

Armenian–Turkish Dialogue in the Social Media: Description of the Situation in the Past Five Years

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Introduction

The use of the communicative capabilities of the internet by a great number of users has certainly had its impact on the Armenian-Turkish relations on a social, as well as political level. The involvement of a huge number of users of social networks, blogs and microblogs into communication on the Armenian-Turkish relations affects the formation of stable society opinions about the neighboring country, the historical and contemporary relations with it, as well as indirectly affects the political decision-making process, because in certain instances public pressure on the political elite proves to be highly powerful.

The presence of historical problems between Armenia and Turkey, the issue of the acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Turkey, the ongoing land blockade of the Armenian border by Ankara, the intervention of the Turkish politicians in the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations – all of these leave their mark upon the views and the information circulating in the social media.

In the meantime, it should be taken into account that not only people living in Armenia and Turkey get involved into discussions in social networks and blogosphere, but also the people of the Diaspora. Considering the fact that there are more Armenians in the Diaspora than in Armenia, and that many Diaspora communities occurred in the beginning of the 20th century as a result of the Armenian Genocide, this leaves a very specific impact on the opinion emphasized in social media.

In addition to the purely Armenian-Turkish dialogue, formation of public opinion is also influenced by users of other nationalities. In particular, there is quite active participation by Azeri users in the discussions concerning Armenian-Turkish relations. Furthermore, users of other nationalities representing regional countries like Georgia and Russia, are also drawn into such discussions.

The mere fact of ‘clusterization’ of discussion groups leaves its particular effect on the discussion. Thus, the Armenian segments of the social media living in Armenia are significantly different that those living in post-soviet partnership countries, in the Middle East or western countries. In many cases the intersection of these clusters is very weak due to cultural differences or language barriers.

Despite the large number of groups that are formed in the social media, the continuous dynamics and the changes in rhetoric, it is obvious that the opinion exchange regarding the Armenian-Turkish relations only grows and has a signifi-

cant influence on the shaping of the public opinion among the two societies, as well as among societies of other countries, which get involved in a certain extent into informational flows.

Generic Situation in the Network

Information exchange in the social media in general has a perceptible global trend: a dynamic growth can be observed in the quantity of users, in the volume of the information submitted by them, as well as in the time spent online by the users.

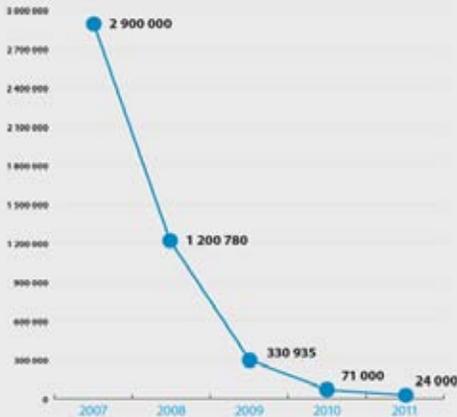
In terms of Armenian-Turkish relations this trend is extant, too, with certain peculiarities though. Specifics of the Armenian internet segment is that until recently the participation of the Armenian audience into the social media was generally represented by Armenian communities from the Diaspora. As a result of monopolization of “Armentel”, the main telecommunication company in Armenia, the prices and the quality of the internet connection were so different from the worldwide average that until 2009 the overall usage of internet in the country was nearly nonexistent. This way in 2000 the number of internet users reached only 30 thousand, i.e. around 0.1% of the total population in the country. In the beginning of 2009 the number of users increased to 191 thousand or 6.4% of the population. At the end of 2010, following a drastic fall of internet prices and expansion of the net, the number of users reached almost 1.4 million or 47.1% of the population of the republic.

YEAR	Users	Population	% Pen.	GDP p.c.*	Usage Source
2000	30,000	3,002,594	0.1 %	US\$ 410	ITU
2001	40,000	3,000,164	0.5 %	US\$ 500	ITU
2006	161,000	2,950,060	5.5 %	US\$ 2,853	ITU
2008	172,800	2,968,586	5.8 %	US\$ 3,685	ITU
2009	191,000	2,967,004	6.4 %	US\$ 2,668	ITU
2010	1,396,550	2,966,802	47.1 %	US\$ 2,506	PSRC

The number of internet users in Armenia and their demographic data. Source: Internet World Stats <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/am.htm>

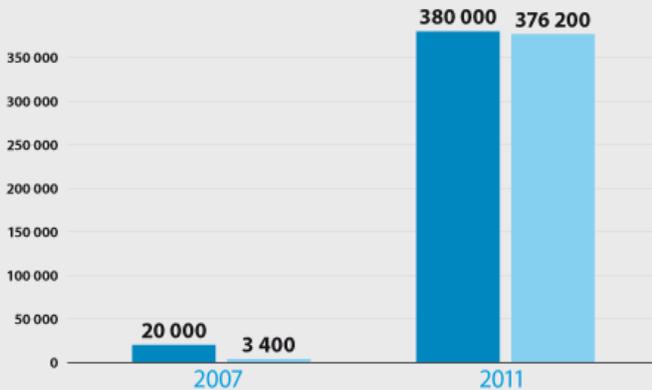
The drastic increase of the number of internet users in Armenia was caused by the fact that in March of 2007 telecommunication company “Armentel” lost its

monopoly rights on internet connection. After that, during the period from 2007 to 2011 the internet wholesale rates dropped for over 100 times.



Wholesale internet prices for 1 Mbps in Armenian drams. Source: Government of Armenia, <http://report.gov.am/?id=10>

On top of all, the usage level of the social media was affected by the penetration of broadband internet connection. Thus, if in 2007 the main connection type was dial-up and the broadband was only 17%, in 2011 broadband reached 99%.



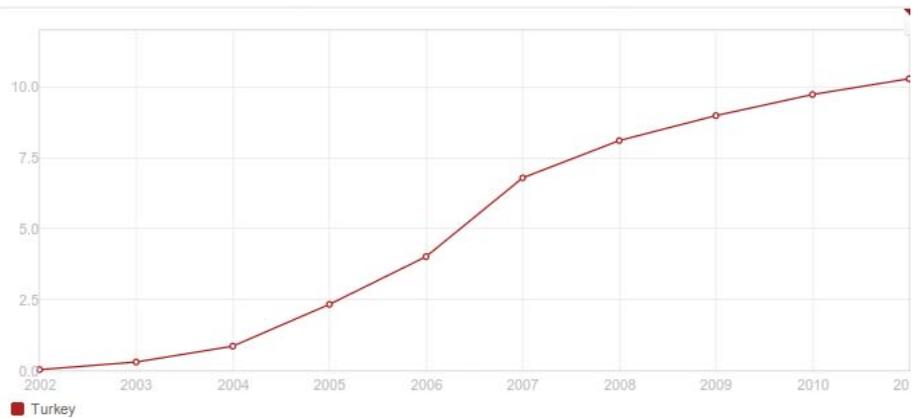
Ratio of broadband internet subscribers to the total number of subscribers of internet connection. Source: Government of Armenia, <http://report.gov.am/?id=10>

In Turkey the situation developed in a different manner. If in 2000 the number of internet users had already reached 2 million, that is around 2.9% of the total population of the country, in 2006 the number of users exceeded 10 million or 13.9% of the population. In 2010 the number of users had already reached 35 million or 45% of the population.

YEAR	Users	Population	% Pop.	Usage Source
2000	2,000,000	70,140,900	2.9 %	ITU
2004	5,500,000	73,556,173	7.5 %	ITU
2006	10,220,000	74,709,412	13.9 %	Comp. Ind. Almanac
2010	35,000,000	77,804,122	45.0 %	Comp. Ind. Almanac

The number of internet users in Turkey and their demographic data. Source: Internet World Stats <http://www.internetworldstats.com/eu/tr.htm>

The growth of the number of broadband internet users in Turkey was also more consistent as opposed to Armenia.

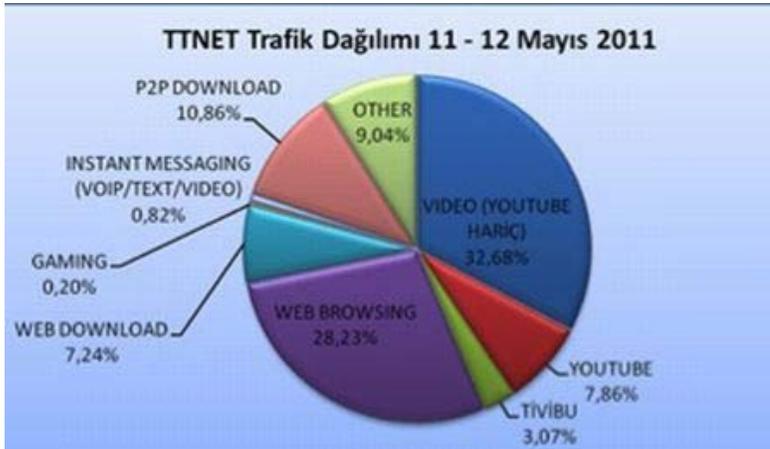


Number of fixed broadband internet users in Turkey. Quantity per 100 persons of the country's population. World Bank data <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.BBND.P2/countries/TR?display=graph>

Actually, until the end of the first decade of the 21st century Turkey was significantly surpassing Armenia in terms of internet access. Yet, in 2010 the level of internet usage in both countries had already risen to practically half of the population. If in the early 2000's only a specific constituency was present in the internet, especially in Armenia, now practically the whole active part of the population of both countries was operating in the network. Unfortunately, no accurate statistics

is available about the level of internet access in the Armenian and Turkish Diaspora communities.

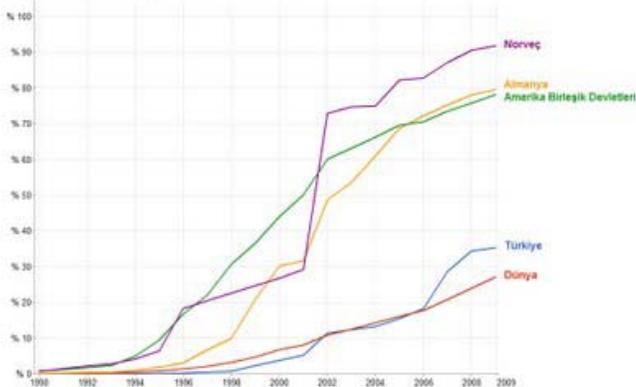
Turkish Internet Statistics



The internet usage of Turkish audience (over 6.5 million sample group) .

Turkey also ranked as 16th in the world with its internet users per population.

Nüfus yüzdesi olarak İnternet kullanıcıları
İsmaret adan 100 kişiden İnternete erişimi olanların sayısı: data.factis.biz.tr



As of 2011 the internet using household numbers reached to 43% in Turkey, with a breakdown of 52 % in urban and 22.7 in rural areas. Also a huge rate of mobil users (mainly by smart phones) connect to internet on daily basis which also fostered the usage of social media in Turkey more frequent and intense.

3G Hizmeti Kullanıcı Verileri

	2011-2	2012-1	2012-2
3G Abone Sayısı	24.835.435	34.919.167	37.671.504
Mobil Bilgisayardan İnternet ¹³	3.629.522	1.780.895	1.859.250
Mobil Cepden İnternet ¹³		7.161.092	8.790.698
Mobil İnternet Kullanım Miktarı, Gbyte	6.575.104	14.154.182	15.403.589

Toplam İnternet Abone Sayıları

	2011-2	2012-1	2012-2	Çeyrek Büyüme Oranı (2012-1 - 2012-2)	Yıllık Büyüme Oranı (2011-2 - 2012-2)
xDSL	6.726.981	6.736.138	6.632.661	-%1,5	-%1,4
Mobil Bilgisayardan İnternet ⁶	3.629.522	1.780.895	1.859.250	%4,4	%193,4
Mobil Cepden İnternet		7.161.092	8.790.698	%22,8	
Kablo İnternet	368.055	483.843	485.531	%0,3	%31,9
Fiber	189.597	378.475	469.668	%24,1	%147,7
Diğer	164.426	139.858	140.299	%0,3	-%14,7
TOPLAM	11.078.581	16.680.301	18.378.107	%10,2	%65,9

There are also 7.2 million Twitter users in Turkey where 5.5 million are active.

Social Media Statistics

The social media, which encompasses the social networks, blogs and micro-blogs, as well as different specialized services such as video hostings like *Youtube*, are quite popular in Armenia as well as in Turkey. Moreover, Tur-



Turkish Population

Percentage of Internet usage per population

Turkish Internet Users

Facebook users percentage amongst internet users

Turkish Facebook users

Gender

(blue Man – Pink women)

Age groups

%33 18-24

%18 35-65+

key as a country where the main part of the population are young people under 35, has one of the most active audiences of the social media in the world.

On the other hand, in terms of specific platforms, the audiences of Armenia and Turkey have quite dissimilar interests. Most services that are popular in Armenia are nearly unknown in Turkey, which brings us to the fact that communication between the Armenian and Turkish communities is possible only on a few platforms, whilst on the majority of platforms these audiences are practically fully separated from each other.

The Armenian Segment of the Social Media

In the beginning of the 2000's, when the number of internet users in Armenia was insignificant, the main triggers of development were the Armenians from the Diaspora, who were drawing the people of Armenia onto different platforms. At the same time a specific factor, inherent particularly for the Armenian internet segment, was making a significant influence on the formation of the audience: there was no officially recognized Armenian encoding for years. As a result it was not only difficult for the users to input text in the internet, but to read many Armenian sites: users were compelled to download and install special software for correct encoding. As a result it took many years for the formation of the Armenian network audience, who did not communicate and generate content in the Armenian language. The most usable languages for the Armenian audience were Russian and English.

The usage of Russian and English led to the formation of the Armenian social media prior to 2009-2010 as two big clusters developing separately. One of these clusters, consisting of the majority of Armenians from Armenia, included representatives from the Russian-speaking Armenian Diaspora, which included repatriates of a new wave, as well as Armenians living outside of Armenia for several generations, who did not speak Armenian at all. This cluster was the best formulated one and held a large amount of internal connections. Here the main formation was based on several national forums, and afterwards switched to the blogging platform *Livejournal* and social networks like *Odnoklassniki* and *Vkontakte*. The second cluster consisted of a large number of relatively amorphous groups of English-speaking Armenians who used the Western Armenian dialect.

In 2009 and further on, the general trend of using Armenian as a principal communication language dramatically changed the Armenian global network. First of all, the groups of Armenians using different languages for communication finally appeared on the same language level (of course a certain barrier was left because

part of the Armenians uses Western Armenian as an input language in communication, whilst the Armenians of Armenia, Iran and post-Soviet area use Eastern Armenian. At the same time, the problems of communication at the level of dialect differences do not create serious barriers). Besides that a certain change in the communication vectors has occurred: if in the beginning it was the Russian-speaking Diaspora, generally from Russia, who was dictating the main topics and was a role model for many people living in Armenia, now it is vice versa: the Diaspora groups get involved in networks that are formed mainly by people living in Armenia.

In terms of popularity of blogging platforms among Armenians the most famous is still Livejournal, despite the outflow of users from blogs in general. Wordpress and Blogspot are significantly less utilized. Tumblr is also becoming popular, but still the main socio-political and economic non entertainment content continues to be generated on the platform.

During the recent years the most active one among social networks is the Russian Odnoklassniki: the number of active users on this network reached 700 thousand in October 2012 meaning that internet is now accessed for around the quarter of the country's population. At the same time certain stagnation has been observed during 2012 and the network has stopped developing as aggressively as it used to during the previous years. According to the marketing and strategic communication director of the "Social networks" business unit of [Mail.RuGroup](#) Alexander Izryadnov, the main "core" of the Odnoklassniki network in Armenia is the age group 18-24, where the number of male users, according to the presented statistics, greatly exceeds the number of females (60% against 40%).¹

The *Odnoklassniki* users have strong ties with the Armenian Diaspora communities in the post-Soviet countries, as well as with the Russian-speaking Armenians in the rest of the world, where communication is carried out mainly in Russian.

¹ Social network Odnoklassniki is now available in Armenian, 22 June, 2012 <http://www.mediamax.am/ru/news/society/5281/>



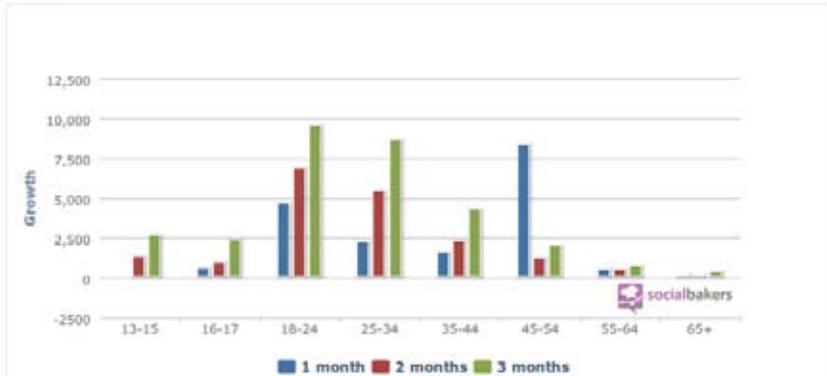
Number of Odnoklassniki visitors from Armenia, monthly statistical data from Liveinternet.ru.

By the number of users *Facebook* is the second social network. The number of active users in this network reached around 335 thousand in October 2012, i.e. around 12% of the total population of the country. Despite the fact that *Facebook* concedes to the *Odnoklassniki* by the number of users, in terms of socio-political activity, impact on civil society and formation of daily agenda in the traditional Armenian mass media, this network is the primary platform in Armenia. The main source of user growth are customers from 18 to 34 representing 65% of the total amount of users.



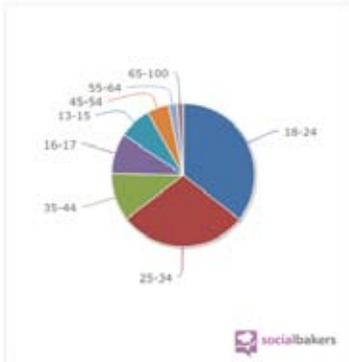
Facebook.com Armenian users quantity growth. Data source: Socialbakers.com

Age Growth on Facebook in Armenia



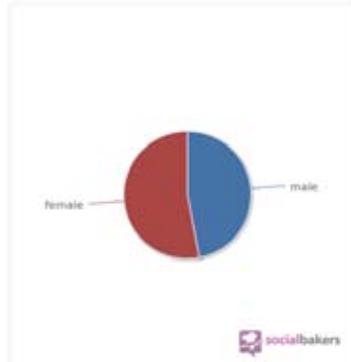
[Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) Armenian users growth by age category during 1st, 2nd and 3rd months: data from the beginning of October 2012. Data source: [Socialbakers.com](http://socialbakers.com)

User age distribution on Facebook in Armenia



Armenia Facebook demographics is other social media statistics we monitor. The largest age group is currently **18 - 24** with total of 120 773 users, followed by the users in the age of **25 - 34**.

Male/Female User Ratio on Facebook in Armenia



There are **47% male users** and **53% female users** in Armenia, compared to 55% and 45% in Mauritius and 84% and 16% in Afghanistan.

[Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) Armenian users distribution according to age and gender criteria. Data from the beginning of October, 2012. Data source: [Socialbakers.com](http://socialbakers.com)

Certain activity is also viewed in the largest Russian social network *Vkontakte*. There is no open statistics here; however, according to the data provided by the advertising service of the network there are over 450 thousand registered users from Armenia, but it is clear that the actual number of active users is significantly less.

The microblogging platform *Twitter* remains very passive in Armenia with only several thousand more or less active users countrywide.

Purely national social networks are very specific for the Armenian network, which are specially created for the Armenians from Armenia and the Diaspora alike. Projects like these keep coming and going. The longest to stay afloat is the social network Hayland.am with more than 150 thousand registered users: about half of the visitors of the site are Diaspora Armenians, mainly Russian-speaking. At the same time it is interesting to see that despite several attempts, the native national blogging platforms in Armenia did not work after all.

The Factor of the Armenian Diaspora

There is no precise or even estimated statistical data concerning the presence of representatives of any Armenian communities on global social media platforms. In the meantime it is possible to make certain deductions in particular about the platforms where communication groups among different Armenian communities, among Armenians from Armenia and the Diaspora and among Armenians and Turks are formulated.

The western English-speaking Diaspora is more actively represented on *Facebook* and *Twitter*, whereas the Russian-speaking Diaspora uses mainly *Odnoklassniki*, *Vkontakte* and *Livejournal* platforms, although it is also present on *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

Given the fact that the user communities of the Armenian Diaspora are scattered across the primary platforms, their interaction is very weak. The Russian-speaking, English-speaking and French-speaking Diasporas practically do not communicate among each other. The main meeting point for all Diaspora clusters is presently the Armenian network segment itself. It is during the last 2-3 years that the users from Armenia, who are mainly Armenian-speaking, became the unifying factor between the scattered Armenian clusters in the social media. And users from Armenia more often act as the main opinion-forming group, particularly in questions concerning the Armenian-Turkish relations.

The Turkish Social Media Segment

Turkish users are one of the most active users of social networks. Practically the whole internet-using population of the country is heavily engaged in several global social networks.

The Turkish segment of *Facebook* is one of the largest by absolute user amount, as well as by access among the population of the country. The number of active users in this network reached around 31.5 million in October 2012, i.e. around 40.46% of the country's population. Moreover, the level of access among all the internet users in Turkey reaches 89.95%, which happens to be one of the highest rankings in the world. The main source of user growth is the age group from 18 to 34, i.e. nearly 64% of the total number of users. (In this respect, the demographic component is almost identical to the situation in the Armenian segment of *Facebook*).



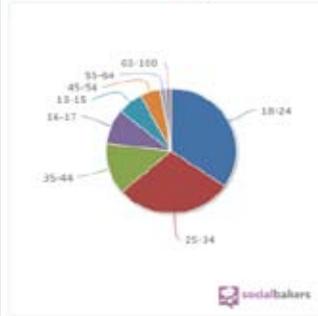
Facebook.com Turkish user growth. Data source: Socialbakers.com

Age Growth on Facebook in Turkey



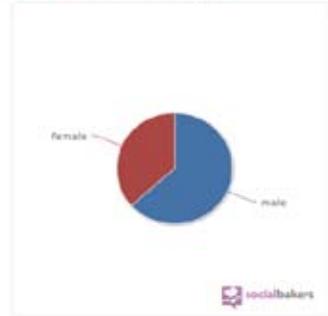
Facebook.com Turkish user growth according to age criteria during 1st, 2nd and 3rd months: data from the beginning of October, 2012. Data source: Socialbakers.com

User age distribution on Facebook in Turkey



Turkey Facebook demographics is other social media statistics we monitor. The largest age group is currently 18 - 24 with total of 11 010 847 users, followed by the users in the age of 25 - 34.

Male/Female User Ratio on Facebook in Turkey



There are 63% male users and 37% female users in Turkey, compared to 45% and 52% in United Kingdoms and 40% and 52% in Philippines.

[Facebook.com](http://facebook.com) Turkish users distribution according to age and gender criteria. Data for the beginning of October, 2012 Data source: [Socialbakers.com](http://socialbakers.com)

Turkey is also one of the largest countries on Twitter. According to ComScore, in 2011 around 16.6% of the country's population was using this microblogging platform, that makes around 4 million people.¹

Top 10 Countries in Internet Penetration for LinkedIn.com and Twitter.com by Reach (%)

March 2011

Total Internet, Age 15+, Home & Work Locations

Source: [comScore Media Metrix](http://comscore.com)

LinkedIn.com	% Reach	Twitter.com	% Reach
Netherlands	26.1%	Netherlands	26.8%
Ireland	21.0%	Japan	26.6%
United States	17.6%	Brazil	23.7%
Canada	15.6%	Indonesia	22.0%
United Kingdom	14.9%	Venezuela	21.0%
Denmark	14.4%	Canada	18.0%
Australia	13.1%	Argentina	18.0%
New Zealand	12.9%	Turkey	16.6%
Belgium	12.6%	Philippines	16.1%
Singapore	12.0%	Singapore	16.0%

Data source: ComScore on the top ten of the largest LinkedIn and Twitter segments. Data for March of 2011

¹ The Netherlands Ranks #1 Worldwide in Penetration for Twitter and LinkedIn, London, UK, 26 April, 2011 – comScore, Inc.

http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2011/4/The_Netherlands_Ranks_number_one_Worldwide_in_Penetration_for_Twitter_and_LinkedIn

Interest towards *Twitter* in Turkey keeps growing. According to the data from *Google Trends* for October of 2012 (data for three months), Turkey holds the 3rd place by search interest for microblogging service.



*Regional interest towards the search query for the word "Twitter".
Google Trends on October 2012 (data for three months)*

In general, the Turkish online audience is one of the most active ones on the net, which can clearly be seen from the statistical data represented above. According to the research conducted by ComScore, in 2011 the network involvement level of the Turkish users was ranked third after Great Britain and the Netherlands in Europe. The average Turkish user is online for about 32.7 hours monthly. As for the amount of monthly viewed sites in the internet the average figures for Turkey exceed all European indicators: 3706 sites viewed monthly.¹

1 Turkey Has Third Most Engaged Online Audience in Europe

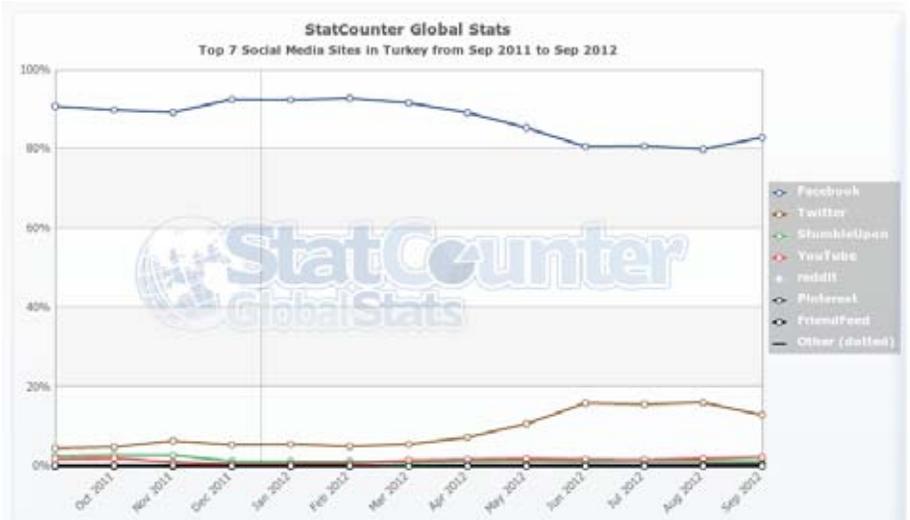
LONDON, UK, 18 October 2011 - comScore, Inc. http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2011/10/Turkey_Has_Third_Most_Engaged_Online_Audience_in_Europe

Overview of European Internet Usage by Country Ranked by Total Unique Visitors (000) August 2011			
Total Europe Audience, Age 15+, Home and Work Locations			
Source: comScore Media Metrix			
Location	Total Unique Visitors (000)	Average Hours per Visitor	Average Pages per Visitor
<i>World-Wide</i>	1,411,178	23.6	2,211
<i>Europe</i>	372,066	25.4	2,659
Germany	50,410	24.5	2,710
Russian Federation	49,991	21.7	2,332
France	42,441	24.7	2,484
United Kingdom	37,254	34.7	3,205
Italy	23,613	15.8	1,647
Turkey	23,100	32.7	3,706
Spain	20,930	23.9	2,029
Poland	18,193	24.1	2,794
Netherlands	11,977	32.8	3,181
Sweden	6,196	24.0	2,406
Belgium	6,006	19.9	2,116
Switzerland	4,712	18.3	1,882

Data from ComScore on monthly network activity among the European countries. Data for August of 2011

Among all principal social media platforms in Turkey, Facebook should be noted as the major player involving practically the entire online population of the country. Next by activity comes Twitter. In the meantime, some of the major platforms remain inactive in Turkey due to objective reasons: Turkish authorities periodically block a large amount of sites for a variety of reasons. According to the data from Freedom House, the amount of blocked sites reaches 15 thousand. Among them are such major social media platforms as YouTube, MySpace, [Last.fm](#), Meta-[cafe](#), [Dailymotion](#), the largest blogging platforms [WordPress](#) and [Blogspot](#).¹

¹ Freedom on the Net 2012, Turkey. Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2012/turkey>



Incidence of visitations on several sites of social media from Turkey. Time period from September 2011 to September 2012. Data from StatCounter

Despite the brutal competition from the global giants, both native social networks and blogging platforms are also developing in Turkey. For example, Istanbul.net network has more than 3.3 million registered users or the blogging platform Blogcu, which is among the top 50 most visited websites from Turkey, according to Aelxa.com.¹

Specifics of Armenian-Turkish Communication on the Net

There are several technical factors that have specific impact on the direct communication between Armenian and Turkish internet users:

¹ <http://www.alex.com/topsites/countries:1/TR>

Language Barriers

Most of the Armenian nationals residing in Armenia speak only Armenian or Russian. Only a minor part of the population is proficient in English or any other language. Knowledge of Turkish is mainly the prerogative of specialists. Similarly, in Turkey knowledge of the Armenian or Russian languages is also practically non-existent, meaning that the primary language of possible communication between the Armenian and Turkish segments of the net is English, assuming a certain educational level.

Normally, the attempts to read and communicate through Google Translate turn out to be not very efficient. On one hand, the use of slang by most internet users creates difficulties for translation and comprehension of the interlocutor's language. Even with literature texts the automatic translation systems are not very efficient and that oftentimes leads to miscommunication. Thus, for instance, an event occurred in December of 2011 that remained in the mems of the Armenian internet. One of the Turkish users of Facebook made an attempt to communicate with a group dedicated to the 'Armenian issue' and used the phrase "Long live Turkey, which in the result of translation into Armenian through Google Translate turned into "Long live the turkey" (Կեցցն հնդկահավ!)¹. This phrase has ever since become a catchphrase in internet slang².



Screenshot of the episode where the word "Turkey" was mistranslated into Armenian.

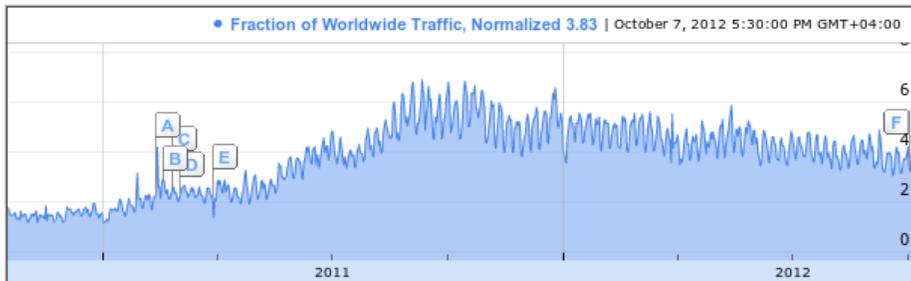
1 <http://www.tert.am/ru/news/2011/12/23/eh-turkey-turkey/?sw> 23.12.11

2 http://chtesutyun.arnet.am/index.php/%D4%BF%D5%A5%D6%81%D6%81%D5%A5_%D5%B0%D5%B6%D5%A4%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%BE

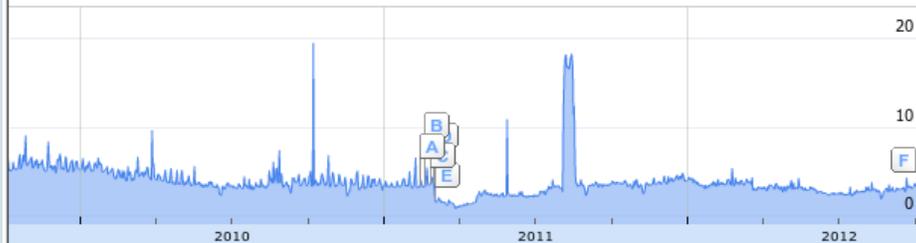
In the meantime, one should keep in mind that there are plenty of Armenians in Armenia and Nagorni Karabakh (mainly refugees from Azerbaijan) that speak Azerbaijani language on a good or at least sufficient level and are able to read and even communicate in Turkish using the level of knowledge they already have. But then again, this part of the population belongs to the age group of 40 and is hardly ever getting engaged in discussions on the web.

The Problem of Platforms

Today *Facebook* is actually the main platform where communication between Armenian and Turkish users takes place. On other platforms there are either too little Armenians or too little Turkish. Most of the Armenian users form groups on Russian platforms like *Odnoklassniki*, *Vkontakte*, and *Livejournal*. Apart from that there is yet another significant factor to be considered: many of the platforms that accommodate forums and exchange of views, like for instance *YouTube*, *MySpace*, *WordPress* and *Blogspot*, are getting blocked in Turkey on a periodic basis. Despite the fact that users continually seek for new methods to bypass site blocking, it is obvious that the traffic in the direction of blocked sites from Turkey tends to decline. In the meantime, the same from Armenia seems to grow just like in the rest of the world, as illustrated on the example of blog platform *Blogspot*.



*Traffic from Armenia in the Blogspot service direction during 2010-2012
Data from Google Transparency Report*



Traffic from Turkey in the Blogspot service direction during 2010-2012
Data from Google Transparency Report

As a result, more dynamic discussions take place within the environment of English-speaking Diaspora or between highly educated people, as well as among the representatives of public organizations involved in various conjoint initiatives. In all other instances Armenian-Turkish relationships could be specified as ... (*Translator's note: the original text misses the ending of this sentence*). Во всех остальных случаях армяно-турецкие отношения определяются скорее внутренними обсуждениями, которые имеют скорее негативный аспект.

Chronological and Thematic Features

Basically, the Armenian-Turkish issues have continually been in the focus of various segments of the social media. Meanwhile, the absence of diplomatic relationships, combined with the existence of numerous historic and political problems, have led to the virtual annihilation of any lasting effort for neutral dialog between the two states. Negative communication, on the other hand, prevails with a tendency of outbursts associated with specific events.

From the aspect of ongoing dynamics, it is evident that most of the accounts in the social media with regard to Armenian-Turkish interaction transpire within the period from April till the beginning of May each year. This has to do with the fact that every year Armenians across the world commemorate the Memorial Day of Genocide Victims on 24th of April. This leads to an outburst of activity in the social media reciprocally.

Apart from that, there have been certain episodes that triggered similar activity within the past five years. Among such it is worth mentioning the following:

- Assassination of Hrant Dink in January of 2007;
- Commencement of the so-called “football diplomacy” in 2008¹;
- Signing of the Armenian-Turkish Protocols and further developments around that document;
- First Liturgy served at the newly restored Armenian church of Holy Cross on Akhtamar Island².

Furthermore, whenever there is a discussion of the issue about adopting a resolution on the Armenian Genocide in this or that country, activity increases drastically within the social media. Thus, throughout the past five years there were several such surges associated with the following:

- Two rounds of discussion of the resolution on the acknowledgement of the Genocide of Armenians at the US Congress in 2007 and 2010;
- Adoption of a resolution by the Parliament of Sweden that proclaimed for the first time the genocides of the Armenians, Assyrians and the Greeks; this later instigated commotion even among the Assyrian and Greek users;
- The debates in France around the law providing for criminal punishment for the denial of the fact of the Genocide.

Much less agitation was provoked by the acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide in Argentina and Chili in 2007, as well as by the fact that the same resolution was rejected in Bulgaria and Spain.

The existence of chronological rhythms sometimes incites certain residual activity in the social media. Thus, in 2007 when the corresponding resolution was under discussion at the US Congress Commission, the NBC News website started an online poll “Should the United States recognize the Genocide of Armenians?”³ During the successive three years, with April approaching or with the commencement of voting in other countries, the link to this poll was beginning to circulate again all across the Armenian segment of the social networks and the users were

1 St. Cross Church (Akhtamar) <http://goo.gl/tIKaO>

3 Vote: Should U.S. recognize Armenia genocide?
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21253084#UHhUlnlXMgy4>

being invited to vote “FOR”, although many of them had no idea that the voting was long over.

This is also true for Turkish audience to circulate info for gathering support on voting “against” to NBC and other polls on Armenian issue held in several countries over the world, mostly about the US parliament. These activities are mostly limited by periods beginning from 1 week to 1 month mainly before April each year.

Сообщение: #6 • Rom@shk@ • 18 мар 2010, 14:58

Наверняка вы слышали, что 04.03.10 Конгресс США принял резолюцию о геноциде армян, но это уже четвертая резолюция и она так и может остаться резолюцией. Для принятия этого факта на государственном уровне сейчас проводится он-лайн голосование, там не надо регистрироваться, идет просто сбор подписей - “за” или “против”. Надо только войти и проголосовать за признание геноцида, т.е. что геноцид был (Yes). С каждого компьютера можно проголосовать только один раз.

Это очень важно для нашего народа. Вот адрес <http://www.msnbc.com/id/21253004/fromiel>

Это мне прислали сегодня в Одноклассниках, я проголосовала за признание только 24%, а за не признание 75% давайте проголосуем все, может реально что-то изменится.

A user of the Armenian forum Gisher.ru calls for voting at the website of NBC News. Information from March 2010, <http://www.gisher.ru/komitet-prinyal-rezolyuciyu-genocida-armyan-t13333.html>

The Issue of the Genocide of Armenians

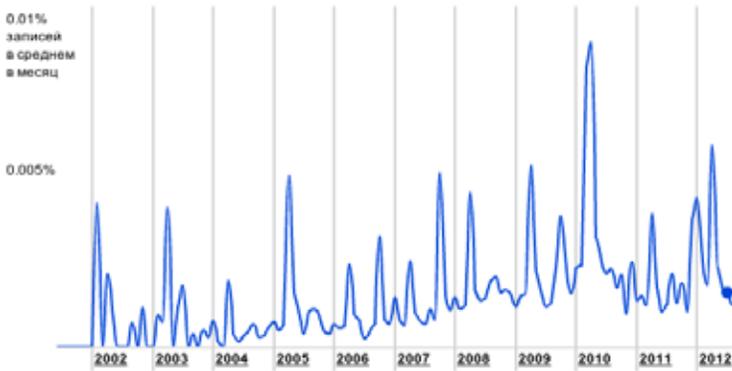
The primary issue of common interest within both the Armenian and Turkish segments of the social media is, without any doubt, the issue of the Armenian Genocide and concomitant problems.

The Armenian users are more interested in this issue than the Turkish ones. In general, the interest towards the Genocide of the Armenians in the Armenian society is substantially higher for explicable reasons. Every year during the period around April 24, this subject becomes extremely tangible drawing out all others.

In Turkish audience, every year around April the issue rises but not mainly as Armenian Genocide but mostly as Us parliaments or other countries acknowledgement of it as Turks believe that these countries are using the issue as a political tool. As an example when French Parliament was about to acknowledge it, almost all the debate is about expressing the anger towards France, not Armenia of using the issue. Not more than 2% debate runs on the Armenians or Diaspora but mostly on French Government, Sarkozy and his politics.

■ геноцид армян 0.002%

Яндекс



Incidence of usage of the phrase "Genocide of Armenians" in the Russian-speaking social media for the period 2002-2012. Data from Yandex search engine

There are several celebrities of Armenian origin that play a special part in the discussions of the Armenian Genocide issue in the social media. These people launch major campaigns on the net. Very enthusiastic in this respect, and throughout the entire period of its existence, was the rock band "System of a Down" that was constantly engaged in Armenian Genocide recognition campaigns. Following the breakdown of the band, vocalist Serge Tankian continued efforts in this direction. In April of 2009 he launched an internet campaign called "As President, I Will Recognize The Armenian Genocide - Obama", which was calling upon the US President Barak Obama to articulate the word "genocide" in his annual speech before the Armenian community on April 24. Only on Tankian's channel the video material containing Tankian's appeal to President Obama was viewed for more than 300 thousand times and commented on 11 thousand times.¹

Still more enthusiastic in this respect are the American supermodel Kim Kardashian and her relatives. Kardashian is one of the most widely read persons on Twitter. According to the data for October 2012, she has over 16 million followers and is considered one of the most popular users of that platform equalling Lady Gaga and Barak Obama.² Effective 2010, Kim and her sisters Khloe (over 7 million followers) and Kourtney (over 7 million followers) as well as their brother Rob,

¹ <http://twitaholic.com/>

² As President, I Will Recognize The Armenian Genocide - Obama. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcjx0qgANM>

have launched a multimillion propagation campaign for the acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide among their followers (it should be taken into consideration that Kim Kardashian has her million-strong auditorium also on Facebook and her own blog as well). They are trying to disseminate as comprehensibly as possible the information about the horrifying events that took place in the beginning of the 20th century. The Armenian National Committee of America, an Armenian lobbyist organization, extended a special commendation to Kardashian¹ after she wrote in her blog “Time for Recognition of the Armenian Genocide”² and this record was widely spread across social networks (it received about a thousand links on Twitter and around 7 thousand on Facebook).

Apart from running a recognition campaign for the Armenian Genocide, Kardashian is trying to get people involved through the social networks. An effective tool for that is Twitter where the most commonly deployed hashtag turns into the most popular one and becomes visible to all the users of the platform. The Kardashian family was vigorously lobbying the utilization of hashtag #ArmenianGenocide on 24 April 2012, due to which the theme of genocide was found to be among the most widely used topics on Twitter (trending), which accordingly made it accessible for a much larger constituency of users on the net³.

Likewise, the Armenian users of Russian-speaking blogs emotively post materials on the genocide of Armenians on their blogs on April 24, due to which the topic hits the chart of the most widely discussed subjects on rating sites by blogs of the Yandex search engine, with an average daily attendance of up to 500 thousand users⁴.

-
- 1 KARDASHIAN BLOGS FOR ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RECOGNITION http://www.anca.org/press_releases/press_releases.php?prid=2009
 - 2 Time To Recognize The Armenian Genocide <http://kimkardashian.celebuzz.com/2011/04/21/kim-kardashian-armenian-genocide-protest-recognize/>
 - 3 Does celebrity activism matter? <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/08/20128287385825560.html>
 - 4 <http://stat.yandex.ru/stats.xml?ReportID=-225&ProjectID=46>



Kim Kardashian ✓
@KimKardashian



Follow

Let's get this trending **#ArmenianGenocide**
!!!!

Reply Retweet Favorite

1,790
RETWEETS

256
FAVORITES



10:50 PM - 24 Apr 12 · Embed this Tweet

On Twitter Kim Kardashian is calling for the trending of hashtag #ArmenianGenocide on 24 April 2012. Permanent address of the tweet - <https://twitter.com/KimKardashian/status/194845773983260673>



Rob Kardashian
@MrRobKardashian



Follow

Great! Recognition of the
#ArmenianGenocide now trending
worldwide. Can't stop the truth. Join the
movement!

Reply Retweet Favorite

369
RETWEETS

37
FAVORITES



8:21 PM - 24 Apr 12 · Embed this Tweet

Rob Kardashian confirms the fact that hashtag #ArmenianGenocide enters the worldwide trends, 24 April 2012. Permanent address of the tweet - <https://twitter.com/MrRobKardashian/status/194808207754006528>

Social networks are periodically being used by both Armenian and Turkish users for the purpose of broadcasting this or that commonly accepted in Armenia or Turkey view on the Armenian Genocide, and for the dissemination of archive materials and latest articles on the given subject.

Sometimes the dissemination of materials is distinctly targeted, in order not to provide an opportunity for the diversion of the information flow. Thus, on 24 April 2007 a major Russian-speaking resource covering the history of the Armenian Genocide, [Genocide.ru](#)¹, underwent a powerful DDoS attack. (Incidentally, such attacks from Turkish and Azeri hacker groups on dedicated Armenian Genocide sites are quite common, especially in April when there is an upsurge of interest to the topic of the genocide among users worldwide). In response to that, a flashmob initiated by the famous blogger Karen Vrtannesyan was passed across all Armenian bloggers: every single Armenian blog placed information about the Genocide of Armenians in order not to give an opportunity for the information flow to be blocked throughout that day.

Повоюем?

Apr. 24th, 2007 at 12:00 PM



О. Ковалева сообщает:

Киевской.

В Киеве осквернена армянская часовня. Киев, 23 апреля. В минувшее воскресенье в Киеве неизвестные совершили акт вандализма в отношении часовни Армянской Апостольской Церкви. Как сообщает украинские СМИ, армянскую часовню изрисовали изображением свастик и забрызгали краской

С утра под мощной атакой находится сайт [Геноцид.ру](#) (можете не кликать, все равно не открывается). Расчет простой: сегодня очень много людей интересуется темой геноцида, кроме того атакующие наверняка вкладывают и некий извращенный символический смысл в выбор даты.

Что дальше? Предлагаю познакомить агрессивных чебурашек с розовой птицей обломинго. Чебурашки и сегодня, спустя 92 лет, так и не поняли, что нас не задуют. Давайте сделаем так, чтобы хотя бы [краткий исторический обзор геноцида](#) и краткий текст о 24 апреля (под катом) появились сегодня во всех армянских журналах, блогах и форумах. Пусть вместо одного [геноцид.ру](#) этот текст будет на всех армянских сайтах. **И не забудьте ставить живую ссылку на [геноцид.ру](#)** – после того, как ребята разберется с атакой, это будет большой подмогой хорошему сайту.

([24 апреля 1915 г.](#))

Popular Armenian blogger Karen Vrtannesyan (*Ahousekeeper*) instigates an information dissemination campaign in response to the attack on the site [Genocide.ru](#) on 24 April 2007.

Permanent address of the record: <http://ahousekeeper.livejournal.com/23634.html>

1 <http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2007/04/24/294310.html>

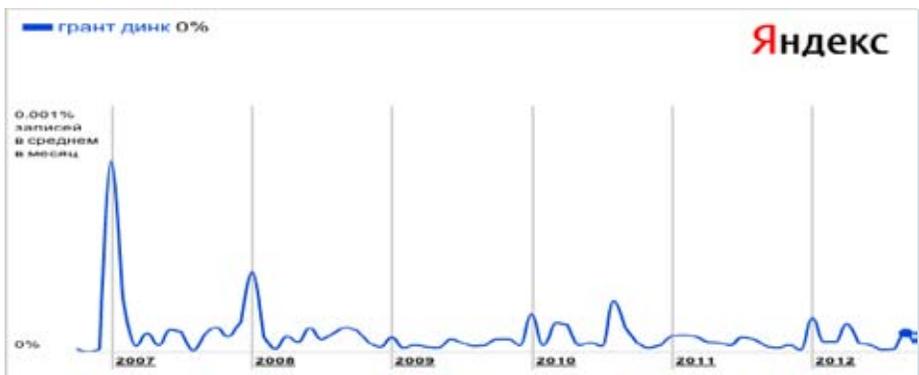
Communication between the Armenian and Turkish users on the subject of the Armenian Genocide is mainly negative; any more or less neutral dialog between the two parties on this subject has practically been nonexistent in the course of years. Most of the records do not intend any dialog. The main target here is either own auditorium or representatives of third countries.

Users normally generate a tremendous number of propaganda video materials and place them on the main video hostings like *Youtube*, *Vimeo*, and *Facebook*. This kind of video materials produces an extremely negative environment for communication between the Armenian and Turkish users. Usually each video is accompanied by hundreds and thousands of comments containing affronts of ethnic character.

Assassination of Hrant Dink

The assassination of Hrant Dink rocked the internet. Virtually all of the Armenian net became flooded with negative messages in reference to Turkey. The murder of Dink was being compared to the continuation of the Armenian Genocide.

Meanwhile, following the funerals of Hrant Dink where hundreds and thousands of people went out into the streets holding the slogan “We Are All Armenians”, there was certain mitigation of attitude noted among the Armenian users towards the Turkish society. It was probably after the shooting of Hrant Dink and the reaction that followed it, that a faint dialog started emerging between small segments of the Armenian and Turkish web.



Incidence of usage of the phrase “Hrant Dink” in the Russian-speaking social media for the period 2002-2012. Data have been acquired from Yandex search engine.

In the aftermath, another internet campaign was launched by the Turkish intellectuals under the motto “Forgive Us, Armenians” that again was somewhat conducive to the improvement of relations. Around 30 thousand Turkish users had signed the petition¹. Of course, this campaign was later publicly condemned by the Turkish prime minister Erdogan who proclaimed the following: “We did not commit that crime; therefore we have nothing to apologize for. Those who feel guilty can bring their apologies; the Turkish Republic and the Turkish nation however do not have any problems like that”². The site www.ozurdiliyoruz.com has been inaccessible since.

Armenian-Turkish Protocols

The situation around the signing of the Armenian-Turkish Protocols caused serious detriments for the possible dialogue between the two parties, since it brought forth chauvinistically geared up groups from both sides. Interestingly, the hostility between the nationalistic users from both sides somehow subsided during that period, given the fact that the primary criticism was directed towards the governmental forces of each state. Both in Armenia and Turkey, as well as among their diasporas, the movement against the signing of the aforementioned protocols was extensive.

Hence, the Armenians of the United States launched a special internet project “stoptheprotocols.com” that spoke out against the signing of the protocols.

An internet survey conducted among 2400 readers of the Armenian periodicals “Asbarez” and “Armenian Weekly” in the United States showed that the prevailing majority of the readers were against the Protocols.

1 http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5_%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%81

2 Turkey President won't apologise for Armenian Genocide <http://izvestia.ru/news/441416>

1. Do you agree with the creation of a historical commission of Turks and Armenians to study whether the events of 1915-23 were a genocide?

Yes: 11.8%

No: 88.2%

2. Do you agree with Armenia officially recognizing its current border with Turkey?

Yes: 11.4%

No: 88.6%

3. Do you agree that the lifting of Turkey's blockade of Armenia should be linked to Azerbaijan's approval of a Nagorno Karabagh settlement?

Yes: 5.3%

No: 94.7%

4. Are the recent Turkey-Armenia protocols better for Turkey or Armenia?

Better for Armenia: 5.2%

Better for Turkey: 94.8%

5. Do you support the adoption of the Turkey-Armenia protocols?

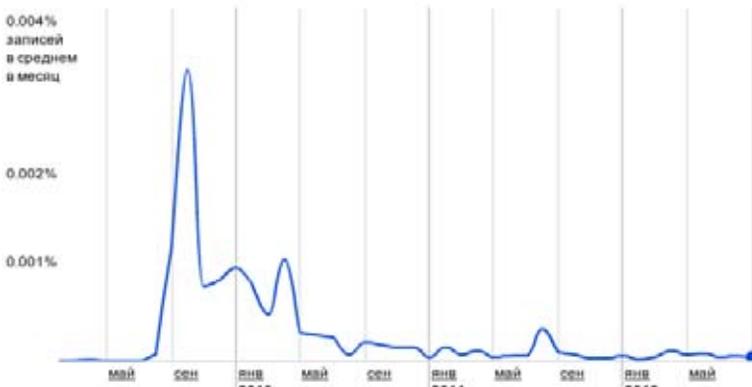
Yes: 9.5%

No: 90.5%

Results of the survey conducted by "Asbarez" and the "Armenian Weekly". Permanent address of the article <http://asbarez.com/71343/poll-over-90-of-armenian-americans-oppose-protocols/>

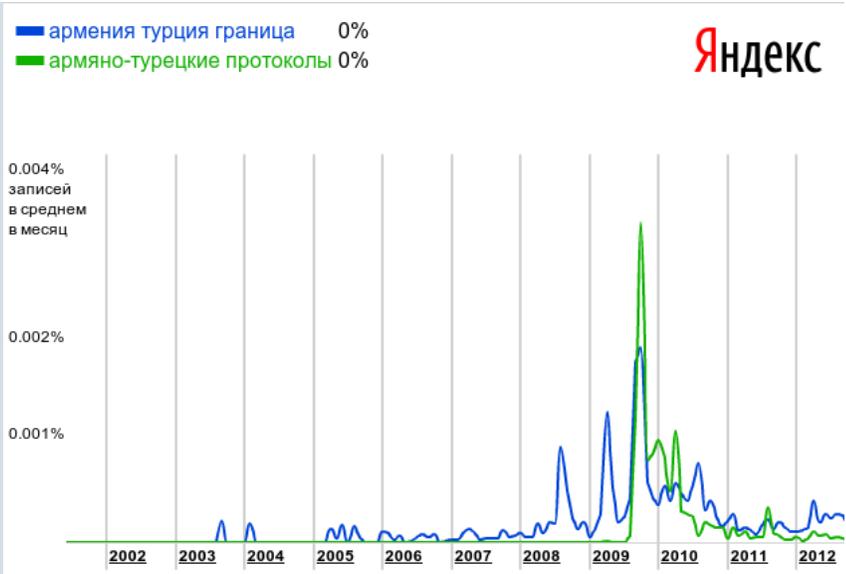
■ армяно-турецкие протоколы 0%

Яндекс



Incidence of usage of the phrase "Armenian-Turkish Protocols" in the Russian-speaking social media for the period 2009-2012. Data have been acquired from Yandex search engine.

It is interesting to note that while the escalation of the plosive interest towards the Armenian-Turkish Protocols died away rather quickly, the attention to the issue of the Armenian-Turkish border still continues raising considerable agitation within the social media today.



Comparison of the incidence of usage of the phrases "Armenian-Turkish Protocols" and "Armenian-Turkish border" in the Russian-speaking social media for the period 2002-2012. Data have been acquired from Yandex search engine.

En masse, it could be maintained that despite of certain thematic aspects, the issue of the Armenian Genocide is among the most frequently discussed topics within the social media. Moreover, any peaked discussion on any other subject inevitably touches upon the issue of the Genocide.



Comparison of the incidence of usage of the phrases “Armenian Genocide”, “Hrant Dink”, “Armenian-Turkish Protocols” and “Armenian-Turkish border” in the Russian-speaking social media for the period 2006-2012. Data have been acquired from Yandex search engine.

Comparison of the incidence of usage of the phrases “Armenian Genocide”, “Hrant Dink”, “Armenian-Turkish Protocols” and “Armenian-Turkish border” in the Russian-speaking social media for the period 2006-2012. Data have been acquired from Yandex search engine.

Specifics of the Involvement of Users from Other Nationalities

Communication between the Armenian and Turkish parties on the net is not deprived of an impact from users of other nationalities. Representatives of the Greek and Assyrian nationalities often get involved in the theme discussions associated with the Armenian Genocide because those nations also suffered during the genocidal events in the beginning of the 20th century. One could observe certain alliance between these groups of users. Many propagation materials

are disseminated by these user groups conjointly, although it should be noted that these groups are not prolific, despite the dynamics of their advancement.¹



Politologist and blogger Roland Bijamov of Assyrian origin is disseminating materials of an Armenian blogger about the genocide of Armenians and Assyrians. Original record at <http://roland-expert.livejournal.com/261014.html>

On the other hand, there is a certain growth in the involvement of Azeri users in thematic discussions on the Armenian-Turkish relations. Specifically, there is an increase in the involvement of aggressive Azeri users with anti-Armenian attitudes that oftentimes get into conflict with the Armenian users (who sometimes cannot even distinguish between Azeri and Turkish users if communication is conducted in English; therefore it all adds to the unfavorable impact inflicted on the Armenian-Turkish dialog).

¹ e.g. one of Armenian-Greek groups in Facebook has around 500 readers <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Greece-Armeniafriendship-forever/159763294039267?fref=ts>

Турецкий экспресс: чемодан–вокзал–Ереван

Mar. 18th, 2010 at 1:30 PM



Анкара может депортировать около 100 тыс. армян-нелегалов



Анкара может депортировать около 100 тыс. граждан Армении, нелегально находящихся на заработках в Турции. Об этом в интервью телерадиокорпорации ВВС заявил находящийся с визитом в Великобритании премьер-министр Турции Реджеп Тайип Эрдоган. Жесткая мера в отношении армян-нелегалов вызвана реакцией турецких властей на продолжающийся процесс признания геноцида армян в Османской империи 1915 года государственными институтами ряда стран.

Турция раздражена и не скрывает возмущения тем, что 4 марта резолюцию о геноциде армян принял Комитет по внешним сношениям Палаты представителей Конгресса США, а спустя неделю – парламент Швеции. Этот вопрос готовы рассмотреть в парламентах еще нескольких европейских стран.

Azeri blogger djin2003 accounts of the threat by Turkish prime minister Erdogan to deport 100 thousand illegal Armenians from Turkey in response to the adoption of the resolution on Armenian Genocide by the US Congress Commission. Original record at <http://djin2003.livejournal.com/18140.html>

Dialogue Opportunities

At this moment the scarce dialog among the limited number of Armenian and Turkish user groups continues. Communication is predominantly in English and remains at the level of people who possess the possibility of direct communication and who can participate in joint conferences, workshops or long-term joint projects. However, these groups cannot seriously contribute to the regulation of positive or at least neutral dialog between significantly larger groups of users.

Following recommendations were made during the workshop organized between Armenian and Turkish bloggers on October 15-17 by the bloggers themselves.

Dialogue requires specific skill and not any blogger¹ can easily take part in a dialogue. Usually arguing mode prevails between Armenian and Turkish bloggers so that they may endlessly debate with each other, advocate each other's agenda. In such mode few learning happens. This fact had to be taken into account when initiating a for a or group or any initiative aiming in involving Armenian and Turkish bloggers to discuss issues via social media platforms. Following recommendation will make it more likely to establish a dialogue forum in social media.

People

- Mainly skilled people in effective communication, dialogue skills, those who can control their balance and emotions;
- Young people. Youth may find many interesting activities in common and share similar values;
- Intellectuals. Educated people are less likely to have grown stereotypes and have more information.
- Art representatives.

Platform

Facebook is one of the most convenient platforms where Armenian and Turkish bloggers may create groups and interact there. However, the practice shows that only attractive and interesting postings create incentives for the other national to regularly read the other's writings. Moreover, photo and videoblogging give a real opportunity to truly see and watch interesting materials and create an opportunity for dialogue. This means that blogspot, livejournal, youtube and other platforms should be the main content generating places while Facebook can become an interesting platform for consolidating these postings and providing space for dialogue.

¹ By blogger we mean any social media user

Nature of groups

Practice shows that mainly facilitated discussions between Armenian and Turkish bloggers are effective. However, creation of closed space limits the number of participants and possible exposure of interesting discussion. It is better to create a two tier approach, where there are open space, and closed administrators group consisting of Turkish and Armenian professionals who discuss the open space problems, issues, opportunities separately.

Language

- English. Majority of young people speak English. Social media users' statistics analyses shows that youth is the majority group both in Armenia and Turkey.
- Armenian and Turkish. There are bloggers who can understand the 'others' language. These are few but their social interaction may have many passive followers – readers: few people interact, but many people knowing language read them.

Topic

There is a huge gap between Armenian and Turkish perceptions about each other. Hence, there are topics which could be of dialogue subject; however they fail because of this lack of information. It should be recognized that not all topics are possible to put and discuss in social media in a dialogue mode. A soft approach aimed at enlarging social relationship has to be adopted allowing starting dialogue from softer topics. This will let discussants learn about each other before being ready to touch tougher issues. Such topics can be:

- Art
- Environment
- Science
- Culture
- Etc

Incentives

It is very important to provide certain incentives to be active in Armenian-Turkish virtual social space. One of the incentives can be regular blogging on useful information. Even a simple touristic blogging/recommendation written by Armenian blogger about Turkey or Turkish blogger about Armenia is be critical in providing incentive to become a member in such social interaction.

Media vs blogging

Media outlets have their missions and interests. A local reader can easily navigate in various news and information provided by media. However, it can be less productive or even stereotypical if foreigner tries to understand the other country by choosing information [which are diverse]. This is especially true when it comes to Armenian-Turkish issues. Blogging can become an opportunity in checking information provided by media outlets. Personal relations developed by interaction in virtual space can create this kind of credit among Armenian and Turkish bloggers.

Program based approach

Blogging has become part of life. And any program between Armenia and Turkey where people interact face to face can transcend into virtual interaction. There is only a simple requirement – having a Facebook account.

The use of the communicative capabilities of the internet by a great number of users has certainly had its impact on the Armenian-Turkish relations on a social, as well as political level. The involvement of a huge number of users of social networks, blogs and microblogs into communication on the Armenian-Turkish relations affects the formation of stable society opinions about the neighboring country, the historical and contemporary relations with it, as well as indirectly affects the political decision-making process, because in certain instances public pressure on the political elite proves to be highly powerful.

The overall objective of the current research is to analyze social networking landscape in Armenia and turkey and provide gaps and opportunities for efficient interaction.

The study has been undertaken by the International Center for Human Development (Armenia) and GAYA Research Institute (Turkey) within the framework of the "Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement" project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).