

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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Greece**Much needed leadership in times of crisis****A.D. Papagiannidis and Nikos Frangakis***

The Lisbon Treaty was awaited with interest – if not with trepidation – in Greece, where ratification had proceeded smoothly, while the mainstream political forces, the media and academia were expecting that institutional change would serve as an incentive for a more active Europe.¹ The fact that new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty started working just as a severe, real-time crisis situation was underway (even more so, a crisis in which Greece was instrumental indeed) served to make the treaty's implementation and the Union's institutional mechanisms in general a major issue.

The figure of Herman Van Rompuy was initially greeted with some reluctance, although not in a negative way, given the lack of “international stature” of the Belgian ex-Prime Minister. References to his consensus-building prowess or even to his haiku-writing were often found in the media; but when the Greek debt crisis (and the search for some sort of “European solution”) erupted, Van Rompuy's role in conducting European Council Summit operations, especially in March 2010, and in bridging the bitter differences between Germany and France or rather between Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy, brought him centre-stage in Greece.

Based on this crucial test case of low-intensity leadership, Van Rompuy's tendency to favour more regular (and more focused) European Council sessions was greeted positively. The uneasy equilibrium between the Van Rompuy Presidency of the European Council and the current (rotating) Spanish Presidency looks set to create problems – which, in turn, would be solved by yielding more powers to the President of the European Council. The fact that the “slow rotation” of Eurogroup/ECOFIN Councils – along with the hands-on personality of Jean-Claude Juncker, who also proved instrumental in the Greek debt issue – had positive results for crisis management (especially in the dramatic May 2010 sessions, where the support mechanism of the economies of Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain (PIIGS) was pieced together, with International Monetary Fund assistance) accents this evolution.²

The figure of Catherine Ashton, at the helm of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, was seen as a letdown insofar as expectations for “more Europe” in foreign relations were fuelled by the Lisbon Treaty. Her performance in office served to confirm initial hesitations.

In Greece, progress towards a more credible European foreign policy is viewed positively. But the creation and perspectives of the European External Action Service (EEAS), as a tangible instrument towards this goal, have obtained very little interest. In the same way, expectations from the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), an element of direct democracy on the European level established in the Lisbon Treaty, are quite high in Greece – both in public opinion and in academia. But the Commission's proposal for setting up the ECI mechanism has remained largely unknown.

* **Greek Centre for European Studies and Research.**

¹ See, among others, G. Anastassopoulos: in: TO VIMA, 10 December 2009; P.K. Ioakimidis, in: METARRYTHMISSI, Vol. 35, May 2010.

² For a balanced/critical approach to the post-Lisbon Treaty Europe, see Loukas Tsoukalis: Europe in a Changing World [in Greek], in: International and European Politics (Vol. 17), p. 17; P. Ioakimidis., First Impressions from the application of the Lisbon Treaty, p. 45.

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?