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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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Germany
Germany more realistic and less enthusiastic of further enlargements; Neighbourhood Policy projects assessed positively

 Katrin Böttger and Daniela Caterina*

Of the three current accession candidates Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey, only Croatia is expected to be part of the next enlargement round. Macedonia is not mentioned much in the public debate and Turkey is a special case of concern in Germany due to the Turkish minority living in the country. In addition, Iceland is expected to join soon. As for future enlargements, the general opinion in Germany is that it has to be done “by the book”, which means in a controlled and not turbo way. This resonates in the government’s coalition agreement of the new conservative/liberal government which backs an “enlargement policy with a sense of proportion”.¹

Recently, less favourable voices are on the rise. In general, the German public views a membership of more than the current 27 member states critically. 66 percent of Germans (compared to 46 percent of Europeans in average) are against further enlargement of the EU.² For example, at his acceptance speech on the Sonning Prize, the German author Hans Magnus Enzensberger criticised the EU’s enlargement frenzy.³ However, the former Commissioner Günter Verheugen assumes that the enlargement waves will continue and cannot be stopped since the process has a dynamic of its own.⁴

Croatia – fighting corruption and privatisation seen as most urgent

After talking with the Croatian Prime Minister Jandranka Kosor, German Chancellor Angela Merkel pointed out that a date for accession will not be set before all criteria are fulfilled. The most important aspects to be dealt with are the fight against corruption and privatisation regulation. Overall, Chancellor Merkel is more reluctant than the other heads of state and government in the EU: “After Bulgaria and Romania’s entry in 2007, landing the EU with unresolved corruption and organised crime problems, enlargement became deeply unpopular in Germany, and is considered a serious vote-loser in Ms Merkel’s own Christian Democrat Party [CDU].”⁵

The internal changes and especially the presidential elections in Croatia have been the subject of many newspaper articles and analyses by political foundations.⁶ For the whole region of the Western Balkans, Croatia’s accession is seen as setting a good example, a view shared by German Members of European Parliaments (MEPs).⁷

Iceland – a newcomer welcomed warmly

In the case of Iceland, Germany’s parliament (Bundestag) was the first to pave the way for opening membership talks.⁸ It thus made use of the new Lisbon Treaty’s accompanying law, according to which the government now has to ask the parliament’s consent in order to agree to accession talks.⁹

Following a motion by the governing coalition’s fractions, these latter gave their consent, while the Social Democrats (SPD) as well as the Greens abstained and the left-wing party DIE LINKE opposed the motion. Nevertheless, all five parties generally supported the beginning of membership negotiations¹⁰ in motions of their own, which emphasised different aspects of Icelandic membership.¹¹ However, cautious voices could also be heard which appealed not to repeat earlier enlargements’ mistakes, when new members were taken in too early.¹² More specifically, these voices addressed the fisheries, unanimously identified as the most problematic field for membership, in which Iceland should not be given opt-outs though possibilities for transition. In addition, it was seen as problematic that the Icelandic population, with a total of 93 percent, overwhelmingly voted “No” against an international agreement dealing with the Icesave case.¹³

On the whole, however, much like in the context of Croatia, the stance is generally positive.¹⁴ Some German politicians underlined the fact that accession should be prepared under the strict conditionality of the Copenhagen criteria; moreover, no dates should be named too early and neither packet deals should be made nor enlargement waves envisaged too hastily.¹⁵ Initially, the Christian Social Union

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(CSU) warned that it is not the EU's role to save bankrupt countries; however, it later supported Iceland's accession in the German parliament.¹⁶

Concerning the countries, which are not expected to become members in the next enlargement round, the accession process in the Western Balkan states is considered to be too slow and the membership negotiations with Turkey have slowed to a crawl due to various reservations from the EU member states, ranging from specificities concerning trade with Cyprus to the general question of membership.

Western Balkans – cautious enlargement at a snail's pace

Enlargement and stability in the Western Balkans region is in Germany's interest, an estimated 50 percent of deputies are said to be knowledgeable in the region.¹⁷ However, in a discussion on a motion by the Social Democrats on the Western Balkan countries' European perspective, Marieluise Beck (Green Party) warned that there is a danger of the Western Balkan states being forgotten by the EU.¹⁸ This motion stressed the need to continue pressing ahead with the political and economic stabilisation of the region. In addition, it asked to react quickly, but only if conditions are fulfilled.¹⁹ The albeit slow progress shows the importance of a membership perspective for the stabilisation process in the Western Balkans. In this case as for future enlargements, the general opinion in the German political sphere is set both against short cuts on the fulfilment of the accession criteria and against an automated membership perspective.

Turkish accession remains point of contention

One of the countries not expected to become a member in the next enlargement round is Turkey, and discussions on the subject remain frequent and heated. In general, the government's coalition agreement sees the membership talks with Turkey as an open-ended process. Moreover, the question of Turkey's membership perspective is strongly combined with the process of integration of the three million strong Turkish minority into German society.

The German-Turkish interactions in the reporting period were intense due to a visit by Chancellor Merkel to Turkey in March 2010. This gained high visibility due to the word battle preceding the visit, where Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Merkel continued to distance themselves from the other's opinion on Turkish schools in Germany, Turkish EU membership and sanctions against Iran.²⁰ Already on the way to Ankara and Istanbul, the German delegation struck a different tone, stressing the fact that the personal relations between the two politicians were excellent.²¹ In a speech at the German-Turkish Economic Forum, Angela Merkel called for pragmatism concerning the question of Turkey's full membership to the EU.²² Furthermore, she identified the Ankara Agreement as the largest barrier inhibiting the opening of negotiation chapters. Therefore, Turkey first has to clarify its situation with Cyprus.²³

One statement by Angela Merkel has been repeated in German media many times, namely that she has now understood that the expression "privileged partnership" has a negative connotation in Turkey. This does not mean, however, that she is shying away from the concept,²⁴ which she understands as a special relationship – a better and more intensive one than with other third states. She also called for consideration on whether full membership should still be aspired to by Turkey or not.²⁵ However, despite the fact that her opinion on full membership differs from the Turkish one, she stressed the circumstance that "pacta sunt servanda" and that the negotiations should be continued.²⁶

The German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle also spoke on the EU-Turkey relations, demanding the country's commitment to reforms.²⁷ Being from a party with a more positive stance towards Turkish EU-membership, he stressed the fact that Turkey has a right to fair negotiations and that the EU should stick to its contracts.²⁸ He also referred to the coalition agreement to point this out. Furthermore, he called for a new dynamic in the accession negotiations, which would have to start with settling the disagreements with Cyprus.²⁹ As for other German politicians, while Ruprecht Polenz (CDU) says that it would be better to have Turkey in the EU, but only if it fulfils the criteria,³⁰ the social democrat Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) stresses the fact that there is a promise to be kept as regards Turkey.³¹

ENP and presidential elections in Ukraine

In general, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its two regional projects, the Union for the Mediterranean and even more so the Eastern Partnership, are positively assessed in Germany. The

coalition agreement supports a further development of these policies, especially of the Eastern Partnership, based on common values.³²

Due to the presidential elections in Ukraine, this country was a focal point concerning the ENP during the reporting period. In an article in the Financial Times Deutschland, Guido Westerwelle, together with the Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kohout, stressed the fact that the newly elected Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich, wants to and should anchor Ukraine even more strongly within European norms and values.³³

According to Cornelia Pieper, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, the German government has a considerable interest in a stronger political and economic rapprochement of Ukraine to the EU and would welcome a near conclusion of the negotiations on an association agreement.³⁴ However, although Ukraine is an important partner in the Eastern Partnership, a membership perspective is not on the agenda.

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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?