

**SIMULTANEOUS LIVES: DAILY LIFE PRACTICES OF TURKS IN  
BELGIUM AS MIGRANT\****Filiz GÖKTUNA YAYLACI\*\****Abstract:**

Belgium is an important country in the context of Turkish migration process towards Europe with 200.000 Turkish migrants. Turks in Belgium have some distinctive characteristics. They have strong ties with original country and culture. The daily life practices of migrants reflect their accommodation and adaptation understanding which influence harmonization with the host country and relations with host society. In this context the study aims to determine some characteristics followed by Turkish people in their daily lives in Belgium. Through surveys applied to 424 survey takers and semi-structured interviews made with 55 interviewees, this study tried to obtain insights into rural dynamics effective on daily life experiences in host country includes eating preferences, shopping styles, wedding ceremonies etc.

**Key words:** Belgium, Migration, European Turks, Belgian Turks.

**INTRODUCTION**

Belgium has been one of the initial targets of the migration of Turkish labor force to Western Europe as from 1960s. Today approximately 200,000 Turkish people are living in Belgium. Turks rate the third with 159,336 people in the category of foreigners or people with foreign origin, followed by 264,974 Moroccan and 262,120 Italian immigrants (<http://www.statbel.fgov.be/16.02.2014>). But it's known that this number is approximately 200,000 along with those who have acquired Belgian citizenship or who have been living in the country through illegal ways.

In Belgium, Turkish people live in certain cities and certain areas. For example there are more than 20,000 Turkish people living in the city of Gent, which is mostly populated by people from the Emirdağ district of Afyon. In the city of Antwerp, it's observed that people from Central

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Anatolian cities such as Konya, Aksaray and Karaman, as well as Sivas are clustered in one neighborhood, whereas other neighborhoods are densely populated by people from Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian Regions or people from Emirdağ. The most important factor causing Turks to be heaped up in certain cities and certain areas of such cities derives from solidarity among fellow townspersons. The need for unity and connection abroad creates a considerable impact on such solidarity. The prominent cities inhabited by the highest number of Turks are Brussels (Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode Municipalities), Antwerp, Gent, Genk, Liège and Charleroi. It should be underlined that half of Turks live within the borders of only nine municipalities in Belgium (Manço, 2004). As indicated by Kaya and Kentel (2008, p. 31), a great many immigrant communities live side by side in these cities without actually communicating with each other. As a result, incidents related with social exclusion usually occur in city centers of Antwerp and Brussels which are densely inhabited by such communities.

In these cities, collective settlements create impacts on many aspects of the daily lives of Turks (Aydın and Manço, 2002). For example, Turks living in the city of Gent which is intensely inhabited with people from Emirdağ have established an introvert land, which is only populated by them, through the protection of Turkish as native language, family companies, as well as organizations, cafés, shops and mosques only consisting of Turks and which are also Turkish-oriented. The political differentiations which are observed in organizations with their roots dating back to many years in Turkey show that the Turkish people living in Belgium are a reflection of Turkey (Kanmaz, 2003). As Gielis (2009) stated that migrants, they simultaneously exist in both the original country and host country. They live crosscutting and a wide variety of social networks. In this context Turks in Belgium seem that they live as if in Turkey.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to determine some characteristics followed by Turkish people in their daily lives in the host society. Towards this end, efforts have been exerted to obtain data on dynamics which create impacts on their daily life practices such as food preferences, ways of shopping, opinions about marriage and marriage ceremonies. The frequency of their travels to Turkey has been questioned in order to understand the transnational relations which play an effective role in daily life practices of the Turkish people living in Belgium. Furthermore, it was tried to determine if the mentioned situation varies by sex and generation or not.

### **1. METHOD**

The study was designed as mixed research involving both qualitative and quantitative methods such as interviews, survey forms, participatory

observations used to collect data. The study was conducted in Flanders and Brussels regions of Belgium with nine months fieldwork. The sample of the study included 424 participants for survey and 55 participants for interviews. As part of the study, the work was conducted with two groups which cluster in certain towns or neighborhoods in cities and thus display the characteristics of a closed society with considerably original qualities. The mentioned groups consist of those from Afyon-Emirdağ and Ardahan-Posof which constitute more than half of Turkish population living in Belgium. The survey and interview conducted in Willebroek and Lier towns in Antwerp, Heusden-Zolder from the Limburg Region, Gent. Quantitative data were analyzed by Chi-square, t-test, ANOVA; and the interviews were analyzed in the light of observations.

## 2. FINDINGS

The findings were included in the headlines covering findings about the demographical features of participants, findings about restaurant preference and reasons in dining outs, opinions on grocery shopping, opinions on marriage, frequency of travels to Turkey.

**Demographical Features of Participants:** As seen on Table 1, in order to collect data, a total of 55 persons were interviewed, including 28 male and 27 female interviewees. Considering their hometown, 33 interviewees are from Emirdağ, 20 interviewees are from Posof and two interviewees are from other parts of Turkey.

*Table 1:* Demographical Feature of Interviewees

	<b>From Emirdağ</b>	<b>From Posof</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>f</b>
Female	20	7	-	27
Male	13	13	2	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>55</b>

Considering interviewees' ages; they are between 21 and 62 years old. Considering interviewees' generation, 32 of them are from the first generation, whereas 23 of them are from the second generation.

As seen on Table 2, survey forms applied on 424 participants, including 240 male and 184 female participants. Considering survey participants' hometown, 214 participants are from Emirdağ, 210 participants are from Posof. Considering participants' ages and generations; they are between 16 and 62 years old; 215 of them are from the first generation, 194

of them are from second generation whereas 15 of them are from the second generation.

**Table 2:** Demographical Feature of Survey Participants

	From Emirdağ		From Posof		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Female	102	47,7	82	39,0	184	43,4
Male	112	52,3	128	61,0	240	56,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>100</b>

**Restaurant Preference and Reasons in Dining Outs:** Considering the interviewees' answers on their restaurant preferences in dining outs (Table 3) it could be seen that a great majority of them (71%) prefer Turkish restaurants, whereas 26% of interviewees reported they don't care, and thus prefer to eat at the restaurants from different cultures.

**Table 3:** Opinions on Restaurant Preferences

Sex	Female		Male		Total			
Restaurant Preference	f	%	f	%	f	%		
<b>Only Turkish</b>	116	63,0	185	77,1	301	71,0		
<b>I don't care</b>	65	35,3	47	19,6	112	26,4		
<b>Unspecified</b>	3	1,7	8	3,3	11	2,6		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>100</b>		
<b>Chi-square</b>	$X^2 = 12,605$ df (1) <b>p,001 &lt;.02</b>							
Generation	First		Second		Third		Total	
Restaurant Preference	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Only Turkish</b>	190	88,4	103	53,1	8	53,3	301	71,0
<b>I don't care</b>	20	9,3	85	43,8	7	46,7	112	26,4
<b>Unspecified</b>	5	2,3	6	3,1	-	-	11	2,6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Chi-square</b>	$X^2 = 66,93$ df (2) <b>p,000 &lt;.02</b>							

As seen on Table 3, restaurant preferences are significantly different in terms of sex ( $X^2 = 12,605$  df (1)  $p,001 <.02$ ) and generations as well ( $X^2 = 66,93$  df (2)  $p,000 <.02$ ). The ratio of Turkish restaurant preferences by male interviewees (77%) is higher than that of females (63%). The rate of females who prefer restaurants from different cultures (35%) is higher than that of males (20%). A similar situation could also be mentioned in terms of generations. The ratio of preferences only on Turkish restaurants by the first

generation (88%) is considerably higher than that of the second (53%) and third (53%) generations.

In line with the answers on their restaurant preferences, 40% of interviewees reported that their criteria is based on permissible (halal) and prohibited (haram) dishes, whereas 57% of them prefer clean restaurants which offer menus appealing to their palate. The considerably higher rate of preferences only on Turkish restaurants implies that the interviewees consider Turkish restaurants rather clean, thinking that they appeal to their palate. There are many Turkish restaurants, döner shops, pita sellers, etc. in the regions which are densely populated by Turks and which also attract the attention of Belgian people.

Furthermore, the observations confirm that the Turkish people living in Belgium prefer Turkish restaurants. There are scarcely any preferences on the restaurants which are owned by foreigners. The signs and windows on Turkish restaurants and döner shops certainly indicate in Turkish and Flemish or through other ways that they sell Turkish products and use halal meat.

**Opinions on Grocery Shopping:** Table 4 shows the interviewees' opinions about their preferences on Turkish or Belgian markets in their grocery shopping. According to data, there is no significant difference in their opinions in terms of sex or generation. One fourth (26%) of interviewees reported that they pay attention to origin of the market – whether it's Turkish or Belgian – but three out of four interviewees reported that they don't make a distinction between them. At this point, the findings from interviews are quite explanatory.

**Table 4:** Criteria Considered in Grocery Shopping

Sex	Female		Male		Total			
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Yes	42	22,8	70	29,2	112	26,4		
No	140	76,1	164	68,3	304	71,7		
Other	2	1,1	6	2,5	8	1,9		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>100</b>		
<b>Chi-square</b>	X <sup>2</sup> = 3,56 df (2) p ,169 >.05							
Generation	First		Second		Third		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	75	34,9	34	17,5	3	20,0	112	26,4
No	136	63,3	156	80,4	12	80,0	304	71,7
Other	4	1,9	4	2,1	-	-	8	1,9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Chi-square</b>	X <sup>2</sup> = 16,52 df (4) p ,002 <.05, %44							

The interviewees were asked from which markets they buy food and the reasons why they prefer them. Almost half of them reported that they prefer both Belgian markets and Turkish markets again depending on certain criteria. One of the two fundamental factors which are evident in the mentioned preference is about the type of food to be purchased, and the other is based on the product price:

**Şafak (30, M):** That's to say, we shop both from Turkish and Flemish markets, and because we examine each product we buy from these markets to make sure that they don't contain any additives. We certainly pay attention to its quality as halal, and we don't buy anything consisting of gelatin or other additives. We never use the products which are prohibited by our religion.

**Veli (38, M):** We shop from two different places; from the markets from which mostly Flemish people shop, and from Turkish markets. Everybody acts the same way here. For example, they buy anything but food, namely, consumables, cleaning materials, clothes and shoes from Belgian shops, whereas they buy food from Turkish markets... There are two basic reasons here; firstly, they are halal products, and secondly, they are more reliable. For me, the third and actually another considerably important reason is their longing for Turkey and the Turkish food. Besides, they don't leave the food that they are accustomed to eat.

The remarks made by **Veli** about the Turkish cuisine point out to the meaning of this approach with following words from **Abbas (43, M)**, who live in a smaller town;

We don't have a lot of choices here. In other words, we live in a small place. Of course we want to maintain the Turkish cuisine as it is. Accordingly, when we need Turkish products, we could buy them from such cities as Antwerp and Brussels.

Some interviewees prefer Turkish markets due to the characteristics of their neighborhood like Arzu does, whereas some others prefer Flemish markets for their functionality in their daily lives;

**Arzu (25, F):** I shop from Turks, because I live in the Turkish neighborhood.

**Çiçek (26, F):** My parents mostly shop from Turkish markets, but I usually shop from Belgian markets such as GB (Grand Bazaar), because there are no Turkish markets around my

office and sometimes I need something practical such as frozen food to be prepared in a microwave.

Bahriye, Sibel and Çağdaş say that their preferences in market shopping are particularly based on the “halal” and “haram” criteria as follows;

**Bahriye (38, F):** Of course, I make a distinction. I buy fruits and vegetables from both, but of course I buy meat from Turkish or Moroccan butchers’ shops...I do this, because they are cut in accordance with Islamic rules, and actually we never purchase meat, but cut our own meat.

**Sibel (36, F):** It depends. Let me put it this way: I never buy meat from Belgians and meat from Belgian shops disgust me, because they aren’t so hygienic. They’re not as careful as Turks. Besides, some food such as lentil or chick-pea is more available at Turkish markets. That’s to say, such products are scarcely available at Belgian markets, but I would buy other products such as detergent, etc. from them. When it comes to meat, I act in stickle way.

**Çağdaş (35, M):** I shop from Turkish markets by 80% or 90%, but we sometimes have to buy something from Belgian supermarkets as well. It depends on the product. I’m sensitive about this issue. I mean, I certainly pay attention to its characteristics as halal food. My wife acts the same way. Besides, I would never eat at a Flemish restaurant.

Çağdaş said that he never participated in his doctor wife’s meetings or dinners which are organized with pharmaceutical companies at hotels for the same reason. Furthermore, although it’s also available with various vegetables or cheese varieties, he said that as a precautionary measure, he never ate “Broodje” which is similar to sandwich bread stuffed with various alternatives and which is also a quite popular fast food in Belgium, on grounds that the bread might have been cut by a knife which has previously cut some pork meat.

**Defne (31, F)** and **Hamdi (39, M)** also reported that they preferred Turkish markets, but that sometimes they are obliged to shop from different markets for some other reasons;

Actually there only two Turkish markets and bakeries in Lier, where we live. For example, of course we buy rice, etc. from Turks, and buy bread, etc. from the bakery, but we buy other products from the Flemish people, because there is not a supermarket belonging to Turks here. However, God willing,

if our new mosque is opened, we would obviously shop from them.

These remarks made by Defne further emphasize the importance of mosques to the Turkish people living in Belgium. According to Turks who live in Belgium, a mosque is not only a place of worship, but also an important environment of social communication and a considerably significant center. Although it has not been opened yet, it's already covered by the plans made by Turkish people.

As there is not a Turkish market in the area where I live, it doesn't matter to me. I occasionally go to Turkish markets in remote cities such as Antwerp or Brussels, but I would prefer to shop from a Turkish market, if there was one. However, Turkish markets are unfortunately disorganized. Besides, you can't find everything you're looking for there. If they were clean and tidy, I would prefer Turkish markets.

With these remarks, Hamdi gives information on the characteristics of Turkish markets as well. As a result of an evaluation on observations about the issue, it was seen that similar findings have been obtained from interviewees. The Turkish people in Belgium own many Turkish markets, butchers' shops, bakeries or restaurants in Turkish neighborhoods where they live. While it was observed that they usually buy food from those places, the people who have hosted us in their houses offered local treats to us (Photograph 1). Among the food which was served to me during my visits are the "Arap aşu" (Arabic meal) and "mercimekli bükme" (flaky pastry with green lentil) which are peculiar to the region of Emirdağ. The food from different cuisines outside the Turkish cuisine was served by only three participants who have bicultural marriages. As a result of observations which were made in parallel to findings from interviews, the Turkish people living in Belgium buy clothes mostly from Flemish shops at times of discount called as "solden." Turkish people who rarely visit the city center rush into the center twice a year due to the "solden."





**Photograph 1:** A Turkish Grocery in Turkish Neighborhood, Antwerp

**Opinions on marriage:** The results from Chi-square analysis with regard to interviewees' opinions on with whom they should marry are shown by Table 5. As seen on Table 3, 12% of interviewees reported that non-Turkish people are also appropriate candidates for marriage, on condition that they get along with and love each other. Within the framework of interview, 47% of interviewees think that they should marry a fellow townsperson and 29% are of the opinion that they should marry Belgian Turks. Among the opinions, a significant difference was found in terms of sex ( $X^2 = 14,35$  df (3)  $p ,002 < .05$ ) and generations ( $X^2 = 25,40$  df (6)  $p ,000 < .02$ ). Turkish people are preferred as appropriate candidates for marriage by 50% of male and 42% of female interviewees. The rate of female interviewees who are of the opinion that they should marry their fellow townsperson is 10%, whereas this rate is 13% in male interviewees. The rate of females who think that Belgian-Turks are appropriate candidates for marriage is relatively higher (38.6%) than that of males (22%). These two groups are relatively cool towards marrying Flemish/Walloon, Moroccan people or other immigrants.

**Table 5:** Opinions on Appropriate Candidates for Marriage

Sex		Turkish	Fellow Townspersons	Belgian Turks	I don't mind	Total
<b>Female</b>	f	77	19	71	17	184
	%	41,8	10,3	38,6	9,2	100
<b>Male</b>	f	121	31	53	35	240
	%	50,4	12,9	22,1	14,6	100
<b>Total</b>	f	198	50	124	52	424
	%	46,7	11,8	29,2	12,3	100
<b>Chi-square</b>		$X^2 = 14,35$ df (3) $p ,002 < .05$				

Generation		Turkish	Fellow Townspersons	Belgian – Turks	I don't mind	Total
<b>First Generation</b>	f	108	34	49	24	215
	%	50,2	15,8	22,8	11,2	100
<b>Second Generation</b>	f	88	16	64	26	194
	%	45,4	8,2	33,0	13,4	100
<b>Third Generation</b>	f	2	-	11	2	15
	%	13,3	-	73,3	13,3	100
<b>Total</b>	f	198	50	124	52	424
	%	46,7	11,8	29,2	12,3	100
<b>Chi-square</b>	X <sup>2</sup> = 25,40 df (6) p ,000 < .02					

According to data on Table 5, almost all of the generations have negative opinions about marrying Flemish/Walloon, Moroccan people or other immigrants. The rate of those who say yes to such marriages is only 12%. The rate of first generation which are of the opinion that Turks are appropriate candidates for marriage is 50%, but this rate decreases in the second and third generation, respectively, to 45% and 13%. The third generation mostly thinks that Belgian-Turks are appropriate candidates for marriage (73%). The rate of first generation in favor of fellow townspersons as appropriate candidates is 16%, whereas this rate decreases to 8% in the second generation. Furthermore, the third generation doesn't consider fellow townspersons as appropriate candidates for marriage at all. In order to make an in-depth analysis of reasons of findings from the interview, married interviewees were asked to answer a question on the things they should take into consideration in their children's choice of spouse and whether they would attach importance to their children's decision to marry a Turk or another fellow townsperson. The single ones were asked to consider this question with regard to them. Almost all of the interviewees reported that an appropriate candidate should be Turkish or Turkish-Muslim, or a person with education in Turkish, a Turkish acquaintance or another Turkish person with whom he/she she can get along with. Only four persons reported without indicating a specific area that an appropriate candidate should be among their acquaintances or from their own area, whereas again only three persons said that they would prefer a Muslim. Though in limited number, some others said that they favored a reasonable person, attached importance to character or another person with whom his/her child could live happily and get along.

**Ayşe (35, F)** and **Songül (34, F)** namely, interviewees from the second generation, prefer Moroccan spouses. The answer given by both women reveal the reason of their choice. Although Ayşe and Songül have chosen a

spouse from a Muslim group, they have been excluded from and rejected by their families and close relatives for a long time, and thus they eloped to get married. It was striking to see that they have taken up a clear position against those who marry somebody from a different group, even if he was a Muslim;

.. Firstly, he should be from the same religion.

..To me, his humanitarian values, honesty and religion are important. He should be a honest person from the same religion, and it wouldn't make a difference whether he's a Turk, Moroccan or foreigner.

Only one interviewee, namely, **Kezban (39, F)** from the second generation, is married with a Belgian man. Her marriage was not immediately approved by her family and it was observed that some family members have been insisting on not seeing her. Kezban said the following with regard to her child and her marriage;

For me, neither generation, nor religion is important. Everybody, either male or female, is quite different from each other. So he should have a sound character. If he ensured a peaceful marriage or relationship, it would make no difference to me. This is how I feel.

**Alim (48, M)** from the first generation makes a different comment particularly in terms of the second generation with regard to Turkish fellow townspersons;

Honestly, it's important for me to choose a prospective spouse among Turks, but I think citizenship has been over for the last 10 years, because people who have been living here for the last 30-40 years are now considered from the same village. When somebody asks my child where he is from or who he is, the child of my next-door neighbor already knows the answer, because he's from our village in Turkey and they both came from the same village. He knows him, because they have been involved in a common life. But I still say that it's important for a spouse to be a Turk. (Why would you say that?) Some close friends and relatives from our immediate vicinity have tried to do this for three to months or for one year, but they failed. For example, if 100 people from other nationalities married a Belgian person, only 10 of those marriages would survive. There are many elements involved in the issue, namely, the culture, customary rules, family structure and loneliness. After spending some good days, their relationship slowly starts to malfunction in a few months.

**Şevket (40, M)** from the first generation, who immigrated to Belgium as part of his marriage with a fellow townsman just like Alim did, made a similar remark. These two interviewees reported that they preferred marriages with Turks, quoting the differences in culture, customary rules and family structures as relevant reasons;

I'm in favor of particularly a Turkish candidate for marriage, but I wouldn't mind if she was a fellow townsman or not, because no matter what, customary rules of a Turkish family are appropriate to us. But dealing with traditions of a Belgian person is a little bit more difficult especially when it comes to children. The children don't cause any problem in early ages, but when they turn 15, their mother allows them to bring his/her lover to cohabit without legally married. But this situation causes a problem, because such things are not covered by our customary rules.

**Çiçek (26, F)**, a single woman from the first generation, says that a prospective groom for her should be Turkish, and her critical approach towards rural characteristics of people from Emirdağ is quite remarkable;

I personally would not like to marry a person from Emirdağ, because many of them are not educated. I don't know how to say this, but these people mostly spend time at cafes, and thus I wouldn't like to marry one of them. (And you said that you wouldn't like to marry a Belgian, either. Could you give us some details?). For me, it's important to marry a Turkish person, because I have been going to school with them since my childhood. Actually being in a circle of friends and marriage are quite different than each other. There are some issues that they don't understand about me, for example, our religion, family discipline or family culture. Accordingly, it's important for a prospective groom to be a Turkish, but he should also be an open-minded, knowledgeable and sophisticated person.

**Defne (31, F)** from the second generation, whose fellow townsman married a relative and suffered a negative experience, doesn't agree with **Nimet (43, F)** from the first generation, who hasn't allowed her daughter to marry a fellow townsman;

..I would be obviously in favor of a Muslim groom. In the past, I used to think that he should be from Posof, but I don't think that way. I think it would be sufficient, if he was a Muslim or from our town. (So you attach importance to the town now?) No, I don't. In the past, I was in favor of

marriages with our relatives, not with foreigners. But I suffered from the same situation, and thus I wouldn't want my child to suffer the same.

Honestly, it would be better, if he was from our own circle, because I have already experienced it. My daughter had her first marriage with a stranger. I mean he was a Turk from another remote city in Turkey. I don't want to mention the name of the city. She couldn't make it, and broke up with him. In other words, I'm saying that a groom from our town would be better. Thank God, now she's enjoying her marriage with a person from our own immediate vicinity.

**Ahu (22, F)** from the second generation, who indicated that her family and husband thought that an appropriate candidate for marriage should be a fellow townsman, has married a fellow townsman, pointing out that the local accent of their hometown in Turkey had also an impact on her choice as follows;

..My parents have been advising me since my childhood that a prospective groom should be from Posof and among our acquaintances who share the same culture and values with us so that I won't face any difficulties in the future. They also wanted to be able to get along with his family. As they have been telling us the same thing all the time, I took these words into consideration and made a choice accordingly. We even share the same accent with a person from Posof. For example, sometimes we mimic the Posof accent among our friends, and even this situation makes a difference. For example, a person from Emirdağ wouldn't understand this. The accent of a person from Emirdağ is quite different than that of a person from Emirdağ. That's to say, if I married a person from Emirdağ, he might have been unable to understand the jokes made by my father or my mother. That's why this is very important to me.

**Şükrü (38, M)** and **Veli (38, M)** both from the first generation, reported the following with regard to their opinions on their choice of spouse and revealed their observations regarding the groups;

..Honestly, as far as I see, they usually marry somebody from their own circle, and the rate of kin marriages is too high as well...

..considering the people from Emirdağ and Posof who live here, the number of people from Emirdağ is much higher. As my husband is from Emirdağ, I know the situation; they

certainly attach considerable importance to choosing a spouse among close relatives, because they aim to bring another close relative from Turkey to here.

**Hamdi (39, M)** from the first generation indicated the following, saying that spouses from the same area get along with each other better in their marriages;

Firstly, a Turkish spouse is very important to me. But as far as I see, people from the same region could get along with each other in a much better way. For example, people from the cities in their own region such as Kayseri, Kırşehir, Yozgat and Çorum are able to get along with each other very well. Of course, I wish people could have reached a certain level of maturity to be able to accept each other as he/she is. That would be perfect, but immigrants are mostly from rural areas, and thus people from the same area could get along with each other better. I think the people from rural areas don't care about this. That's to say, they don't care if their spouse is from Ankara or Istanbul.

**Yahn (36, M)** and **Zekiye (46, F)**, who are of the opinion that religion should be one of the most important factors in the process of choosing a spouse, reported the following;

.. I'm in favor of love. In other words, it doesn't matter, even if he/she was Flemish. But I attach importance to the religion issue. For example, if he was Flemish, I would want him to change his religion to become a Muslim. In other words, firstly love is important, but religion is also important to be able to harmonize with each other.

.. Our Prophet says that women have levels in three issues; beauty, dignity and piousness. You should choose the pious one. Of course I always wanted the same for my children...

As for the marriage issue, it's seen that interviewees mainly think that a spouse should be Turkish. This situation also overlaps the observations made by the researcher. Turkish people living in Belgium are gradually showing a tendency to marrying somebody from their own immediate vicinity. At this point, the basic idea similarly point out to cultural differences between the Turkish people living in Belgium and the Turkish people coming from Turkey. In spite of everything, marriage maintains its position as a traditional concept along with rituals. This situation has been evident in marriage ceremonies as well. Photograph 2 shows a wedding ceremony peculiar to Emirdağ which was organized in Brussels. The wedding ceremonies remain as the fields where identity symbols and

national or local aspects of culture are preserved. The researcher has observed the same situation in all of the seven wedding ceremonies she has attended.



*Photograph 2: A Wedding Ceremony*

**Frequency of Travels to Turkey:** The results from Chi-square analysis with regard to interviewees' answers about the frequency of their travels to Turkey are shown on Table 6.

As seen on Table 6, all of the interviewees travel to Turkey at certain intervals. More than half of interviewees (58%) travel to Turkey once or more than once a year. Among answers about the frequency of their travels to Turkey, a significant difference was not found in terms of sex ( $X^2 = 2,664$  df (3) p,446 >.05) and generations ( $X^2 = 11,489$  df (6) p,074 >.05).

**Table 6:** Frequency of Travels to Turkey

Sex		Yearly	Biyearly	At Intervals more than Three Years	More than Once a Year	Total
<b>Female</b>	f	88	51	33	12	184
	%	47,8	27,7	17,9	6,5	100
<b>Male</b>	f	126	66	30	18	240
	%	52,5	27,5	12,5	7,5	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	f	<b>214</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>424</b>
	%	<b>50,5</b>	<b>27,6</b>	<b>14,9</b>	<b>7,1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Chi-square</b>	$X^2 = 2,664$ df (3) p,446 > .05					
Generation		Yearly	Biyearly	At Intervals of more than Three	More than Once a Year	Total

				Years		
<b>First Generation</b>	f	119	53	25	18	215
	%	55,3	24,7	11,6	8,4	100
<b>Second Generation</b>	f	86	62	34	12	194
	%	44,3	32,0	17,5	6,2	100
<b>Third Generation</b>	f	9	2	4	-	15
	%	60,0	13,3	26,7	-	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	f	<b>214</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>424</b>
	%	<b>50,5</b>	<b>27,6</b>	<b>14,9</b>	<b>7,1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Chi-square</b>	$X^2 = 11,489$ df (6) p ,074 > .05					

Both the observations and impressions show that interviewees spend their holiday outside Belgium and obviously in Turkey. In this respect, the offices where flight tickets are purchased are evidently considerably popular areas of Turkish neighborhoods. Similar pictures are also available in Turkey. Particularly direct flight requests of Emirdağ people from Eskişehir to Belgium are evaluated. In summer months, vehicles with license numbers from Belgium traveling in convoys display a typical picture in Turkey. During summer, vehicles with license numbers from Belgium traveling on roads to Emirdağ are an indication of their ties with Turkey.

As the Turkish people living in Belgium spend their summer holidays in Turkey, Turkish neighborhoods become emptier and quite in summer months, and the letters accumulated in mail boxes constitutes a typical picture of summer months (Photograph 3). The interest and density in travels to Turkey are also responded by Turkey. The passengers landing in the Eskişehir Airport from Belgium at midnight are awaited by minibuses to take them to Emirdağ, even to their villages. The drivers, who wait for them by holding the signs which show the names of villages, meet passenger demands directed from Belgium towards Emirdağ.



**Photograph 3:** Mailboxes in Summer in Turkish Neighborhood in Antwerp



Photograph 4 shows a conversation meeting at the clubhouse of a mosque owned by people from Emirdağ, which was attended by Emirdağ district governor, mayor, Afyon governor, Afyon Kocatepe University Rector and Antwerp consul general. The delegation from Emirdağ makes a request from their fellow townspeople living in Belgium to invest in Emirdağ, and those who listen to the delegation talk about the problems they face during their visits to Emirdağ. At the background of this picture, the two groups facing each other latently accepts that people from Emirdağ who live in Belgium actually live in the same place simultaneously, and that actually they belong to.



*Photograph 4: A Visit to the Mosque by a Delegation from Emirdağ, Antwerp*

### 3. CONCLUSION

In line with research results, Turkish people living in Belgium make a decision on their grocery shopping based on the characteristic of a product to be purchased. They make their decisions about food especially based on the halal and haram criteria, and buy certain products only from Turkish markets, whereas they purchase other products such as cleaning materials and clothes, etc. from Belgian markets. It was found out that as the generations get older, the rate of those indicating that they don't mind about the shopping location increases.

It is observed that not the process of living for a long time in Belgium, but being born and raised in Belgium, and thus the process of acculturation mainly cause further flexibility in preferences about shopping. The Turkish people living in Belgium act in a functional and creative way about the citizenship issue, like they do with regard to shopping. It was determined that they act sensitively about halal or haram food, maintain the culture of Turkish cuisine as well and usually shop from Turkish markets towards this end.

In dining outs, data about restaurant preferences reveal that they attach importance to the halal-haram criteria and food preferences from the Turkish cuisine, just like they do concerning the market shopping. Turkish restaurants are prominently clear in restaurant preferences of the two groups. This situation is more evident in male interviewees. The halal-haram criteria are on the foreground in the first generation, whereas palate is dominantly important to the second and third generations. Furthermore, the first generation prefers Turkish restaurants, but the second and generation predominantly reported that it wasn't important to them.

The level of restaurant preferences from different cultures is higher in women than men and again higher in second and third generations than the first one. Remarkably, the Turkish people densely living in small towns lead rather an introvert way of life, attach more importance to traditional values and maintain the values from Turkey as well. Turkish people living in big cities such as Brussels and Antwerp put considerable emphasis on their Turkish identity, but lead a more extrovert life. Turkish people living in small towns criticize the Turks living in big cities for moving away from traditional values. Bora (2006:52) says that province is the land of conservatism, in a sense making a definition regarding the world of communities with Turkish origin who have been heaped up in Belgium. Both conservatism and nationalism are important to these communities, and other groups are mostly criticized for moving away from these values.

As defined by Martin and Nakayama (2007, p. 156-157), marriage preferences are made under the intensive guidance of family among immigrants with Turkish origin in Belgium. In the process of basing their tendencies towards marriage, the interviewees reported that they feel that being from the same culture is important; they believe that Belgians and even Muslim Moroccans make more difficulties in marriage due to cultural differences; and they think that marrying a Turk is necessary to be able to maintain his/her culture and existence as a Turkish person. As reported by a person from Emirdağ, everybody has married his/her relative and brought each other to Belgium. For example, 80% of the population of Karacalar Village lives in Brussels, Belgium. Everybody has brought firstly his/her relatives and then friends to Belgium (Özkarabekir, 2008).

As determined by Kaya and Kentel (2005, p. 153), getting married to somebody from Turkey clearly indicates immigrant families' willingness to be in touch with Turkey and also maintain their cultural values such as honor and decency. Honor is not only a personal, but also a social and congregational value. Cultural values such as honor become a source of privilege and distinctness at remote places, where an individual living far away from his/her homeland faces the other. Honor occasionally refers to a

resistance against cross-cultural marriages, as well as a reaction against assimilation.

It has been observed that particularly the first generation doesn't display a flexible approach towards marriage, but burden some functions on marriage in terms of preservation of culture. As the generations get older, the rate of those who are in favor of marrying a Turk or a fellow townsman decreases, whereas the rate of those who think that Belgian Turks should marry each other increases; this situation shows that being born and raised in Belgium, and thus the process of acculturation there bring some limited flexibility to opinions about marriage. In conclusion, flexibility in opinions about marriage becomes evident, as the generations get older; and yet a tendency in favor of marriage among Turks maintains its importance, but interviewees predominantly think that it would be better, if Belgian Turks married each other. Besides, as found out by Tezcan (2011) in the context of urban migration, the concept of fellow townsman is strong in urban life, which is caused by lack of confidence in urban life, and thus the sense of confidence caused by being from the same land finds its reflection on marriage preferences.

They certainly spend their holidays in Turkey. The groups particularly above middle age show a tendency to stay in Turkey within the year for a longer period of time. This situation shows that the Turkish people living in Belgium maintain their ties with their homeland miss their homeland and visit their villages or towns whenever possible. In line with cultural characteristics deriving from their own villages or towns, the Turkish people living in Belgium have established small neighborhoods in Belgium, which are similar to their villages in Turkey. There are strong similarities between the atmosphere in Belgium and being a provincial person-rural culture, which was defined by Bora (2006, p. 40) as narrow horizons, monotony, suffocating fanaticism, a limited communication system and a public world squeezed into communities, as well as savageness and mediocrity which perceive anything strange as a weird plant. As defined by Gürbilek (1995), the province refers to an experience which could be gained in a city, and a state of exclusion and depression. In the context of Turkish people living in Belgium, the negative contribution made by host society to the emergence of this experience is also undeniable (Argın, 2006, p. 279). As determined by Bora (2006, p. 40), the face of being a provincial person is distinguishable not only in steppe towns or at the end of nowhere in Anatolia, but also in the most modern neighborhoods with refined styles such that the city has been covered by the province. In Istanbul, there is a Sivas greater than the actual Sivas, and an Erzurum greater than the real Erzurum. This situation is totally valid also within the context of research, as part of which 68% of interviewees were born in a village. In Belgium, there is again a Posof greater than actual Posof, and an Emirdağ greater than the real Emirdağ. As

passed over with a joke which points out to this fact by people from Emirdağ, there is an anecdote; Belgians officials ask whether Emirdağ or Turkey is larger. Bora (2006, p. 40) also says that there is a little bit of Istanbul in Sivas and Erzincan. In this respect, it could be said that Belgium exists in various forms and characteristics in Emirdağ as well.

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