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## CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY OF TURKEY: AN ANALYSIS OF REGULAR PROGRESS REPORTS

Onur KULAÇ<sup>1</sup>, S. Evinç TORLAK<sup>2</sup>

**Key words:** Climate Change, Regular Progress Reports, Policy, Public Policy Analysis, Environmental Issues, Participation

**Abstract:** When assessed from a global perspective; environmental problems, especially in the last five decades, have been a threat to almost all countries. International organisations and institutions struggle to develop effective solutions for arising issues. Climate change is also evaluated as one of the most crucial risks for the environment. European Commission regular progress reports hold a guiding role for the candidate countries and in light of that numerous policies of the relevant countries have aligned with the European Union (EU) acquis. The main purpose of the study is to analyze the climate change policy of Turkey within the context of regular progress reports in an effort to mend the gap fill the void in literature regarding climate change policy of Turkey. Therefore, 7 regular progress reports between the years 2010-2016, when climate change was considered as a title, will be scrutinised in terms of legislation, institutional structure and emission gas through content analysis method with the aim of having a functional assessment about the determinations and the expectations of the EU. The study reveals that although Turkey has made fundamental progress over the years regarding climate change, there are still some crucial issues that need to be reconsidered to have an effective climate change policy.

### Introduction

The European Union (EU) is one of the most crucial international organisations which operate in various kinds of fields. In this context, the EU attempts to tackle significant global issues, particularly by formulating and implementing functional policies. These policies highly affect member and

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<sup>1</sup> Pamukkale University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Turkey, e-mail: onurkulac@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Pamukkale University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Turkey, e-mail: etorlak@pau.edu.tr

candidate countries' national policies (Kulaç 2016). In this fashion, many countries and organisations have to fulfil their responsibilities towards environmental problems so as to leave a better world to the future generations. Climate change, which is one of the most striking and noteworthy environment problems, is recognised as an overwhelmingly essential threat especially by the EU and the United Nations (UN). Thus, international summits were held in order to discuss the arising climate change issues. Among these significant summits and treaties are Stockholm Conference, Rio Earth Summit, and Kyoto Protocol, which is an addition of "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)" (Torlak et al. 2015), Vienna Treaty, Montreal Protocol and Paris Treaty ([www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr)).

Within the framework of Kyoto Protocol, several flexibility mechanisms were developed so as to reach the set goals about climate change, namely, Joint Implementation, Clean Development Mechanism, and Emission Trading (UN 1998, UNFCCC 2007). To effectively deal with environment problems, the EU has prepared 7 "Environment Action Programs" to date and set a number of priority targets for the purpose of bettering the environment and climate. The 7th Environment Action Program was developed and entered into force in 2014 to guide European environment policy until 2020. The main goal of the EU with the Environment Action Programs is to invest more and rationally in environment and climate policy. In addition, the EU aims to address international environmental problems and climate change more effectively and efficiently ([ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme/index.htm)).

Public policies are the regulations made by the governments in various policy areas (Kulaç and Çalhan 2013: 205) in order to provide functional solutions for the social, national and also international issues. In other words, public policy is the whole of purposeful decision and actions (Hill 1997: 7) that are carried out by a number of organisations or individuals in an effort to sort out the existing issues or meet the social needs (Anderson 2014: 7). As well as official and unofficial actors, international actors play a significant role in public policy making process, and they have a great impact on the countries' domestic and foreign policies. Moreover, international organisations even intervene in the public policies often through diversified multi-national projects (Kulaç 2016: 26) for the purpose of having productive cooperation, especially with developing countries. Thus, by the enhancement of collaboration and the facilitation of information sharing, noteworthy and promising policies in some of the major countries are transferred to other relevant countries (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 7).

Turkey is one of the most fundamental European countries that has a strategic importance in terms of geographic location, population and economy. It is possible to suggest that Turkey and the EU have a long history. With respect to this, one of

the main goals of Turkey is to be a member of the EU in an effort to provide citizens with better life standards. In 1959, Turkey applied for association to the European Economic Community. Later in 1963, the Ankara Agreement, which is an association agreement, was signed and came into effect in 1964. Even though the application was rejected by the European Commission due to various reasons, 1987 is a highly important milestone in Turkey-EU relations since Turkey applied for full membership of the European Community within context of Rome Treaty. In 1995, customs union was established between Turkey and the EU, covering industrial and manufactured agricultural products. As the decision was made in Luxembourg, full membership negotiations between Turkey and the EU officially started. In this context, the EU published a negotiation framework document to explain and emphasize the fundamental points of the negotiation process with Turkey ([www.ab.gov.tr](http://www.ab.gov.tr), Palabıyık and Yıldız 2007, Topal 2009). Regular progress reports are reports that are annually published by the European Commission<sup>3</sup> which evaluate the activities and the policies of the candidate country regarding issues related to individual and community life (Cansever 2009: 228). The European Commission has been preparing regular progress reports for Turkey since 1998. In these reports, various policy areas and the related activities in Turkey have been scrutinised and some functional suggestions have been offered in order to have an efficient negotiation process.

In public policy making process, legislation can be considered as one of the most crucial stages. According to Kraft and Furlong (2004: 86), legislation stage is the legitimacy of the decisions made by policy actors. Thus, the designed arrangements made on any policy area are put into force and the formulated policies are implemented to reach the targeted goals. In some circumstances, the process of legislation may start from scratch for the amendments to be made in the current laws. Therefore, it is considerably feasible to focus on the legislation phase and legislative regulations when analyzing the policies of a country. Furthermore, public institutions are the key actors particularly in the implementation stage of public policies. Different features of public institutions have an effect on the success of the implemented policies. Policy analysts even benefit from the institutional model, which is regarded as one of the significant public policy analysis models (Anderson 1979, Dye 2008, Anderson 2014). Hence, an emphasis should be made on the institutional structure in order to carefully study the policies. Concordantly, the policy analysts have an opportunity to get a broad overview through evaluating the policies in terms of legislation and institutional structure. In this study, as an international actor, the EU's effects on the climate change policies of Turkey are dealt by analyzing the regular progress reports. To do so, the regular

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission can be described and defined as an executive body of the EU.

progress reports published by the European Commission for Turkey are analysed in an effort to figure out the determinations and the expectations of the EU, particularly in the cases of legislation, institutional structure and emission gas.

### **1. Methodology<sup>4</sup> and limitations of the study**

The main aim of the study is to analyze and shed a light on the determinations and the expectations of EU about the climate change policy of Turkey. To achieve this, reports that are annually prepared and published by European Commission called Turkey Regular Progress Reports (TRPR) were examined and evaluated in accordance with content analysis model, which is one of the fundamental qualitative methods (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1277). This study is limited to the TRPR published between the years 2010-2016 when climate change was considered a title. Focusing only on the European Commission progress reports, which are the most fundamental sources and roadmap for the climate change policy of Turkey, can be regarded as another limitation of the study. However, future research can use a variety of international organization reports and data in an effort to have a comprehensive analysis. In this study, 7 regular progress reports in total were taken into account and relevant tables were generated. Looking at the regular progress report of Turkey, it is possible to claim that the determinations about the climate change policy of Turkey were mostly shaped by 3 different parameters. These parameters can be listed as legislation, institutional structure and emission gas. Hence, the determinations of EU were listed and classified in terms of “legislation”, “institutional structure” and “emission gas”. Furthermore, the EU’s expectations about Turkey’s climate change policy was observed and presented systematically. In the findings and conclusion part of the study, the current climate change policy of Turkey was evaluated and functional suggestions were offered.

### **2. Findings and discussion**

In this part of the study, the determinations and the expectations of EU regarding Turkey’s climate change policy were examined. Firstly, the regular progress reports between the years 2010-2016 were scrutinised in terms of determinations of the EU. In this context, the determinations were classified as legislation, institutional structure and emission gas. Secondly, the expectations of the EU were addressed in an effort to provide with the researchers some effective and functional suggestions.

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<sup>4</sup> In the methodology part of the study, the articles authored by Kerman et al. (2013), Çalhan et al. (2015), Erten and Aktel (2016) were taken as samples in an effort to conduct a comprehensive analysis.

### 2.1. Determinations of the EU

In regular progress reports, it is feasible to detect and observe the determinations of EU in terms of legislative regulations and activities of Turkey regarding climate change policy. Furthermore, the institutional structure of Turkey regarding climate change policies has been covered and discussed in the regular progress reports. In this manner, several determinations of EU with respect to the institutional structure can be put forth in order to evaluate the effort of Turkey in the case of climate change. On the other hand, determinations of the EU with regards to emission gas are remarkably important when evaluating the reduction targets and the functional attempts of Turkey. In this context, 4 different tables were generated with the aim of having sufficient data for the further analyses.

Table 1. Determinations in terms of Legislation

Years	Determinations
2010	In connection with the marketing of new cars, Turkey has begun to adopt legislation that transposes the EU acquis on domestic legislation to inform consumers about the fuel economy and CO2 emissions (TRPR 2010: 90).
2011	Turkey accepted a national climate change strategy which will last until 2020. In this regard, 1 <sup>st</sup> national climate action plan has been adopted by the Climate Change Coordination Board so as to implement planned strategies (TRPR 2011: 100).
2012	Turkey adopted the National Action Plan on Climate Change covering the period up to 2023. Turkey adopted a regulation on the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions. No progress was made on other legislation in the field of climate change (TRPR 2012: 83).
2013	Investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy are increasing with the adoption of renewable energy law, energy efficiency strategy and some awareness-raising projects (TRPR 2013: 70-71).
2014	The Legislation was adopted to align with the Fuel Quality Directive in order to comply with the EU acquis on climate. Turkey signed an agreement with the World Bank to pilot the monitoring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gases in the electricity sector and the capacity building support program for working on technical capacity transfer issued related to the carbon markets in Turkey (TRPR 2014: 69).
2015	-
2016	A national strategy consistent with the European Union's "2030 Framework on Climate and Energy Policies" has not yet been adopted. Even a climate change adaptation strategy has been prepared; it lacks a legal basis and enforcement (TRPR 2016: 88).

When the determinations in terms legislation are analysed, some promising developments and regulations made by Turkey are obviously observed (see Table 1). The legislation practices of Turkey in the years 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014 are especially noteworthy as there are numerous efforts in order to comply with the EU acquis on climate. In this context, the national climate change strategy that will expire in 2020, renewable energy law, energy efficiency strategy and some awareness-raising projects can be considered as the prominent achievements of Turkey. Nonetheless, the performance of Turkey in the years 2012 and 2016 regarding climate change was insufficient due to a lack of needed national strategy in accordance with the “2030 Framework on Climate and Energy Policies” of the EU. In addition to this, the climate change adaptation strategy of Turkey lacking the legal basis and enforcement is the other fundamental weakness that needs to be focused on and developed (TRPR 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016). In the regular progress report prepared in 2015, there are no determinations related to legislation regarding climate change policy of Turkey.

Table 2. Determinations in terms of Institutional Structure

Years	Determinations
2010	A Climate Change Department was established within the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and a high-level "Coordination Committee for Climate Change" was established in an effort to enhance coordination among public institutions (TRPR 2010: 90).
2011	-
2012	-
2013	The split of the former Ministry of Environment and Forestry into two new ministries in 2011 and the ongoing restructuring efforts within the newly established Ministry of Environment and Urbanization weakened the capacity of Turkey to pursue a strong climate change policy. The very high rate of staff turnover in the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization lead to loss of competence in specialized units (TRPR 2013: 70-71).
2014	The re-establishment of a dedicated Climate Change Department within the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization is an important step for administrative capacity. There is a need for a better complementarities relationship between the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and other concerned ministries in terms of the environment, climate and development agendas (TRPR 2014: 69).

The determinations in terms of institutional structure provided in Table 2 are significant for having an idea about the climate change policy of Turkey. When the

determinations of EU regarding institutional structure are examined, it is possible to monitor several encouraging and functional institutional structure arrangements made by Turkey. The establishment of Climate Change Department and Coordination Committee for climate change was one of the remarkable accomplishments of Turkey in the years 2010 and 2014. However, various circumstances such as the restructuring of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, and the staff turnover frequency have had a negative impact on the progress of Turkey's institutional structure in 2013 (TRPR 2010, 2013, 2014). According to Table 2, there are no determinations put forth by EU in terms of the institutional structure of Turkey in the years 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2016.

Table 3. Determinations in terms of Emission Gas

Years	Determinations
2010	The intention of Turkey to limit greenhouse gas emission growth by %11 from the projected 2020 emissions on the basis of usual scenario cannot be accepted as an ambitious target (TRPR 2010: 90).
2011	Turkey has taken significant steps to develop cooperation on emission trading. No progress has been made regarding the application of emission standards from fuel quality or from cars and vans (TRPR 2011: 100-101).
2012	Turkey is one the largest greenhouse gas emission countries that has not yet set a greenhouse reduction target for 2020 (TRPR 2012: 105).
2013	The absence of a general greenhouse gas emission target in Turkey is an obstacle to the further development of carbon market mechanisms (TRPR 2013: 72).
2014	Turkey's national climate change action plan lacks a general national greenhouse gas emission reduction target (TRPR 2014: 69).
2015	-
2016	Turkey has submitted its first and second biennial report on greenhouse gases in March, the sixth national declaration and the national inventory in April regarding commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (TRPR 2016: 88).

Table 3 provides an opportunity to further examine the climate change policy of Turkey with regards to emission gas. Reducing and controlling the emission gas level is becoming significant and even mandatory for some countries. Emission gas is one of the most critical parameters under the title of climate change in the regular progress reports of Turkey. In this respect, the EU has diverse determinations regarding emission gas for almost every year so as to stimulate

Turkey to look into more effective policies and practices. In this context, when the regular progress reports are inspected, a number of impressive steps taken by Turkey are observed. Enhancing cooperation on trading emission and submitting the biennial report on greenhouse gases are the promising activities put forth and implemented by Turkey in the years 2011 and 2016. But nearly in all regular progress reports, the nonexistence of an emission gas reduction target was highlighted and emphasised (TRPR 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016). In the regular progress report published in 2015, the EU has no substantial determinations regarding emission gas.

Table 4. Overall summary of the determinations by years

Parameters/Variables	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Legislation	X	X	X	X	X		X
Institutional Structure	X			X	X		
Emission Gas	X	X	X	X	X		X

The determinations of EU in the regular progress reports of Turkey are summed up in Table 4 above. According to the table, the EU had numerous determinations in terms of legislation and emission gas almost in all years. Therefore, 2015 might be regarded as a way exception year given the nonexistence of determinations presented by EU. The number of determinations regarding institutional structure of Turkey is considerably less than determinations regarding legislation and emission gas. When Table 4 is reviewed, it is possible to observe that more than half of the reports lack determinations in terms institutional structure. In other words, the reports published in 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2016 have no data related to institutional structure.

**2.2. Expectations of the EU.** The expectations of the EU in the regular progress reports of Turkey are functional and practical for Turkey to make progress in accordance with the EU acquis. That is why spotting and presenting the expectations of EU is essential for the purpose of offering several beneficial suggestions. The following table can be considered as an outline of the expectations of the EU in terms of climate change and environment.

The expectations of the EU (see Table 5 above) provide policy makers, researchers, and the relevant individuals with a valuable roadmap to comprehend the steps Turkey needs to take. In all regular progress reports published between the years 2010 and 2016, the EU presented various expectations. These expectations of the EU from Turkey can be summarized as: 1) increasing the number of investment in terms of environment, 2) taking crucial steps to comply



with EU legislation and regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases, 3) enhancing environment directives, 4) encouraging cooperation and coordination among the relevant public institutions responsible for environment and climate change, and 5) complying with EU legislation concerning monitoring and reporting of greenhouse emissions (TRPR 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). When the expectations of the EU are examined, it is possible to claim that all the expectations are acceptable and noteworthy opportunities for Turkey to tackle climate change issues and to make functional contributions on an international scale.

Table 5. Expectations of the EU

Years	Expectations
2010	The number of investments in the field of environment needs to be increased (TRPR 2010: 91).
2011	Turkey is expected to take further steps to comply with the EU legislation on fluorine gases (TRPR 2011: 100-101).
2012	Turkey needs to take more steps to comply with EU legislation and implement legislation (TRPR 2012: 106).
2013	Due to the increase in the number of greater municipalities, the implementation of some environmental directives is expected to be improved (TRPR 2013: 72).
2014	Further work is expected to be undertaken to strengthen cooperation and coordination among the various institutions responsible for environmental and climate change field (TRPR 2014: 69).
2015	Turkey is expected to comply with EU legislation regarding monitoring and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions (TRPR 2015: 83).
2016	Further efforts should be made to harmonize regulations on fluorinated greenhouse gases (TRPR 2016: 88).

### Conclusion and Suggestions

Regarded as a significant environmental issue, climate change has an impact on all countries. Therefore, every country needs to fulfil their responsibilities in order to strengthen the cooperation when facing arising climate change issues. International treaties, protocols and summits with the aim of having an effective coping policy play a functional role in this. Additionally, international organisations and institutions as international policy actors are also important in terms of coordinating and encouraging relevant countries. As an influential international actor, the EU attempts to increase the sensitivity and the awareness

about environmental issues in member and candidate countries. To do so, regular progress reports are published by European Commission to evaluate the candidate countries' progress in different policy areas. In these reports, the determinations and expectations of EU are presented for each policy chapter. The policies of Turkey have been assessed by the European Commission by regular progress reports approximately for the last two decades. Climate change is one of the essential titles that need to be carefully examined to be able to identify the determinations and expectations of EU. As highly emphasised in the previous part of this study, the determinations of EU are mostly comprised of the parameters legislation, institutional structure and emission gas. Even though Turkey had promising attempts and efforts in terms of climate change over the years, there are still some areas in need of development put forth and proposed by the EU, which need to be reconsidered and then developed further. The expectations of the EU mentioned briefly in the previous part can be regarded as a functional roadmap for Turkey to take numerous essential steps for further cooperation and possible investments.

Public support and participation are keys in accomplishing the implemented policies in Turkey. Thus, public awareness of climate change and environment can be ensured by organising and providing various free education programs. In these education programs, the curriculums should be kept practical and simple to ensure high participation. Furthermore, the certification system can be arranged and the citizens can be awarded and provided with various certificates such as "Climate Friendly Citizen", "Environment Friendly Citizen" etc. Through doing this, citizen engagement can be achieved and the policies of Turkey regarding climate change can be more effective and efficient. As official policy actors, relevant ministries and municipalities should take responsibility in the organization and coordination of these educational programs. Besides, written and visual media support should be maintained to have an increased level of public awareness. The curricula for every level of education in Turkey can be revised and updated within the context of environment and climate change. Starting from the primary schools, students' awareness and interest in climate and environment should be enhanced. The awareness about climate can thereby be passed on to the future generations. Furthermore, the number of lectures in the postgraduate study programs related to climate change or environment should be increased so as to train specialists and researchers in the field. In this respect, think tanks and other relevant non-governmental organisations might be more influential by the beneficial support of climate and environment specialists. The climate change policy of Turkey can be more sustainable by the involvement of related think tanks to the policy decision making process. By doing so, the expectations of the EU from Turkey in terms of climate change can be fulfilled.

Research and development are necessary for most of the sectors. Official actors such as public institutions and organisations in Turkey need to invest more in order to have eco-friendly technologies. In addition to this, the number of inspections made should be increased and preventive measures should be taken by the official actor to be able to conduct an adequate climate change policy. On the other hand, tax policies should be reconsidered and citizens could be encouraged to choose hybrid cars for the purpose of having low carbon emissions. The significance given to renewable energy sources should also be emphasized and usage of these sources should be widespread. Consequently, Turkey can have a functional and promising climate change and environment policy by considering the various fundamental suggestions provided above. This way, Turkey can fulfil its responsibilities, as set in the international treaties, and also have climate policies that comply with the EU acquis.

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