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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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Austria**New institutions and instruments introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and the view from Austria**

Hakan Akbulut*

When Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton were respectively nominated as the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Chancellor Werner Faymann seemed to be content with the staffing while the press generally described the nominations as the least common denominator. Herman Van Rompuy's role in Belgian politics as a conciliator was the only positive aspect to be mentioned. Overall, Van Rompuy's nomination was understood to constitute a safeguard installed by the member states against Brussels playing a greater role or usurping the competences of the nation states. Reflecting this point of view, Die Presse columnist Oliver Grimm, for instance, maintained that Van Rompuy had "secretly, calmly and quietly"¹ taken decisions in his first 100 days in office which would result in the Commission being down-graded into a form of a secretariat-general while real power is transferred to the heads of state and government. As for his performance in the face of the economic crisis, Van Rompuy was criticised by leading figures. During a debate on TV, the President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Christoph Leitl, claimed that one did not hear anything from Van Rompuy despite the crisis.² In a similar fashion, former Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik also maintained Van Rompuy should have played a more prominent and visible role. With regard to the role to be played by the rotating council presidency, there are apparently no major changes expected, as Van Rompuy's role is conceived to be limited to acting as a chairperson and conciliator during summit meetings at best. Against this background, it is worth mentioning that Foreign Minister Spindelegger sharply criticised the decision to exclude the foreign ministers from summit meetings.³

As for Catherine Ashton, except for Chancellor Faymann's positive remarks, she was widely described as an inexperienced no-name.⁴ Ashton was criticised by Foreign Minister Spindelegger after the Cordoba meeting of the foreign ministers in March 2010. The Minister argued there was no visible foreign policy line and that no respective coordination on a common policy existed.⁵ Spindelegger confirmed that there was dissatisfaction with the performance of Ashton so far and that the foreign ministers were frustrated about not being included in the process of setting up the European External Action Service (EEAS). He did not seem to be content with Ashton being the Vice-President of the Commission either, raising the question as to how this would affect her workload and stating that members of the Commission might be tempted to prevent competences from being transferred to the EEAS. Media reports also indicated that Ashton's unpopularity was partly due to the impression that she was being excessively influenced by Barroso instead of pursuing independent policies.⁶ Ashton's performance was also severely criticised by the Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Andreas M \ddot{u} lzer from the Austrian Freedom Party (FP \ddot{O}).⁷ Due to Ashton, the EU had said farewell to world politics, M \ddot{u} lzer claimed. He simply described Ashton as the wrong choice.

As mentioned above, Foreign Minister Spindelegger stated, after the Cordoba meeting, that the foreign ministers were frustrated about not being included in the process of setting up the EEAS.⁸ The day before the proposal on the EEAS was presented, during a parliamentary committee meeting, Spindelegger maintained that he fully supported the idea of the EEAS. He also supported the structure proposed in the draft put forward by Ashton. Nevertheless, there existed a number of questions that had to be solved, he added.⁹ In his view, the EEAS could only be successful if the personnel from the member states were represented at all levels in due proportion and could participate on equal footing. He added that, in cooperation with other member states, progress had been made on the question of a geographically balanced staffing as well as on the training of the diplomats. Moreover, having German as an official and working language was also significant (a demand also supported by Austrian MEPs such as Strasser and M \ddot{u} lzer). When the foreign ministers achieved an agreement on the structure and the responsibilities of the EEAS in April 2010, former Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik asserted that all Austrian demands had been met.¹⁰ She praised the adoption of German as an official language and the acceptance of consular protection as one of the responsibilities of the EEAS offices.¹¹ Spindelegger also praised the EEAS and referred to crisis management and consular protection as major issues that should be of concern to the EEAS.¹²

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The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) is likely to be the first ever organiser of a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). Given existing differences with his party's coalition partner, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), on the topic of introducing a financial transaction tax, Chancellor Faymann declared that his party would initiate the first European Citizens' Initiative on the establishment of a financial markets supervision system and the introduction of a financial transaction tax.¹³ While supported by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), Faymann's initiative evoked criticism in Austria and was described as window-dressing by the other parties. Nevertheless, on 19 May 2010, a resolution supported by the Austrian People's Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Greens and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) was passed in parliament, calling for, among other things, a lowering of the threshold for the initiation of an ECI from nine to six countries, a rapid introduction of the instrument as such, binding regulations for the handling of successfully finalised initiatives, and the decision on the admissibility of the initiative to be taken at an earlier stage by the Commission and not only after 300,000 statements of support have been collected.¹⁴

¹ Oliver Grimm: Meisterstrategie: Van Rompuy's diskreter Zug zur Macht, Die Presse, 16 April 2010.

² ORF broadcast "Im Zentrum", 16 April 2010.

³ Der Standard, 21 January 2010.

⁴ Cf. Der Standard, 19 November 2009. For critical views by Green politicians see Die Presse, 20 November 2009.

⁵ Der Standard, 5 March 2010.

⁶ See for example Der Standard, 8 March 2010.

⁷ FPÖ: Mölzer: Mit Ashton als "Außenministerin" hat sich EU von der Weltpolitik verabschiedet, 8 March 2010, available at: [http://www.fpoe.at/news/detail/news/moelzer-mit-ashton-als-ausse/?tx_thgenericlist\[114\]\[offset\]=0&cHash=59914ea5b818c808ea7dbd7229083f85](http://www.fpoe.at/news/detail/news/moelzer-mit-ashton-als-ausse/?tx_thgenericlist[114][offset]=0&cHash=59914ea5b818c808ea7dbd7229083f85) (last access: 19 May 2010).

⁸ Wiener Zeitung, 5 March 2010.

⁹ Parlament der Republik Österreich: Hauptausschuss diskutiert über Hilfen für Griechenland Weitere Themen: Auswärtiger Dienst der EU, Klima, Naher Osten, 24 March 2010, available at:

http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100324_OTSO248/hauptausschuss-diskutiert-ueber-hilfen-fuer-griechenland-weitere-themen-auswaertiger-dienst-der-eu-klima-naher-osten (last access: 05 May 2010).

¹⁰ ÖVP-Parlamentsklub: Plassnik: Mehrwert durch Bürgerservice, 27 April 2010, available at:

http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100427_OTSO081/plassnik-mehrwert-durch-buergerservice (last access: 4 May 2010).

¹¹ See also Der Standard, 27 April 2010.

¹² Der Standard, 8 May 2010.

¹³ ORF.at: SPÖ und SPD planen EU-Bürgerbegehren, 18 May 2010, available at: http://news.orf.at/100518-51337/?href=http%3A%2F%2Fnews.orf.at%2F100518-51337%2F51338txt_story.html (last access: 18 May 2010).

¹⁴ Der Standard, 19 May 2010; SPÖ: Muttonen: Europa braucht mehr Demokratie und starke Beteiligung der Bürgerinnen und Bürger, 19 May 2010, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100519_OTSO164/muttonen-europa-braucht-mehr-demokratie-und-starke-beteiligung-der-buergerinnen-und-buerger (last access: 19 May 2010); ÖVP-Parlamentsklub:

Neugebauer: Europäische Bürgerinitiative rasch umsetzen, 19 May 2010, available at:

http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100519_OTSO257/neugebauer-europaeische-buergerinitiative-rasch-umsetzen (last access: 19 May 2010).

Austria**Austrian perspectives on EU enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy**

Hakan Akbulut*

Given the changes brought about by the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the repercussions of the Greek financial crisis, neither the enlargement issue nor the European Neighbourhood Policy were paid much attention to in the reporting period. Nevertheless, from an Austrian point of view, the candidates most likely to join the EU in the next enlargement round are Croatia and Iceland. Croatia's admission is strongly supported by the Austrian government. Foreign Minister Spindelegger asserted that the waiting-room policy vis-à-vis the Western Balkan countries had to be ended.¹ Even though certain countries could not recognise any benefits in Western Balkan countries joining the EU, the Union should stick to its plans irrespective of the current problems, the Foreign Minister added. He also emphasised the importance of countries like Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia for Austrian investment and trade. Except for the latter, however, the inclusion of the Western Balkan countries was expected to be completed by 2020, Spindelegger argued.² Spindelegger also stated that Austria would assist these countries in the process of EU approximation. Since Croatia reached an agreement with Slovenia to refer the border dispute to an international court and the Commission offered the view that accession talks could be finalised in 2011, the country is anticipated to join the Union by 2012.³ From the point of view of Andreas Mölzer, a Member of European Parliament from the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) – a party which usually has strong reservations about EU enlargement – neither the border problems with Slovenia, nor any lack of cooperation with the tribunal in The Hague should be allowed to further delay Croatia's admission to the Union.⁴ Croatia's inclusion is also strongly supported by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO). Croatia's quick inclusion in the Union would be good for both Austria and Croatia, the President of the Chamber, Christoph Leitl, claimed.⁵ With regard to Iceland, given positive signals from Brussels, it is expected to join in 2013.⁶ The country's accession process does not attract much attention and is almost taken for granted. Even for the aforementioned FPÖ, Iceland's accession does not constitute any obvious problems. Therefore, in the view of Mölzer, Iceland's accession could proceed quickly as the country is European and meets EU standards.⁷ Except for some problems related to the issue of fisheries, there are no stumbling blocks, Mölzer argued. However, according to a report by the daily *Der Standard*, Iceland is confronted with financial claims by the United Kingdom and the Netherlands as both had to compensate investors who lost their money when the banking system in Iceland crashed. Therefore, Iceland's response to these claims is expected to affect its membership prospects.

A candidate country that is not going to join the Union during the next enlargement round is obviously Turkey. Almost all political parties seem to have reservations against Turkish membership or categorically oppose it. Only the Greens seem to support Turkish accession to the Union – yet, insofar as Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen criteria, and only after the social, ecological and democratic integration of existing members has proceeded to higher levels.⁸ Moreover, from the Greens' point of view, the countries of Southeast Europe have to be given priority in the enlargement process. The coalition government, comprising the Social Democratic Party and the People's Party, is in favour of negotiations with an open end and emphasises the prospect of a referendum on the issue should the negotiations be finalised.⁹ However, their position is to some extent ambiguous, oscillating between a conditional "Yes" and a veiled "No".¹⁰ As for the Freedom Party and the Alliance for the Future of Austria, both parties categorically oppose Turkish membership. Andreas Mölzer from the Freedom Party reiterated in April 2010 that negotiations with Turkey should be stopped immediately saying that Turkish membership would pose a threat to the Christian-occidental culture of Europe.¹¹ It is also worth mentioning that Austrians are generally known for their enlargement scepticism. Eurobarometer polls conducted in the period from 27 October 2009 to 13 November 2009 showed, for example, that only 28 percent of the public supported further enlargement while 65 percent opposed the idea.¹²

In the reporting period, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) barely attracted any media coverage at all. Except for brief references to the difficulties Spain had in organising the next summit due to the refusal of Arab countries to participate in a conference where Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman would also be present and the announcement that the summit had finally been postponed, there were no debates or elaborations on substance of the UfM.¹³ As for the Eastern Partnership, even though there were no explicit references to the strategy as such, it is known

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that the Danube and Black Sea regions constitute core areas of interest to Foreign Minister Spindelegger. During a speech held in January 2010, Spindelegger reiterated the importance of both regions for Austria and Europe and maintained that due to an Austrian-Romanian co-initiative, the EU Commission was working on an EU Strategy for the Danube Region, which would be presented at the end of 2010.¹⁴ Spindelegger also pointed to the importance of the Black Sea region, especially for investment and energy security.

¹ ORF.at: EU muss "auf Schiene bleiben", 14 May 2010, available at: http://orf.at/100512-51162/?href=http%3A%2F%2Forf.at%2F100512-51162%2F51163txt_story.html (last access: 19 May 2010).

² Der Standard, 21 January 2010.

³ Der Standard, 14 October 2009; Der Standard, 8 November 2009.

⁴ Freiheitlicher Parlamentsklub: Mölzer: EU-Beitrittsverhandlungen mit Kroatien so rasch wie möglich abschließen!, 5 May 2010, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100505_OTS0047 (last access: 19 May 2010).

⁵ WKO: EU Panorama, 16 October 2009, available at: http://portal.wko.at/wk/dok_detail_file.wk?AngID=1&DocID=1249660&ConID=444130&StID=530063&titel=EU-Panorama_vom_22..J%C3%A4nner_2010 (last access: 22 May 2010).

⁶ Der Standard, 24 February 2010.

⁷ Freiheitlicher Parlamentsklub: Mölzer: EU-Beitrittskandidaten dürfen nicht alle in einen Topf geworfen werden!, 23 November 2009, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091123_OTS0147/moelzer-eu-beitrittskandidaten-duerfen-nicht-alle-in-einen-topf-geworfen-werden (last access: 18 May 2010).

⁸ Die Grünen: Türkei: EU-Beitrittsverhandlungen, available at: http://www.gruene.at/europaeische_union/tuerkei/ (last access: 23 May 2010).

⁹ Bundeskanzleramt: Regierungsprogramm für die XXIV Gesetzgebungsperiode, 2 December 2008, available at: <http://www.bundeskanzleramt.at/DocView.axd?CobId=32966> (last access: 18 May 2010).

¹⁰ As the daily Der Standard reported, during the election campaign to the European Parliament, Ernst Strasser from the People's Party, for example, called for aborting the negotiations. See Der Standard, 22 May 2009.

¹¹ Freiheitlicher Parlamentsklub: Mölzer: Türkeibeitritt wäre Bedrohung für christlich-abendländische Kultur Europas, 7 April 2010, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100407_OTS0051/moelzer-tuerkeibeitritt-waere-bedrohung-fuer-christlich-abendaendische-kultur-europas (last access: 22 May 2010).

¹² Europäische Kommission: Eurobarometer 72. Herbst 2009, Nationaler Bericht Österreich, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_at_at_nat.pdf (last access: 28 May 2010).

¹³ Die Presse, 11 May 2010; Die Presse, 21 May 2010.

¹⁴ Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten (BmeiA): Rede von Bundesminister Dr. Michael Spindelegger zu den Schwerpunkten der österreichischen EU-Politik, 21 January 2010, available at: <http://www.bmeia.gv.at/aussenministerium/aktuelles/reden-und-interviews/2010/rede-von-bundesminister-dr-michael-spindelegger-zu-den-schwerpunkten-der-oesterreichischen-eu-politik.html> (last access: 15 May 2010).

Austria**The Greek tragedy, European economic policy and Austria**

Hakan Akbulut*

The ruling Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP) have been defending the aid package to Greece, saying it was a necessary and indispensable measure. They have also repeated that not only Greece but also the Euro was at stake and that not helping Greece would be much costlier than providing the levels of aid agreed upon.¹ Finance Minister Josef Pröll from the ÖVP pointed to credits granted by Austrian banks to Greece amounting to 5 billion Euros in order to underline the necessity of the aid package, while the Governor of Austria's Central Bank (OeNB), Thomas Nowotny, termed the package a "vaccination" which should help others forgo infection.² The ruling parties also emphasised that Greece had agreed to adopt and implement "harsh" austerity measures, which constituted a pre-condition for receiving the aid promised. Both the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) and the Freedom Party (FPÖ) opposed the aid package, arguing that Greece would never be able to pay back the money of the Austrian taxpayers. In contrast, the Greens welcomed the aid package, arguing that otherwise a chain reaction could be set off entailing the necessity for additional aid packages for banks and leading to a devaluation of the Euro.³ The President of the Austrian Trade Chamber (WKO), Christoph Leitl, also publicly supported the aid package, warning against a possible conflagration.⁴ As for the public, according to a poll conducted among 500 Austrians for the magazine Profil, they are divided on the issue.⁵ While 48 percent of the respondents stated that they supported financial aid to EU countries facing severe problems, 42 percent indicated that they opposed the idea.

Whereas the way the EU finance ministers reached the decision on Greece was not a topic of controversy in the related debate, the question arose as to whether the government could make such financial commitments without involving the parliament. The coalition partners ÖVP und SPÖ argued that the so-called *Zahlungsbilanzstabilisierungsgesetz* – a federal law adopted in 2009 in the face of the banking crisis which allows the finance minister to offer financial aid to countries Austria is economically closely associated with – provided the legal basis for the commitments made.⁶ However, as the bill only allowed for transfers amounting to 2 billion Euros to a single country and Austria had accepted a credit line of 2.3 billion Euros in the case of Greece, the bill required amending. The opposition parties, on the other hand, argued that the aforementioned bill did not authorise the government to make such financial commitments and that additional parliamentary authorisation – that is to say a new law – was required. The Freedom Party had even been demanding a referendum on the issue. Nevertheless, the government, having the majority in parliament, changed the bill raising the credit line to 2.3 billion Euros.⁷

Both FPÖ and BZÖ have been claiming that Greece had joined and remained in the Monetary Union by providing false data to the Union. Moreover, from the very beginning of the crisis, the FPÖ has been demanding that Greece should be ejected from the Monetary Union. Member of European Parliament (MEP) Andreas Mölzer (FPÖ) argued that the current system was not viable and maintained that two different currency areas should be established – a hard currency region including countries like Germany, Austria and the Netherlands vs. a soft currency region with members like Greece, Spain or Portugal.⁸ From the point of view of the BZÖ, Greece should leave the Monetary Union, though on a voluntary basis. While the ruling parties do not support the idea of throwing countries out of the Monetary Union, the German proposal to revoke the voting rights of countries that do not stick to the stability criteria is not rejected. Overall, all political actors have been calling for better control and monitoring mechanisms. In line with this, Finance Minister Josef Pröll (ÖVP) called for more powers for Eurostat and for the ECB to scrutinise the budgetary situation of member states and the data they provide, which should enable the Eurogroup to propose corrective measures at an early stage.⁹

There seems to exist a general understanding that further fiscal and economic coordination and stricter supervision are required on a European level. MEP Hannes Swoboda even stated that a common economic government constituted a necessity.¹⁰ In a similar fashion, the President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Christoph Leitl, called for a common and binding economic policy.¹¹ At the same time, phrases such as deepening coordination and cooperation seem to require

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further specification and detailing, except for when used with general demands and ideas such as establishing a financial market supervision system on a European level, introducing a financial transaction tax and founding a European rating agency and an EU Monetary Fund. However, as the discussions on the Europe 2020 Strategy show, too much interference in budgetary and economic affairs does not seem to be desired.

While the reaction of the ruling parties to the Europe 2020 Strategy was positive in general, together with the opposition parties they criticised certain centralistic tendencies in the paper.¹² Ewald Stadler (BZÖ) argued the paper was reminiscent of economic plans presented by the communist party in the former Soviet Union. In the view of MEP Mölzer (FPÖ), the strategy de facto introduced a European economic government.¹³ Apart from that, the parties in the parliament concurred that social aspects (especially poverty) were not paid due attention in the Strategy. According to the Green MEP Lunacek, the Strategy constitutes a repetition of the very same ideas and defects of the Lisbon Strategy by focusing on Gross Domestic Product growth, neglecting social aspects, and lacking binding goals.¹⁴ In a similar fashion, the Strategy was criticised by the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) for not paying due attention to the creation of new jobs and to job quality.¹⁵ The reaction of the WKO was in general positive.¹⁶

¹ See for example Der Standard, 4 May 2010.

² Die Presse, 23 April 2010.

³ Der Standard, 29 April 2010.

⁴ WKO: Leitl zu Griechenland: "An gemeinsamer EU-Wirtschaftspolitik führt kein Weg mehr vorbei", 29 April 2010, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100429_OTS0183/leitl-zu-griechenland-an-gemeinsamer-eu-wirtschaftspolitik-fuehrt-kein-weg-mehr-vorbei (last access: 4 May 2010).

⁵ Cf. Die Presse, 20 May 2010.

⁶ Der Standard, 29 April 2010.

⁷ Die Presse, 19 May 2010.

⁸ FPÖ: Mölzer: Kerneuropäische Hartwährungszone als Ausweg aus der Euro-Krise, 3 May 2010, available at: <http://www.fpoe.at/news/detail/news/moelzer-kerneuropaeische-hart/> (last access: 4 May 2010).

⁹ Der Standard, 7 May 2010.

¹⁰ Der Standard, 3 March 2010.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Parlament der Republik Österreich: Kritische Stimmen zur Strategie Europa 2020, 24 March 2010, available at: http://www.parlament.gv.at/PG/PR/JAHR_2010/PK0190/PK0190.shtml (last access: 20 May 2010).

¹³ FPÖ-Parlamentsklub: Mölzer: EU2020-Strategie darf nicht nationalstaatliche Restsouveränität aushöhlen, 3 March 2010, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100303_OTS0141/moelzer-eu2020-strategie-darf-nicht-nationalstaatliche-restsouveraenitaet-aushoehlen (last access: 4 May 2010).

¹⁴ Die Grünen: Lunacek zu Barroso: Alte Lissabon-Ideen statt Grüner New Deal, 3 March 2010, available at: http://www.gruene.at/europaeische_union/artikel/lesen/56208/ (last access: 10 May 2010).

¹⁵ ÖGB Europabüro: DGB und ÖGB kritisieren geplante Ausgestaltung von EU 2020-Strategie, 23 April 2010, available at: http://www.oegb-eu.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S05/Page/Index&n=S05_6.2.a&cid=1271946129681 (last access: 4 May 2010).

¹⁶ Der Standard, 3 March 2010.

Austria**Climate and energy policy – Copenhagen and beyond**

Hakan Akbulut*

Even before the conference in Copenhagen ended, NGOs such as GLOBAL 2000 warned that the negotiations might collapse, in part due to Austrian intransigence related to the accounting of forest emissions.¹ When the conference indeed ended without producing any tangible results, the very same organisation stated that the declaration by the leaders was not worth the paper it was written upon.² The representative of the Climate Alliance Austria referred to the minimal compromise reached as a “climate catastrophe”.³ He added that the only positive aspect to be mentioned was the commitment to provide 30 billion US-Dollars to developing countries in the period 2010-2012 and 100 billion US-Dollars a year by 2020 to cover mitigation and adaptation costs. Austrian Environment Minister Berlakovich openly acknowledged the failure of the conference. “Today is a black day for climate protection. What remains is only an invitation to continue”, Berlakovich held.⁴ Later on, Chancellor Faymann blamed the organisers, saying that a conference bringing together 190 heads of government to achieve a compromise within three days should have been better prepared.⁵ The Greens also stated that the conference in Copenhagen did not produce any results and criticised both the government and the EU.⁶ Johanna Ruzicka, writing for the daily Der Standard, even argued that the minimal outcome of Copenhagen had led to an “international paralysis on the issue of climate protection and to a perplexity as to how to solve the problem of global warming.”⁷ The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber also described the results of the conference as disappointing.⁸ The EU strategy of trying to inspire other countries to commit themselves to emission reductions by adopting binding reduction goals prior to the conference had been flawed and had failed, the representative of the Chamber argued.

Overall, the EU unilaterally committing itself to more ambitious environmental goals, especially to greater levels of emission reduction, is opposed by the business circles. Before the conference in Copenhagen had started, the Federal Economic Chamber had demanded that all industrialised and threshold countries should adopt “reasonable” goals with regard to emission reduction.⁹ The Chamber openly opposed the EU unilaterally raising the reduction goal to 30 percent during the conference unless other countries agreed to do so as well. It was argued that enterprises would otherwise flee the EU due to higher “CO₂ costs”. The President of the Chamber, Christoph Leitl, added that unilateral commitments would not be helpful anyway, as the EU was responsible only for 13 percent of emissions worldwide.¹⁰ Leitl also pointed out that Austria had been overambitious in Kyoto and thus committed itself to goals it could not realise in the end. Thus, the country was now paying about 1 billion Euros in penalties, as had been anticipated and warned against by the Chamber. The Federation of Austrian Industries (IV) is reportedly not in favour of more demanding emission regulations either.¹¹ As for the government, while the Environment Minister Berlakovich called, according to a report by the daily Der Standard, for a concrete, clear-cut EU position in order to be able to put pressure on countries such as the US, China, or Brazil,¹² neither the Ministry of the Environment, nor the Ministry of the Economy supported the idea put forward by the EU Commissioner Connie Hedegaard to raise emission reduction goals to 30 percent.¹³ In contrast, for the Greens or NGOs such as Global 2000, the reduction goals of the EU are not ambitious enough. Both demand that the EU should commit itself to reducing emissions by 40 percent.¹⁴

As for the various positions on financing mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries, the Greens and Global 2000 are apparently strongly in favour of financial contributions by the industrialised world. The Greens demand that the industrial countries, as the main polluters, should provide the developing countries 110 billion Euros a year by 2020, while the latter should have reduced their emissions by 15-30 percent by that time. Global 2000, using the term “climate justice” and citing a study by the Stockholm Environment Institute, holds that the “EU’s fair share of finances for the developing world amounts to 150 billion to 450 billion Euros per year by 2020.”¹⁵ The decision by the EU to provide 7.2 billion Euros in immediate aid to developing countries for mitigation and adaptation efforts was also welcomed by the Member of the European Parliament Karin Kadenbach from the Social Democratic Party of Austria.¹⁶ However, she added that more money was required and that the European Parliament had asked the heads of state and government to provide at least 30 billion Euros in aid to the developing countries until 2020. The Social Democratic Party’s support for

* Austrian Institute for International Affairs.

the amount offered was also confirmed by the Party's speaker for Development Cooperation, Petra Bayr.¹⁷

As for the question as to whether the UNFCCC is the best framework to reach a global agreement on climate protection, no relevant debate could be identified for the reporting period.

¹ Global 2000: Eine Woche Klimakonferenz – GLOBAL 2000 zieht erste Bilanz: Verhandlung stocken, Österreich bremst!, 11 December 2009, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091211_OTS0269/eine-woche-klimakonferenz-global-2000-zieht-erste-bilanz-verhandlung-stocken-oesterreich-bremst (last access: 17 May 2010).

² Global 2000: GLOBAL 2000 zu Kopenhagen: Verhandlungsdesaster statt notwendiger Klimaschutz!, 19 December 2009, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091219_OTS0032/global-2000-zu-kopenhagen-verhandlungsdesaster-statt-notwendiger-klimaschutz (last access: 25 May 2010).

³ Klimabündnis Österreich: Klimabündnis: Kopenhagen ist gescheitert, 19 December 2010, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091219_OTS0031/klimabuendnis-kopenhagen-ist-gescheitert (last access: 22 May 2010).

⁴ Lebensministerium: Kopenhagen: Geteilte Reaktionen auf Minimalkonsens bei Klimagipfel. Berlakovich kritisiert das Fehlen konkreter Zielvorgaben, 28 December 2009, available at: <http://www.lebensministerium.at/article/articleview/80470/1/26609/> (last access: 22 May 2010).

⁵ Bundeskanzleramt Österreich: Bundeskanzler Faymann: Finanzmarktkontrolle, Bankenabgabe und Klimaschutz sind außenpolitische Schwerpunkte, 6 April 2010, available at: http://www.austria.gv.at/site/cob_39134/6597/default.aspx (last access: 25 May 2010).

⁶ Die Grünen: Kogler zu Klimagipfel Kopenhagen brachte Null-Ergebnis – Konferenz gescheitert, 19 December 2009, available at: <http://www.gruene.at/umwelt/artikel/lesen/53582/> (last access: 10 May 2010).

⁷ Johanna Ruzicka: Klimaschutz in der Sackgasse, Der Standard, 13 January 2010.

⁸ WKO: WKÖ-Schwarzer: Zweiteilung der Welt in Sachen CO₂-Restriktionen muss überwunden werden, 20 December 2009, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091220_OTS0008/wkoe-schwarzer-zweiteilung-der-welt-in-sachen-co2-restriktionen-muss-ueberwunden-werden (last access: 5 May 2010).

⁹ WKO: EU-Panorama, 27 November 2009, available at: http://portal.wko.at/wk/dok_detail_file.wk?AngID=1&DocID=1207531&ConID=433687&StID=520663&titel=EU-Panorama.vom.27..November.2009 (last access: 4 May 2010).

¹⁰ WKO: Leitl zu Klimaschutzgipfel: Europa muss alle großen CO₂-Emittenten mit gleichwertigen Verpflichtungen ins Boot bekommen, 11 December 2009, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091211_OTS0186/leitl-zu-klimaschutzgipfel-europa-muss-alle-grossen-co2-emittenten-mit-gleichwertigen-verpflichtungen-ins-boot-bekommen (last access: 4 May 2010).

¹¹ Der Standard, 26 May 2010.

¹² Lebensministerium: Berlakovich: Schritt für Schritt hin zu einem neuen Klimaschutzabkommen, 9 April 2010, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100409_OTS0023/berlakovich-schritt-fuer-schritt-hin-zu-einem-neuen-klimaschutzabkommen (last access: 5 May 2010).

¹³ Note that Hedegaard has already revised her position. Cf. Der Standard, 26 May 2010.

¹⁴ Die Grünen: Klimakonferenz Kopenhagen, available at: http://www.gruene.at/umwelt/klimakonferenz_kopenhagen/ (last access: 16 May 2010); Global 2000: Die 40 Prozent-Studie, 26 January 2010, available at: <http://www.global2000.at/site/de/wissen/klima/40prozentstudie/article-40prozent.htm> (last access: 22 May 2010).

¹⁵ Global 2000: 40% by 2020, 2009, p. 3, available at: http://www.global2000.at/module/media/data/global2000.at_de/content/klima/Question_and_Answers.pdf_me/Question_and_Answers.pdf (last access: 22 May 2010).

¹⁶ SPÖ: Kadenbach: Einigung zu Soforthilfe für Entwicklungsländer zaghafter Schritt in richtige Richtung, 11 December 2009, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091211_OTS0283/kadenbach-einigung-zu-soforthilfe-fuer-entwicklungslaender-zaghafter-schritt-in-richtige-richtung (last access: 20 May 2010).

¹⁷ SPÖ: Bayr zu EU-Soforthilfe: Erfreuliches Angebot der EU an Entwicklungsländer, 11 December 2009, available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091211_OTS0217/bayr-zu-eu-soforthilfe-erfreuliches-angebot-der-eu-an-entwicklungslaender (last access: 20 May 2010).

Austria**Presidential elections in Austria****Hakan Akbulut***

In the reporting period, the presidential elections of 25 April 2010 were the major issue dominating domestic politics and related debate. Apart from the incumbent, Heinz Fischer, a Social Democrat running as an independent candidate, Barbara Rosenkranz from the Freedom Party and Rudolf Gehring from a small party called the Christian Party of Austria (CPÖ) ran for the office. However, given Heinz Fischer's popularity, combined with the ideological affiliation and comparatively unglamorous careers of his challengers, there existed no doubts that Fischer was going to win. Thus, the election campaign lacked any excitement. Nevertheless, the personality of Barbara Rosenkranz and the general attitude adopted by the People's Party during the election campaign caused some controversies.

The candidate of the far-right Freedom Party, Barbara Rosenkranz, was to put the prohibition law banning Nazi ideology and penalising any attempt to glorify or play down Nazi crimes in question.¹ This prompted severe criticism and her eligibility for the office of the president was challenged. Moreover, the publisher of Austria's best-selling tabloid Neue Kronen Zeitung, Hans Dichand, who had previously announced his support for Rosenkranz, now demanded that she should publicly denounce National Socialism. Upon this, Rosenkranz signed an affidavit saying she condemned Nazi crimes and ideology. In the end, Rosenkranz only got about 15 percent of the vote.

As for the People's Party, given the aforementioned popularity of Heinz Fischer and the prospect of him being re-elected in the end, the ÖVP did not nominate a candidate. At the same time, despite the controversies surrounding Rosenkranz, People's Party officials refrained from endorsing the candidacy of Heinz Fischer, who is a former Social Democratic Parliament Speaker and Minister. Instead, prominent ÖVP politicians such as the leader of the parliamentary group, Karlheinz Kopf, openly declared that they would participate in the elections but only submit a blank ballot.² This was, of course, severely criticised by the Social Democratic Party.

The controversies surrounding the personality of Barbara Rosenkranz, the stance adopted by the People's Party and the expectation that Heinz Fischer would be re-elected anyway all added to discussions on the rationale behind the office of the president and contributed to a very low voter turnout (54 percent). Heinz Fischer and Barbara Rosenkranz respectively won 79.33 percent and 15.24 percent of the vote, while Rudolf Gehring captured 5.43 percent.

Apart from the issues raised in the questionnaire and the abovementioned presidential elections, the disruptions in the air traffic caused by the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull Volcano in Iceland, as well as the explosion of an offshore oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico causing the spilling of millions of tons of oil into the sea were also very salient in the reporting period.

¹ Der Standard, 3 March 2010; AustrianTimes.at: Rosenkranz 'condemns Nazi crimes', 8 March 2010, available at: http://www.austriantimes.at/news/General_News/2010-03-08/21366/Rosenkranz_%27condemns_Nazi_crimes%27 (last access: 22 May 2010).

² Der Standard, 29 March 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?