

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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Denmark**The next best choice****Julie Herschend Christoffersen***

The “Next best Choice” was the way in which the left-wing newspaper Information described the choice of Herman Van Rompuy.¹ He might not be an international showstopper, but he is considered valuable because of his strong analytical sense and ability to create consensus. The Danish Prime Minister (PM) Lars Løkke Rasmussen emphasised this point when asked if he thought that the new President of the European Council was too unknown for the prestigious job: “You can be very good at your job, even if you are not well-known”.² The Danish Member of European Parliament (MEP) Jens Rohde, also from the PM’s Liberal party, did not agree with Løkke. He thought that Van Rompuy was chosen so as not to overshadow the heads of the national governments.³

Another newspaper called it a “sensible choice” to give the post to Van Rompuy since the EU is now in need of “peace” to implement the Lisbon Treaty.⁴ Kristeligt Dagblad, a centrist daily newspaper, is very critical towards the new figure and calls it unambitious and a waste of a good opportunity for profiling the EU.⁵ At the grassroots level, the Danish European Movement welcomed the new President of the European Council without any critical comments. The Youth division of the movement was, however, not satisfied with the new leaders, calling it a victory for those opposed to a strong EU.

Not a lot of attention has been paid to the question: which changes to the role of the rotating council presidency are expected? The shifting priorities of the rotating presidency are generally seen as having damaged the consistency of EU foreign policy and it is one of the main goals of the Lisbon Treaty to change this with the common High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The Confederation of Danish Industry (Dansk Industri – DI) asks for more focus on financial issues, but does not mention the new role of the presidency. Jyllandsposten, a conservative daily, emphasises the possible fight for the spotlight and the lack of clarity in the division of labour. The Spanish Presidency will make precedence for the division of labour between the President of the European Council and the rotating presidency.

Danish Diplomat to the rescue

The Prime Minister had the same attitude towards Catherine Ashton as he had towards Van Rompuy: even though you are not a political superstar you can still be very fit for the job.⁶ The overall impression in the Danish debate when Ashton was named as the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was that she was elected because, in terms of gender and political affiliation, she represented that which Van Rompuy is not. There was critique of her lack of foreign policy experience, but some leading dailies have stated that much of the critique was chauvinist⁷ and premature.⁸

Danish newspapers also covered extensively the appointment of Catherine Ashton’s new counselor, Poul Skytte Christoffersen, in late February 2010. Ashton personally requested the nomination of Skytte Christoffersen, until then Denmark’s Ambassador to the EU. The Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lene Espersen, was very satisfied by the choice and called Ashton’s request “a huge acknowledgement of Skytte Christoffersen’s abilities and experience.”⁹ Ashton’s double role as both High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission is hardly mentioned in the Danish debate.

In favour of a strong Europe

On EU foreign policy, Espersen has also declared working for EU unity as her first priority: The “EU risks ending up as a “looser region” if we don’t learn how to agree and speak with [one] voice.”¹⁰ The Foreign Minister has expressed herself since February 2010 to be a strong supporter of a strong EU in the world. However, national experts are not too optimistic on behalf of the European External Action Service (EEAS). In general many observers argue that internal bickering is damaging Ashton and the EU, which is paradoxical considering the Lisbon Treaty was meant to strengthen the EU’s role in the world.¹¹

* Danish Institute for International Studies.

Marlene Wind of the University of Copenhagen fears that Danish diplomats will not get the top positions in the EEAS hierarchy. With Denmark having an opt-out in vital policy areas, high-ranking officials should be from member states which are fully integrated into the EU.

Other observers are also sceptical about the role of the EEAS. They fear that the EU will turn into the role of a mediator rather than a powerful actor, and that the rest of the world will turn away from the EU in world politics.¹² Towards the end of March 2010 the very critical attitude in the media towards Ashton seemed to fade away as she picked up the pace and the EEAS started to come together.

A half open door

The Danish debate concerning the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) has been dominated by the rather complicated procedures the Commission is setting up for the petitions. The EU-critical grassroots movements, such as "Radikal EU-kritisk netværk" and "Folkebevægelsen med EU", were initially against this development. Folkebevægelsen answered a Commission-hearing stating that the wording in the Lisbon Treaty should be interpreted in the least restrictive way. Furthermore, the Commission should be obliged to take the request seriously and not only consider it.¹³ Also, MEP Morten Messerschmidt from Dansk Folkeparti wants all restrictions on the petitions removed.

More EU-friendly grassroots are also complaining over the complicated procedures. The Danish branch of the NGO-network Concord Denmark has launched the first ECI, "Keep your promises to the poor". Despite the enthusiasm over the possibility to have direct influence over the Commission's agenda, the NGO fears that the new demands require a lot of resources that are not available to most grassroots movements.¹⁴ A consequence of this could be a favouring of the lobby industry instead of the grassroots movements, since they are the only ones who have the resources to make petitions of this kind.¹⁵ The European Movement, a pro-EU group, argues that the ECI is only a small part of the positive democratic development the EU is undergoing with the Lisbon Treaty.

¹ Information: Det næstbedste valg, 10 November 2009.

² Søndagsavisen: Løkke: Nye EU-ledere kan blive profiler, 19 November 2009.

³ Nordjyske Stifttidende: Jens Rohde: EU-Udnævnelser: Hvor er mod?, 24 November 2009.

⁴ Dagbladenes Bureau: Fornuftigt Valg, 20 November 2009.

⁵ Kristeligt Dagblad: Europæisk Selvmål, 21 November 2009.

⁶ Søndagsavisen: Løkke: Nye EU-ledere kan blive profiler, 19 November 2009.

⁷ Information: Hvorfor er baronessen usynlig?, 24 February 2010.

⁸ Jyllandsposten: Europas ansigter, 21 November 2010.

⁹ Jyllandsposten: EU's udenrigstjeneste får en dansker i spidsen, 26 February 2010.

¹⁰ Berlingske Tidende: EU står alt for ofte fuldstændigt afklædt og forpjusket tilbage, 6 March 2010.

¹¹ Mandag morgen: Knald eller fald for EUs udenrigstjeneste, 8 March 2010.

¹² Weekendavisen: EU's udenrigspolitik: Høje FUSP, 29 January 2010.

¹³ Folkebevægelsen mod EU: Giv borgerne reel indflydelse!, 30 January 2010, available at:

http://www.folkebevaegelsen.dk/spip.php?article2276&var_recherche=giv%20borgerne%20reel%20indflydelse (last access: 19 May 2010).

¹⁴ Politiken: EU spænder ben for sin egen folkelighed, 15 April 2010.

¹⁵ Information: EU åbner døren for direkte borgerindflydelse – men ikke helt, 7 April 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?