

EU-27 WATCH

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On the project

Due to the new treaty provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and the economic crises the enlarged EU of 27 member states is on the search for a new *modus operandi* while also continuing membership talks with candidate countries. The EU-27 Watch project is mapping out discourses on these and more issues in European policies all over Europe. Research institutes from all 27 member states and the four candidate countries give overviews on the discourses in their respective countries.

The reports focus on a **reporting period from December 2009 until May 2010**. This survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire that has been elaborated in March and April 2010. Most of the 31 reports were delivered in May 2010. This issue and all previous issues are available on the EU-27 Watch website: www.EU-27Watch.org.

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Editorial Team

Publisher: Prof. Dr. Mathias Jopp
Executive Editor: Dr. Katrin Böttger
Managing Editor: Julian Plottka
Editorial Staff: Daniela Caterina, Gregory Kohler, Christoph Kornes
Layout: Matthias Jäger

Contact: info@EU-27watch.org
www.EU-27watch.org

 Institut für
Europäische Politik
Bundesallee 23
D-10717 Berlin
Tel.: +49/30/88.91.34-0
Fax: +49/30/88.91.34-99
E-mail: info@iep-berlin.de
Internet: www.iep-berlin.de

Poland**Willing to play a leading role in Europe****Maria Karasinska-Fendler**

The issue of the Lisbon Treaty on political leadership is of high salience in Poland. The government has an ambition of playing an important and sometimes even leading role in the enlarged EU, commensurate with its size and growing potential. The Treaty poses certain questions concerning the future of the institutional triangle that no one is ready to respond to at this very moment. Particular attention is given to the following questions: does the Lisbon Treaty really strengthen the community method, what will the relations between the President of the Commission and the President of the Council look like, and what would be in practice the character of the new European External Action Service (EEAS). Most experts agree that a lot will depend on implementation; therefore, the Polish government is still considering all the options and no ready position has been published yet. According to informal interviews, Polish politicians are worried that the new presidency format will deprive Poland of a chance of influencing the EU agenda. The newcomers, as demonstrated some time ago by the Czechs, would be very keen on exercising a full presidency, which, in their understanding, would allow them to promote their interests more effectively. The attitude towards political leadership is dependent on the attitude towards integration as such. Whereas the Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS) would generally like the EU to be as intergovernmental as possible and is simultaneously afraid that an enlarged EU would be dominated by the Germans and the French, the governing Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska – PO) is much keener on strengthening the supranational institutions and much less concerned with the claim that the new treaty would strengthen the biggest member states.

Poland's perception of the new EU leaders, the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, was not positive. These nominations were seen by the Polish government as a victory for Germany and France and as a defeat for Poland, which had wanted a more transparent selection process. It is worth noticing that this critical view was presented to the public in a rather equilibrated way with a focus on future expectations linked to the functions of the new EU leaders, whose roles – according to the Lisbon Treaty – could reinforce the common EU voice in the world. The press was far more critical, especially in the context of persons who were nominated to these eminent positions. Conservative daily Rzeczpospolita mocked the choice in an editorial entitled “Mr. Nothing to Say and Baroness No Experience” by saying: “The nominations mean nothing good for Europe. Europe's President is a man who will have nothing to say on the international stage, while the foreign minister is a woman who has no experience in diplomacy.”¹

An intensive exchange of views published on the non-governmental political blog portal showed a deeply negative picture presented by internet interlocutors. In a summary of a debate on President Van Rompuy we could read: “President Van Rompuy? Not in Poland. We are sure every EU citizen who is reading about this appointment is asking the question: Is this really our new President? In Poland, the answer is “No”. Here he will be formally known not as President Van Rompuy but rather as a “chairman”.² The first President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, made his first short working visit to Warsaw when he met Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The politicians discussed issues connected with the summit of the European Council scheduled for 11 February 2010 as well as the EU's new economic strategy until 2020. Among other issues discussed during this meeting were climate change and preparations for Poland to take over the rotating presidency of the EU in the second half of 2011. This visit was barely commented by the media and did not raise substantial interest in society.

Catherine Ashton, much criticised as chief of the EU's foreign policy, made her first visit to Warsaw on 31 May 2010. Ashton stopped in Warsaw on her way to a two-day EU-Russia summit in Rostov-on-Don, southern Russia. She met with Poland's Foreign Minister, Radek Sikorski, acting President Bronislaw Komorowski and Defence Minister Bogdan Klich. During the short press conference, Minister Sikorski said: “We had talks on the Eastern Partnership, as we had some proposals for Baroness Ashton, and we also discussed priorities for Poland's six-month Presidency of the EU next

· [Foundation for European Studies – European Institute.](#)

year: energy security and strengthening European defence policy". Sikorski and Ashton also discussed possible Polish candidates for a deputy head of EU diplomacy, which could include European Minister Mikołaj Dowgielewicz or Member of the European Parliament Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, the EEAS, and EU-Russia relations. This visit did not attract the deeper interest of the Polish press nor of Polish public opinion. This is most probably due to the government's very modest and rather superficial information on the content and on the importance of these issues for Poland. After the UK's Daily Telegraph reported that "Baroness Aston – whose selection as EU High Representative of Foreign Policy last year made many in Brussels scratch their heads in disbelief – such was her inexperience at this level – will leave her post this year, forced out after heavy criticism", Polish Radio organised a public debate, in which Karel Lannoo from the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels participated. This debate concluded that the news should only to be expected, as Ashton had repeatedly shown an inability to present a common voice for the European Union to the world. The most common example was the earthquake in Haiti, after which EU aid was not coordinated.

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty at the beginning of the year, European institutions have been adjusting to the new framework and taking steps to make necessary changes. One of the new elements to have been introduced by the treaty is the establishment of the EEAS, which is under the control of the High Representative Catherine Ashton. Ashton submitted a proposal for the EEAS on 25 March 2010, and, since then, Brussels has been full of discussion on the proposal's practical applications. In Poland, this proposal was not submitted to deeper public debate, probably for two reasons: it was published just before Easter, which is a four day celebration in Poland, and, more importantly, since 10 April 2010, the crash of a Polish aircraft and death of 96 victims, including the Polish President and his wife, several ministers, members of Polish parliament, heads of important public institutions (including the Head of the Polish National Bank), monopolised Polish political life for several weeks. The need for the acceleration of the presidential elections and heavy floods focused politicians, press and public opinion on internal issues. However, one could notice a scientific debate on EEAS issues. Within this debate there were suggestions that the EEAS should contribute to the programming and management of external cooperation programmes that fall under development policy. Experts assert that the proposal actually breaches the Lisbon Treaty on legal grounds and goes against the interests of both the EU and the world's poorest people. Some lawyers say that the role of the EEAS is restricted to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which is just a part of the EU's external action. This does not extend to development policy, which is the "sole competence" of the European Commission, as defined by the treaties.

As concerns the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), it drew the attention of a great number of NGOs, especially those dealing with environmental issues, humanitarian aid, health and women's support. Several organisations and citizens took part in the internet debate on its shape and potential facilities. Poland took 5th place in a ranking of number of reactions addressed to this site counted by nationality of interlocutors. In the first half of this year, there were two visible areas of citizens' action. The first, stimulated and supported by the church and conservative parties, concerned the citizens' right to be free of work on Sundays. It includes a civic initiative to introduce a new law imposing the closure of all shops (and especially of all supermarkets), in order to provide families space for more diversified ways of spending time. This proposal divided Polish public opinion and raised a parallel civic action against this law. The second, most recent action took aim at the registration of soft drugs. During the last weekend of May 2010, there were several events and a major demonstration in Warsaw (with participation of approximately 6,000 young people) supporting this initiative. Again, this action raised a large reaction against this proposal (82 percent of Poles, according to public opinion polls).

¹ Rzeczpospolita, 29 November 2009.

² Available at: <http://www.Blogs.wsj.com> (last access: 28 July 2010).

Questionnaire for EU-27 Watch, No. 9

Reporting period December 2009 until May 2010 – Deadline for country reports 21 May

All questions refer to the position/assessment of your country's government, opposition, political parties, civil society organisations, pressure groups, press/media, and public opinion. Please name sources wherever possible!

1. Implementation of the Lisbon Treaty

On the 1 December 2009 the EU-reform ended with the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty. However, the new treaty provisions still have to be implemented. Some procedures and conditions have to be determined. In other cases, procedures, power relations, and decision-making mechanisms will change due to the new provisions.

- How is the work of the new President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, assessed in your country? Which changes to the role of the rotating council presidency are expected?
- How is the work of the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, assessed in your country? Please take into particular consideration both her role within the European Commission and her relationship to the Council of the European Union.
- On 25 March 2010 a "Proposal for a Council Decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service" was presented. How is this concept perceived in your country? Which alternatives are discussed?
- On 31 March 2010 the European Commission presented a proposal defining the rules and procedures for the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). What are the expectations for the ECI in your country? What are the various positions concerning the rules and procedures?

2. Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

The European Commission has given its opinion on Iceland's application for EU-membership and a decision from the Council is expected before the end of June. Croatia seems to have settled its border dispute with Slovenia. Against this background:

- Which countries does your country expect to become members of the European Union in the next enlargement round? What are the opinions in your country on the membership of these countries?
- How are the membership perspectives of those countries discussed, which are not expected to become a member in the next enlargement round?

The Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean were the last major projects dealing with the European neighbourhood:

- How are these projects assessed in your country?

3. European economic policy and the financial and economic crisis

The European Council agreed on 25/26 March on the key elements of the Europe 2020 strategy, the successor of the Lisbon strategy. While not being on the formal agenda the economic and financial situation in Greece was discussed. The European Council agreed on a finance package combining bilateral loans from the eurozone and financing through the International Monetary Fund.

- How is the finance package for Greece assessed in your country? Are there any opinions on the process, how the agreement on the package was reached?
- Which lessons should be drawn from the Greek case for a reform of the Stability and Growth Pact?
- How is the idea of "a strong coordination of economic policies in Europe" perceived in your country? What concepts of an European economic governance are discussed in your country and which role do they assign to the Euro group?
- How is the Europe 2020 strategy discussed in your country? What are the priorities for the Europe 2020 strategy from your country's perspective?

4. Climate and energy policy

The climate conference in Copenhagen took note of the Copenhagen Accord but did not reach a binding agreement. The next conference of the parties (COP 16 & CMP 6) will take place at the end of November 2010.

- How is the Copenhagen conference assessed in your country? Please take into consideration the negotiation strategy of European Union and the results of the conference.
- Does the European Union need to change its own energy and climate policy in order to give a new impulse to the international negotiations?
- Is a global agreement within the UNFCCC the best strategy to fight climate change? If not, which alternative strategy should the European Union follow?
- What is your country's position on financing mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries?

5. Current issues and discourses in your country

Which other topics and discourses are highly salient in your country but not covered by this questionnaire?