



THE MILLENNIAL  
DIALOGUE



## Turkey

Istanbul, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016

*I think my generation can make big changes for the future (...) I think politics is important. We should know what is going around in this life and plan our future accordingly. I think the younger generation is more interested in politics and people possess more knowledge about different topics*

*Quote from an Turkish Millennial*

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**FEPS  
Activity  
Report**

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Progressive  
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FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN  
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES  
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE  
D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES



As part of the **Millennial Dialogue initiative**, an online survey was conducted on the perceptions of the Turkish youth towards politics, politicians and Turkey's political system in December 2015.

The **Foundation for European Progressive Studies** (FEPS) together with the **Progressive Thought Institute** (PTI) launched on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2016 the **Millennial Dialogue report on Turkey** and discussed its findings in a roundtable with progressive young leaders, academics and politicians.

The aim of the discussion was to understand how the Millennial generation is shifting conventional wisdom on political engagement and how progressives can reignite the participation of the youth in democratic life.

Of the countries surveyed so far **the Turkish Millennials were the most politically engaged**, with 24% saying they were very interested in politics and 91% stated they would vote if there was an election tomorrow. However, the young Turkish also conveyed some fear about openly expressing their political views on social media and other public spaces.

FEPS's preliminary analysis showed that **the Millennials as a generation is valuing freedom (liberty) as one of the highest appreciated principles**. In this context, the Turkish youth is not different – “being free to do and say what I want” scored as their first interest. What is interesting however is that in other geographies this desire was not so accentuated. Millennials in Turkey also suggested that in order to re-build trust in politics, politicians should become more trustworthy, listen to young people and enable them to freely express their views and opinions. Turkish Millennials also conveyed that **politicians should focus on single issues such as youth unemployment rates, education and immigration**. The war in Syria and the ongoing refugee crisis also arose as top concerns for the youth in Turkey.

Participants offered their remarks on the Millennial Dialogue report as it outlined the tendencies and dynamics within Turkish youth regarding their apparent apathy towards politics. Highlights of the discussion below:

- Drawing comparisons to other countries' results, Turkish youth does seem to share many of the main concerns as in other countries. **Issues such as healthcare, education and employment featured very highly in the results, which make one consider the implications that this carries for a number of fundamental questions surrounding the role and mission of the state.**
- There is a serious issue of participation, which stems from young people's dissatisfaction of the traditional political system and not due to their lack of information. The only opening that there is for young people to be heard and when policy that concerns young people is put forward is only around the time of elections. **However, there usually is no follow-up to this opening, and that creates a series issue of lack of the politicians' authenticity of intentions.** Today's politics is not matching what the youth is expecting and the communication between the political system and the young generation is dominantly one-sided and not interactive at all.
- Difference between having the right to vote and actually exercising it should be analysed as well as bringing forward a better a better definition of what political participation means (ex: Gezi Park protests in July 2013 were very illustrative of the youth's engagement, women and progressive forces).

- Although Turkish youth is interested in politics, many are still reluctant to take action, either in conventional or unconventional ways. Turkey’s political system as prescribed in the current Constitution of the country poses serious restrictions as to how young people can engage with politics and with political parties.

**Three main recommendations were made to youth up the country’s political system:**

1. Parties have to change their structures and modes of engagement, and become more open to young people.
2. **Millennials want politicians that listen to them and work for the younger generation’s agenda.** However, one needs to differentiate between the willingness of the politicians to listen and the willingness of the young people to be heard. Using the data from the official budget of the Turkish republic for 2015 (where issues related to the core concerns of young people as appearing in the Millennial survey), the disconnection that exists between what young people want and how the government policy agenda prioritizes issues was very surprising.

<b>BUDGET 2015</b>	
Name of Department	Budget for 2015 (TL)
Presidency of Religious Affairs	5 743 383 000
Ministry of Internal Affairs	3 898 467 000
Ministry of External Affairs	2 080 968 000
Ministry of Health	2 762 657 000
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources	1 890 023 000
Ministry of Culture and Tourism	2 297 536 000
Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology	3 025 593 000
Ministry of Environment and Urbanization	1 385 916 000
Ministry of Economy	1 481 672 000
Ministry of Customs and Trade	764 447 000
Ministry of Development	2 182 320 000

3. Urgent need to establish interactive communication between politicians and young people and to use a new and youthful language that is not simply concerned with discussing problems, but also focusing on solutions, whilst allowing at the same time a fair representation of young people and women.