

**Translations from 12 East European Languages into Turkish,
1989-2010
a study by the Next Page Foundation
with contributions by Vildan Bizer
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Note: the study is being updated annually. For the most recent updates, please, visit the
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The study: aims, methodology and limitations

This study is the first-ever attempt to collect and analyze information on translations from Central and East European (CEE) languages into Turkish in the period after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. The year 1989 is taken as a starting point in the study, as it marks a turning point in the social, political and economic history of the countries in question. The democratization process that started in 1989 also brought about remarkable changes in the way cultural production – including publishing and literature – is created, disseminated and received. In foreign relations, cultural products lost their role as “soft weapons” for promoting the achievements of socialism – as well as the state financing that went with it.

The study covers book translations into Turkish of works from all genres from the following 12 source languages:

Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak and Slovenian

The choice of languages and the fact that they are grouped together here are to some extent arbitrary. A common feature shared by these countries is their pre-1989 history of extensive and state-supported cultural export, including to countries like Turkey. Currently, however, there are other geo-political and cultural factors at play that have a much stronger impact on these countries’ cultural relations than their common socialist legacy. Thus, any generalizations about the cultural and literary exchange between “Eastern Europe” and the Turkey should be approached with extreme caution.

For the purposes of this study, we include here not only works originally written in these languages, but also works by authors originating from these 12 countries¹. Bibliographies cover all genres insofar the translations are published in Turkey but not in the countries of origin of the original text.

Unlike Next Page’s other similar projects, this study confines itself to collecting, editing, and only partially analyzing a bibliography of translations into Turkish from the 12 source languages. Whenever possible, we also include information on matters such as the selection of books, quality, availability of translators between certain language combinations, public and private support, etc.

A major limitation on the current study has been posed by the general deficit in proper documentation of books published in the Turkish language. This problem also equally concerns translations from CEE languages as well from other languages.

¹ Despite the controversial and politically-charged debates surrounding the language formerly known as “Serbo-Croatian”, we opted for including “Bosnian”, “Croatian” and “Serbian” separately, since the dynamics of these new countries’ cultural relations with the Arab world are quite different. We are also aware that considering the three languages separately may revive disputes around the literary and symbolic heritage of authors such as Ivo Andric, who was working during the era of Yugoslavia or of authors such as Dubravka Ugresic, who prefers to present herself as a “Yugoslav” author. In addition, there are several immigrant authors on the bibliography, writing in the languages of their new home countries or in a third language. The study cautiously takes account of these specific cases and discusses them separately.

In order to at least partly overcome these deficits, the bibliography presented here combined, complemented and corrected entries **from the following sources**:

- Next Page Foundation studies on translation flows between Turkish and Eastern Europe and particularly contributions by Amina Isanović and Mirnes Duranović (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Azis Tas (Bulgaria), Ekrem Causević and Neven Usumović (Croatia), Petr Kucera (Czech Republic), Justina Pilkauskaite (Lithuania), Dragan Zajkovski (Macedonia), Magdaleno Ebo (Poland), Azel Mavi Anton (Romania), Mirjana Marinković (Serbia) and Gabriel Piricky (Slovakia).
- UNESCO Index Translationum
- Türdav Catalogue
- Publishers' websites and online bookshops such as www.eksisözlük.com, www.idefix.com, www.kitapkurdu.com
- libraries' catalogues in Turkey
- individual interviews with translators, editors and festival organizers in Turkey

Thus, the bibliography this study is based upon is **by no means comprehensive** and should be considered a work in progress.

Bibliographic data

In addition to the large documentation gaps, available bibliographies (as well as the book publications themselves) often do not indicate if the work is an original or a translation, nor does it typically include the original language of translation or the name of the translator. Thus, despite its shortcomings, the UNESCO Index Translationum remains the most comprehensive source for some language combinations, while for others it lacks any data whatsoever. To illustrate this, below is a comparative table of the Index's data and data compiled for the purposes of this study:

Translations into Turkish from	N of titles in Index Translationum for 1989-2010	Cumulative N of titles from other sources for this study, 1989-2010
Bosnian	0	8
Bulgarian	14	53
Croatian	1	6
Czech	18	47
Hungarian	7	10
Lithuanian	0	4
Macedonian	134*	11
Polish	16	58
Romanian	9	59
Serbian	25**	7
Slovak	0	3
Slovenian	0	2
TOTAL	224 (see notes below)	268

* The majority of these 134 titles are schoolbooks and other books published in Macedonia itself for use of the Turkish-speaking minority in the country.

** The majority of these 25 titles are schoolbooks and other books published in Serbia itself for use of the Turkish-speaking minority in the country

Some general observations

Turkey has a vital publishing scene with an average of 30 000+ new titles published annually for the last three years. The share of translations oscillates between 17% and 22% of the total book production.

Although the state's presence in the economy has dramatically decreased since the 80s, state competition in publishing is still quite significant today, especially in the educational books segment².

Government policies towards publishing of translations recently seem to be directed more explicitly towards cultural *export*, rather than cultural *import*. The large-scale TEDA program of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism that has significantly improved the dynamics of translations from Turkish³, has no equivalent in supporting translations into Turkish language.

Thereby, the dynamics of translations from the 12 languages studied here into Turkish marks a very slight rise in number after year 2000. In fact, while translations while translations from Turkish dramatically increased after the international success of Pamuk and other Turkish authors as well as the establishment of TEDA, there is no visible change in the translations into the other direction. Translations from less-popular languages such as the 12 CEE languages studied here follow this general trend: **while we identified more than 500 titles from Turkish into these languages, translations in the other direction are just a bit more than half of this number.** Moreover, the vast majority of the 268 titles published in Turkey over the last 20 years by CEE authors constitute books by CEE authors writing in languages other than their mother tongues or books translated via a mediating language (usually English or French). There are two types of exceptions of this rule. First type are the titles from authors from Bulgaria and Bosnia & Herzegovina. The long-standing cultural relations between Turkey and these countries, and the availability of well-educated, basically bi-lingual translators, make direct literary connections easier. Secondly, non-fiction, academic books on Ottoman history is the type of publications usually – and naturally! – translated directly from the foreign language into Turkish.

Most of the translations included here are done via an **intermediary language**. The reasons for this are twofold. First, the general lack of translators from CEE languages Second, translation fees from English or French are far less expensive for the publishers. Similarly, European publishers often prefer translations of originals via intermediary language as more cost-effective.

² For an usefull overview of Turkish publishing industry from 2006, see the partuclarly informative MA thesis by Cemil Boyraz of Middle East Technical University at <http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12607154/index.pdf>

³ For a statistical account of TEDA effects on literary translations from Turkish into other languages, see previous Next Page's studies of translations from Turkish in 11 East European languages at <http://www.npage.org/article230.html>

Translators of CEE languages into Turkish have often studied in one of the CEE countries (particularly before 1989 through the exchange programs at the time), have worked there or have personal connections with these countries. Intellectuals, writers and translators whose mother tongue is Turkish born in neighboring Balkan countries play an extremely important role as cultural mediators between Turkey and their countries of origin (Bulgaria, Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo).

Publishers that seem to have a consistent policy in presenting quality translations from the 12 CEE languages include *Can*, *Everest*, *Iletişim* and *Yapı Kredi*. These are all relatively large publishers with diverse lists. CEE authors, mainly but not exclusively 20th c. classics, are “mainstreamed” into the publishers’ series of world and European fiction or poetry and usually translated indirectly. Interestingly, public and private universities’ publishers that otherwise have a significant presence at the Turkish book market, do not appear on our bibliographies as active in translations, or at least not from the 12 languages studied here.

Another important channel for CEE translations in Turkey seems to be the politically-motivated publishers. Politically engaged publishing has long traditions in Turkey and even nowadays some 10% of the titles in the bibliographies below are works of communist propaganda or “socialist realism” that have been long forgotten in their home countries. Such titles sometimes are being reprinted in numerous editions by small Turkish publishers.

Another curious phenomenon – that also obstructs the reliability of pure statistics, is the appearance in the Romanian bibliography of 26 editions of Panait Istrati, all by different publishers. Such a success of a single author would not be disturbing in itself if it wasn’t for the overall profile of all translations from Romanian. The total of 59 entries in the Romanian bibliography is shared between Istrati (a Romanian-born French author with 26 entries), Mircea Eliade with 20 editions, Elie Wiesel (Romanian-born Jewish-American writer and political activist with 6 titles) and 2 editions of Dada Manifesto. Ultimately, contemporary Romanian writing from the literary scene of nowadays Romania is confined to two editions of an anthology of Romanian women poetry.

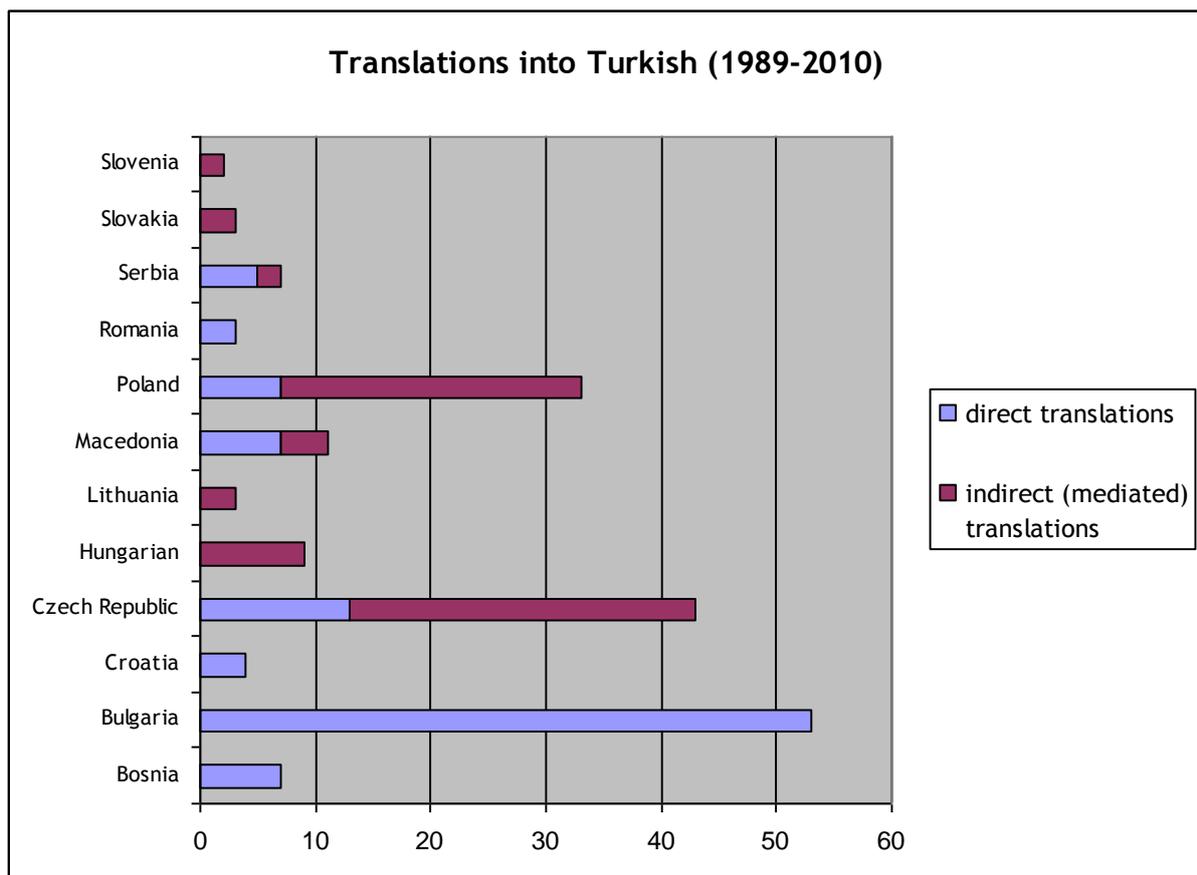
With few exceptions, the overall profile of each of the 12 languages’ bibliographies follows the same pattern: authors writing in other languages dominate, followed by 20th c. classics and a small portion of contemporary authors already available in French or English. Apart of stars such as Kundera and Havel, the number of such CEE authors with international reputation translated into Turkish is not very high and includes Alexander Hemon (Bosnia/US), Dubravka Ugrešić (Croatia/Netherlands), Pregrag Matvejević (Croatia/Italy), Ivan Klima, Patrik Ouredník (Czech Republic), Luan Starova (Macedonia) and others. Direct literary communication through translations, that is – translations of current quality authors, even of the ones that are well-established in their home countries, is almost not present. Exceptions are living authors from the Balkan countries that have a mixed origin.

Numbers, genres and languages

Translations from Turkish in CEE (515) outnumber the works translated into Turkish from these very same languages (268) over the last twenty years. It remains to be seen whether one can attribute this huge discrepancy to the incompleteness of the Turkish bibliographic data.

According to the statistics, the most translated authors into Turkish seem to originate from Romania, Poland and Bulgaria. However, at a closer glance and as already mentioned it becomes apparent that the large number of Romanian authors actually include some 20 titles by Mircae Eliade and 26 by Panait Istrati, mostly originally written in – and translated from – languages other than Romanian. Similarly, the Polish bibliography with its impressive number of 58 titles in fact includes many editions of Jerzy Kosinski’s and Joseph Conrad’s works originally written in English.

On the overall, **some 35 % of all 268 titles are in fact works originally written in other languages** by authors originating from the East European region, such as Joseph Conrad, Elie Wiesel and even Tristan Tzara. Thereby, to get a more realistic picture of the translation flows between CEE and Turkish the following chart excludes works originally written in languages other than the 12 in question.



Genre-wise, non-fiction is a negletable part of the bibliography. Most visible are translations of academic texts in Ottoman history, mainly from scholars from the Balkans as well as the 20 entries of Mircae Eliade’s works.

Theatre plays appear on the Bulgarian and Czech lists only. A quick check on Internet forums show that Bulgarian plays like *Miracle*, *Roman Bath*, *The Other Death of Joan of Arc*, *The Wife of the Colonel*, and *The Titanic Orchestra* are being staged in Turkey and are a topic of discussion for Turkish fans of contemporary theatre.

Public and private funding

Funding for such translations is available from two types of sources. First, some governments in CEE have established **book promotion programs** with the aim of promoting their respective literatures⁴. Turkish is not among the most popular target languages for these programs compared to other European languages. The reasons for this are mostly practical rather than strategic. Compared to other European book funders (such as the Goethe Institute or the French Institute), CEE programs have been established relatively recently, operate with much smaller budgets and do not have representatives in Turkey. To achieve a notable impact on the dynamics of translations, these programs need time to establish working relations and trust with Turkish publishers as well as to cultivate a sufficiently large number of translators who would create their market within given translation projects.

Secondly, it is important to note that indirect funding for such translations comes by the way some publishers in Turkey operate. Some of the publishers on the bibliographies below are part of groups whose core business is outside publishing field, in banking or in media. Others are active in related sectors such as book distribution, printing or marketing.

⁴ For an extensive list of these programs, see the members page of the Literature across Frontiers (LAF) network at <http://www.lit-across-frontiers.org/>