

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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Bulgaria**Low salience of Lisbon Treaty implementation in Bulgaria**

Katia Hristova*

The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty had limited coverage in Bulgaria and provoked no major debate in Bulgarian society. This trend is inherited from the pre-accession period when an almost complete lack of public attention to the EU constitutional debate and the following ratification crisis prevailed. The few interested media publications have commented on the entry in force of the Lisbon Treaty mainly in reference to Bulgaria's deficiencies as a new member state in fulfilling its obligations and the remedies that the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union could bring to that situation with new provisions in the areas of freedom, security and justice. Special attention is paid to the further federalisation of the Union through the reinforcement of the EU criminal justice system that will bring about a "more effective prosecution of criminals and will guarantee individuals' rights more effectively in free movement Europe".¹

However, the changing role of the European Parliament within the EU institutional architecture was intensively discussed following the unsuccessful hearing of the then Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs Rumiana Jeleva as commissioner designate.

The work of the new President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, is reflected in media articles mainly in relation to the settlement of the Greek economic crisis. Nonetheless, assessment of his performance so far is hard to be found either in official statements of political actors, or in public debate. Public opinion in Bulgaria is still not concerned with the work of the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton.

Bulgaria will consider getting one head of mission position from 32 announced vacancies for heads of EU diplomatic missions in third countries a success. The procedure is part of a regular rotation of diplomatic representatives, which so far headed the delegations of the European Commission. With the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the missions become EU representations and are under the control of the European External Action Service (EEAS). According to the spokesperson of the Bulgarian Foreign Affairs Ministry Vessela Tcherneva, Bulgaria is hoping to get one position for an ambassador in a country from the Black Sea region or the Balkans, because it is there where "we have interests and expertise".²

Bulgaria was part of the group of new EU member states that insisted, while the diplomatic service was being established, that the principle of geographic balance be taken into account in order to ensure that younger member states would not be less represented – first, because the representatives of old member states dominate in the current bodies of the Union (where 2/3 of the EEAS personnel would come from) and, second, because the candidates from the "old" EU nations have greater experience and longer careers in European institutions.

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is still an unfamiliar concept in Bulgaria. Although the National Assembly, following the spirit of the Lisbon Treaty, adopted a new Law on Direct Civic Participation in the State and Local Government³ in June 2009 where the citizens' initiative is for the first time mentioned in Bulgarian legislation, the new instrument has never attracted public attention. A modest attempt by civil society organisations to comment on the opportunities that the ECI will open for civic interests to be forwarded to the EU political process was made in the framework of a conference "Europe 2020 – The Civic Vision" held in Sofia on 29 and 30 January 2010. The overall assessment agreed by participants is that the ECI is a very positive development and expectations of it are high, perhaps too high. Therefore it will need to prove itself with the necessary precaution to focus on proper issues so that the enthusiasm is not wasted. Another key aspect will be the Commission's response to this initiative.⁴

¹ Svetoslav Terziev: We are New Bulgarians, Are we? The Lisbon Treaty enhances the hope for Bulgaria to become a "normal" country, 2 December 2009, Segabg daily, available at: <http://www.segabg.com/online/new/articlnew.asp?issueid=4546§ionId=5&id=0000901> (last access: 30 July 2010).

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- ² Available at: <http://www.euinside.eu/en/news/sofia-hopes-for-one-eu-mission-chief> (last access: 30 July 2010).
- ³ State Gazette 44, 12 June 2009, available at: <http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/index.faces> (last access: 30 July 2010).
- ⁴ Available at: <http://parliament.europe.bg/en/?id=26996&category=371> (last access: 30 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?