

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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Croatia**Van Rompuy received more attention than Ashton**

Senada Šelo Šabić*

The Council President received media attention with regard to Croatia's accession negotiations

The media describes Herman Van Rompuy as a discrete and skilled compromise developer. In his own words, he “would perform his duties discretely, would search for consensus and would respect the specificity of each member state.”¹ Vanja Figenwald, a journalist at Lider magazine, commented that only uninformed persons can wonder why the duties of the President of the European Council are vaguely defined when everybody knows that the EU excels in precise definitions. The reason is that the European Council is and will remain the only true source of power.² The March 2010 meeting of the new Croatian President Ivo Josipović and the new President of the European Council in Brussels was widely covered. Herman Van Rompuy repeated the official EU position that Croatia can complete negotiations this year if it meets all conditions.³ Ivo Josipović replied that the government, the parliament, and he as President were determined to prepare Croatia for EU membership.⁴ Herman Van Rompuy visited Croatia on 5 July 2010 as the first stop on his first trip to the Western Balkans. “This visit is a way to demonstrate to Croatia and the region my personal commitment to the integration of the region into the EU”, said the President of the European Council.⁵

High Representative will get more attention when she engages in regional issues

The media describes Catherine Ashton as a lady not well known even in the United Kingdom, the country which was given the post of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to partly relax its obstructionist position *vis-à-vis* the European External Action Service (EEAS). Yet, Catherine Ashton, the former EU Commissioner for Trade, may prove to be exactly the right candidate for this post. Not controversial, not highly visible, and without a complicated professional history, she might succeed (with the help of ‘quiet diplomacy’⁶) in making progress on many fronts. “Judge me by results”, she said after the appointment.⁷ The fact that on her trip to the Western Balkan region in February 2010 Catherine Ashton did not visit Croatia (she travelled to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) also explains her limited media coverage.⁸ As the High Representative gets more engaged in the region of Southeast Europe, which she has put high on her list of priorities, more intensive media coverage will follow.

How efficient the new diplomatic service will be is yet to be seen

For the first time in history, the EU will have a single diplomatic service, published Novi list.⁹ The aim of the EEAS, with offices in 136 countries, is to strengthen the EU's global position. However, the EU has so far managed to agree on only two foreign affairs issues – the Middle East peace process and the regional approach to the Western Balkans. If the EU is to demonstrate its strength through diplomacy, it has to make its diplomatic service operable and efficient. It needs to address concerns of small countries that fear they may end up on the margins of the decision-making process within the EEAS and in personnel allocation, as well as the concerns of larger states such as the UK, which insists that the diplomatic service cannot include consular duties.¹⁰

ECI has the potential to open a debate in the future

Information on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) was published on the website of the Croatian parliament, including a brief explanation on how the ECI could be implemented.¹¹ No debate on the merit and effect this direct democracy instrument may have on the nature of the Union itself is to be found at this point in time, but if it develops into a tangible tool in the hands of European citizens, assessments will abound everywhere, Croatia included.

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¹ Herman Van Rompuy: I will remain open for dialogue, Novi list, 21 November 2009; Bruno Lopandić: New rules for the future, Vjesnik, 14 January 2010, available at: <http://www.vjesnik.hr/html/2010/01/14/ClanakTx.asp?r=tem&c=5> (last access: 16 May 2010).

² Vanja Figenwald: European Council dictates freedom of the first EU President, 26 November 2009, available at: <http://www.liderpress.hr/Default.aspx?sid=90826> (last access: 20 May 2010).

³ Herman Van Rompuy: Croatia can complete negotiations with the EU by the end of this year (in Croatian), SEEBiz, 5 March 2010, available at: <http://www.seebiz.eu/hr/politika/herman-van-rompuy-hrvatska-moze-završiti-pregovore-ove-godine.70027.html> (last access: 15 May 2010).

⁴ Nataša Božić: Europe particularly worried by events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'President Ivo Josipović met with the leaders of the EU who commended the progress our country made towards the EU', Novi list, 6 March 2010.

⁵ Augustin Palokaj: Van Rompuy: We are ready to accept you as the next EU member, Jutarnji list online, available at: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/van-rompuy--spremni-smo-vas-prihvatiti-kao-slijedecu-clanicu-eu/844149/> (last access: 5 July 2010).

⁶ Ksenija Jurišić, who teaches diplomacy at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, defines 'quiet diplomacy' as a tool for strengthening dialogue and cooperation among parties who may express different views on certain issues. Ksenija Jurišić: Quiet diplomacy – diplomacy without public noise, Političke analize, Vol 1, No 1, February 2010, p. 46.

⁷ Herman Van Rompuy: I will remain open for dialogue, Novi list, 21 November 2009.

⁸ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration published a brief report on Catherine Ashton's visit to the region, available at: <http://www.mvpei.hr/ei/default.asp?ru=1&gl=201002220000007&sid=&jezik=1> (last access: 16 May 2010).

⁹ Marko Lederer: EU gets single diplomatic service, Novi list, 28 April 2010; Marko Lederer on internet portal H-alter argues that new mechanisms have the potential to increase efficiency and enlarge democracy in the EU. Catharine Ashton, in his view, will have political space and a whole army of about 8,000 diplomats to make her work recognisable in the EU and abroad. Marko Lederer: New treaty – new Europe, H-alter, 1 December 2009, available at: <http://www.h-alter.org/vijesti/europa-regija/novi-ugovor-nova-europa> (last access: 16 May 2010).

¹⁰ Bruno Lopandić: European diplomacy in service of clearer foreign policy, Vjesnik, 29 April 2010, available at: <http://193.58.252.6/html/2010/04/29/Clanak.asp?r=tem&c=2> (last access: 16 May 2010).

¹¹ EU citizens will be able to propose laws by petition, 6 April 2010, available at: <http://www.sabor.hr/Default.aspx?art=32967> (last access: 16 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?