


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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Malta**New posts for more coherence**

Stephen Calleya*

The new President of the European Council is regarded as the individual who is supposed to bring further coherence to EU policy-making. As former Belgian Prime Minister, he is highly respected and was well received during his brief visit to Malta earlier this year. There is an assumption that his role will supersede the role previously held by the member state of the rotating presidency, but there is a great deal of ambiguity among public opinion about the exact extent to which the rotating presidency modality will be made redundant. The fact that the Spanish EU Presidency has adopted a more or less “business as usual” attitude when it comes to their presidency has not helped to clarify the precise role that the new President of the European Council is expected to play.

The new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is regarded as an important new actor that should provide a more coherent foreign policy perspective to the EU decision-making process. Criticism of Catherine Ashton in the international media has not been mirrored in the Maltese press. Most of the attention has focused on the policy platform that she is seeking to introduce in line with the Lisbon Treaty agenda with a particular focus on reform of the EU's diplomatic service.

The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) is regarded as a positive development as it should bring more coherence to the EU's diplomatic representation globally. An issue of concern is the extent to which every EU member state will have sufficient representation in the future EEAS. Similar to other small states in the European Union, the major concern of Malta's government is that a future EEAS should not be set up at the expense of small states being underrepresented in the new EEAS. Malta is thus lobbying to ensure that a significant number of diplomats from Malta are selected to also play a direct role in a future EEAS.

Malta would also like to see future EEAS diplomatic training provide a focus on issues pertaining to the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, which has provided post-graduate training to more than six hundred diplomats since opening its doors in 1990, has been identified as a venue where such training can take place.¹

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) has not been widely discussed in Malta. The media and certain civil society spokespersons regularly refer to the importance of the EU addressing its democratic deficit. In this respect, if the ECI can offer a clear and transparent mechanism through which the voice of citizens of the EU can be heard, then it would be a welcome development.

¹ Hon. Dr. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta, speech, seminar on the Spanish Presidency of the EU and the Mediterranean, 18 March 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?