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## CLAIMING THE GLORY OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE: LESSONS FOR BETTER SOCIETIES VIA A SUCCESS STORY NEARLY LOST IN TRANSLATION

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## ABSTRACT

The BioNTech-Pfizer cooperation has led to the invention of a revolutionary vaccine against covid-19, upon which many countries of the world have based their hopes for a gradual salvation from an unprecedented global pandemic. At a scientific level, this is a formidable achievement marking a new era for humanity. At a human level, the story of the people who contributed to this prodigious step, is a bright example of Greek-Turkish friendship developed in a German context. Dr. Şahin and Dr. Bourla, respectively, scientists of an immigrant background, joined forces and produced a vaccine which has been delivered to European countries, with Greece being among the first to have received doses. The international media has hailed this remarkable story of scientific success, highlighting, also, its human aspect, illustrating the fruit of Greek-Turkish cooperation as a paradigm of a successful outcome despite bilateral antagonism and cultural constraints. This has not been the case, however, with the Greek and Turkish media. What has been celebrated on American or European media as an example of 'Greek-Turkish friendship', has been manipulated or distorted by Greek and Turkish news. The vaccine story has either been depicted as a 'made in Germany' accomplishment, or has been presented one-sidedly, aimed at generating national pride by focusing only on the existence of the one partner and silencing the existence of the other. What is even more interesting is, how, in some cases, the same piece of information, coming from a foreign original source, has been translated into Greek and Turkish, respectively, in a way that conveys different messages, directing, thus, the readers' attention into the elements that each country prioritizes as more important or more appropriate for its audience. If seen, however, in its real and full dimension, not only at a scientific, but also at a social-cultural level, the story behind the vaccine is a fascinating illustration of how, given the right conditions and opportunities, scientists coming from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, can thrive together and serve science and humanity.

**Key words: ideology, media representations, Greek-Turkish cooperation, BioNTech-Pfizer, culture and science, youth, immigrants**

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is the result of a 4-month research conducted by two investigators of different cultural and professional backgrounds, yet, with the joint aspiration to explore the following two, interconnected topics:

At a first level, the paper discusses the Greek-Turkish human story behind the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine as it has been represented in the international media. By juxtaposing the representation of this human narrative in the Greek and Turkish newspapers, respectively, and then comparing it to selected articles written in the international media, we have attempted to identify the ideological axes underpinning local and international media platforms as illustrated via the strategies throughout which they have covered this interethnic friendship. We have discussed consequently, how the very same story has been -in some cases- highlighted and projected to the wider audience as a bright and hopeful paradigm of intercultural dialogue, while in some other cases, it has been silenced, distorted, or even manipulated, to serve dividing nationalistic discourses.

At a second level, the paper discusses the basic conditions that allow interethnic friendships to grow and produce fruits in a country like Germany, where scientific excellence and academic deontology obviously prevail over ethnic and religious labels. In order to touch upon the core ideas stemming from such an ambitious question, the researchers have conducted personal interviews with immigrants from both Greece and Turkey in Germany, who, each in their own means, field of expertise and capacities, have achieved their personal success story in German territory and discuss how they have witnessed the Burla-Şahin story within the media and what this symbolic cooperation has meant to them.

## METHODOLOGY

The idea for this research topic emerged while reading news in different languages and observing that different media platforms followed divergent strategies -implying, thus, different ideologies regarding the coverage of the story behind the Pfizer vaccine. The first stage of the research was therefore dedicated to further investigated articles and interviews published on the news; firstly, on platforms providing news in the Turkish and Greek language, respectively, and secondly, on international websites publishing stories mainly in English, but also in French and German.

The desk research was succeeded by primary investigation in the form of personal interviews, conducted mainly online, due to travel restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic. Some interviews were conducted separately by each investigator, while others jointly; the latter applied for the three focus groups that took place among members of the same family or community (two focus groups conducted in Turkish and one in Greek).

Specifically, this paper presents findings from the analysis of 18 theme-guided, semi-structured and open in-depth interviews that took place between March and May 2021. Interviews have been conducted in Turkish, Greek and/or English. With regards to the respondents' profile, candidates for interviews were initially chosen through each investigator's wider social circle, while some interviews have been the result of snowball sampling, as some of the people that we talked to introduced us to acquaintances of theirs, that could enrich our investigation. The criterion for choosing candidates for interviews has been their relevance to the topic at hand and their connection with the three relevant countries - Greece, Turkey, and Germany.

In this context, we have talked to people representing interesting combinations: young scientists or entrepreneurs from Greece or Turkey, but also from the so-called "third countries"[1], who migrated to Germany in quest of better education, career or even, the *opportunity to live in a more 'resilient' or 'multicultural' society*, to use their in vivo words; also, Greek or Turkish citizens[2] who spent an important period of their life in Germany, working, studying or participating in youth programs and then returned to their homeland, some permanently and others only to move back to Germany after a few months or years. Furthermore, we have also talked to experts from Greece, Turkey, and Germany with significant experience in the field of youth and intercultural dialogue.

In relation to age, respondents could be classified in three groups: young students aged 21-25; young professionals (scientists or entrepreneurs) aged 30-38; and senior professionals/experts aged 50-65.

This research has been epistemologically based on Stuart Hall's *Media Representation Theory*, as shaped within his rich bibliography in cultural theory. Ideological reflections have been largely inspired by Teun A. van Dijk's study on *Ideology and discourse* (2000), which builds upon Hall's theory.

## MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS, IDEOLOGY, AND POWER

'Media Representation' refers to how the media choose to depict the reality surrounding us, directly influencing, thus, our perception of individuals and events (Hall 1980, 117-121).

[1] By 'third countries', we mean regions outside the EU. We have interviewed economic migrants and refugees from Iraqi Kurdistan and Afghanistan who are now living and working or studying in Germany.

[2] Of different ethnic backgrounds. For instance, some of our interviewees have been Greek citizens of Albanian origin (coming from either Albania or Kosovo); while others, Turkish citizens who represent different ethnic communities (Kurdish, Arabic, Rum etc.).

According to Hall, there can be various grades between an accurate or distorted reflection of a fact or a person, but news platforms are the ones that can subtly promote a positive or a negative interpretation of any given situation or individual and mold the so-called 'public feeling' or public opinion. For instance, if the media choose to present a public figure in negative or positive terms, then our understanding of that person and even our feelings towards them will be a direct reflection of that representation. This explains how we can like or dislike people that we have never met in real life, based on their public image, which may not necessarily be accurate. In other words, the media are the conceptualizing force of 'meaning', a term which Hall sees as a constantly changing, dynamic notion, that can be remade and reshaped: media platforms can turn heroes into villains and vice versa; a coordinated series of positive or negative media representations can uplift or ruin completely the public image of an individual, even if these representations are untrue and unfair. With this kind of influence, media can have a direct impact on both individual and collective ideology.

Hall defines ideology as "the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works." (Hall 1996, 26) Van Dijk further elaborates on this definition, adding that "ideologies are not limited to making sense of society, but that they also serve to regulate social practices." (2000, 7) As a result, ideology shapes not only the way we choose to do things, but also the things we strongly believe to be 'good or bad'; 'right or wrong' (Van Dijk 2000, 16). In other words, our ideology dictates the norms, ideals, and values that we preserve and cherish within a society; it is these beliefs and norms that differentiate groups and render them distinct from one another. Hall emphasizes the catalytic role that ideology plays regarding the stabilization of power and dominance. (Hall 1982, 1996, 2017) The manipulation of ideologies by the media can shape politics (Hall et al 1978, 2011), but also challenge them, as Van Dijk argues (2000, 9).

This is why Hall (2017) stresses the necessity of treating any type of information we receive with a critical eye and constantly interrogating the accuracy of every piece of news that reaches us.

It is open to discussion whether our educational systems equip us with the skills, attitudes and competences that would enable us to be critical towards the information we get exposed to. This is a topic that we will touch upon further below, when referring to policy recommendations for better societies. For now, we will simply provide a brief comment: if a citizen's main armor against media manipulation is critical thinking, as Hall suggests, then the school is the first place where critical reading and active citizenship should be cultivated. There are countries where schools truly cultivate critical thinking and others where educational institutions promote exactly the opposite: passive reception of information, parroting and attachment to title-based hierarchies. In the first case, education is seen as a vehicle for more resilient and pluralistic societies, while in the latter, schooling institutions serve nationalistic purposes that usually preserve and deepen stereotypes connected with one's role in society, as dictated by their ethnicity, religion, or gender.

The narrative of the Pfizer vaccine could have three readings, all equally important for the 'good' in our societies:

Firstly, it could be read as an optimistic example of Greek-Turkish friendship, made possible, however, in a third country, Germany, which stands outside of this longstanding rivalry between Greeks and Turks and obviously offers the ground for such paradoxical friendships to grow and flourish.

Secondly, it could be seen as the inspirational success story of two immigrants who saw their hard work pay off, despite the hardships of living in the so-called 'gurbet/κουρμπέτι' [3].

[3] The same word exists in both Greek and Turkish and refers to the 'foreign land', usually connoting a hard place to live in, compared to the homeland, where one feels always accepted and welcomed.

The third reading focuses not on the Şahin-Burla duet, but rather on the husband-and-wife synergy, referring here to Dr. Şahin and his life partner, Dr. Özlem Türeci, who contributed significantly to the Pfizer achievement. Both are bright scientists and together they founded BioNTech, a company which, in the pre-covid-19 era, would focus on cancer treatment (Gelles 2020). In 2020, Time magazine featured them among the most significant people for the year.

Let us see how these three versions of the same story have been represented by the international and local media.

## TRANSLATING SUCCESS IN THE GREEK AND TURKISH CONTEXT: CELEBRATING THE COVID VACCINE WITH OUZO AND ÇAY

*We realized that he is from Greece and that I'm from Turkey. It was very personal from the very beginning.*

Uğur Şahin about his friendship with Albert Bourla, New York Times (Geller 2020)

This extract is from the *New York Times*, and it is one of the few articles in prominent news platforms (among *Euronews*, *Voice of America*, etc.) that have concretely mentioned the Greek-Turkish synergy underpinning the Pfizer story. Many articles shared by the local media in the Greek and Turkish language, respectively, have been translations of articles originally published by global news platforms, such as the aforementioned *New York Times* or *Euronews*. The headlines of these translated articles have been following the diplomatic protocol, that wants the reference to the host country being mentioned first. For instance, a Greek article published on the Greek *Euronews* site bears a headline beginning

with the phrase ‘ένας Έλληνας και ένας Τούρκος’ (A Greek and a Turk), while a similar article on the Turkish *Euronews* site refers to ‘Türk-Yunan dostluğu’ (Turkish-Greek friendship) [4]

The desk research findings in articles written originally for the local platforms indicate the following: the Greek-Turkish friendship behind the production of the vaccine has not been particularly highlighted by the local media, but rather by independent blogs, either personal or initiated by groups of people. [5] The fact that ordinary people are indeed interested in stories of intercultural cooperation beyond politics is optimistic for the future of the Greek-Turkish dialogue. The bilateral relations of the two countries have always had their ups and downs, yet, the specific story was published at a quite turbulent time, when news coming from both sides would cause even further tension between the two nations. Blogs, however, tend to be read by a much narrower audience, therefore hypothetically have a significantly smaller impact on public opinion compared to large news companies. This hypothesis has been verified by the findings of our primary research: the vast majority of our respondents knew little or nothing about the human story behind the Pfizer vaccine and those who did, often had a unilateral perspective of the story: the Greeks knew about Bourla,[6] while the Turks knew about Şahin; [7] not to mention respondents from other ethnic communities living in Germany who had heard about two German citizens of a blurred origin who ‘had saved the world’.

This finding is a direct reflection of the fact that the local media in Turkey, Greece, as well as Germany have chosen to represent the Pfizer story fragmentally, as a one-sided story of ethnic pride. In Greece, most news platforms have focused mainly on the personal story of Albert Bourla, a Greek Jewish scientist from Thessaloniki, who graduated from the Aristotle University and left Greece in search of better opportunities.

[4] Έλληνας και Τούρκος οι CEO των εταιρειών που ανακοίνωσαν το εμβόλιο για την COVID-19 | *Euronews*; Pfizer ve BioNTech: Covid-19 aşısının arka planındaki Türk-Yunan dostluğu | *Euronews*

[5] For example, Το ελπιδοφόρο εμβόλιο κατά του κορωνοϊού είναι Ελληνοτουρκική υπόθεση – *Olympia.gr* ([wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com))

[6] See, for example, Αλ. Μπουρλά: Πώς αναπτύξαμε το εμβόλιο Pfizer/BioNTech σε χρόνο – ρεκόρ | Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ ([kathimerini.gr](http://kathimerini.gr))

[7] There are exceptions, too. See, for example, Turkish German vaccine pioneers receive Germany's highest award | *Daily Sabah*

After the publicity received due to the Pfizer vaccine, Greek platforms hosted extensive articles on the personal story of Albert Bourla and his family, accentuating his love for his homeland, his connections to Halkidiki and other places around Thessaloniki. Objects related to the Bourla enterprise in Greece suddenly became tokens of high symbolic significance; small treasures culturally binding Bourla to the Greek Jewish Community of Thessaloniki: a bottle of ouzo, for instance, with a kosher label written in Hebrew, produced by the distillery of the Bourla Brothers, as Leon Saltiel recalls in an article published by one of the largest news agencies. [8]

Similarly, the Turkish media have portrayed Şahin and Türeci as the ‘the two Turks behind the vaccine’.[9] Turkish media platforms, just like their Greek counterparts, have engaged in cultural representations of objects and rituals stereotypically attributed to Turks: ‘We celebrated by brewing tea’ (*Çay demleyerek kutladık*), reads the headline of an article in *Yeni Şafak* (11.11.2020).[10]

The local media, however, whether consciously or not, have preserved another cultural stereotype, connected this time with the position of women in Turkey. The Turkish media have referred to Dr. Türeci mainly as ‘Dr. Şahin’s wife’, playing down her capacity as a scientist in her own merit (Türkmen 2020).[11] Despite their joint work, it is the male character of the story, Uğur, who has been in the spotlight.

Overall, Turkish-speaking media have preferentially depicted the story as a source of national Turkish ‘pride’: ‘gurur’ to cite ad verbum the word in Turkish that appeared in many articles. [12]

In most cases, however, local media platforms have eloquently refrained from elaborating on the social and economic factors that allowed for this success to happen in a country like Germany. It has been critical voices via smaller blogs or less popular news platform, that, like in the case of Greece[13], commented that this success might have never happened had the scientists not been living in countries like Germany or the USA, allowing them to prosper.

On the contrary, German websites have been eager to highlight that this success was made in Germany. There have been different representations of the story in various Germany-based media, varying from articles that overemphasize the scientists’ migrant background, to those not referring to it at all. DW for instance, a leading media platform, has opted for different representation strategies. In an article titled ‘Angela Merkel ‘incredibly proud’ of BioNTech founders’[14] dated 17 December 2020, there is no reference whatsoever to the origin of the scientists. The article focuses solely on their scientific excellence and novelty, factors that have made all Germans proud, starting with the Chancellor herself. In another DW video, titled ‘Who are the BioNTech founders?’[15], the following interesting phenomenon takes place: in the first part of the video, referring to the couple’s current status, Şahin and Türeci are depicted as the people behind the ‘German vaccine maker BioNTech’, who are characterized as ‘celebrities’, ‘Nobel candidates’, ‘people of the year’ (denoting the homonymous *Financial Times* front cover) or even ‘scientific superheroes’. The video’s second part, however, refers to the scientists’ origin by characterizing it as ‘humble’.

Other German news platforms such as *Focus* have represented the story as a “shining example of successful integration.”[16]

[8] The story of a bottle of ouzo and its modern connection to the Covid vaccine - ΑΠΕ-ΜΠΕ (amna.gr)

[9] See, for example, Corona virüs aşısının arkasındaki iki Türk: Uğur Şahin ve Özlem Türeci kimdir? | NTV

[10] Koronavirüs aşısının arkasındaki iki Türk: Çay demleyerek kutladık - Yeni Şafak (yenisafak.com)

[11] See, for example, Piyasalara 'aş' dopingi - InBusiness

[12] Uğur Şahin ve Özlem Türeci'nin baba ocağında gurur var! - A Haber Son Dakika Gündem Haberleri

[13] Popular websites in Greece, such as Capital.gr or DW, hosted articles on the brain drain issue and the reasons obligating young and promising scientists to flee their country: Γιατί έφυγε από την Ελλάδα ο Μπουρλά της Pfizer | Capital; Γιατί έφυγε από την Ελλάδα ο Μπουρλά της Pfizer | Κοινωνία & Πολιτισμός | DW | 30.01.2021

[14] <https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-incredibly-proud-of-biontech-founders/a-55971775>

[15] <https://www.facebook.com/dw.deutschewelle/videos/133862535266446>

[16] [https://www.focus.de/finanzen/boerse/aktien/produktion-gestartet-biontech-wird-immer-mehr-zum-hoffnungstraeger-fuer-die-welt\\_id\\_12596565.html](https://www.focus.de/finanzen/boerse/aktien/produktion-gestartet-biontech-wird-immer-mehr-zum-hoffnungstraeger-fuer-die-welt_id_12596565.html)

This success has been largely seen in Germany as an opportunity to justify the governments' policy to be hosting large numbers of migrants and refugees. Furthermore, local media celebrated this interethnic narrative as proof that the German society is multicultural, pluralistic and that it provides to all its citizens equal access to educational and vocational opportunities. It should be mentioned, at this point, that the German media never failed to emphasize the fact that Şahin and Türecci are German citizens.

Nevertheless, there have been cases where the German media (and not only), in an attempt to outline the success of Germany's integration policy, placed more emphasis on the ethnic background of the two scientists than their scientific capacity per se.[17] In her 2020 article in ResetDoc, Gülay Türkmen observes how, upon the discovery of the scientists' ethnic background, "the axis of the debate shifted to the lingering questions about migration, integration, diversity, and discrimination in Germany (and beyond)." (Türkmen 2020). Some Greek sites have also referred to them with benevolent yet pejorative terms,[18] such as 'children of Turkish *Gastarbeiter*', to mention an indicative example of a source that attempts to celebrate this story, yet ends up falling into conventional representations of immigrants, that further deepen existing stereotypes.

What is worth noting is that in many cases, the same article, taken from an original, international source has been translated into Greek and Turkish, respectively, in ways that appeal to their readers. In other words, articles have been adopted and translated in ways that give emphasis to the one ethnicity or the other. This is quite evident for instance in media platforms providing news in many languages, such as DW. A Greek-speaking reader, who will click to the DW platform from Greece, will find a list of Pfizer-related articles relative to their reality. Anyone entering DW Turkish, however, will see on the top of the list articles where the two scientists are illustrated as Turkish.

## **'WE GO WHERE WE CAN SEE THE LIGHT OF THE TUNNEL': THE VOICE OF YOUNG IMMIGRANT**

Elaborating on the role of Germany as a country facilitating social and educational integration, the reality is quite different than the one depicted on the media of all countries at issue. Germany is not the 'heaven' that many migrants and refugees had dreamt of before leaving their country (Trines 2019, Türkmen 2020); it is, however, a country offering opportunities to those who work and study hard.

Many of our respondents admitted that there have been times when they have felt like 'second class' citizens for various reasons: not speaking the language; practicing a different religion; coming from another culture or simply for having a darker skin complexion and physical attributes distinct than those of the average 'European' type figure. These are parameters existing in many societies hosting migrants and refugees and certainly not limited to Germany only.

Similar feelings of social isolation, yet attributed to different reasons, have been shared by Greeks living in Greece and Turks living in Turkey, who mentioned among others, that factors such as a bad economy, unemployment, lack of opportunities and corruption have often made them feel as 'strangers in their own country'. According to our interviewees, however, what differentiates Germany from other countries, namely Turkey and Greece, is that it offers them reasons to endure negative feelings and hardships by thinking that if they try hard enough, they will eventually be rewarded, as there is a system in place allowing for people and enterprises to prosper. We are quoting this extract from an interview with a young migrant from Eastern Anatolia, who is now living and studying in Germany, after having spent some months working as an interpreter in Greece. His words clearly highlight his hope to soon reach the 'light at the end of the tunnel'.

[17] See, for example, How an immigrant couple in Germany developed leading vaccine against COVID-19-World News , Firstpost

[18] Quite the contrary image is represented in another, English speaking website where the couple is depicted as being 'billionaires': A Billionaire Couple Is Behind the Historic Coronavirus Vaccine (businessinsider.com)

*'I cannot compare myself to a German citizen. I don't think there is a point in even trying to. I don't have a job. I don't speak good German. But I want to stay here, because I know that at least here there is a system that can support me if I work hard enough. I feel safe because I see a strong economy. I see people of different cultures every day in the streets. Do you think that the Pfizer people would have succeeded if they had stayed in their countries? No. Their countries couldn't have supported them. Trust me; being in Germany played a big role in their achievement.'*

Mustafa, 21

Mustafa accentuated the parameters of a vibrant economy and an educational system open to people of his age. The authors of this article both have lived and working experiences with migrants and refugees in Greece and Turkey, where the age between 18-22 is often seen as a 'transit' age and very few (if any) educational opportunities exist for the young people who belong to this group (Drosopoulos 2017, 2018). Our young interviewee talked emphatically about the multicultural character of the German city he is living in, where people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds co-exist.

Another respondent, this time a refugee from Afghanistan living in Germany has provided another, equally interesting perspective:

*On my way to Germany, I spent some months in Turkey first and then in Greece. As an asylum seeker, I worked as a volunteer in refugee camps. As soon as I received my residence permit, they said that I could work as a cultural mediator because of the languages I know. But you know what? I saw how other young people were there; they don't get real opportunities. They study and study... and then, they can't find a job and if they find one, they get a one-month or a three-month contract and get paid less money than a worker in Germany. You know what the problem is? Turkey and Greece don't trust in youth. I would have no future there. I spent so many years doing nothing. Look at me now. I am studying. I am planning to finish university. I know that Germany will support me. Germany believes in young people.*

Aras, 25

A similar opinion is voiced by a Greek female student, who after having spent some time in Turkey learning the Turkish language, has decided to flee to Central Europe. Her words identify some of the major plagues for youth in both Greece and Turkey, such as corruption, lack of opportunities, nepotism and a clientelist mentality when it comes to finding a job:

*I am studying German to pursue a job either in Germany or any other German speaking country. I don't want to leave my country, but eventually I will have to. Who would leave their home if they could have a good life there? When I graduate I will have no one to support me. My dad is not in the same field of work, so as to put me in his office. I don't belong to any political party. Plus, I am young, and I am a woman. Who will trust me with their case? At least, abroad I will be given opportunities. I will know that I didn't study in vain. I didn't waste my youth for nothing.*

Vasiliki, 22

Overall, the interviews conducted show that in both Greece and Turkey young people suffer from similar challenges, often forcing them to migrate to countries such as Germany, where they believe they will stand better chances of having academic and professional success in life on their own merit. An issue emphasized by respondents coming from both countries is the lack of cooperation between Greece and Turkey, especially in science and academia. Young people interviewed believe that constructive synergies between Greece and Turkey would lead to innovative projects and would significantly reverse the process of the brain drain.

## CONCLUSIONS

The human story of the Greek-Turkish friendship behind the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine has been represented fragmentally by the media: the Greek media has focused on the Greek figure in the story, while the Turkish media on the Turkish origin of the two scientists. In this sense, translation from one language to the other has played a key role in adopting and manipulating the story to appeal to the prevailing public sentiment in each case.

The German media have minimal references to the Greek-Turkish dimension; they have focused instead on the marriage of the two scientists, Şahin and Türeci. The Germany-based media has focused its attention to the favorable conditions that have allowed two scientists of migrant origin to create a life-saving vaccine.

Despite its limited coverage, the aspect of a Greek-Turkish friendship behind the Pfizer vaccine is indeed a bright example, which become a source of inspiration for scientists and scholars from both countries. The fact that this friendship grew and blossomed in a third country, namely Germany, indicates that in the presence of favorable conditions, constructive and long-term Greek-Turkish cooperation is indeed possible. This story also serves of an optimistic paradigm of the fact that in humanitarian crises, human lives are above political disputes.

Young people from both countries have seen this Greek-Turkish example as a way to move forward. For them, regional cooperation is the key to progress, innovation, and success. Despite young people's willingness to work and interact with each other, currently, there are no resources or institutions supporting the meaningful and sustainable exchange of ideas, resources, and good practices. The Pfizer story of Greek-Turkish friendship could become a starting point for joint cooperation and synergies; a source of inspiration for scientists, scholars, young entrepreneurs and policy makers from both countries willing to work for the good of the region.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of both primary and secondary research conducted for this project, we would like to suggest the following policy recommendations:

- The countries at issue should invest more in their youth and provide access to resources that would allow young people to stay in the region and contribute to its progress.
- Cooperation between Greece and Turkey in the field of science, academia and technology is essential not only for the bilateral relations of the two countries, but for the overall good of the region. Academic and professional opportunities that would emerge from such as synergy could influence the prevention and management of the brain drain.
- Greece and Turkey should follow the example of Germany and should further enhance and consolidate the youth sector, by taking steps such as updating their youth strategy and providing open and accessible spaces where young people could interact, network and exchange ideas. In this regard, Greece could follow the example of Turkey, which has established a Ministry for Youth and Sports and has invested on high-quality youth centers, some of which [19] meet the quality standards of the Council of Europe. It could also be inspired by Germany's youth centers and social houses for youth.
- Last but not least, the specific paper proposes the establishment of a Greek-Turkish Youth Cooperation Office, with branches in both countries, which will promote bilateral relations via youth entrepreneurship, intercultural dialogue, and academic/scientific cooperation. Both researchers express in writing their commitment to support this cause.

[19] At the Euromed Youth Center/Akdeniz Gençlik Merkezi in Adrasan, Antalya.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### MARY DROSOPULOS

Mary Drosopulos is an intercultural trainer, youth worker and researcher, with experience in Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, and the Western Balkans. Born in Thessaloniki and raised in Istanbul, Mary is bilingual in Greek and Turkish. She is also fluent in European and Balkan languages. She holds a PhD from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in cross-cultural translation studies; during the last years she has been investigating the role of youth in state-building in post-conflict societies via arts-based participatory approaches within her role as a research assistant in the 'CoLearnSEE-Changing the Story' project, supported by the University of Leeds, UK. She is a member of the Trainers' pool of the Council of Europe and a European Youth Researcher for the Youth Partnership between the EU and the Council of Europe. She is an external consultant for the Regional Cooperation Council, with a specialty on the implementation of the 'South Eastern Europe 2030 Strategy', aligned with the UN SDGs. Mary is also the founder and president of the Eurobalkan Youth Forum, an interregional advisory platform promoting cooperation and youth participation via track two diplomacy.

### JEGAR DELAL TAYIP

Jegar Delal Tayip is a cultural mediator and interpreter, currently working with refugees in an international organization. A native speaker of Turkish and Kurdish, with a strong command of English and Arabic, Jegar aspires to build bridges between people and societies through language and gastronomy. He is a youth worker at grassroots NGOs aiming at empowering young migrants and refugees, facilitating their transition to adulthood and autonomy by providing access to educational, vocational, and professional opportunities. Passionate about community cooking, he is a volunteer chef in intercultural events, where he prepares meals inspired by the cuisine of Anatolia, where he was raised, but with a European twist. He was recently featured by the Intereuropean Human Aid (IHA) as a success story and a role model for young migrants. Despite his young age, thanks to his linguistic skills, cultural background and experience in Turkey, Greece, and the Middle East, he has contributed to the work of international researchers either as an expert or as a facilitator and mediator. His fields of interest include the social integration of young refugees and migrants, cultural mediation, refugees' access to education, arts and sports-based youthwork, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, prevention of youth extremism, and community cooking for good.

## ABOUT THE DIALOGUE PAPER SERIES

The Dialogue Paper Series is a collaborative effort of [the Center for International and European Studies \(CIES\) at Kadir Has University; the Department of International, European and Area Studies at the Panteion University of Athens; and the Istanbul office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom](#) launched in December 2020. The objective of this initiative is to encourage and support Turkish and Greek scholars, analysts, journalists, and others to develop and write together a research/policy paper which will highlight an area of common ground and cooperation between Greece and Turkey. All papers in this series have been co-written by at least one Greek and one Turkish author.

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