

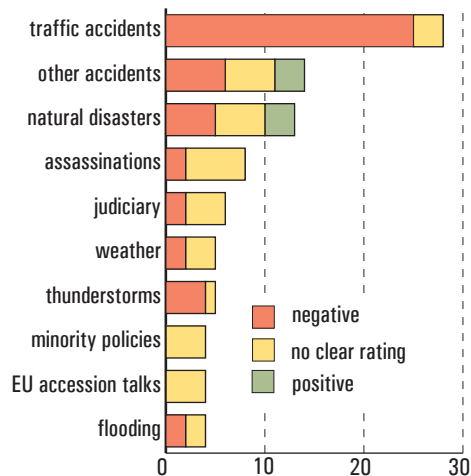
Is Turkey a disaster?

Catastrophic events shape Turkey's image in German TV media

TV news tells us little about the EU candidate Turkey. Train accidents or earthquakes shape the image of Turkish society. TV news and magazines portray Turkish politicians in a balanced way, while emphasizing primarily negative aspects about Turkish companies. As the official beginning of ascension talks at the end of December 2004 approached, EU topics were only covered in passing.

When EU Commissioner Günter Verheugen presented his report on enlargement in September 2004, a short debate on Turkey potentially joining the European Union began. Proponents argued that, being a democratic state with a predominantly Muslim popu-

1 Turkish society is tarnished by disasters



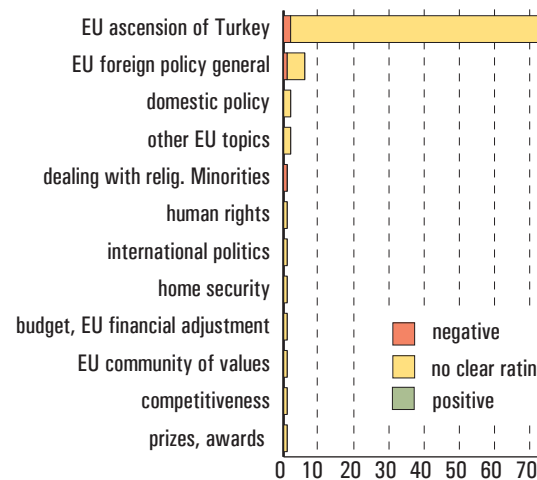
Presence and assessment of public affairs topics with Turkish protagonists

Source: Media Tenor 12/15/2003 – 11/15/2004 Basis: 116 reports in 11 media

lation, Turkey could serve as a model for the Islamic world, which the EU should support by accepting it into its ranks. Moreover, it had a workforce of relatively well-educated, quality conscious and, above all, young people. The aging Europe, they said, needed them far more urgently than the new EU member states that just joined, with their equally unfavorable demographics. Ascension skeptics opposed those arguments saying that Turks risked overwhelming Europe, posing a threat to Europe's cultural identity and possibly causing a ruinous spiral of wage cuts. In their view, the EU's capacity to act is equally in danger as are its already strained social systems.

The print media treated the pros and cons of Turkey's potential EU membership in relatively strong detail. But what about those who receive their only information on Turkey via TV news and magazines? Politicians, such as Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan or his cabinet members, are portrayed neutrally. Other protagonists in society, covered in about 40% of the news stories, gave a primarily negative impression. The main focus was on victims of accidents. Terror-

2 EU ascension talks overshadow all other EU topics



Presence and assessment of EU topics with Turkish protagonists

Source: Media Tenor 12/15/2003 – 11/15/2004 Basis: 101 reports in 11 media

ists also played an important role. We therefore hear about Turkish society mostly in the context of accidents and natural disasters (graph 1). Of course, this is a natural consequence of how TV media operate: Events providing strong visuals are more accessible than abstract arguments.

Only on rare occasions did television media take the opportunity to address EU-related topics. In September, Commissioner Verheugen visited Turkey and Prime Minister Erdogan came to Brussels. For three weeks, the question of Turkey possibly joining the EU was on the agenda (graph 2). But TV media talked relatively little about the effects it would have on the European Union regarding domestic policies, competitiveness or budgeting.

Basis:

Media: Tagesthemen, heute journal, RTL Aktuell, Sat.1 18:30, Tagesschau, heute, ProSieben, Frontal 21, Plusminus, Report (BR), Report (SWR)

Time: 12/15/2003 – 11/15/2004

Analysis: overall 295 TV news stories mainly referring to Turkish protagonists

Turkish protagonists are treated differently in German TV news and magazines: Society is primarily portrayed as a victim of man-made or natural disasters, while politicians, in the run-up to the official opening of ascension talks, were only briefly present.

Open questions: Aside from accidents and natural disasters, what could be interesting enough for the television media to cover a broader range of topics on Turkey's society and economy?