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**To the roots of the European Union: international master student Simay Petek**  
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## To the roots of the European Union

### International master student Simay Petek

In order to get to know more about our international and master students we had an interview with Simay Petek. Simay is an international student from Turkey where she finished her bachelor in Ankara. She came to Leiden to study European Governance.

door Lisa Blanken

#### What did you do before you came to Leiden to study European Governance?

Before I came here I studied political science and public administration as my major and international relations as my minor -a four-year bachelor- at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. The name makes people often think that it is a technical university. This was the case when it was established in 1956. In Turkey it is now known as the second best university in the country, also famous for practicing social sciences. When you enter the university, before starting with your bachelor, you start with a preparatory year learning English to make sure you're able to deal with the articles for the rest of the study. This is important because the education language at the university is entirely English. Next to my studies, I have always been an active student following internships at several NGO's and some units of the Turkish government. Furthermore, my short-time experiences at the Dutch Embassy in Ankara and NIHA (Netherlands Institute for Higher Education in Ankara) was of great value in contributing to my personal development.

#### Why did you choose for Leiden and the Netherlands?

I made a conscious decision about coming to and studying in Leiden. In the second year of my bachelor I already knew that I wanted to do a Master's degree. I wanted to study something related to European Studies, because Turkey's relations with the European Union is a hot topic in the media since 2005. That was the time when negotiations for the accession of Turkey were officially started. Since then the issue has become such a matter of daily life that not only politicians and academics give speeches on the topic; but also taxi drivers talk about it. At that time there weren't many courses focused on European Studies at my own department therefore I took some courses from other departments such as International Relations. There, I was taking courses from professors who made me aware of the courses

at the University of Leiden. Erik Jan Zürcher, who is very successful in Leiden concerning Turkish studies, is well known in Turkey and that was important to me. In addition, thanks to Erasmus scholarship, I spend six months in Köln, Germany, during my third year. There I took some courses of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels at the Jean Monnet Chair for European Affairs at the University of Cologne. I liked the European environment in general and I decided to do my Master either in Germany, Belgium or the Netherlands. The reason not to think about other countries was the fact that I wanted to go to the roots of the European Union. A friend of mine who studied in Leiden last year could help me with all the practical arrangements. It also helped that my boyfriend lives in the Netherlands. Last but definitely not least, the prestigious HSP Huygens scholarship by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science gave me this unique opportunity to make my master degree plans in Leiden come true.

#### You are now studying here for more than a month; do you like it so far?

Although I like the program now, the courses in the first half of the semester weren't the best experience. The first two months were mainly filled with state of the art courses. The classes were very crowded and the courses were quite hard, partly because of the heavy workload. Also, the fact that there weren't many international students at my department wasn't pleasant for me. Through the end of the first block, we had an evaluation meeting giving feedback on the courses together with Wim van Noort and Jolanda Den Heijer. There was a lot of talk about how the courses were taught because a lot of students thought that we would start with our specializations right away. Now I see the importance of those courses and I enjoy my master. At the moment I am happy taking courses of Dr. Dimitrova, Dr. Steunenberg and Dr. Wuisman. I am also currently taking part in a Capstone Project on Turkey and the EU with Dr. Steunenberg.

*'I am into networking. That's why I became a member of the B.I.L.'*

#### You also became member of our study association B.I.L., what do you think of it?

During our introduction day we were really looking forward to meet the different study associations. I am into networking. That's why I became a member of the B.I.L. As Master students of Public Administration we visited the International Criminal Court and I enjoyed it very much. During this trip I got to know both the institution itself and more students in my study and from the B.I.L.

#### What did you think of the International Criminal Court?

I really liked it and learned a lot about it. I had never been to an institution in the Netherlands before. So going to the ICC was a good experience. It was a shame that we were not able to see the hearing because it ended earlier that day. It would be nice if the B.I.L. continued these types of excursions, this way it makes it easier to visit such institutions for all the international students. It would be nice for me and other (international) students to see some more institutions.

#### Looking at your current study, what are your plans for the future?

Although I was previously thinking of continuing my academic life with PhD but now working at a European or international institution seems to be a more interesting option for me. That way I can use my ability and experiences to interact with people.

#### Would you recommend the University of Leiden?

Based on my experiences so far I would recommend the University of Leiden. But I really want to make some propositions to the board to put some interesting track courses in the beginning of the year. Then it would be easier to see the connection between the state of art classes and the track courses.

