

EU-27 WATCH



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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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Czech Republic
The Czech Republic – an inward-looking critic

 Vít Beneš*

The Czech media presented the Copenhagen conference as a failure.¹ Most Czech political parties formally support the EU's plans for emissions reductions,² but only a few politicians genuinely regretted the conference's failure. Czech Environment Minister Jan Dusík (nominated by the Green Party) made it clear that he expected more from the UN Copenhagen climate conference.³ The Civic Democratic Party (ODS) expressed its willingness to "respect the EU commitment to fight climate change".⁴ The Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) endorses the climate policy and presented its plans to reduce CO₂ emissions in the Czech Republic by, among others, further exploitation of nuclear energy.⁵ Czech President Václav Klaus retained his position as a global warming sceptic and continued his criticism of climate policy. In an interview with the news server FoxNews.com, he described global warming as a "new religion" rather than a science.⁶ According to President Klaus, the radical measures suggested in Copenhagen are unnecessary.

The "green issues" have been salient during the 2010 election campaign. Since 2006, when the Greens made it into parliament, all parties paid more attention to environmental issues in their programmes and campaigns. Nevertheless, the media and political parties focus primarily on domestic issues (breaking Czech coal mining limits, nuclear vs. renewable energy, protection of nature on a national level). Even though Czech citizens agree that climate change represents a serious problem, they are much more sensitive to the problem of the economic crisis and downturn.⁷ There is hardly any public pressure on Czech politicians regarding the fight against global warming and climate change. Czech political elites often perceive climate change as someone else's problem: they perceive the EU's climate policy as imported, as someone else's policy. With the exception of the Green Party (which failed to get into parliament in the May 2010 general elections), key political actors express little genuine interest in the policy. They either respect and accept the EU's climate policy for strategic reasons or openly oppose the policy. There is little genuine interest in climate policy and, consequently, no alternative strategies to fighting climate change are being thought through.

The climate policy is much less salient than, for example, the issues of the EU's energy security or the global economic downturn.⁸ Czech elites embraced the topic of energy security; they treat it as a unique contribution of the Czech Republic to Europe. The EU's external energy security continues to attract the attention of politicians, state officials, commentators and academics. But it should be noted that energy security is understood as a problem in and of itself, and it is being discussed separately from the climate change issue. Czech political elites and experts expect the European Union to change its own energy policy for economic, strategic and geopolitical reasons. The energy security has been discussed with regard to national, rather than global, problems.⁹ In a bid to tackle the Czech Republic's energy security, the environmental organisations proposed a lowering of the energy intensity of the domestic economy. But they appear to be outnumbered by experts and politicians who favour a boost in domestic energy production, mainly through nuclear power plants.¹⁰

The issue of financing mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries had been on the agenda of the Czech EU Presidency during the first half of 2009. The then Minister of the Environment Martin Bursík took the issue of supporting developing countries and helping them adapt to climate change and develop green technologies seriously.¹¹ Nevertheless, the issue has failed to attract wider attention from the public, the media and politicians.

¹ iDNES.cz: Kodaňská konference OSN byla katastrofou, uznala EU [The EU admitted that the Copenhagen conference was a catastrophe], 22 December 2009, available at: http://zpravy.idnes.cz/kodanska-konference-osn-byla-katastrofou-uznala-eu-fxi-zahranicni.asp?c=A091222_212439_zahranicni_ban (last access: 29 June 2010); Czech Radio: Hopes of new climate pact dashed in Copenhagen, 18 December 2009, available at: <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/123328> (last access: 29 June 2010).

² Euractiv.cz: České politické strany vesměs podporují plány EU na snižování emisí [Czech political parties mostly support EU plans for emissions reductions], 17 December 2009, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/clanek/ceske-politicke-strany-vesmes-podporuji-plany-eu-na-snizovani-emisi-006867> (last access: 29 June 2010).

³ Czech News Agency: Czechs expected more from Copenhagen conference – minister, 19 December 2009, available at: http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/tema/zpravy/ods-to-respect-eu-commitment-to-fight-climate-change-leader/411342&id_seznam=2106?id=412861 (last access: 29 June 2010).

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- ⁴ Czech News Agency: ODS to respect EU commitment to fight climate change – leader, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/tema/zpravy/ods-to-respect-eu-commitment-to-fight-climate-change-leader/411342> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ⁵ Euractiv.cz: České politické strany vesměs podporují plány EU na snižování emisí [Czech political parties mostly support EU plans for emissions reductions], 17 December 2009, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/clanek/ceske-politicke-strany-vesmes-podporuji-plany-eu-na-snizovani-emisi-006867> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ⁶ FOXNews.com: Czech President Klaus: Global Warming Not Science, but a “New Religion”, 18 December 2009, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2009/12/18/czech-president-klaus-global-warming-science-new-religion/> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ⁷ European Commission: Eurobarometer 72.1. Results for the Czech Republic, October 2009, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_322_fact_cz_en.pdf (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Czech Chamber of Commerce: Prohlášení účastníků konference „Energetická bezpečnost EU a životní prostředí“ konané dne 17. února 2010 v Mostě [The declaration of the participants of the conference “EU energy security and the environment” held on 17 February 2010 in Most], 17 January 2010, available at: <http://www.komora.cz/regionalni-a-oborove-informace/regionalni-informace-1/informace-z-regionalnich-slozek/prohlaseni-ucastniku-konference-energeticka-bezpecnost-eu-a-zivotni-prostredi-konane-dne-17-unora-2010-v-moste.aspx> (last access: 29 June 2010); see also Prague Security Studies Institute: Jak posílit energetickou bezpečnost ČR? [How to strengthen Czech energy security?], 15 December 2009, available at: <http://www.pssi.cz/files/News/publikace/jak-posilit-energetickou-bezpecnost-cr.pdf> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ¹⁰ Euractiv.cz: Odborníci: Energetickou bezpečnost nelze zúžit pouze na otázku zdrojů [Experts: Energy security can not be narrowed down to the issue of resources], 28 April 2010, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/energetika/clanek/odbornici-energetickou-bezpecnost-nelze-zuzit-pouze-na-otazku-zdroju-007425> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ¹¹ EuropeanVoice.com: The Czechs’ green agenda, 23 January 2009, available at: <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2009/01/the-czechs-green-agenda/63729.aspx> (last access: 29 June 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?