

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

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**Finland****Plates are more important than presidents or high representatives**

Tuulia Nieminen, Johanna Nykänen and Aaretti Siitonen\*

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The Finnish public discussion following the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty quickly became dominated by a somewhat overblown debate on the country's representation in the European Council – whether it would be the Prime Minister or the President. This heated debate, dubbed the “plate debacle”,<sup>1</sup> continued for months, until it became apparent that the Prime Minister would in the future, by default, act as the country's representative. Also, the weight of the Finnish Commissioner's portfolio was seen as an important question. Serious media discussion on the President of the European Council and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was conspicuous in its absence after it became apparent that the incumbents were neither Finns nor otherwise well-known. There were a number of dissenting voices calling for the media to move their attention from domestic matters to the EU, “the most important political arena for Finland”, but they were limited to expert commentary.<sup>2</sup>

The Finnish expert discussion on the top posts was typically conducted from the point of view of observers rather than active participants, with the notable exception of Foreign Minister Stubb. He positioned himself as a staunch defender of Catherine Ashton. He self-deprecatingly used the memorable comparison “Snow White and the twenty-seven Dwarfs” to describe the relationship of Ashton and the 27 foreign ministers.<sup>3</sup> Also, Stubb organised an unofficial meeting of a limited number of EU foreign ministers, the Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu and Catherine Ashton at Saariselkä in Finnish Lapland. This was seen as an attempt to smooth the road for the High Representative in her interpersonal dealings with the foreign ministers, as well as to facilitate Stubb's own future collaboration with his peers.

The “Spirit of Saariselkä”, as the prevailing mood of the conference became known, was described as one of ease, personal contacts and informality, which are, according to the press, the defining characteristics of Finland's present attitude towards handling EU foreign affairs.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Stubb did not succeed in getting representatives from all the EU member states led to some criticism. Also, the Eurosceptic party, the True Finns, criticised the event for not promoting Finland's Arctic expertise.<sup>5</sup>

Other commentators on Ashton's role and performance, including Finnish Members of European Parliament (MEP), tended to be understanding of the challenges faced by her and more inclined to postpone an opinion on her performance until a reasonable amount of time had passed.<sup>6</sup> Green MEP Satu Hassi compared the criticism directed at Ashton to workplace bullying.<sup>7</sup>

The High Representative's position has been described as being nigh on impossible: “the most difficult job in the world” according to Stubb.<sup>8</sup> The question of who represents the EU in foreign policy was, furthermore, seen as problematic due to both the European Council's and European Commission's presidents, as well as, to some extent, the rotating presidency, maintaining a role in foreign policy. The anecdote about Kissinger's phone number has been repeated to no end in Finland, but the metaphor of the EU's partners now not needing one phone number, but the number to the switchboard, in order to direct them to the relevant actor, has also been put forward and is emblematic of the expert discussion on the, as of yet, embryonic division of roles between the main actors.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, commenting on the new leadership of the EU, then Prime Minister Vanhanen pointed out that the EU has now become more “political”, with the role of the European Council strengthened at the detriment of the rotating presidency in particular. This view was shared by other major commentators. As to the rotating presidency's future, it was juxtaposed with the European Council's heightened influence. If the Council succeeds in offering meaningful leadership, the rotating presidency will become insignificant, and the question of the member states' subsequent role in leading the Union becomes relevant.<sup>10</sup> In relation to this, the Spanish Presidency has been described as a thankless assignment.<sup>11</sup> The increased role of the European Council was also seen as diminishing the role of the community method, or, alternatively, as constituting a balancing act, with the Commission pulled in two directions, by the European Parliament on the one hand and the Council

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on the other. Yet this thought has not quite caught on with the mainstream press, which still tends to focus on what they are already familiar with – Barroso and his Commission.

Questions arose as to whether Van Rompuy's image of being a "grey mouse" was merely a clever facade. There was a sense of careful respect towards Van Rompuy's handling of his duties, especially vis-a-vis Barroso.<sup>12</sup> The same initially applied to economic governance, where the question of European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Olli Rehn having had his initiative usurped by Van Rompuy was raised with the metaphor: "Did the mouse steal Rehn's piece of cheese?" This changed considerably with the advent of the Greek crisis, however, with Rehn stealing the Finnish limelight. In the less serious press, Van Rompuy was dismissed as a "daffy duck president", with mentions of his Haiku collections, but little else.<sup>13</sup>

Very little was written on the European Citizens' Initiative. Reporting was descriptive in nature and the few comments merely practical (e.g., a time limit of six months for the Commission to react to an initiative suggested by the European Movement in Finland).<sup>14</sup> Some criticism was levelled at the difficulty of the procedure, with the Commission encouraged to facilitate the practical implementation of it.<sup>15</sup> As an interesting detail, a Finnish equivalent was suggested during the constitutional reform process, with Justice Minister Brax pointing out that an EU level precedent already existed.<sup>16</sup>

Reporting and discussion of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was characterised by a sense of waiting, with an emphasis on the power struggle within Brussels, as well as between the member states, and impatience towards the EU's inward-looking procrastination, when it should be taking a more active role in the world.<sup>17</sup>

The service was described as being about twice the size of Finland's own Foreign Ministry, and Foreign Minister Stubb expressed the wish for one or two heads of delegation to be Finns. Furthermore, it is hoped that between 15 and 30 Finns will be placed in other duties within the service.<sup>18</sup> After the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, he supported the idea of using national foreign ministers as the High Representative's deputies, an idea further espoused at the Saariselkä gathering. Moreover, Stubb criticised the way that João Vale de Almeida was appointed to represent the EU in Washington.<sup>19</sup>

The received wisdom during the reporting period was that the EEAS, if strong, effective and with global reach, would be a boon for a small country like Finland. Offering synergy benefits, it was, nevertheless, not seen as replacing but rather complementing Finland's own network of embassies.<sup>20</sup>

The True Finns were the most vocal critics of the service, dismissing it out of hand as an unnecessary institution which would further enhance the EU's federalist trappings.<sup>21</sup> Doubts were also raised as to the renationalisation of EU foreign policies with the creation of the service. The most contentious issue in this regard was the service's effects on development aid.<sup>22</sup> More widely, the question of how the set-up of the service would affect the so-far normative, rules-based and predictable nature of the EU's foreign policy was raised.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The plate debacle was in the public discussion connected to the work of the Taxell committee, the objective of which was a revision of the Finnish constitution. The committee's work was factually unrelated to EU matters, but the fact that it aimed to define the President's foreign policy powers made the question of EU representation symbolic.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Kaleva: Suomen tärkein poliittinen areena on EU, 3 December 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Arvostelijat käyttävät EU:n uutta ulkoministeriä, 26 January 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Lapin kansa: Spirit of Saariselkä koostuu hangista, huumorista ja hyvistä keskusteluista, 14 March 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Lapin kansa: Saariselkä sai satikutia, 15 March 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Anneli Jäätteenmäki: Euroopan mahdollomin tehtävä, Suomenmaa, 19 March 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Turun Sanomat: Europarlamentin ulkopoliittisesta täysistunnosta Ashtonin piinapenkki, 11 March 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Ashton lupaa Suomelle tukevan edustuksen EU:n ulkoministeriöön, 13 March 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Tuomas Forsberg: Saiko EU nyt puhelinnumeron?, Aamulehti, 11 February 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Teija Tiilikainen: Eurooppa-neuvosto nousee vallan huipulle, Helsingin Sanomat, 2 February 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Turun Sanomat: Espanja EU-puheenjohtajana uuden tilanteen edessä, 3 February 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: EU:n harmaa hiiri kasvattaa lihaksia, 2 April 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Iltalehti: Hullu maailma, 30 April 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Aamulehti: Euroopan unionin kansalaiset saavat vihdoin aloiteoikeuden, 19 March 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: EU:n uusi kansalaisaloite vaatii taitoa ja rahaa, 1 April 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Suomenmaa: Kansalaisaloitteen mahdollisuus perustuslakiin, 11 February 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Aamulehti: EU puhelinvastaajan varassa?, 13 March 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Stubb/Pertti Torstila: Vahva ulkomaanverkko on Suomen etu, Aamulehti, 25 February 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Helsingin sanomat: EU:n lähettiläsnimitys suututtaa jäsenmaita, 23 February 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Aamulehti: Mustalla päin punaista, 8 February 2010.

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<sup>21</sup> Lapin kansa: Saariselkä sai satikutia, 15 March 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Aamulehti: Ashton haluaa kehitysavun ohjat käsiinsä, 26 March 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Finnish Institute of International Affairs: Rewriting the ground rules of European diplomacy, Briefing Paper 57, 31 March 2010.

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**Finland****On biased negotiations, Balkan stereotypes and Arctic potential**

Tuulia Nieminen, Johanna Nykänen and Aaretti Siitonen\*

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During the reporting period, a conflict between the official policy of Finland and popular sentiment in the country towards EU enlargement could be detected. The government held that enlargement benefited Finland politically and economically, and lay at the core of its EU policy. More specifically, “Finland supports the membership negotiations of Turkey and Croatia and the Western Balkans’ closer proximity to the EU.”<sup>1</sup> At the same time, according to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in autumn 2009, a majority (55 percent) of Finns were against enlargement of the EU in the coming years. Although two out of five (40 percent) were in favour of enlargement, Finns are somewhat more reserved on this than EU citizens on average. According to the survey, the cautiousness of Finns can be explained by the fact that a great majority feel that the EU has grown too quickly. However, judging from the Finnish press coverage, a more realistic explanation might be that, apart from Iceland, the candidate countries remain distant and unknown to Finns, and this causes uncertainty and some reservations. Also, ministerial level visits concentrated on Finland’s neighbouring area, with even the Prime Minister’s office admitting that the Mediterranean region and some new member states were being neglected.<sup>2</sup>

Iceland’s EU membership was largely perceived as an open-and-shut affair, and, as such, separate from other current and awaiting applications. Indeed, comparisons with Bulgaria and Greece were made to argue that the EU criteria for membership favours some states over others; Iceland, the daily newspaper Helsingin Sanomat wrote in its main editorial, already implements EU legislation better than, for example, the aforementioned member states.<sup>3</sup> Iceland was expected to become a member of the EU in the next enlargement round, notwithstanding its economic turmoil and the Icesave dispute with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Foreign Minister Stubb believed that Croatia is already almost at the finishing line. He also envisaged that membership negotiations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia could be opened this year. Referring to Turkey, Stubb strongly emphasised that the EU must treat all applicants equally and keep its promises.<sup>4</sup>

Reporting on the EU prospects of the Balkan candidate countries fluctuated between informing the readers about the largely unknown countries and reinforcing pre-existing stereotypes of the region being a “powder keg”, where, in the words of Aamulehti journalist Veikko Vuorikoski, “the burden of history prevents the countries from becoming fully-fledged members of the European family.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, reporting tended to lean towards the negative, with Serbia only brought up to praise the EU for forcing the Serbian parliament to publicly condemn Srebrenica and to suggest that visa freedom for Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians has caused a wave of Albanians to arrive in the EU.<sup>6</sup> Turkey’s role as a significant energy supplier to the EU was mentioned, as was Moldova’s frustration with its slow progress towards EU membership.<sup>7</sup>

Partly overlapping with the debate on the prospective member states is the discussion on Finland’s potential to become a flag bearer in the EU’s Arctic policy, which has gained prominence. At the end of 2009, the parliamentary foreign affairs committee held a session on the relations between Finland and the Arctic region, concluding that it is important for Finland to profile itself as an Arctic and Northern state in order to reap all the political and economic benefits that the region has to offer. This sentiment is shared by researchers.<sup>8</sup> In a newspaper column, Social Democrat Member of the European Parliament Liisa Jaakonsaari emphasised that environmental and security issues, together with the living conditions of indigenous people, must be taken fully into account when planning Finland’s policies towards the Arctic.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland: EU enlargement, available at: <http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=15624&contentlan=1&culture=fi-FI> (last access: 19 May 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Suomenmaa: Suomalaisministereitä eivät kiinnosta vierailut Välimeren maissa, 17 December 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Icesave-kiista pois Islannin EU-tieltä, 26 February 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Turun Sanomat: Kroatian kanssa lähestytään maaliviivaa – Turkin EU-jäsenyydelle entistä tiukemmat ehdot, 9 December 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Aamulehti: Enemmän kuin pientä laitton tarvetta, 12 February 2010.

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<sup>6</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Serbia lähetti viestin Brysseliin, 2 April 2010; Helsingin Sanomat: Viisumivapaus aiheutti albaanien vyöryn EU:hun, 3 March 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Turkki haluaa energiamahdiksi, 2 April 2010; Turun Sanomat: Moldova turhautui EU-tien hitauteen, 6 April 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Lotta Numminen: Jäämeren suojeleminen vaatii uutta hallintatapaa, Helsingin Sanomat, 6 April 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Kaleva: Aukaiseeko Ashton arktisen aarrearkun, 2 March 2010.

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**Finland**
**The jury is still out on the outcomes of the economic turbulence**

 Tuulia Nieminen, Johanna Nykänen and Aaretti Siitonen\*
 

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At the beginning of the reporting period, Finnish discussion about economic governance was still heavily focused on national policies and the means for recovery. Lessons learned – or not learned – from, and comparisons with, the Finnish recession of the 1990s were the main point of reference. Only gradually did the Greek problems draw attention from the national to the European level.

The Commission, or more precisely the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Olli Rehn, was widely supported by his compatriots and seen as a capable and decisive actor in the crisis from very early on.<sup>1</sup> The growing importance of the European Council and its President Van Rompuy was noted, contributing towards the overall impression in Finland that the EU is rising to its task.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, while the discussion began with a national focus, it gradually took a decisively more European turn. Rather surprisingly, it emerged that, in the eyes of many Finns, the crisis might not actually manifest fragility and internal fractures or differences in the Union, but could lead to a stronger Union, active in the field of economic policy. Even the plummeting Euro after the European Council in May 2010 did not lead to an immediate panic. Serious commentaries suggesting the dismantlement of the Euro were almost non-existent. Rather, the received opinion was that Finland was capable of bearing this burden. Some economists even maintained their pre-crisis expectations of the Finnish economy remaining on the path of moderate growth, fuelled by global recovery.<sup>3</sup> It was also widely noted that the Finnish export industries – crucial for the national economy – were benefiting from the weakened Euro.<sup>4</sup>

*“Loans or recession are the options”: the finance package for Greece accepted as the least harmful option*

The initial consensus was to let Greece do “everything it can” by itself.<sup>5</sup> However, once the plans for supporting Greece started taking shape, the Finnish government quickly grew supportive of it. The parliament accepted the loan package after a long debate on 12 May 2010, with the opposition – led by the traditionally pro-EU Social Democrats – voting against the package. This sparked an argument between political parties with a degree of harshness not usual in the consensus-oriented country. Some commentators have argued that the crisis has turned the usual division in Finnish politics around, with the Social Democrats opposing the centre-right government’s calls for “international solidarity” and more governance.<sup>6</sup> In reality, the shift of positions was not quite as stark as that. Throughout the debate, the government argued its policy in terms of national interest and as the least harmful option for Finland, emphasising that “this is not a pleasant decision.”<sup>7</sup>

Both the public debate and policy makers’ plans circled largely around lending as the measure for solving the Greek crisis. “Loans or Recession are the options that Europe is facing”<sup>8</sup> was the logic of the supporters of the loan package, whereas the majority of opponents focused on arguing against the loan, not on creating alternative routes – either realistic or utopian – out of the crisis.

A poll conducted in early May 2010 showed that almost half of Finns were willing to support another Euro member on a case-by-case basis, with another nine percent willing to lend support in every case.<sup>9</sup> The sentiment on internet forums and in letters to editors, however, was almost entirely against granting the loan package to the Greeks, with the majority arguing that the Greeks should find their own way out. This was expected to cause support for the package to melt away,<sup>10</sup> but another poll, asking specifically about the Greek case and conducted in 7-12 May 2010, when the debate had already been underway for several days and the size of the loan known, found 42 percent of Finns supporting the loan and 43 percent opposing it.<sup>11</sup>

*Is the EU getting its act together? Improving European economic governance*

The eagerness to strengthen the EU’s role in the field of economic policy grew in the spring, as one commentator put it: “the crisis is an effective consultant.”<sup>12</sup>

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\* Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

The ambitions of improving economic governance were more modest at the beginning, with many commentators limiting their suggestions to, first and foremost, more effective use of the tools provided in the Stability and Growth Pact.<sup>13</sup> However, the scope of the ambitions soon grew. The Finnish government strongly supported sanctions – in the form of cutting EU subsidies – as a way of guaranteeing economic austerity in the future. Following the European Council in March 2010, then Prime Minister Vanhanen was of the opinion that this was feasible within the limits of the current treaties, preferring that as a faster alternative to opening treaty negotiations. However, as treaty amendments would allow for a less vague system to be established, he was willing to consider that alternative, too.<sup>14</sup>

The Finnish government expressed concerns about excessive supervision of the banking and financial sector, which – in its opinion – would lead to shrinking lending and, therefore, curtail recovery from the economic crisis. At the Ecofin meeting of 17 April 2010, Martti Hetemäki, Finland's representative at the meeting, called this risk a "supervision tsunami", saying that it was not only the banks, but also political decision-makers who were concerned about it.<sup>15</sup> However, as the main focus in the European discussion turned towards the public sector and strengthening the EU's position in governing that sector, Finland threw its weight behind the Commission's proposals. Finland's position was positive towards the proposal to review the draft budgets of EU member states before they are adopted at the national level. Jyrki Katainen, Minister of Finance, declared that "Finland has nothing to hide." Katainen felt that he would "feel safer" upon seeing the other member states' budgets in advance.<sup>16</sup> All in all, his emphasis was on strict budgetary discipline to be imposed by all member states.<sup>17</sup> Finland was also keen to improve the transparency and quality of statistical information about all EU member states' economic performance, as well as to increase comparisons between them.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Finland was complacently reminding that it had been calling for budget rules to be strictly applied from much earlier on.<sup>19</sup>

With a number of initiatives floating around, the discussion on each of them would be too lengthy to report. Moreover, with most decisions still to be taken and it being too early to make a long-term assessment of the economic consequences, the general discussion soon focused instead on the general direction that the Union seemed to be taking. With the exception of the forces most staunchly opposed to the EU, Finns seemed to view a stronger EU economic policy as both very beneficial and long overdue. Even those political figures who had been around at the time of the decisions on the Euro and the Greek entry into the Eurozone were willing to publicly admit that corrections to the old model were necessary.<sup>20</sup> From very early on, the plans sparked a discussion on federalism. Traditionally, Finnish public opinion has been cautious of federalism – which, in fact, has been a rather central theme in the Finnish EU debate. In Finland, EU scepticism has been allayed by emphasising the ways in which the Union is different from a federation. However, a major part of identifiable anti-federalists are supporters of the Centre Party, the party of then Prime Minister Vanhanen and Commissioner Rehn. This may have contributed towards them largely accepting the general idea of more European economic governance as a necessity in this case. The emerging consensus seemed to be that, though this could be seen as a step towards more federalism, no-one "should think that a federation is being created".<sup>21</sup> Moreover, as mentioned above, Finland has already, prior to the crisis, been calling for better compliance of the Euro rules, and this is now easing the acceptance of greater control.

The decisions taken in mid-May were widely understood as emergency measures, designed to give a little extra time for the problem economies, as well as the whole EU, to gather strength before embarking on real changes. Nevertheless, the Union was generally commended for showing determination and "getting its act together". While commentators at one end of the discussion were reminding the public that the impact of the crisis was still largely unknown,<sup>22</sup> at the other they were rejoicing that the Union is finally working on legislation with substantial significance.<sup>23</sup> Last but not least, Estonia's entry into the Eurozone was generally warmly welcomed as a positive note amongst the financial disarray.<sup>24</sup>

### *Finns initially sceptical or indifferent towards the Europe 2020 Strategy*

In Finland, the overall reception of the Europe 2020 Strategy was bordering on scepticism. While the goals of the strategy were seen as laudable, EU's ability to reach them was doubted. The failure of the Lisbon Strategy, in particular, was seen as grounds for scepticism: "Why would anything be different this time?"<sup>25</sup> The more positive voices suggested that Europe had learnt its lessons from the failure of the Lisbon Strategy: the Europe 2020 Strategy will be designed to be more down-to-earth, giving it a better chance of success.<sup>26</sup>

In its post-Council evaluation, the Finnish government emphasised, e.g., raising European productivity as a key means for recovery from the current economic crisis. Charts comparing member states' performance in this regard were seen as a means to improve awareness of differences in productivity.<sup>27</sup> From the point of view of implementing the Strategy, then Prime Minister Vanhanen did not envisage much extra effort. Rather, his emphasis was on boasting how far advanced Finland was with many of its goals, sometimes even surpassing them, for example, in the level of research and development inputs. The national plans – the beef of which is in the Europe 2020 Strategy – are still in the making at the time of writing, with the government promising more details before the European Council meeting in June 2010.<sup>28</sup> All in all, however, neither the strategy nor the national plans aroused much interest or debate in Finland.

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<sup>1</sup> Turun Sanomat: Kreikan kriisi nostanut Rehnin Barroson rinnalle, 11 May 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See the Finnish chapter on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (chapter 1).

<sup>3</sup> Taloussanomat: Velkakriisi ei pysäytä talouden käännettä, 18 May 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Turun Sanomat: Euron heikentyminen kasvattaa Suomen vientiä, 12 May 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Talouskomissaari Rehn vaatii Kreikalta lisäsäästöjä, 2 March 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Maksamme velkaa Aristoteleelle, 14 May 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister: Press Briefing, 4 May 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Jyrki Katainen, Minister of Finance: Press Briefing, 4 May 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Suomalaiset uskovat Euroon, 8 May 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Uutispäivä Demari: Kansa ei hyväksy luottoa Kreikalle, 17 May 2010. This result is based on a proposition that, on the basis of financial consequences, Greece should be supported.

<sup>12</sup> Arto Aniluoto, Secretary General, European Movement in Finland, interviewed in the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE), 11 May 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Turun Sanomat: EU:n valuuttarahasto ei ehtisi Kreikan avuksi, 13 March 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister: Press Briefing, 26 March 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: EU-päätäjät varoittivat liian tiukasta pankkien sääntelystä, 18 April 2010.

<sup>16</sup> The Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE): Katainen puoltaa EU-maiden tiukempaa budjettisyyniä, 18 May 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Talousongelmat pitkittivät taas euromaiden kokousta, 18 May 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Turun Sanomat: EU:n pankkiverolle varovainen tuki, 18 April 2010.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister: Joint Parliamentary Meeting on EU Affairs in the Finnish Parliament, 25 May 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Lipponen: EU:n löperön otteen on loputtava, 12 May 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Suomenmaa: EU-maiden taloudenpito tarvitsee velvoitteensa, 12 May 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Kellot soivat Euroopassa taas kaikille, 23 May 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Turhaa lohtua, 23 May 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Viro on ansainnut paikkansa eurossa, 9 May 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Hufvudstadsbladet: EU-strategi bemöts med skepsis, 5 March 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Kaleva: Eurooppa iskuun, osa 2, 8 March 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister: Press Briefing, 26 March 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

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**Finland****Between ethical considerations and political interests**

Tuulia Nieminen, Johanna Nykänen and Aaretti Siitonen\*

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The debate in Finland on climate and energy policy drifted between economic interests and a wider sense of responsibility. On the one hand, the Copenhagen conference was viewed from an ethical perspective, maintaining that we have a shared responsibility for our planet, and, as such, we would need to take all necessary actions to ensure that a binding global agreement was reached. As one commentator put it: “Without the sacrifices of our predecessors, Finland would not exist. It remains to be seen what our great grandchildren will say about us.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, political concerns were raised over Finland’s monetary contributions towards climate change prevention schemes and both Finland’s and the EU’s political interests in the negotiations. In a parliamentary meeting prior to the conference, True Finns Member of Parliament (MP) Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner pointed out: “Although we negotiate as part of the EU delegation, we must ensure that Finland’s delegation has national interest as its core priority.”<sup>2</sup>

The Social Democrats highlighted that those lower on the income ladder in Finland should contribute less than high earners. Environment Minister Lehtomäki responded with an ethical approach: “I am a little saddened that Finland’s climate bill is facing criticism of this magnitude. What is essential here is whether our generation pays the bill or whether we pass it on to our children and grandchildren with huge interest.” Then Prime Minister Vanhanen further pointed out that domestic burden sharing was not among the main concerns in preparation for Copenhagen. National Coalition MP Sanna Perkiö stated that, rather than focusing on monetary issues, Finland should calculate how much the country could benefit from a climate agreement. Such optimism was shared among many other MPs – including government ministers – with Centre Party MP Kimmo Tiilikainen offering the most far reaching figure of 100,000 new jobs in Finland with the “green revolution”. The Left Alliance, spearheaded by MP Paavo Arhinmäki, demanded a minimum of 40 percent carbon cuts for developed countries.

Finland was among the first EU member states to promise funds to help developing countries cope with their climate burden, but the fact that part of that money came from Finland’s development budget caused some criticism in the media.<sup>3</sup> Also, the EU’s means of reaching its bio fuel targets by 2020 were criticised for pushing millions of people towards starvation in the developing world. As Finland’s leading newspaper Helsingin Sanomat put it in its main editorial: “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”<sup>4</sup> When it came to the results of the Copenhagen conference and the EU’s climate change and energy policies, different views were present in the Finnish public debate. National Coalition Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Sirpa Pietikäinen asserted that, in Copenhagen, it was the process rather than the outcome that was the most important thing: “The Copenhagen conference is a milestone in a series of several national and international actions.”<sup>5</sup> Another National Coalition MEP Eija-Riitta Korhola highly criticised the EU’s climate policy, arguing that it was bureaucratic and inefficient.<sup>6</sup> In his often critical newspaper column, Finland’s previous Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen stated that the EU should refrain from praising its self-perceived moral superiority in global climate politics and focus on reaching a global climate strategy with other significant actors, including the USA, China, India and Brazil.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Foreign Minister Stubb voiced his disappointment over the Copenhagen conference, arguing that it resulted from certain weaknesses in the UN system and the lack of strategic cooperation between world powers. He remained nevertheless optimistic and pointed out that environmental protection, besides being a moral and ethical responsibility, is also a business opportunity that both Finns and Europeans should exploit. What is now needed, he argued, is strong EU leadership, an EU-wide carbon tax and a 30 percent carbon reduction target.<sup>8</sup>

Following a government decision to allow the construction of two more nuclear power stations in Finland, the post-Copenhagen debate transformed into an argument over nuclear energy. Again, the main bifurcation in the debate was between ethical considerations and political and economic interests. According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in autumn 2009, a majority (67 percent) of Finns believed that nuclear energy is a way of tackling climate change. There were still prominent voices – mainly from the Green Party – calling for reductions in nuclear energy production. For example, Green MEP Satu Hassi stated that “it is in the interest of Finland to wake up from its nuclear

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hypnosis and join the green revolution.”<sup>9</sup> The Centre Party newspaper Suomenmaa attacked Helsingin Sanomat for being a “servant of the nuclear business” and disregarding the importance of EU cooperation.<sup>10</sup> Suomenmaa did however acknowledge that the EU target for Finland – 38 percent renewable energy by 2020 – was a challenging one, a sentiment shared by many commentators, including another provincial newspaper Kaleva: “The target that the EU has set for Finland is tough, but there are no other options”.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the mood in some circles was that nearly impossible targets had been imposed on Finland from outside, but this reaction was immediately challenged from an ecological point of view: It seems that “for Finland industry is more important than climate.”<sup>12</sup> The critical article discussed Finland’s hesitation to pledge to make 30 percent carbon cuts, suggesting that it will negatively affect Finland’s image as a green and progressive EU member state.

Finally, with its rich natural resources, Finland was envisaged as the future leader in green politics. For example, Centre Party MP Kyösti Karjula suggested: “Finland could become the forerunner in business-led sustainable bio economy. That requires bold political choices and visionary decisions.”<sup>13</sup> The EU was criticised for its “green protectionism” that prevents bio fuel industry from growing more rapidly.<sup>14</sup> Turun Sanomat wished that Finland had received more appreciation for its role as a major producer of bio energy, but concluded that ultimately what matters is that we all work together towards the common good.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aamulehti: Ilmastovastuullisuus on mahdollista, 8 March 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Ilmastomuutoksen lasku köyhille huolestutti eduskuntaa, 3 December 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: EU:n kolehti: vanhaa, uutta ja lainattua, 12 December 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Tie helvettiin on kivetty hyvillä aikomuksilla, 28 February 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Nykypäivä: Pietikäinen: Kööpenhaminan tulos ei ratkaise kaikkea, 18 December 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Nykypäivä: Korhola: EU:n uusittava ilmastopolitiikkaansa, 12 February 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Turun Sanomat: EU:n kohtalon hetket ovat käsillä, 5 March 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Kaleva: Ilmastopolitiikka ei pysähtynyt Kööpenhaminaan, 5 May 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Tuulivoima ajaa ydinvoiman ohi, 13 March 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Suomenmaa: Pekkarisen ministeriön arvioihin pitää voida luottaa, 21 April 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Kaleva: Pakosta nieltävä energiatavoite, 16 April 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: Suomelle teollisuus on ilmastolupauksia tärkeämpi, 16 March 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Suomenmaa: Suomi EU:n biopolitiikan edelläkävijäksi, 16 March 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Helsingin Sanomat: EU:n tukipolitiikka vaarantaa biopolttoaineiden käytön kasvun, 28 March 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Turun Sanomat: Bioenergialla suuret lupaukset, 30 March 2010.

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**Finland****Begging, immigration and identity****Tuulia Nieminen, Johanna Nykänen and Aaretti Siitonen\***

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Another issue of importance in the Finnish EU discussion was the Roma beggars in Helsinki. They were still few in numbers, but attained a highly symbolic value, taking up a great deal of attention in the parliamentary and media discourse.<sup>1</sup> Begging on the streets of Helsinki was seen to represent the darker aspects of the EU's freedom of movement, and was often underlined in conjunction with the argument that Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU too soon. Outlawing begging was discussed, together with minority rights and European standards.<sup>2</sup>

Relating to the discussion on the freedom of movement, the wider debate on immigration was also heating up in Finland. It is not strictly an EU matter, but the Roma question raised questions of inclusivity and identity.<sup>3</sup> An inclusive, rather than exclusive, Finnish identity tends to be tied in with a basically positive attitude towards EU integration, which also has connotations of naïveté in the Eurosceptic discourse, much as an open attitude towards immigration in particular and internationalism in general does.<sup>4</sup> The expression "When in Rome..." was primarily used by the populist True Finns, but, in spring 2010, the Social Democrats also took to both using this expression and employing populist rhetoric supporting those who feel their employment threatened by immigration. Then Prime Minister (PM) Vanhanen and Foreign Minister Stubb both condemned this attitude with exceptionally harsh words, with especially the latter identifying his view of what it means to be a Finn to be essentially internationalist. Europe and Immigration Minister Thors, who has even received death threats from anonymous sources due to her allegedly uncritical attitude towards immigration, emphasised on numerous occasions that the immigration debate in Finland tends to be plagued by generalisations, oversimplifications and outright bigotry.<sup>5</sup> This debate must, however, also be seen in the context of the upcoming 2011 elections.

On the whole, the received wisdom in the press was that the main identification of Finns is still the nation state. While this may be true, often the questionnaires and figures quoted for these arguments are based more on knowledge about the administrative machinery of the EU than on Europe per se.<sup>6</sup> As mentioned, the discussion on federalism remained rather abstract and shallow, with the question of national independence being the main sticking point on both the Greek crisis and the Lisbon Treaty. Finland's peripheral location is a point of worry for many – will the EU bureaucracy in faraway Brussels be able to understand our exceptional conditions when it comes to farming and the welfare state, for example?<sup>7</sup>

On 22 June 2010, Mari Kiviniemi (Centre Party) was officially appointed as the Finnish Prime Minister, with the previous PM Matti Vanhanen resigning for reasons which he was unwilling to completely reveal. One of the characteristics of Vanhanen's time in office was the change in his EU position over time: from slightly EU sceptical to its advocate. Kiviniemi is expected to continue along the latter line. She belongs to the liberal wing of her party, and is the second female to take up the position.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Parliament session, 25 May 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Vihreä Lanka: Holokaustin perintö elää, 19 February 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Suomenmaa: Suomi elää tavallaan?, 8 April 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Aamulehti: Osta pieni puhdas Pohjoismaa!, 8 April 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Kaleva: Thors: EU:ssa vapaa liikkumisoikeus, 28 April 2010.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Turun Sanomat: Kansallisvaltio voimissaan, 6 December 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Kaleva: Santa Claus Oulun presidentiksi, 14 December 2010.

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## 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?