

# 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](http://www.EU-27Watch.org).

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## 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](mailto:info@EU-27watch.org)  
[www.EU-27watch.org](http://www.EU-27watch.org)

**iep** 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](mailto:info@iep-berlin.de)

Internet: [www.iep-berlin.de](http://www.iep-berlin.de)

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**Italy****Miscellaneous current issues in Italy**

Jacopo Leone\*

*Immigration:* At the beginning of 2010, an impressive social uprising took place in southern Italy, involving numerous African crop-pickers and the Italian police. Clashes lasted several days, and the news was reported on all national media.<sup>1</sup> This is just one episode which well describes the Italian concern over illegal immigration and its connection with crime. Public opinion seems increasingly worried about the lack of public order, sometimes even in big cities, where closed racial neighbourhoods have emerged in the last decade.

*Corruption:* The past six months have seen a series of political scandals, connected in various ways to corruption and the illegal use of public money.<sup>2</sup> Both sides of the Italian political establishment seem to be involved in the events, leaving a deep sense of dissatisfaction in the national public opinion towards politicians in general.

*Afghanistan:* Following the arrest in Afghanistan of three Italian aid workers of Emergency, a charity organisation funded by Gino Strada, accused of supporting a plot to assassinate the Governor of the Helmand province, a tense debate emerged in the Italian press and political establishment.<sup>3</sup> The episode obtained large coverage in TV shows and parliamentary auditions, even after the release of the three prisoners.<sup>4</sup>

*Regional Elections:* With thirteen out of twenty regions involved in the vote, Italy registered a low turnout (64 percent) in the regional elections held on 28 and 29 March 2010. Although at the centre of a series of scandals and political controversies, the centre-right party, headed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, managed to snatch four regions away from the centre-left and emerged as the main winner. The abstention rate was the highest of the last 15 years.<sup>5</sup>

*Thailand:* In recent weeks, the unstable political situation in Thailand has received much attention by the Italian press. Although no specific political comments have been made on the topic, the public opinion follows the evolution of the clashes between demonstrators and the local government with interest.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Corriere della Sera: Rosarno, altri quattro immigrati feriti. Spari e scontri in strada: è battaglia, 8 January 2010, available at: [http://www.corriere.it/cronache/10\\_gennaio\\_08/rosarno-scontri-maroni\\_cef157a6-fc32-11de-98e4-00144f02aabe.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/10_gennaio_08/rosarno-scontri-maroni_cef157a6-fc32-11de-98e4-00144f02aabe.shtml) (last access: 1 July 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Corriere della Sera: L'appartamento di Scajola e le falle nella tesi del ministro, 3 May 2010, available at: [http://www.corriere.it/cronache/10\\_maggio\\_03/appartamento-scajola-sarzanani\\_6e658120-5685-11df-ae23-00144f02aabe.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/10_maggio_03/appartamento-scajola-sarzanani_6e658120-5685-11df-ae23-00144f02aabe.shtml) (last access: 1 July 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Natalino Ronzitti: L'Italia in Afghanistan dopo il caso Emergency, AffarInternazionali, 19 April 2010, available at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1438> (last access: 1 July 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Unita: Frattini in Parlamento 'Uno dei tre volontari forse libero', 14 April 2010, available at: [http://www.unita.it/news/97381/frattini\\_in\\_parlamento\\_uno\\_dei\\_tre\\_volontari\\_forse\\_libero](http://www.unita.it/news/97381/frattini_in_parlamento_uno_dei_tre_volontari_forse_libero) (last access: 1 July 2010).

<sup>5</sup> La Repubblica: Elezioni Regionali, 28-29 March 2010, available at: <http://www.repubblica.it/static/speciale/2010/elezioni/regionali/index.html> (last access: 1 July 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Corriere della Sera: Thailandia, 20 vittime negli scontri, 11 April 2010, available at: [http://www.corriere.it/esteri/10\\_aprile\\_11/thailandia-scontri-vittime-camicie-rosse\\_fdb7b568-4547-11df-93de-00144f02aabe.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/esteri/10_aprile_11/thailandia-scontri-vittime-camicie-rosse_fdb7b568-4547-11df-93de-00144f02aabe.shtml) (last access: 1 July 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?