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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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Czech Republic**The Czech Republic – neglecting implementation because of treaty ratification hangover?**

Mats Braun*

The Czech Republic was the last country to ratify the Lisbon Treaty. The late and dramatic Czech ratification of the treaty has been followed by a certain “treaty ratification hangover” which has manifested itself through little media interest in the implementation process of the treaty. At the same time, the political situation in the country, with a low profile caretaker cabinet in office, has had the consequence that the country lacks a clear vision of its priorities during the implementation phase. However, to the extent that there is a coherent Czech view on the implementation, this is a perspective that tones down the potential political dimension of the new offices and institutions introduced by the treaty, and prefers to view them as technicalities. From the Czech perspective, the President of the European Council should be a moderator, while the European External Action Service (EEAS) is preferably discussed as an expert team and not as a real diplomatic corpus, a European ministry of foreign affairs or something along those lines.

From the Czech official perspective it was essential that the first President of the European Council should be a person viewed rather as a moderator than as a strong political leader. Herman Van Rompuy was, from this perspective, a good choice, even if part of the political elite probably considered him too much of a Euro-federalist. Especially the Civic Democrats (ODS), who were in government until spring 2009, have a very intergovernmentalist vision of the EU. However, the first reactions to the appointment of Van Rompuy were rather positive, even if politicians, journalists and experts all agreed on one point – they knew very little about this man.¹ Even after his initial months in office, some commentators remained sceptical about the possibilities of this unknown Belgian getting something done in his new position. However, his involvement in solving the Greek economic crisis was in general viewed rather positively; at least, he was not considered to be the one to blame for the allegedly slow EU reaction. Politicians in general have remained positive or at least wanted to give Van Rompuy more time before commenting on his work.

It should also be noted that the Czech media has started referring to the President of the European Council as the “Euro-president”. This non-precise vocabulary is also common among well-established and respected newspapers and weeklies. It is likely that this increases the prestige of the office in the eyes of ordinary Czech citizens, but it is questionable what effect it has on their understanding of the EU and the general understanding of the second “EU President”, i.e., the President of the European Commission.

There was a large debate on the consequences of the Lisbon Treaty for the rotating presidency in the Czech Republic prior to the ratification of the treaty. In particular, this debate was intense before the first Irish referendum on the treaty, when it still looked likely that the treaty could come into force prior to or during the Czech Presidency of the first half of 2009. The debate at this time was rather self-centred and focused on the question of whether the Czech Presidency would be a “full-worthy” presidency or not. Especially the Civic Democrats remain critical of the possibilities of the President of the European Council and of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy representing the EU abroad. From the ODS’ perspective, there is the risk that they will primarily represent the big states of the EU, and therefore, where it is possible, they prefer the rotating presidency to still play a role.²

When Catherine Ashton was appointed High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, it was commented in positive terms by Czech Prime Minister Jan Fischer, because of the good collaboration with then European Commissioner for Trade Ashton during the Czech Presidency.³ Some were of the view that it was a natural choice that the position was given to a representative of a big state. Ashton has been criticised for her failure to inform the member states prior to the appointment of the EU ambassador to the USA. One of the Czechs’ general demands is the need for greater transparency. This is considered important especially in relation to the EEAS. The Czech Republic has tried to harmonise its position on the EEAS with those of the other three countries in the Visegrad group, i.e., Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. One of the goals of the group was to make sure that small and new member states would also be represented in the EEAS, and, in order to

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obtain this, a third of the EEAS staff should be recruited from the member states.⁴ The prime motivation for the Visegrad countries is the fact that they are underrepresented in the EU's senior management in general, and regarding external relations in particular. As an example, it can be mentioned that, of 130 European Commission delegations, only one was led by a senior diplomat from the new member states at the end of 2009.⁵ Another Czech demand was that the EEAS should not lead to a cost increase.⁶

On the issue of the European Citizens' Initiative, the Czech government has demanded a higher minimum number of citizens than originally proposed. The government wants to see the same minimal percentage level applied to all countries and prefers a one percent threshold. The reason is that the government believes that a lower threshold would open the way for extremist groups to misuse the initiative. The Czech government also supports the idea of an ex ante possibility for citizens to check whether their proposal is admissible in case they manage to gather the required number of signatures before they start this process.⁷

¹ See, e.g., Černý, Adam: "Herman Kdo" z Bruselu ["Herman who" from Brussels], 23 November 2009, available at: <http://hn.ihned.cz/c1-39162900-adam-cerny-herman-kdo-z-bruselu> (last access: 24 June 2010).

² See, e.g., Vondra, Alexandr: Češi nebudou žábou na prameni [The Czechs will not be a fly in the ointment], 26 May 2010, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/interview/alexandr-vondra-cesi-nebudou-zabou-na-prameni-007532> (last access: 24 June 2010).

³ CeskeNoviny.cz: CzechRep considers Van Rompuy, Ashton good choice – Fischer, 19 November 2009, available at: http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/tema/zpravy/czechrep-considers-van-rompuy-ashton-good-choice-fischer/408443&id_seznam=20781 (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁴ Chmiel, Juraj: EU by měla být více "user friendly" [EU should be more user friendly], 12 April 2010, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/analyza/juraj-chmiel-eu-by-mela-byt-vice-user-friendly-007353> (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁵ Khol, Radek: Klasická bilaterální diplomacie se vznikem vnější služby EU nezanikne [Classical bilateral diplomacy does not disappear with the External Action Service], 15 April 2010, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/evropske-institute/interview/radek-khol-klasicka-bilateralni-diplomacie-se-vznikem-diplomaticke-sluzby-eu-nezanikne-007372> (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁶ Novinky.cz: O posty ve vznikající diplomatické službě EU usilují i Češi [Even Czechs aim at positions in the emerging EU diplomatic service], 15 April 2010, available at: <http://www.novinky.cz/kariera/197595-o-posty-ve-vznikajici-diplomaticke-sluzbe-eu-usiluji-i-cesi.html> (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁷ Chmiel, Juraj: EU by měla být více "user friendly" [EU should be more user friendly], 12 April 2010, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/analyza/juraj-chmiel-eu-by-mela-byt-vice-user-friendly-007353> (last access: 24 June 2010).

Czech Republic**The Czech Republic keeps an eye on Eastern Europe**

Vít Beneš*

Further EU enlargement has been a long-term priority of the Czech Republic and a steady ingredient of Czech European policy.¹ In the past years, Czech diplomacy invested a good deal of political capital in the enlargement cause, trying to repulse the critique of the “enlargement-sceptical” governments. The Czech political elites tacitly agree on the merits of the EU enlargement in general. On the other hand, disputes arise when individual countries are being discussed. In fact, consensus is limited to the support of the Balkan countries’ membership.² The negotiations with Croatia are unanimously supported by all political players. Even though the support for EU enlargement was not a topic of strong proclamations by the Czech political representation, Czech diplomacy continuously expressed its support.³ Croatia’s case is also unproblematic due to the popularity of the country as a tourist destination among the Czech population.

Other Balkan countries are subsumed under a general priority in the EU enlargement to the Balkans. Individual actors rarely express preferences regarding individual countries. The key political actors and experts do not seem to prioritise one Balkan country over another. Everybody acknowledges that Croatia will enter the EU separately, but other Balkan countries are expected to join the EU within a short time span or as a group. All Balkan countries are expected to join the EU in a mid-term perspective. At this time, the focus is on keeping the enlargement agenda alive so that the individual countries can enter the EU depending on their merits.

On the other hand, Turkey is clearly a particular case. On the political level, Turkey’s accession is being discussed separately and more intensely, and the issue is controversial. The Czech Republic officially supports the accession of Turkey into the EU once all its entry conditions are met. The accession of Turkey into the EU is vocally supported by the Czech President.⁴ Most parties either openly support the prospect of full membership or at least favour the continuation of negotiations.⁵ The arguments voiced in the current debate often start with the observation that the suspension of talks by the EU would harm the reputation of the EU. Turkey is seen by supporters of its EU accession as an important partner in strengthening the EU’s energy security or as an important asset for the EU as a global political actor. On the other hand, the opponents of Turkish membership (the Christian Democrats – KDU-ČSL – and other, smaller parties including Public Affairs – VV)⁶ point to the cultural and civilisational differences (“non-Europeaness”) of Turkey. Even though these parties are marginal on the political scene, their positions echo the attitudes of the silent majority of Czech citizens which oppose Turkey’s EU membership. According to a 2007 poll, 57 percent were against Turkey’s membership and only 27 percent were in favour of it.⁷ Even though there are no newer opinion polls, we assume that this negative attitude persists.

In the examined period, the prospect of Iceland’s accession into the EU has been discussed by the media and think tanks in the wake of Iceland’s bid to join the EU. Since Iceland is a developed West European country, and there are no negative feelings towards it, the prospect of its membership is almost unequivocally accepted by all relevant actors. Czech political parties are ready to come up with innovative ideas when it comes to EU enlargement. For example, the right-wing parties seem to support the idea that, in the long-term period, Israel also should belong in the EU. On the opposite side of the political spectrum, communists dream about an EU “from Vancouver to Vancouver”.⁸

Most of the Czech political parties officially support further EU enlargement in their programme documents.⁹ Nevertheless, the issue of EU enlargement was not present in the election campaign. The same can be said about public attitudes: the Czech population supports further EU enlargement – according to the last Eurobarometer (Autumn 2009), 63 percent of Czech citizens support further EU enlargement while 31 percent oppose the policy, the Eurobarometer even recorded an increase in support.¹⁰ On the other hand, support for further EU enlargement has not been manifested in public discussions.

In late 2009, the Czech Štefan Füle became Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy.¹¹ This appointment has been welcomed by all political actors as a natural

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expression of the Czech Republic's long-term interests in EU enlargement. Even though the daily activity of the European Commission is somehow remote to the Czech media, they continue reporting the steps taken by Commissioner Füle.¹² Nevertheless, the issue of EU enlargement has been sidelined by the Greek crisis and the subsequent discussion about the fate of the Eurozone. EU enlargement as such or the prospects of individual candidate countries have not been discussed in the public debate and thus we have recorded no shifts in the positions of relevant actors.

With regard to the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), we may argue that it consumed some of the energy and attention previously devoted to enlargement. Czech diplomats participated in several activities (seminars, forums) devoted to the Eastern Partnership.¹³ The diplomacy of Mirek Topolánek's government focused its attention on the east, as it concentrated on fomenting a strong European position towards Russia on energy and other issues and towards the eastern neighbourhood in general. Fischer's government (in power since mid-2009) kept the focus on the Eastern Partnership, even though the discourse has somehow changed.

Originally, the Eastern Partnership was perceived as a counterbalance to France's Union for the Mediterranean,¹⁴ which would ensure the EU's attention and presence in the region of Eastern Europe in times of more assertive Russian foreign policy. In the first half of 2010, the Czech discourse changed a bit; for example, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Kohout and his German counterpart, Guido Westerwelle, stressed in a joint article that the Eastern Partnership is not a private club and that third countries like Russia and Turkey are most welcome to participate in it.¹⁵

Even though Czech political parties differ in their assessments of Russia and its foreign policy, the Eastern Partnership is unequivocally assessed positively.¹⁶ There is a consensus among Czech politicians, the media and analysts that the initiative represents one of the successes of last year's Czech EU Presidency. On the other hand, the Eastern Partnership remains an "expert-driven" policy. As far as we can judge from the Czech media, the general public remains disinterested and uninformed in regard to it. In contrast to Poland, Czech society does not feel any deep emotional attachment to the region. As a consequence, the political parties rarely mention the Eastern Partnership as such in their electoral programmes, let alone in their election campaigns. The Eastern Partnership remains a domain of some party experts (the initiative fits into broader concerns over containing Russia and spreading democracy), professional diplomats and academics. While EU enlargement represents a tangible and understandable policy for the ordinary citizen, public awareness of the Eastern Partnership seems to be relatively low. The Union for the Mediterranean is not discussed in the media at all and it receives only limited (if any) attention from political parties, experts and academics.

¹ See, e.g., Beneš, Vít: A cherished child left out in the cold: the Czech Republic and her enlargement priority, in: Drulák, P./Šabič, Z. (eds.): The Czech and Slovenian EU presidencies in a comparative perspective, Dordrecht: Republic of Letters, 2010 in print.

² Mediafax.cz: Balkán do EU patří, shodují se politické strany [Political parties agree: the Balkans belong in the EU], 29 April 2010, available at: <http://www.mediafax.cz/politika/3032459-Balkan-do-EU-patri-shoduji-se-politicke-strany> (last access: 24 June 2010).

³ Government of the Czech Republic: J. Chmiel se setkal s chorvatským vyjednavacem pro vstup do EU [J. Chmiel met with the Croatian negotiator], 29 March 2010, available at: <http://www.vlada.cz/cz/evropske-zalezitosti/tiskove-zpravy/j--chmiel-se-setkal-s-chorvatskym-vyjednavacem-pro-vstup-do-eu-70002/> (last access: 24 June 2010); Czech Social Democratic Party: ČSSD usiluje o co nejrychlejší vstup Chorvatska do EU [Social Democrats support a speedy entrance of Croatia into the EU], 17 May 2010, available at: <http://www.socdem.cz/inews/video/cssd-usiluje-o-co-nejrychlejsi-vstup-chorvatska-do-eu> (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁴ Czech Television: Klaus a řecký prezident se shodli na rozšiřování EU i o Turecko [Klaus and the Greek president agreed on the EU enlargement including Turkey], 2 December 2009, available at: <http://www.ct24.cz/domaci/74238-klaus-a-recky-prezident-se-shodli-na-rozsirovani-eu-i-o-turecko/> (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁵ Eurozprávy.cz: Srovnání programů politických stran v neekonomických tématech [A comparison of the party programmes in non-economic areas], 6 May 2010, available at: <http://domaci.eurozpravy.cz/politika/8490-srovnani-programu-politickyh-stran-v-neeekonomickyh-tematech/> (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁶ Mediafax.cz: Lidovci, Zemanovci a Věci veřejné nechťejí Turecko v Evropské unii [The Christian Democrats, Zeman's Party and Public Affairs do not want Turkey in the European Union], 25 April 2010, available at: <http://www.mediafax.cz/politika/3030399-Lidovci-Zemanovci-a-Veci-verejne-nehchteji-Turecko-v-Evropske-unii> (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁷ Public Opinion Research Centre: Postoje českých občanů k Evropské unii a jejímu rozšiřování [The attitudes of the Czech citizens towards the EU and its enlargement], 21 February 2007, available at: http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/upl/zpravy/100656s_pm70221.pdf (last access: 24 June 2010).

⁸ Mediafax.cz: Balkán do EU patří, shodují se politické strany [The Balkans fits into the EU, political parties agree], 29 April 2010, available at: <http://www.mediafax.cz/politika/3032459-Balkan-do-EU-patri-shoduji-se-politicke-strany> (last access: 24 June 2010).

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- ⁹ Czech Social Democratic Party: Zahraniční politika [Foreign policy], Lubomír Zaorálek, shadow minister of foreign affairs, 30 January 2010, available at: <http://www.cssd.cz/volby/oranzove-knihy/> (last access: 24 June 2010); Civic Democratic Party: Podrobný volební program [Detailed election programme], available at: <http://www.ods.cz/volby2010/data/soubory-ke-stazeni/182/volebni-program-velky.pdf> (last access: 24 June 2010); Tradition Responsibility Prosperity 09: Zahraniční politika [Foreign Policy], Election programme 2010, available at: <http://www.top09.cz/proc-nas-volit/volebni-program/volebni-program-2010/?clanek=1352> (last access: 24 June 2010).
- ¹⁰ Standard Eurobarometer 72, December 2009, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_en.htm (last access: 24 June 2010).
- ¹¹ Czech News Agency: Czech Fuele to be EU commissioner for enlargement, 27 November 2009, available at: http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/czech-fuele-to-be-eu-commissioner-for-enlargement/409570&id_seznam=1800 (last access: 24 June 2010).
- ¹² Czech News Agency: Czech press survey - November 28, 28 November 2009, available at: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-press-survey-november-28/409699> (last access: 24 June 2010).
- ¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Czech-Slovak Forum on the Eastern Policy, 18 January 2010, available at: http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/issues_and_press/events_and_issues/press_notices/x2010_01_19_czech_slovak_forum_on_the_eastern_policy.html (last access: 24 June 2010); Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Minister Kohout opened a seminar on Eastern Partnership in Madrid, 27 January 2010, available at: http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/issues_and_press/events_and_issues/press_releases/x2010_01_27_minister_kohout_opened_a_seminar_on_eastern_partnership.html (last access: 24 June 2010).
- ¹⁴ Týden: EU: nadšení i zdrženlivost ohledně Unie pro Středomoří [EU: Enthusiasm and restraint regarding the Union for the Mediterranean], 14 March 2008, available at: http://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/zahranici/evropa/eu-nadseni-i-zdrzenlivost-ohledne-unie-pro-stredomori_49004.html (last access: 24 June 2010).
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- ¹⁶ See, e.g., Government of the Czech Republic: Achievements of the Czech Presidency: Europe without Barriers, September 2009, available at: <http://www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=61211&down=yes> (last access: 24 June 2010); Král, David/Bartovic, Vladimír/Řiháčková, Věra: The 2009 Czech EU Presidency: Contested Leadership at a Time of Crisis, Stockholm: Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, 2009.

Czech Republic**The Czech Republic – a satisfied spectator**

Mats Braun*

The Czech Republic has yet to introduce the Euro as the country's currency. However, so far there has been a lack of political will to fulfil the EU membership commitments on this point. The current crisis has strengthened the position of Euro reluctant voices in the country. Even if none of the established political parties are directly against the introduction of the Euro, primarily the Civic Democrats (the major rightist party – ODS) and the Communists have made it clear that early access to the Eurozone is not in their interest. The otherwise Europhile Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) is, on the other hand, not willing to accept the necessary economic reforms for the Czech membership in the third phase of the European Monetary Union (EMU).¹ The most prominent and also the most outspoken EMU sceptic in the country, President Václav Klaus, has used the crisis as an opportunity to state that his long-term criticism of the project has been proven correct. Klaus has, among others, blamed the current crisis in Greece on the country's choice to introduce the Euro.²

The country's position on the rescue package for Greece has been influenced mainly by three factors: the country's position as a non-member in the third phase of the EMU, the weak political mandate of the current caretaker cabinet and the ongoing national election campaign. The country's involvement in the rescue package is, due to the country's non-membership in the Eurozone, rather limited and only through the EU rescue fund. It is also important to mention that the current Czech government is largely a caretaker cabinet with an unclear political mandate and that it does not consider itself in the position to make any more long-term commitments on behalf of the Czech Republic; at the same time, the more prominent representatives of the political parties were more interested in the domestic election race than in saving the Euro. The upcoming elections to the Chamber of Deputies led to a situation where politicians, especially on the right side of the political spectrum, tended to use the crisis to win political points by warning the electorate that this is what would happen if the Socialists were to win the elections. If we look at the comments on the rescue package in the media, they, to a large degree, tend to reflect what is written in the European media as a whole, such as in *The Economist*. An often-stated point is that the agreement was reached too late, and that Germany is primarily to blame for this failure.³

The Czech reactions regarding what can be learned from the Greek crisis are mixed. During the Czech Council Presidency in the first half of 2009, the Czech message regarding the financial crisis was that the member states should maintain budgetary discipline and keep their commitments to the Stability and Growth Pact.⁴ Simultaneously, the country has had difficulties in mastering its own budgetary situation. The Czech reactions regarding the future of the Stability and Growth Pact are generally positive towards stricter budgetary discipline, but simultaneously hesitant towards any step that could be interpreted as increasing the supranational aspects of the European integration project. This is in particular the view of the parties on the right side of the political spectrum. The initial Czech responses to the discussions on a special bank tax as well as regulation of hedge funds (especially concerning the points regarding third countries) have been reluctant and the government has sided with the United Kingdom on most of these issues.⁵ However, the first comments regarding the possibility of some kind of EU surveillance of national budgets were rather positive.⁶

From the Czech perspective, the Europe 2020 Strategy was criticised in its original version for including too many numbers without any clear content. It was also criticised for lacking vision regarding competitiveness, a better climate for entrepreneurs and work productivity, which are viewed by central Czech actors as the key components for economic growth. The Minister for European Affairs has, among other things, stated that the intended goal of reduced energy dependency in the Czech Republic is unrealistic.⁷ The Strategy has also been criticised by both the organised trade unions and business interests. Both Jaroslav Šulc from the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions and Radek Špicar from Škoda cars have criticised the Strategy for failing to reflect why the Lisbon Strategy failed, and both have also questioned the lack of consequences for failing to fulfil the targets of the Strategy. However, there is a general agreement on the point that the EU member states need to invest more in research and science. The Czech Republic has also started working on a

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national road map to the Europe 2020 Strategy. Among the first steps in this direction was a conference held in the chamber of deputies in May 2010.⁸

¹ Parížek, Michael: Euro ano, nebo ne? Český diskurz o euru [Euro, yes or no? The Czech discourse on the euro], in: Drulák, Petr/Handl, Vladimír (eds.): Hledání českých zájmů – Vnitřní rozmanitost a vnější akceschopnost, Prague 2010.

² See, e.g., Klaus.cz: F.A.Z.-Gespräch mit dem tschechischen Präsidenten, available at: <http://www.klaus.cz/clanky/2577> (last access: 22 June 2010); Klaus.cz: Rozhovor prezidenta republiky pro časopis Týden o volbách do Poslanecké sněmovny a problémech eurozóny [Interview with the president for the weekly Týden about the elections to the Chamber of Deputies and the problems of the Euro-zone], available at: <http://www.klaus.cz/clanky/2591> (last access: 22 June 2010).

³ See, e.g., Niedermayer, Luděk: Evropa se otáčí správným směrem [Europe is turning in the right direction], 19 May 2010, available at: <http://hn.ihned.cz/c1-43631920-evropa-se-otaci-spravnym-smerem> (last access: 22 June 2010).

⁴ See, e.g., Braun, Mats: Předsednictví za ekonomické recese [The Presidency during the Economic Crisis], Mezinárodní politika, no. 7, 2009.

⁵ Hospodářské Noviny: Zákrok unie proti velkým fondům provážeji spory [The Union's measures against big funds are followed by controversies], 19 May 2010, available at: <http://hn.ihned.cz/c1-43631570-zakrok-unie-proti-velkym-fondum-provazeji-spory> (last access: 22 June 2010).

⁶ Hospodářské Noviny: Brusel: Rozpočtová pravidla se budou řešit až na podzim [Brussels: The budgetary rules will be dealt with in the autumn], 19 May 2010, available at: <http://hn.ihned.cz/c1-43631560-brusel-rozpocetova-pravidla-se-budou-resit-az-na-podzim> (last access: 29 June 2010).

⁷ Chmiel, Juraj: EU by měla být více „user friendly“ [EU should be more user friendly], 12 April 2010, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/analyza/juraj-chmiel-eu-by-mela-byt-vice-user-friendly-007353> (last access: 29 June 2010).

⁸ Euroskop.cz: Shrnutí konference ke strategii „Evropa 2020“ [A summary of the conference “Europe 2020”], 7 May 2010, available at: <http://www.euroskop.cz/44/16288/clanek/shrnuti-konference-ke-strategii-evropa-2020/> (last access: 29 June 2010).

Czech Republic
The Czech Republic – an inward-looking critic

 Vít Beneš*

The Czech media presented the Copenhagen conference as a failure.¹ Most Czech political parties formally support the EU's plans for emissions reductions,² but only a few politicians genuinely regretted the conference's failure. Czech Environment Minister Jan Dusík (nominated by the Green Party) made it clear that he expected more from the UN Copenhagen climate conference.³ The Civic Democratic Party (ODS) expressed its willingness to "respect the EU commitment to fight climate change".⁴ The Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) endorses the climate policy and presented its plans to reduce CO₂ emissions in the Czech Republic by, among others, further exploitation of nuclear energy.⁵ Czech President Václav Klaus retained his position as a global warming sceptic and continued his criticism of climate policy. In an interview with the news server FoxNews.com, he described global warming as a "new religion" rather than a science.⁶ According to President Klaus, the radical measures suggested in Copenhagen are unnecessary.

The "green issues" have been salient during the 2010 election campaign. Since 2006, when the Greens made it into parliament, all parties paid more attention to environmental issues in their programmes and campaigns. Nevertheless, the media and political parties focus primarily on domestic issues (breaking Czech coal mining limits, nuclear vs. renewable energy, protection of nature on a national level). Even though Czech citizens agree that climate change represents a serious problem, they are much more sensitive to the problem of the economic crisis and downturn.⁷ There is hardly any public pressure on Czech politicians regarding the fight against global warming and climate change. Czech political elites often perceive climate change as someone else's problem: they perceive the EU's climate policy as imported, as someone else's policy. With the exception of the Green Party (which failed to get into parliament in the May 2010 general elections), key political actors express little genuine interest in the policy. They either respect and accept the EU's climate policy for strategic reasons or openly oppose the policy. There is little genuine interest in climate policy and, consequently, no alternative strategies to fighting climate change are being thought through.

The climate policy is much less salient than, for example, the issues of the EU's energy security or the global economic downturn.⁸ Czech elites embraced the topic of energy security; they treat it as a unique contribution of the Czech Republic to Europe. The EU's external energy security continues to attract the attention of politicians, state officials, commentators and academics. But it should be noted that energy security is understood as a problem in and of itself, and it is being discussed separately from the climate change issue. Czech political elites and experts expect the European Union to change its own energy policy for economic, strategic and geopolitical reasons. The energy security has been discussed with regard to national, rather than global, problems.⁹ In a bid to tackle the Czech Republic's energy security, the environmental organisations proposed a lowering of the energy intensity of the domestic economy. But they appear to be outnumbered by experts and politicians who favour a boost in domestic energy production, mainly through nuclear power plants.¹⁰

The issue of financing mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries had been on the agenda of the Czech EU Presidency during the first half of 2009. The then Minister of the Environment Martin Bursík took the issue of supporting developing countries and helping them adapt to climate change and develop green technologies seriously.¹¹ Nevertheless, the issue has failed to attract wider attention from the public, the media and politicians.

¹ iDNES.cz: Kodaňská konference OSN byla katastrofou, uznala EU [The EU admitted that the Copenhagen conference was a catastrophe], 22 December 2009, available at: http://zpravy.idnes.cz/kodanska-konference-osn-byla-katastrofou-uznala-eu-fxi-zahranicni.asp?c=A091222_212439_zahranicni_ban (last access: 29 June 2010); Czech Radio: Hopes of new climate pact dashed in Copenhagen, 18 December 2009, available at: <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/123328> (last access: 29 June 2010).

² Euractiv.cz: České politické strany vesměs podporují plány EU na snižování emisí [Czech political parties mostly support EU plans for emissions reductions], 17 December 2009, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/clanek/ceske-politicke-strany-vesmes-podporuji-plany-eu-na-snizovani-emisi-006867> (last access: 29 June 2010).

³ Czech News Agency: Czechs expected more from Copenhagen conference – minister, 19 December 2009, available at: http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/tema/zpravy/ods-to-respect-eu-commitment-to-fight-climate-change-leader/411342&id_seznam=2106?id=412861 (last access: 29 June 2010).

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- ⁴ Czech News Agency: ODS to respect EU commitment to fight climate change – leader, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/tema/zpravy/ods-to-respect-eu-commitment-to-fight-climate-change-leader/411342> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ⁵ Euractiv.cz: České politické strany vesměs podporují plány EU na snižování emisí [Czech political parties mostly support EU plans for emissions reductions], 17 December 2009, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/clanek/ceske-politicke-strany-vesmes-podporuji-plany-eu-na-snizovani-emisi-006867> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ⁶ FOXNews.com: Czech President Klaus: Global Warming Not Science, but a “New Religion”, 18 December 2009, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2009/12/18/czech-president-klaus-global-warming-science-new-religion/> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ⁷ European Commission: Eurobarometer 72.1. Results for the Czech Republic, October 2009, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_322_fact_cz_en.pdf (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Czech Chamber of Commerce: Prohlášení účastníků konference „Energetická bezpečnost EU a životní prostředí“ konané dne 17. února 2010 v Mostě [The declaration of the participants of the conference “EU energy security and the environment” held on 17 February 2010 in Most], 17 January 2010, available at: <http://www.komora.cz/regionalni-a-oborove-informace/regionalni-informace-1/informace-z-regionalnich-slozek/prohlaseni-ucastniku-konference-energeticka-bezpecnost-eu-a-zivotni-prostredi-konane-dne-17-unora-2010-v-moste.aspx> (last access: 29 June 2010); see also Prague Security Studies Institute: Jak posílit energetickou bezpečnost ČR? [How to strengthen Czech energy security?], 15 December 2009, available at: <http://www.pssi.cz/files/News/publikace/jak-posilit-energetickou-bezpecnost-cr.pdf> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ¹⁰ Euractiv.cz: Odborníci: Energetickou bezpečnost nelze zúžit pouze na otázku zdrojů [Experts: Energy security can not be narrowed down to the issue of resources], 28 April 2010, available at: <http://www.euractiv.cz/energetika/clanek/odbornici-energetickou-bezpecnost-nelze-zuzit-pouze-na-otazku-zdroju-007425> (last access: 29 June 2010).
- ¹¹ EuropeanVoice.com: The Czechs’ green agenda, 23 January 2009, available at: <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2009/01/the-czechs-green-agenda/63729.aspx> (last access: 29 June 2010).

Czech Republic**Czech Republic – too few European topics attract the attention of politicians and the public**

Vít Beneš*

We would like to stress the salience of economic topics in the Czech Republic and its public debate. On 28-29 May 2010, the Czech Republic held general elections, with Czech national debt and its budgetary discipline being the core issues debated during the election campaign. The right-wing parties singled out Greece as a negative example of what could happen to the Czech Republic if it does not tackle its own budget deficit.

The future of the Euro has been discussed in this context. The Greek crisis provided an argument for President Václav Klaus, who has always criticised the project of a European single currency. In an article for the Wall Street Journal, Klaus argued that the Eurozone has failed to deliver the expected considerable economic benefits.¹ He has pointed out that the Greek crisis was triggered by the Greek decision to introduce the Euro in 2002 and that the Euro will survive the current problems but the price will be high.² According to Klaus, the Czech Republic has not made a mistake by avoiding membership in the Eurozone. His arguments resonate in Czech society, at least among right-wing media and political elites. Even though Czechs are disturbed by the ongoing global economic crisis,³ they seem to draw a lesson from the Greek crisis – that the Euro is a problem rather than a solution. According to the latest opinion poll, 55 percent of Czech citizens do not want the Czech Republic to adopt the Euro (38 percents are in favour of its adoption).⁴ Among the Euro's main opponents are the voters of the Social Democrats and the Communists as well as people with a low standard of living.⁵

As we have already noted, the Czech pre-election debate about European and international issues has been narrowed down to a relatively few topics: the economic crisis and the Euro supplemented with a continuing expert debate over Czech and European energy security and over the future of the Eastern Partnership. We have also recorded some media coverage of the activities of the Czech member of the European Commission for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle and a very limited public and political discussion about the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. The Czech media also reported on the Czech Republic's complaint about the lack of EU support for the lifting of Canadian visas.⁶

¹ Wall Street Journal: "The Euro Zone Has Failed", 1 June 2010, available at:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704875604575280452365548866.html> (last access: 29 June 2010).

² Prague Daily Monitor: Klaus: Euro will survive but price will be high, 23 April 2010.

³ European Commission: Eurobarometer 72.1. Results for the Czech Republic, October 2009, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_322_fact_cz_en.pdf (last access: 29 June 2010).

⁴ Public Opinion Research Centre: Czech Republic's membership in the European Union, 29 April 2010, available at:

http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/upl/zpravy/101034s_pm100429.pdf (last access: 29 June 2010).

⁵ Prague Daily Monitor: Poll: Most Czechs against euro adoption, 30 April 2010.

⁶ Czech News Agency: Czechs do not feel EU support for lifting of Canadian visas, 25 February 2010, available at:

<http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czechs-do-not-feel-eu-support-for-lifting-of-canadian-visas/440831> (last access: 29 June 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?