spent here some time and see the differences . . . people are different, their mentality is different than the European ones. (Lucas, Romania)

The same student (Lucas, Romania) continued, "I travelled a lot. . . . It's like, I think, the last foreign country that I'm going to live in. It's in the East, it's the most Eastern place that I have ever been." When this statement is considered within the context of previous expressions, it connotes the positioning of the self and the other based on a "West-East" dichotomy. Religion is a determinant of the dichotomy between the West and East (Nalbantoğlu, 1995), and modernity as well. One of the ways of conceptualizing European identity is to take Europe as an object and describe it as a cultural, geographical, or political construct (Eder, 2009). Here, the sense of belonging to Europe was described through narrating the West-East dichotomy based on superficial features of modernity such as underground systems and architecture. The West-East dichotomy functions as a system of representation to evaluate and classify societies.

In the same vein, one student acknowledged the rule of law when making comparisons between Turkey and Europe as follows:

I do not want Turkey to be part of Europe for various reasons. First maybe because it is so different, not like the other European countries. I think Europe defines really much about the laws and accepting the laws. Values and laws. Values creating laws. And I think that's not given for Turkey . . . without Turkey, for example, in Germany, we have so many Turkish people, it is kind of already part of Europe. I think we can make really a European culture by . . . value sharing. The system is the key for Germany, we have many Turkish people living as Muslims in Germany, in whole Europe, already belongs to Europe. (Robert, Germany)

Although this is the only such example and thus cannot be sufficient to generalize from, this statement presents the rule of law as a common value embedded in European institutions and distinguishes Europe from Turkey. It seems that the student values the "system," which embodies the rule of law. It is this system that allows the coexistence of differences. At this point, it is meaningful that being Turkish is diffused into being Muslim; thus, religious identity is used as a reference point.

Being a European in the Netherlands

Moving from the primary analyses, which revealed an understanding of how Erasmus students describe the self and the other, the second study involved open-ended questions probing European and national identities such as "What does it mean to you to be a European?" and "Do you consider yourself as European or . . . (nationality)?" Here, it must be acknowledged that European and national identities are not opposed, but interchangeable (Bruter, 2003; Kohli, 2000; Miller, 2012). Bruter (2003) argues that quantitative instruments, specifically the Eurobarometer, are problematic because of such questions, as European and national identities are not contradicted; thus, he suggests a more in-depth analysis of what

individuals mean by feeling European. Discussing the identification with Europe and existing nationalities, Kohli (2000) asks which situations lead individuals to prioritize one of these identities. Focusing on the perceptions of Erasmus students in a Western European country, the current study revealed significant information concerning how participants make sense of the interrelationship between their national identities and the sense of belonging to Europe.

The dilemma in investigating European and national identities seems to be solved theoretically with the notion of multiple identities. Cinnirella (1997) points out that citizens of Europe tend to recognize coexisting European and national identities. Citrin and Sides (2004) suggest that the distinction between the self and the other is unstable because individuals often engage with several groups. Social identity involves different engagements with different groups (Kohli, 2000). As a theoretical concept, multiple identities involve orienting the self according to context and situations. Miller (2012) explains multiple identification as follows:

Identities can be expressed at many levels—the local, regional, national and international as well as the European. Life stories often include multiple frames of reference, a clear sign of transnational experience and biographical identities that are multiple, changing, and at times conflicting. Rather than layered or nested identities, it is more sensible to speak of a mosaic of situationally-relevant identities with the context determining identity. (p. 10)

In this respect, individuals tend to hold multiple identities, either compatible or conflicting, which are expressed depending on the specific context. In this study, thematic analysis of the data gathered from Erasmus students in Amsterdam demonstrates that national identities are more prioritized in a European context in which cultural differences are relatively slighter than in the ones representing the other. A student's statement clearly summarizes the issue:

I think I am first Italian and then European. . . . There are so many differences inside Europe. . . . It is quite impossible that, for example, me and the people from Sweden consider both belonging to the same thing, we are too different, but if I speak to someone, for example, I have friend from the U.S., when I speak to her I consider myself European. (Eva, Italy)

Another student from Italy addressed European values, whereas she prioritized her nationality: "I think European people could be similar about values, general ideas, but if you look at cultures we are very different. In this sense, I think I am more Italian than European" (Adriana, Italy).

Furthermore, the findings of the study highlight common history, European values, and mobility as factors that emerged in students' definitions regarding their senses of belonging to Europe. Identification with Europe was mostly described based on the historical past of the continent, which underlies the core values of democracy, civilization, and tolerance. A student made the following statement:

I understand that there are big differences between us, but I think that we have to work together to create a better future for everyone here in Europe. We share the tragic past in the last century, so we all know what is fascism, Nazism, so we share principles of democracy and civilization and tolerance with the difference. . . . We have a set of values that tie us together. . . . I am Italian but also European. (Daniel, Italy)

European history was presented as a major theme to define the sense of belonging, but also to delineate the excluded aspects. Some students emphasized a common history to distinguish Europe from others:

Sharing sort of the same story. There is a common background, a common historical background, . . . we share the same background. I really saw it with my two roommates, one is European, even though Switzerland is not part of the EU, the historical background is the same, and a girl from the States. With the girl from Switzerland, our culture, our way of thinking, even though I am Italian, she is Swiss, too different like the way of seeing things, we were way more similar than the girl from the States. (Sandra, Italy)

A student from Germany responded to the questions addressing what it means to be European and what connects European people as follows:

It does mean a thing. It does not have this nationalistic hitch to it, but then again it is the concept that does not really have that much meaning I feel, so, it is also vague. I do feel European, whatever that means. In the broader sense, the democracy, high standard of living by comparison, maybe also old history. (Christine, Germany)

Students from Eastern European countries tended to distance themselves from the sense of Europeanness. A student preferred to describe Europe only through the notion of democracy as a value:

I had this course, Eurocentrism. Basically, it was all about how great Europe is, how everything comes from Europe. . . . I was actually thinking that I don't consider myself part of one continent or Europe as much as I consider myself just a normal human being from the planet. And I don't think I ever told anyone like I am from Europe, I am European. I think there are certain values that you find in Europe such as democracy let's say, or the separation of power. (Dalia, Romania)

Another student from Poland highlighted openness and tolerance to describe Europeanness, pointing at self-development, learning languages, exploring other cultures, and travelling. It is significant to note the way that Erasmus students from former socialist countries manifested the core values of modern Europe. She expressed herself as follows:

I don't say I am a European. I think being European is maybe the way of thinking, of being open also tolerating or even accepting; to learn foreign languages, the culture, to travel, I think these make people European. The openness to differences, culture, and religion as well. (Kaleen, Poland)

European core values such as tolerance were underlined several times by students across Europe. A student from the United Kingdom also saw cosmopolitanism as the outstanding characteristic of a European city:

One thing that I can definitely see living in Amsterdam, how tolerance has made the city especially very different. I think it is the tolerance you can see in most of the places. There is lots of difference, religious buildings, like there is a Buddhist temple, a big mosque in Amsterdam, you got like every religion . . . so it is nice to live in a country where it is very tolerant, very cosmopolitan. (Caroline, United Kingdom)

Findings of this research reveal a strong emphasis by the respondents between Europeanness, common history, and core values. Therefore, Europeanness is mostly projected as a civic identity when the cultural context presents similarities rather than differences. Referred to as "constitutional patriotism," Habermas (1998) argues that citizens' sense of belonging to Europe develops through liberal democratic values, politics, and institutions. Similarly, Bruter (2003) suggests that "civic identity refers to the citizens' identification with their political system as an institutional frame" (p. 1155). European identity relies on core principles such as liberal democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (Llurda et al., 2016; Passerini, 2002). It seems that students of the second study emphasized the civic notions of Europe in a Habermasian way.

A part of the civic identity, mobility was expressed as a prominent factor that fosters a sense of belonging to Europe for the Erasmus students. One student, prioritizing his national identity, attributed the notion of Europeanness to the benefits of mobility: "I think I am British first and European afterwards. It means, I associate being European with being able to move wherever I want without sort of borders" (Camden, United Kingdom).

Moreover, he seemed to be bothered by the way that Europe is not fully appreciated by young people. Similar to Tsafos (2006), who claims that the young generation "takes Europe for granted" (p. 181), the student presented mobility as a privilege to explore the cultural richness of cosmopolitan Europe:

Mainland Europe seems a lot better than UK, she is a great thing. Just before university I took a gap year. In that gap year, most of my friends travelled to Asia, to America, to Australia, . . . but I travelled three times in Europe. I feel like a lot of young people in my age, they just seem to miss out what's near them. I think they take Europe for granted and they don't really appreciate it. . . . I think there is lot more differences in cultures in Europe, it is just that hard to find, that kind of make it more interesting. (Camden, United Kingdom)

One of the respondents directly related the idea of Europe with the right of free movement as follows:

I grew up with the impression that you could just go to any country in Europe, and it is very open, no borders. But now I think because of the refugees, every country is like focusing on self and becoming more national again. And it is a bit strange now because I

really like the idea of Europe, and, for example, with Brexit, it is a bit strange as if people just don't want to support this idea of Europe anymore. (Heidi, Germany)

It can be clearly seen that a sense of belonging to Europe is developed by means of mobility opportunities for Erasmus students:

In general what makes European people feel the sense of Europe is the good and the positive side, for example, the facility in movement and commerce and the economy and stuff like that basically. (Mona, Italy)

Mobility appears to be a dominant factor in students' identifications with Europe. Moreover, situations seem to affect the choices in prioritization of one of the multiple identities that individuals express. This comes into prominence in the narratives of students from the United Kingdom, which is evident in the following statement:

European. But to be honest . . . it has probably changed since I came here and I've lived the benefits of being part of the EU because of this big question at the moment in Britain, with the EU referendum. I am absolutely terrified they are going to leave EU, . . . for example, my sister . . . is about to go to university and she wants to do study abroad like I have done, and it might really affect the chance that she has. I've got quite a nice amount of funding from the EU to come to do it, which I couldn't probably do it otherwise. And it just really scares me that we could part from such an amazing thing; yeah, the EU is useful and it needs to be reformed. It is such a wonderful thing in terms of sharing culture, sharing Europeanness but yeah I'd say since coming to a part of mainland Europe and experiencing it, living the benefits of the EU, I would say I am probably European first and British second. (Caroline, United Kingdom)

It has been understood from the qualitative data that students highlighted the freedom of movement in Europe to describe their Europeanness. Within the Erasmus context, the emergence of mobility as a theme can be considered natural. Because the Erasmus program provides many benefits to European students, they are likely to appreciate mobility across the borders of member states. However, it is significant that mobility is recognized and appreciated as a distinguishing aspect of being European.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article has explored the notion of Europeanness and the sense of belonging to Europe from the perspective of Erasmus students. Generating an understanding from two different samples in two different countries, the current study suggests that the Erasmus students tend to make sense of their Europeanness through three associations: mobility, values, and the constitutive outsides. The research demonstrates that the participants of the second study in Amsterdam emphasized the European values and the mobility, whereas the majority of the students who participated in the primary study in Izmir made sense of Europeanness on the basis of making Turkey "other" because of its religious identity.

First, the findings of the current study must be evaluated considering a vital characteristic of the European millennials,² which is that this young generation has not directly experienced the tragic outcomes of World War II and the driving forces leading the European integration (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Huyst, 2008; Mihalcea, Săvulescu, & Vițelar, 2013). They were born into the idea of an integrated Europe and "have grown up with the EU as a given entity" (Huyst, 2008, p. 290). Therefore, the young generation, labeled the "Erasmus generation" (Bennhold, 2005; Wilson, 2011), embraces individuals who experience mostly the benefits of the European Union, particularly free movement through student mobility programs. According to the instrumentalist/utilitarian approach, identification with Europe is likely to be realized when individuals provide support to European institutions as a result of economic or social benefits they receive from the European Union (Kritzinger, 2005). It is argued that people can identify themselves with Europe when they evaluate European policies or practices in a positive manner (Christin & Trechsel, 2002; Gaxie, 2011b; Ruiz Jiménez, Górnica, Kandulla, Kiss, & Kosic, 2004). The Erasmus program obviously provides tremendous opportunities to young students, which enable them to prioritize Europeanness when they experience the benefits of mobility.

Second, the present study highlights the fact that Erasmus students tend to make sense of their Europeanness in relation to the values they associate with Europe. They are likely to identify themselves with Europe in terms of some core values, namely, democracy and tolerance. It was unsurprising to hear these values from Erasmus students when they were asked to describe Europeanness. However, it must be noted that the students were most likely to refer to them when emphasizing the differences in Europe. They were inclined to approach the idea of being a European through intrinsic concepts, while cherishing inclusive aspects of Europe. It seems that students acknowledged the nature of cosmopolitan Europe, and they seemed to appreciate it. Maybe this explains what Delanty (2005) claims when he states that the sense of Europeanness relies on cosmopolitanism, which bonds citizens of different nations with the recognition of diversity. However, recent developments since 2011 (i.e., the greatest refugee crisis resulting from the Syrian war, the attacks of Daesh, and the growth of Islamophobia) consolidate questioning or even almost a suspension of thoughts concerning cosmopolitan Europe (Cicchelli & Pendenza, 2015). Despite this questioning of the cosmopolitan nature of Europe, students who were interviewed in Amsterdam for the second study frequently referred to the cosmopolitanism of Europe. They attributed it to common history and shared values when they were asked to describe Europeanness. However, students who were interviewed in Izmir constantly preferred to explain the difference between Europe and Turkey through Islamic identity. It is notable that they never mentioned that Turkey does not share a common history with Europe or lacks core European values.

It is evident in the current study that Erasmus students still use Islam as a reference point to narrate Europeanness in Turkey where Islam is the dominant religion. Cosmopolitan values or civic identity as in the Habermasian view were not visible in a culturally different context representing the other. Therefore, these conceptualizations can be more meaningful within the European Union. Discussing the political discourse, Laclau (1985) conceptualizes the antagonism within logics of difference and equivalence. Opposed relations in a democratic society are embraced together with their differences; however, they do

² Although there is no exact consensus regarding the range of birth years, Generation Y (millennials) is generally accepted to include people who were born between 1977 and 1999.

not enhance the constitution of collective identities. On the other hand, within the logic of equivalence, the social finds itself an equivalent that is constituted through opposed relations as the self and the other (Laclau, 1985). From this perspective, a European identity can be instituted through the "logic of difference" in its own borders, and the "logic of equivalence" would be relevant in its relationships with the constitutive outsides. The antagonist role of Islam in Europe prevents the inclusiveness of Turkey into the logic of difference, because this inclusion will possibly abolish a constitutive aspect of the identity.

Finally, the present study reveals that Erasmus students are more likely to accept themselves first as European in a non-EU country, whereas they feel first as their nationals in Europe. In the EU context, feeling European is generally related only to a common history and some common values. However, the primary study demonstrated that national identifications were kept in the background; instead, the sense of belonging to Europe was highlighted through narrating images about West-East and modernity-conservatism. This result is consistent with Inthorn's (2006) study on British and German news coverage about European identity, suggesting that Europe is often perceived as a civic collectivity, whereas cultural elements of the identity become dominant in representations of Turkey with its cultural differences and Islamic heritage. Inthorn concludes that "discursive construction of European identity is context-dependent" (p. 85). In this regard, Turkey seems to remain as a constitutive outside of Europe, which facilitates the strengthening of citizens' sense of belonging to Europe. As Smith (1992) suggests, identification develops more as a situational categorization when individuals are faced with ethnic differences. The sense of belonging to a group mostly appears in specific situations in which individuals meet with outgroup members. This is obvious in the study given that the important role of cultural contexts emerged when specific identities were stimulated.

If we come to the main question that several scholars (i.e., Delanty, 2005; Smith, 1992) ask, "What does it mean to be European?" the Europeanness obviously means mobility for the 21st-century's Erasmus students. The millennials are likely to approach the idea of an integrated Europe for pragmatic reasons. They unsurprisingly recognized the cultural differences between member nations, recognized and appreciated the cultural diversity in the global world. In this sense, the Erasmus students tended to prioritize the benefits of mobility while supporting liberal values and the institutions. Sigalas (2010) and Wilson (2011) point out that Erasmus students already hold a strong sense of belonging to Europe, so the program does not have a specific role in that. Quite the contrary, it seems that young students will most likely be satisfied with their Europeanness as long as the Erasmus program supports cooperation between higher education institutions and encourages internationalization strategies. However, fostering sustainable European identifications can be possible only with sustainable constitutive outsides. The other remains a necessity.

There is an extensive literature on Turkey's role as an other in the formation of European identity, which often discusses relevant discourses and politics (Kösebalaban, 2007; Morozov & Rumelili, 2012; Müftüler-Bac, 1998; Rumelili, 2004). There are a few studies, conducted in Turkey (i.e. Demirkol, 2013; Mutlu, 2011; Oner, 2015), focusing on the perspectives of Erasmus students regarding Turkey's accession to the European Union. The existing research investigating the relationship between the Erasmus program and European consciousness seems to overlook Turkey. However, being a partner country of Erasmus, Turkey provides a vital context in which the Erasmus generation's European consciousness and sense of belonging can be examined in more depth. Although the sample size of this research was rather small, the

current article provides significant insights on how Erasmus students approach the notion of Europeanness in different cultural contexts. Further research embracing more expanded groups within diverse cultures to elaborate the idea of Europeanness would be invaluable. Students' perspectives about migrants or other Western nationalities (such as the United Kingdom) remain open and require further investigation for the matter of the constitutive outside. It is especially recommended that the sense of belonging to Europe among younger generations in culturally distant environments be investigated.

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