

# 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](http://www.EU-27Watch.org).

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**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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> 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).<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

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

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_322_fact_cz_en.pdf) (last access: 29 June 2010).

<sup>4</sup> 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](http://www.cvvm.cas.cz/upl/zpravy/101034s_pm100429.pdf) (last access: 29 June 2010).

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

<sup>6</sup> 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?