

EU-27 WATCH



No. 9
July 2010

ISSN 1610-6458

www.EU-27Watch.org

EU-27 Watch

Contributing partners are

Austrian Institute of International Affairs, Vienna
Bulgarian European Community Studies Association,
Sofia

Center for European Studies / Middle East Technical
University, Ankara

Centre d'études européennes de Sciences Po, Paris
Centre d'étude de la vie politique, Université libre de
Bruxelles

Centre d'études et de recherches européennes Robert
Schuman, Luxembourg

Centre of International Relations, Ljubljana

Cyprus Institute for Mediterranean, European and
International Studies, Nicosia

Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen

Elcano Royal Institute and UNED University, Madrid
European Institute of Romania, Bucharest

Federal Trust for Education and Research, London

Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki

Foundation for European Studies - European Institute,
Łódź

Greek Centre of European Studies and Research,
Athens

Institute of International Affairs and Centre for Small
State Studies at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik
Institute for International Relations, Zagreb

Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian
Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Institute for Strategic and International Studies, Lisbon

Institute of International and European Affairs, Dublin

Institute of International Relations, Prague

Institute of International Relations and Political
Science, Vilnius University

Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome

Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Riga

Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies,
University of Malta

Netherlands Institute of International Relations
'Clingendael', The Hague

Ohrid Institute for Economic Strategies and

International Affairs, Skopje

Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
(SIPRI)

University of Tartu

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.

The EU-27 Watch No. 9 receives significant funding from the **Otto Wolff-Foundation, Cologne**, in the framework of the *"Dialog Europa der Otto Wolff-Stiftung"*, and financial support from the **European Commission**. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.



Disclaimer

Institutes/authors are responsible for the content of their country reports. The publisher and editorial team cannot be held responsible for any errors, consequences arising from the use of information contained in the EU-27 Watch or its predecessors, or the content of external links on www.EU-27watch.org or in the EU-27 Watch. The content of the EU-27 Watch is protected under German copyright law. The articles of the EU-27 Watch can be printed, copied, and stored for personal, scientific, and educational use for free. Articles of the EU-27 Watch may not be used for commercial purposes. Any other reprint in other contexts is not allowed without prior permission from the publisher. For permission or any other question concerning the use of the EU-27 Watch please contact: info@EU-27watch.org.

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

Hungary

Hungary is looking to the east

Krisztina Vida, Zsuzsa Ludvig and Tamás Szigetvári*

Croatian and Icelandic accession is expected and strongly supported

In the official Hungarian view, any enlargement of the European Union must happen once a country complies with membership criteria and accession negotiations should advance according to the candidate's performance. It seems that, after the recent 10+2 enlargement, the EU will not have "enlargement rounds" with several new member states anymore, but would rather continue the widening process by taking up newcomers one by one. The next new member state of the EU will undoubtedly be Croatia, whose accession treaty could be signed under the Hungarian Presidency enabling the country's entry in 2012. Croatian membership will be very much welcomed by Hungary, being a direct neighbour. Actually, Hungary is highly interested in the European integration of the whole Western Balkan region in the foreseeable future. Hungary is convinced that the Croatian example of preparations can serve as a model for the other candidates and potential candidates in the Western Balkans.

The other country relatively close to membership is Iceland. According to Hungarian high officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,¹ Hungary expects a faster process given Iceland's preparedness and strong ties with the EU. Hungary would very much welcome an Icelandic accession, as this could become another success story of enlargement. Nevertheless, the outcome of this process will mainly depend on the commitment of the Nordic country to become a full member of the EU.

Turkey on a slow track, the Macedonian deadlock is regrettable

As was pointed out before, in Hungary the future widening of the EU is not really seen in "enlargement rounds". The perception is rather that new entrants will join one by one. In fact, negotiations go on with Turkey in a very slow and "cautious" way. According to the official Hungarian position, the negotiations should proceed according to Turkey's level of preparedness, and a clear perspective on the "finalité" of the accession talks should be formulated as soon as possible.

The next country queuing up for membership negotiations is (the Former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia (FYROM). In the opinion of a high official at the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,² the Macedonian story is a sad one, where – due to the unsettled name-dispute with Greece – there seems to be a deadlock. Even though the European Commission released its positive conclusions on the FYROM in October 2009,³ negotiations could not be launched. This is very much regretted by Hungary who is in favour of opening negotiations as soon as possible. Sadly, however, at the moment there seems to be no solution for the highly sensitive Greek-Macedonian dispute, and it is expected that the present financial crisis in Greece might turn Athens' attention away from this issue. In any case, this situation (similarly to the Slovenian-Croatian border dispute) points to the fact that – prior to enlargement/accession – good neighbourly relations are as important as any other preconditions and criteria. In any case, Hungary is encouraging and helping Macedonia to continue with the preparations for membership.

Regardless of all these challenges, Hungary is very supportive concerning further enlargements of the EU (especially towards the Western Balkans), and this official position is maintained no matter which political parties are ruling the country. Furthermore, this attitude is strongly shared by the public, as can be detected in public opinion polls.

Eastern Partnership: a high priority for Hungary

From the beginning of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Hungary was more interested in the eastern dimension of it than in its southern dimension, due to geographical and historical reasons. Accordingly, Hungary has always been in favour of a separate treatment of the two dimensions, arguing that eastern neighbours include European countries with a potential membership perspective while the group of southern neighbours has neither this option nor this kind of ambition. Based on this

* Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

approach, the launch of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) one year ago was welcomed in Hungary. In this framework the EU is assisting six countries to adapt to the EU *acquis* and to its fundamental values. Budapest is extremely interested in the development of EU-Ukrainian relations and is rather active in forming EU-Moldavian relations, too, representing two partner countries from among the six within the EaP initiative. Besides, Hungary is interested in the further strengthening of relations between the EU and the trans-Caucasian countries that are either potential energy sources (Azerbaijan) or future important energy transit countries (Georgia, Azerbaijan).

It is important to emphasise that the Hungarian assessment of the EaP is positive in general, so there is no dividing line on that issue between major parties or between the departing and incoming governments. Concrete proof of this attitude lies in the fact that the EaP was included in the priorities of the Hungarian 2011 presidency programme prepared by the outgoing socialist government (in power until the end of May 2010) and can equally be found among the major regional priorities of the conservative coalition parties (the Hungarian Civic Union and the Christian Democratic People's Party – FIDESZ-KDNP) entering office at the very end of May 2010. One important aim of Hungary, holding the Visegrad-4 presidency in 2010, has been to look for real content in the EaP framework.⁴ Regarding the most important EaP partner country for Hungary, Ukraine, there is a broad consensus on the necessity of maintaining the option of a future EU membership. Also, visa-facilitation with the potential final aim of total liberalisation is a common goal within the Hungarian political elite,⁵ implying that Hungary is among those EU member states that may find the recent promises and substance of the EaP insufficient.

However, there might be some smaller differences between the two governments' (and/or party) emphases and approaches regarding the EaP. The new government being formed by the centre-right FIDESZ-KDNP alliance will probably be more focused on developing ties with the energy-abundant Azerbaijan, and, even more importantly, may be less regardful towards Russia's reservations vis-à-vis the EaP initiative. The new government's policy might include more determined support for Georgia, which it sees rather as a victim than an irresponsible initiator of the 2008 Georgian-Russian conflict. Beyond the different evaluation of the Eastern Partnership, the general approach of the old and new governments to Russia is also rather different, although the Russia-policy of FIDESZ seems to have been "softened" during the past years moving from "value-orientation" towards pragmatism.⁶ The third important political force in the new parliament, the radical right-wing Movement for a Better Hungary, commonly known as Jobbik, calls for developing stronger ties with Russia, seen as a major European power.

The EaP itself is not widely known within the Hungarian public and there is no important pressure group, neither in favour, nor against Hungarian participation in it. The public media is rather neutral on the subject; however, it sometimes highlights the Eastern Partnership initiative as an EU project "against" Russia or more explicitly as a concrete element of competition between the European Union and Russia over their "common post-Soviet neighbourhood". The brand new EaP is a popular theme in academic circles; several conferences, workshops and research projects have already been dedicated to it since its birth in 2008 and official launch in May 2009.

The ultimate aim of Hungary is to conclude a new generation of association agreements with all EaP members. Budapest is already preparing for the first EaP summit, which will take place in May 2011, under the Hungarian Council Presidency.

Union for the Mediterranean: Hungary is rather a policy-taker

The Mediterranean region has never been a priority in Hungarian foreign policy over the past decades, and was especially sidelined prior to Hungary's EU membership. Thus, the Hungarian national attitude towards the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Mediterranean as a whole has evolved in the context of the country's EU integration process.

As far as the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian trio presidency is concerned, it was logical that due to geographical reasons from among the three countries, Spain put Mediterranean issues highest on the agenda. This does not mean that Hungary could not formulate Mediterranean-related issues of its own interest, but Budapest is more likely to join the already ongoing Mediterranean projects than initiate such.

According to Hungarian interests and position, the EU should strike an even balance in representing and promoting the eastern and the southern dimensions of its Neighbourhood Policy.⁷ Furthermore,

this should also be reflected in a rebalancing of the financial envelope leading to a 50-50 percent share instead of the current one third and two thirds division. Hungary participates actively in all the relevant structures and activities of the EMP, but its capabilities are rather limited not only because of its location but also for economic reasons. Public awareness of the EMP or the UfM is still very limited in Hungary, and outside the official circles it is debated only in a relatively restricted academic context.

¹ Interview done at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 12 May 2010.

² Interview done at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 12 May 2010.

³ European Commission: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2009 Progress Report. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Brussels, COM (2009) 533, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2009/mk_rapport_2009_en.pdf (last access: 10 June 2010).

⁴ Based on a communication from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 February 2010, available at: http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Szovivoi_nyilatkozatok/FJ_Mlnszk_20100212.htm (last access: 17 May 2010).

⁵ See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary: Directions and tasks of the Europe-policy strategy of the government, 2007, available at: http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/eu/kormany_eupolitikai_strategiaja/ (last access: 17 May 2010).

⁶ See the interview in the Hungarian newspaper "Magyar Nemzet" with János Martonyi, appointed foreign minister of FIDESZ, 8 April 2010, available at: <http://www.mno.hu/portal/printable?contentID=705754&sourceType=MN> (last access: 17 May 2010).

⁷ Erzsébet N. Rózsa: From Barcelona to the Union for Mediterranean. Northern and Southern Shore Dimensions of the Partnership, HIIA Papers, 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?