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On the project

Euroscepticism and the European Parliament elections in 2014, the EU's Neighbourhood in light of the Ukraine crisis and power relations in the EU: The EU-28 Watch project is mapping out discourses on these issues in European policies all over Europe. Research institutes from all 28 member states as well as Iceland, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey give overviews on the discourses in their respective countries.

This survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire that has been elaborated in March 2014. Most of the 33 reports were delivered in June 2014. This issue and all previous issues are available on the EU-28 Watch website: www.EU-28Watch.org.

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1. Euroscepticism and European Parliament elections

Commitment to European integration

The key topics in the electoral campaign were the fight against unemployment, the economic crisis, the preservation of social rights, climate protection, data safety and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Basically, all politically relevant forces from Luxembourg represented in the European Parliament are pro-EU. The defence of what is commonly called the European model of welfare state was in fact part of the electoral campaign, due to the fact that Europe is mostly considered to be part of the answer to a globalized world putting pressure on the achievements of the social state. This does not mean that the Commission's economic policy is overwhelmingly welcomed, but there is no relevant party saying that the achievements of the Luxembourgish welfare state can be better defended outside the Union.

The choice of Jean-Claude Juncker for the presidency of the European Commission was of major importance and contributed probably to a large extent to the good performance of the Christian Social People's Party (CSV). The perspective that a Luxembourger might become the president of the Commission - the third one with a Luxembourg passport –fills some of his fellow citizens with pride. Nonetheless, Martin Schulz, the socialist candidate, was backed with strong support by the Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP). However, the election results have revealed that Schulz campaign was not really much help for his Luxembourgish supporters. The LSAP was one of the big losers of the elections. As for the other candidates, their political impact in Luxembourg was very small.

(Soft-)euroscepticism only at second glance

During the electoral campaign the main Luxembourgish newspaper, the *Luxemburger Wort*, headlined: "(almost) all political parties united for Europe - parties position themselves for the intensive phase of the campaign. They are still seeking for substantially distinctive positions" (Bumb). This analysis is indeed appropriate for the 'big four', already represented in the European Parliament in the 2009-2014 term: the Christian Social People's Party (CSV), the Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP), the Democratic Party (DP) and the Greens (Déi Greng). Due to the fact that Luxembourg is one of the smallest Member States, only six seats are allocated to its candidates for the Strasbourg hemicycle. On the background of the moderate political landscape it was arithmetically rather doubtful that any other than the aforementioned parties would be represented in the European Parliament. However, eurosceptical parties were not totally absent in the run-up to the elections.

The Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR) campaigned with the slogan "More Luxembourg, less Europe", aspiring for a Europe of nation-states. Curiously enough, the ADR, considering itself as the only eurosceptical party, wants to keep the Eurozone and is far from advocating an exit from the Union.

The Left (Déi Lénk) appealed for voters by campaigning for the "Reconstruction of the European Union" from a socialist and anti-capitalist angle. The Communist Party (KPL) called for the nullification of the Lisbon Treaty. Although none of the rather (soft-)sceptical parties collected individually sufficient votes to be represented in the European Parliament, the results of the 2014 elections give evidence of some discomfort with the state of the Union. Together, they represent approximately 15 percent of the voters.

Elections to the European Parliament in the light of national snap elections

The high turnout rate of about 90 percent is due to electoral duty - in Luxembourg, voting is compulsory. Traditionally, European elections were held the same day as national elections. But snap elections in October 2013 have led to the first really European electoral campaign in Luxembourg. The outcome of the elections must be analyzed in the light of Jean-Claude Juncker's candidacy for the presidency of the European Commission and the national elections just seven months ago. Although Juncker's Christian Social People's Party (CSV) gained the most seats in the Luxembourgish parliament, it was evicted from government by a coalition of Liberals, Socialists and Greens. On the background of the national elections, the three parties in the current Luxembourg government had to bear considerable losses in the elections to the European Parliament. However, the attribution of seats doesn't change in comparison with the previous term 2009-2014. They are distributed as follows: CSV 3 seats, LSAP 1 seat, DP 1 seat, The Greens 1 seat.

Links:

- Christoph Bumb: (Fast) alle vereint für Europa, Luxemburger Wort, 6 May 2014.
- Christoph Bumb, [Nationaler Populismus light](#), Luxemburger Wort, 23 May 2014.
- Le portail de l'actualité gouvernementale, [Résultats des élections européennes 2014 au Luxembourg](#), 26 May 2014.
- Christoph Bumb, Die Stunde der Euro-Pragmatiker, Luxemburger Wort, 22 February 2014.
- Roy Grotz, [Analyse vun de Resultater vun den Europawahlen](#), 26 May 2014.

2. The EU's Neighbourhood

Trust in Russia weakened for years

Beware of the fact that Luxembourg is but a small figure on the chessboard of international diplomacy, it is an intrinsic feature of its foreign policy to stick to the framework of international law and to the positions found within the EU Foreign Affairs Council and NATO. In an interview given on 1 April 2014, on occasion of the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, the Luxembourg Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean Asselborn, blamed Russia for violating international law and treaties. He claimed that trust in the country has been weakened significantly for the next years. Nonetheless, he said that the relationship with Russia as a whole should not be put into question, taking into account Europe's dependency on Russian gas and knowing that Luxembourg's financial sector would be affected by economic sanctions given the fact that Luxembourg is the third biggest investor in Russia and serves as a hub for Russian activities and investments in the EU.

Europe's mistake not to be reiterated

From the Luxembourgish stance, the Ukraine crisis confirms the necessity of the Eastern Partnership. However, the political class probably shares the view of the Grand Duchy's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean Asselborn, that it was a big mistake to urge Ukraine to choose between the West and Russia - a mistake that should not be repeated in the wider context of the Eastern Partnership. In other words, the partnership with eastern countries should not provoke further antagonism towards Russia.

Negotiations with Turkey should continue

In the context of the elections of May 2014, one single party, the eurosceptical Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR) campaigned openly against future membership of Turkey in the EU. All parties heavily criticise the current Turkish government under Prime Minister Erdogan for the way it deals with protests and for its restriction of press freedom. Nonetheless, the Luxembourgish Ministry of Foreign Affairs still considers EU negotiations with Turkey as part of the process of a transition to democracy.

Links:

- Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes, [Rapport d'activité 2013](#), 12 March 2014.
- Geneviève Montaigu, [La Turquie, un ami de choix](#), 20 November 2013.
- Romain Hilgert, [Aus dem Schatten der Kammerwahlen](#), 14 March 2014.
- Jean-Lou Siweck, [Erschütterungen](#), 26 May 2014.
- Jean Asselborn, ["Das Vertrauen in Russland ist stark angeknackst"](#), 2 April 2014.
- Frédéric Ruaz, [50 milliards de dollars dans la balance, L'essentiel](#), 10 March 2014.

3. Power relations in the EU

*Germany as part of the *directoire**

Traditionally, the wellbeing of Luxembourg is considered to depend, among other things, on a balanced relationship between France and Germany and on its own good relations with both countries. Germany's relative strength compared to France's is not perceived as a major problem. What is really criticised is the attitude of the big member states in the European Council. The policy of a *directoire*-group of big States is seen as being detrimental to the supranational approach favoured by smaller member states.

At the same time, the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, was repeatedly criticised for her rigour in the financial crisis. From the Luxembourgish point of view, the problem of especially high youth unemployment in southern Europe has not found sufficient attention in German politics. Finally, the support by Merkel for the former Luxembourgish Prime Minister, Jean-Claude Juncker, as future president of the Commission has produced a very positive echo. In view of growing scepticism concerning European integration and the election of Eurocritical parties in most European member states, the pro-European stance of the German government is rather reassuring from the Luxembourgish point of view.

More integration

The austerity policy supported by the Commission is openly criticized by virtually all political parties because it is not sufficiently flanked by measures to combat unemployment. Since the outbreak of the financial crisis, members of the Luxembourg government argued repeatedly in favour of Eurobonds in

order to support the member states under the pressure of financial markets. On the other hand, the Luxembourg government sticks to the control mechanisms of the Eurozone and to an anti-inflationist monetary policy.

Any reform agenda in favour of more intergovernmentalism is rejected by virtually all political parties. Just one party which represents about 7.5 percent of the Luxembourgish electorate wants "More Luxembourg and less Europe."

Most recently, a prominent Luxembourgish Member of the European Parliament from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), Charles Goerens, sent a letter to the president of the European Parliament calling for an open vote in order to choose the next president of the European Commission.

A possible British exit

From a Luxembourgish point of view, a possible UK exit as a consequence of a referendum to be held in 2017 is no longer a terrifying idea. In fact, the British veto of an EU-wide treaty change in December 2011, which finally led to an inter-governmental agreement without the UK called fiscal treaty, is but one British decision undermining European integration. Luxembourgish Members of the European Parliament speak openly in favour of the UK leaving the European Union. Lately, Cameron's opposition to the appointment of Jean-Claude Juncker as the next president of the European Commission has been harshly criticized.

Links:

- tageblatt.lu, [Asselborn wehrt sich gegen deutsches Diktat](#), 26 March 2013.
- Michèle Gantenbein, [Wohin driftet Europa?](#), 26 March 2014.
- Charles Goerens, [Open letter to the President of the EP](#), 5 June 2014.
- Frank Engel (MEP), [Europa hat anderes zu tun, website of the Chrëschtlech-Sozial Vollekspartei](#), 24 January 2014.
- Luxemburger Wort (édition française), [Juncker ne se mettra pas à genoux devant Londres](#), 6 June 2014.