

EU-27 WATCH



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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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Cyprus**Treaty reforms overshadowed by more existential problems****Nicoleta Athanasiadou, Costas Melakopides and Christos Xenophontos***

Six months since the Lisbon Treaty entered into force, the majority of Cypriot citizens, as well as a number of Cypriot politicians, have not yet clearly comprehended the changes this Treaty has brought into the EU's decision-making process. Once again, the explanation seems to rest with the fact that the overwhelming, daily and anxious preoccupation of the political classes and the public opinion of the Republic of Cyprus centres on following the vicissitudes of the country's "existential problem" (i.e., the military occupation), including the protracted bi-communal negotiations for its settlement in a fair and viable manner.

To be sure, in December 2009, when the Cypriot media covered the official ceremony and the celebrations surrounding the Lisbon Treaty, they did provide a schematic description of the changes that would follow the implementation of the Treaty.¹ According to the Cypriot media, the assumption of duties by the European Council's first permanent President, Herman van Rompuy, and by the first High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, were two cardinal changes brought about by the Treaty that could enhance the democratic operation and transparency of the Union. Other reportedly significant changes include the replacement of the unanimity vote in the Council by that for a special majority (representing 55 percent of member states and 65 percent of the EU population); the increased powers of the European Parliament and national parliaments; and the activation of the EU diplomatic service, giving the EU a stronger voice on the international scene.

According to Cypriot political analysts, the Lisbon Treaty has already led to a significant shift in Brussels' power landscape. They add, at the same time, that many of its effects were not written into the Treaty and are only slowly coming to light as the EU's policies are implemented.² Moreover, analysts we conversed with pointed out that the main visible changes to follow from the ratification and implementation of the Lisbon Treaty are the increase of the European Parliament's co-legislating powers and the creation of the posts of the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In addition, the European Council, now an institution with its own president and budget, as well as the European Parliament, is increasing its status in the EU power hierarchy. Consequently, it seems indubitable that the decision-making status of the European Council and the European Parliament has been raised, whereas the Commission appears to be somehow "squeezed" between the two.

Our interlocutors at the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs have noted that the Lisbon Treaty entails implications on how member states act in Brussels, as the dynamics within the European Council have completely shifted.³ They also noted that not only Cypriot politicians, but also other top EU politicians, are still learning to function within the reformed framework of the Lisbon Treaty. Moreover, they stated that, as the entire decision-making process has undergone serious alterations, from now on the member states must provide more persuasive arguments and must have direct cooperation and communication with key actors in other EU bodies, and especially with the President of the European Council and within the European Parliament. The Court of Justice of the European Union is also expected to assume a more significant role in the coming years.

With the Lisbon Treaty, Van Rompuy's main role is to "chair" and "drive forward" internal meetings of the EU leaders in the European Council and ensure the external representation of the Union on issues concerning the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Nevertheless, according to our interlocutors, these responsibilities are not yet clearly separated from the various responsibilities held by the President of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.⁴ What is suggested is closer cooperation amongst these posts and a better connection between the EU's different institutional bodies and the EU member states.

Catherine Ashton's mission to create a coherent European Foreign Policy is certainly perceived as quite challenging. Considering the fact that – due to EU multiformity – the Union's member states do

* Cyprus Institute of Mediterranean, European and International Studies.

not always agree on a number of important international problems, Cypriot political commentators conveyed the opinion that, while a coherent European foreign policy will take time, Ashton should create a vast network of liaisons among her office, the EU institutions, and the member states.⁵ Such a stance would help avoid adverse complications in the forthcoming future.

The Lisbon Treaty ushers in another important element in the attempts for European integration. As explained by George Eliopoulos, spokesman of the European Commission's Representation in Cyprus, all of the EU's delegations across the world will henceforth become de facto EU embassies.⁶ According to officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this is supposed to give impetus to the frequently incoherent EU foreign policy by bringing all its different dimensions – diplomatic, military, civil and developmental – under one roof.⁷ Recognising Cyprus' small size, Cypriot diplomats also expressed concerns regarding the difficulties that most small member states may face vis-a-vis the development of the Union's external policies. Consequently, they underlined the importance of linking directly the ministries of foreign affairs with Ashton's services in order to strengthen the aspiration to a coherent EU foreign policy.

Meanwhile, in light of the Lisbon Treaty, the main Cypriot opposition party (Democratic Rally of Cyprus – DISY) accused the Nicosia government of failing to properly inform the public on the Treaty's provisions.⁸ DISY also argued in favour of Cyprus' application for membership to the Partnership for Peace programme (PfP) and criticised the prospect of Cyprus' demilitarisation. As DISY argued, Article 42, Paragraph 3, of the Lisbon Treaty refers to the commitment of member states to gradually improve their military capabilities. The proposal for the demilitarisation of Cyprus would constitute a deviation from the EU acquis, leaving Cyprus dependent for its protection on foreign forces. Also supporting the PfP project was the governmental coalition-party (Democratic Party – DIKO), which noted that Cypriot participation in the Common Foreign and Security Policy mechanisms "cannot be a-la-carte". Similarly, the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK) reiterated its long-held position: now, more than ever, it is necessary to apply for membership to the PfP, as it would best serve the interests of Cyprus.⁹ EDEK also argued that, following an eventual settlement of the Cyprus problem, Cyprus would unquestionably need a small military force in order to be capable of protecting its sovereignty. European Party (EVROKO) also presented parallel arguments and added that, following the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU will become the forum where Cyprus can defend its rights best.¹⁰

In response, government spokesman Stephanos Stephanou and ruling left-wing Progressive Party for the Working People (AKEL) leader, Andros Kyprianou, argued that the demilitarisation proposal is a permanent goal of the Greek Cypriot side since 1989.¹¹ Stephanou also talked of an "arbitrary and dangerous" interpretation of the Lisbon Treaty by DISY and remarked that the Treaty does not set the existence of an armed force as a prerequisite for participation in the Union's defence mechanisms.

¹ Press Reports, December 2009.

² Interviews conducted by Christos Xenophontos and Nicoleta Athanasiadou, Nicosia, late May-June 2010.

³ Interviews conducted by Christos Xenophontos, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicosia, late May-June 2010.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Interviews conducted by Christos Xenophontos and Nicoleta Athanasiadou, Nicosia, late May and June 2010.

⁶ George Eliopoulos spokesman of the European Commission's Representation in Cyprus: Statements, Nicosia, 01/12/2009, (reported by CyBC TV and SIGMA TV main evening news).

⁷ Interviews conducted by Christos Xenophontos, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicosia, early June 2010.

⁸ Tasos Mitsopoulos, MP of DISY party: Statements by DISY party MP, Nicosia, 04/02/2010, (as reported by all Cypriot Media).

⁹ Press Reports, February 2010.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

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?