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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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Macedonia**In front of the gates of Europe**

Biljana Janeva*

The Republic of Macedonia strongly supports the EU enlargement process for all Western Balkan countries. The Western Balkan region is the only region which is bordered by the EU on all sides. However, not only its geography, but also its multiculturalism and rich multiethnic history make it only natural that it belongs to Europe.

Since Croatia solved the bilateral issue with Slovenia, it is clear that it is advancing to the EU's doorstep. The Republic of Macedonia was also part of the package for accession into the EU, and, having spent five years as a candidate country, it has so far fulfilled the conditions and benchmarks set by the EU and received a recommendation by the EU Commission in order to obtain a start date for the accession negotiations. The only remaining obstacle keeping the Republic of Macedonia from receiving a start date from the EU is the bilateral issue with its southern neighbour – an absurd dispute over Macedonia's constitutional name imposed by Greece. Yet, the Republic of Macedonia is willing to cooperate and to solve this issue in order to take a step further and start negotiations. Nevertheless, the name issue is a very sensitive issue for the Macedonian people, touching their identity and language.

There was huge disappointment expressed by the Macedonian public after the Council of Ministers failed to give a start date for the accession negotiations, and there was general dissatisfaction from the “double standards” imposed on Macedonia and it not being judged by its merits.

“On the 60th anniversary of the day when Schuman presented the proposal for a United Europe, Macedonia is the best example that the EU forgets that his idea was that Europe be open to those who want to join, and also forgets the idea of Jean Monnet that the veto requires a strong reason and the ability to look past the national egoism”, writes the daily Nova Makedonija. “Macedonia will pass yet another year put aside by the unprincipled politics of the EU, which is distant from the ideals of its visionaries. Macedonia is the best example that the basic ideas of the founders of the EU are being ignored today, being blocked on its way toward European integration by one member country. If the founding fathers would be alive, they would have been disappointed that bilateral issues stand in the way of enlargement”, say the Macedonian experts consulted by the newspaper. It quotes the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Macedonia, Antonio Milososki, that the dream of the founders of the EU – a Europe whole and united – can never be realised without the Balkans.¹ With the help of the EU, Macedonia has so far successfully built a functional model of democracy in a multiethnic society, which can serve as an example for the region and abroad.

Having the close historical and cultural connections in mind, the Macedonian model is of great importance for the other Balkan countries, and it has a positive contribution to regional stability. That is why the accession process in Macedonia should be viewed in its larger context, not only through the prism of the solution of the name issue with Greece. “We are not looking for a shorter way, but a steady process which will enable us to advance on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria. The start of the negotiations for Macedonia will be a win-win solution for all”, said Milososki.²

The attitudes in Macedonia regarding its European integration agenda are moving from total disappointment due to the fact that its future is blocked by a member state of the EU (which can last for several years), through encouragement because of the fact that if the country focuses on the EU agenda (the reforms foreseen in the negotiation chapters and the legislation approximation) it can shorten the length of the negotiation process even while sitting in the EU “waiting room”, to positive views that the name issue will be resolved and Macedonia is ready to immediately start working on the negotiation chapters.³

Another issue, which is becoming more and more obvious, is that EU officials do not even use Macedonia's name any more. Being aware of the name dispute between Macedonia and Greece, and even knowing that the country has a temporary name reference – “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” or FYR of Macedonia in short – EU officials, either from ignorance or from respect

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towards their Greek colleagues, refer to the country as “FYROM” (which is perceived as offensive by the Macedonian people) or as “the country”, “your country” or, simply, the Former Yugoslav Republic.⁴

After the bad news from Brussels that Macedonia was not given a date for opening negotiations, the government blamed the EU for not setting a firm agenda for Macedonia. “The EU, in the same amount as Greece, will be guilty if Macedonia doesn’t get a date for starting negotiations in June” was the message sent by both the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Vice-Prime Minister for European integration. Both of them called upon the EU to keep its credibility and be principled in its decision to start negotiations for Macedonia.

The opposition, on the other hand, says that the government is ignoring the clear messages from the EU that there is no other way for membership except through a compromise in the name dispute with Greece. According to the opposition, by doing that, the government is trying to cover up its own responsibility for the failure, regardless of all the consequences Macedonia might face both internally and externally. The opposition leader Crvenkovski said that this is another failure by the government, another missed chance for Macedonia, which has been waiting for 20 months. “Self pity doesn’t move the country forward”, says Crvenkovski. “The prime minister should deal with the problems, not tell us how hard it is for him and who is to blame for his failure”.⁵

Membership perspectives

Regarding the prognosis of the membership perspectives of the countries aspiring towards EU membership, public opinion is clear and realistic. Croatia will undoubtedly become a member state. Iceland will start its negotiations process. Serbia, Albania and Montenegro will receive candidate statuses (and maybe start negotiations for membership before Macedonia). Turkey is already negotiating and still has some issues, but is actively included in the Union for the Mediterranean. The neighbouring states are already planned in the new Europe 2020 Strategy. Where is Macedonia in all of this? was the conclusion drawn by a political talk show on A1 TV.⁶

The biggest fear in Macedonia is that it will be “stuck” waiting for Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo so that these countries can join together. Clearly, they aren’t on the same level of development and the delay could only worsen the fragile situation in the country.

At the moment, public opinion in Macedonia is not so certain there will be a next round of enlargement after Croatia, or, if there will be, when it would happen. The uncertainty comes mostly from the EU’s “tiredness” concerning enlargement and its will to resolve its own problems before further enlargement. Also, with European economic recovery in question, it is still uncertain if the EU has the capacity to enlarge at the moment.

Unfortunately, that is not what the candidate and accession countries want to hear. The future looks much grimmer without an EU integration perspective. It is a question of stability, economic prosperity, access to markets and, above all, peace and security. Not having a clear signal from the EU has a demotivating and demoralising influence on the people: it attracts Euroscepticism, instability and uncertainty.

For Macedonia, the undesirable outcome of every EU meeting has consequences in its political and interethnic relations, as well as in the economy. Social and economic tensions are rising and there is only one subject in the internal discussion – the name issue.

There should be a clear and firm rule in the EU that one member state should not, in any condition, use its position to “bully” a candidate country which has fulfilled all the conditions necessary for the next step in its accession process. It should be reiterated that bilateral issues of any nature are only bilateral issues between the two countries, not between the EU as a whole and that country. Or, if there is a rule that all bilateral issues are indeed EU issues, then the EU should show true leadership and arbitrate all bilateral issues, present and potential, between all member countries and candidate countries.⁷

The Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean

The general opinion in Macedonia regarding the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the Union for the Mediterranean is that the EU should focus more on its own “backyard” – the Western Balkans. The EU should deal with the closest issues first, as the Balkan region is not even a backyard. It belongs to the

EU: it is surrounded on all sides by the EU, but it is not in the EU. With regard to the EaP, the debate revolves around whether the EU will focus more attention on the EaP countries from 2011 onward and forget Macedonia or force it to wait for the other Western Balkan states (Serbia, Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo). "The Western Balkans were the focus in 2009, now it is Iceland and the new neighbourhood countries will be next. Is Macedonia lost? In any case, there will be a change in the policy of the EU regarding enlargement", analyses the Dnevnik daily newspaper.⁸

The countries from the EaP are regarded as having more support in the EU, especially among the new member states (from the 2004 and 2007 enlargement). This will also be evident in the instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA), which will probably be diminished or conjoined with the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI), which will pit Macedonia against bigger competition, prognoses the daily Dnevnik. Most discussions in public regarding the EaP are in correlation to the Macedonian position and standpoint.

The creation of the Union for the Mediterranean was considered by many as a utopian and false hope for connecting the Mediterranean countries and for creating a greater influence of European politics. The functioning of the Union for the Mediterranean is only monitored and reported in Macedonia.

¹ Interviews of the newspaper Nova Makedonija, EU forgets about the ideals of Monet and Shuman, available at: <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=5810918166&id=9&setlzdanie=21978> (last access: 8 May 2010).

² Speech by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Macedonia, Antonio Milososki at a conference in Sweden, available at: <http://www.vlada.mk/?q=node/5406> (last access: 21 May 2010).

³ Even without a date we can negotiate with EU, analyses Nova Makedonija daily newspaper, available at: <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=5710102918&id=9&setlzdanie=21977> (last access: 7 May 2010).

⁴ Analysis by the time.mk news portal, available at: <http://www.time.mk/read/cbcf0afa7/ae14c107d/index.html> (last access: 20 May 2010).

⁵ Analysis and interviews by A1 TV: Macedonia asks for principality by the EU, available at: <http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=123988> (last access: 20 May 2010).

⁶ From Studio 2 vo 20, aired on the 10 May 2010, available at: <http://a1.com.mk/default.aspx> (last access: 20 July 2010).

⁷ In the OHRID Institute's Leadership Monitoring Report N 2, p. 43.

⁸ Available at: <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=DEBE6D4BCAA39995BD97D9006920FD74> (last access: 18 May 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?