

EU-27 WATCH



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EU-27 Watch

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On the project

Due to the new treaty provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and the economic crises the enlarged EU of 27 member states is on the search for a new modus operandi while also continuing membership talks with candidate countries. The EU-27 Watch project is mapping out discourses on these and more issues in European policies all over Europe. Research institutes from all 27 member states and the four candidate countries give overviews on the discourses in their respective countries.

The reports focus on a **reporting period from December 2009 until May 2010**. This survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire that has been elaborated in March and April 2010. Most of the 31 reports were delivered in May 2010. This issue and all previous issues are available on the EU-27 Watch website: www.EU-27Watch.org.

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Germany

Scapegoat European Union?

Severin Fischer, Meike Löhr and Julian Schwartzkopff*

In Germany, the outcome of the Copenhagen conference led to a variety of different interpretations. Chancellor Angela Merkel and the German government described the result with “mixed feelings”,¹ while environmental associations and opposition politicians called it a “disaster”² with a “disillusioning and insufficient result”.³ Europe gave up its leading role on climate protection without even fighting for it, Reinhard Bütikofer (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) argued,⁴ whereas the Social Democrats (SPD) accused China and the United States of not being cooperative enough.⁵ Hubert Weiger, head of BUND, one of Germany’s most influential environmental NGOs, clearly expressed his disappointment about the EU being responsible for Copenhagen’s failure. The EU should have been an example for others, but stranded.⁶ Germanwatch, another environmental NGO, argued that the “negotiating poker failed due to the misguided strategy pursued by central actors”.⁷ Accordingly, the EU did not take over a leadership role.

Before the beginning of the Copenhagen conference, the media criticised the EU for not being able to put a concrete offer on the table on how to finance mitigation and adaptation measures in developing countries.⁸ During the conference, the EU was blamed for the absence of a common European position in general.⁹ After the summit, the EU was accused for having negotiated clumsily.¹⁰ This also corresponds to the German call for improvements in the EU’s strategy and policy. On the one hand, the EU has to avoid misjudgements of global interests and true intentions in the future, especially regarding China and the United States, in order to bring its influence to bear.¹¹ On the other hand, changes have to be made on CO₂ emissions reductions, as the EU failed to set concrete medium- and long-term targets, as environment Minister Norbert Röttgen, Christian Democratic Union (CDU), put it.¹² He claims that the EU now has to take further steps and propose an unconditional 30 percent CO₂ emissions reduction by 2020 instead of sticking to its hitherto decided 20 percent reduction in CO₂ emissions.¹³ Germany’s national target, however, goes even further, aiming at a 40 percent reduction by 2020¹⁴ in order to benefit from early investments in low-carbon technologies.¹⁵ This 40 percent target is generally backed by the government, although some ministers such as Rainer Brüderle,¹⁶ Free Democratic Party (FDP), fear negative impacts for the economy.¹⁷ The Social Democrats (SPD) also support the target, while even aiming towards a 80-95 percent CO₂ reduction in the long-term.¹⁸ The Left Party (DIE LINKE) aspires to a reduction of at least 50 percent by 2020.¹⁹ At the same time, the Federation of German Industry (BDI) warns about setting a 40 percent target.²⁰ BDI-President Hans-Peter Keitl argues that it would negatively affect the competitiveness of German companies, cost jobs and would not improve global climate protection in general.²¹ In order to tackle the problem of carbon leakage and accelerate low-carbon investments outside of Europe, France and Belgium started a discussion about the introduction of a carbon border tax. Environment Minister Norbert Röttgen describes trade restrictions as an inappropriate instrument for achieving environmental aims²² and Matthias Machnig (SPD), economy minister of Thuringia, also disagrees with the effectiveness of this proposal, calling it “eco-imperialism”.²³ In Germany, most politicians prefer other instruments to create a level playing field with international competitors.

There is a clear preference for a binding agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on the part of the German government.²⁴ Environment Minister Norbert Röttgen (CDU) is still optimistic and sees the climate conferences to be held this year in Bonn and Cancún as essential steps towards such an agreement.²⁵ At the same time, the government admits to having misjudged the real distribution of power in Copenhagen and plans to forge new alliances.²⁶ Developing countries and emerging economies in particular should thus be engaged more actively by the EU in order to contest China’s role as self-proclaimed leader of the developing world.²⁷

In order to rectify these mistakes and give new impetus to the UN negotiations, Germany hosted the Petersberg Climate Dialogue together with the Mexican government from 2-4 May 2010 in Bonn, Germany. This informal conference of the 43 countries representing the major negotiating blocks during COP15 was set up to reinvigorate international climate policy and to rebuild trust among the negotiating parties.²⁸ The parliamentary opposition nevertheless claimed this informal summit to be a failure. According to the Social Democratic²⁹ and Green³⁰ parliamentary groups, the conference has

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not produced any concrete results. On top of that, they argue that the governing coalition is cutting back on climate protection at home and has accordingly lost credibility on the international stage. Civil society groups like Germanwatch, Oxfam and Greenpeace largely agree that the government's climate policy undermines the international negotiations.³¹ At the same time, even the critics concede that the informal process itself has the potential to bring the UNFCCC negotiations forward.³²

While the government stresses the need to keep negotiating within the UNFCCC, some media commentators criticise the UN process as "inefficient", "time-consuming" and prone to instrumentalisation for "anti-western propaganda".³³ They argue that climate negotiations should instead be conducted in the G20 or some other small forum.³⁴

The German government affirms its willingness to support developing countries in their fight against climate change. Immediately before the Copenhagen conference, Germany offered to provide 420 million Euros per year from 2010 to 2012.³⁵ This figure stands as the German contribution to the overall EU commitment to provide 7.2 billion US-Dollars over the same period. Originally, the German government had refused to provide clear figures for climate finance before Copenhagen. Officials feared that this would weaken Germany's capacity to extract concessions from third countries.³⁶ Therefore, the EU as a whole was not able to enter the Copenhagen conference with a concrete offer on financing, as requested by the Swedish Presidency.³⁷

The German financial commitments are heavily criticised by the opposition and civil society groups. According to the current preliminary national budget, only 70 million of the climate-related funds for 2010 are new and additional.³⁸ The bulk of the money will be taken from existing budgets, primarily from development assistance funds. The Social Democratic Party,³⁹ the Green party⁴⁰ and NGOs like Germanwatch⁴¹ and Oxfam⁴² all agree in the assessment that this diminishes German credibility abroad and sets an alarming precedent for other industrialised countries.

The Federation of German Industry, on the other hand, argues that Germany, as a country with high emissions reduction targets, should not be expected to provide a disproportionately high amount of assistance to developing countries.⁴³

¹ EurActiv.de: Schwacher Kompromiss in Kopenhagen, 19 December 2009, available at: <http://www.euractiv.de/energie-klima-und-umwelt/artikel/schwacher-kompromiss-in-kopenhagen-002516> (last access: 26 April 2010).

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³ dradio.de: Unterschiedliche Reaktionen auf Klimakonferenz in Kopenhagen, 19 December 2009, available at: <http://www.dradio.de/nachrichten/200912190300/2> (last access: 17 May 2010).

⁴ Bütikofer, Reinhard: Kopenhagen: Endstation für Europas "Vorreiterrolle" im Klimaschutz?, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 21 April 2010, available at: <http://www.boell.de/oekologie/klima/klima-energie-reinhard-buetikofer-kopenhagen-europa-klima-9031.html> (last access: 18 May 2010).

⁵ Miersch, Matthias/Schwabe, Frank: Klimakonferenz in Kopenhagen. Der Klimagipfel in Kopenhagen ist gescheitert, SPD Fraktion, 21 December 2009, available at: http://www.spdfraktion.de/cnt/rs/rs_dok/0_50013_00.html (last access: 18 May 2010).

⁶ Cf. Fuehr, Herbert: EU hat beim Klima ihre Chance vertan, Nürnberger Nachrichten, 21 December 2009, available at: <http://www.nn-online.de/artikel.asp?art=1144028&kat=3> (last access: 26 April 2010).

⁷ Germanwatch: Climate summit in Copenhagen misses its target, 19 December 2009, available at: <http://www.germanwatch.org/presse/2009-12-19e.htm> (last access: 26 May 2010).

⁸ Cf. EurActiv.de: EU verhandelt ohne konkretes Angebot in Kopenhagen, 30 October 2009, available at: <http://www.euractiv.de/zukunft-und-reformen/artikel/eu-verhandelt-ohne-konkretes-angebot-in-kopenhagen-002312> (last access: 28 April 2010).

⁹ Cf. Boltzen, Stefanie/Schiltz, Christoph B.: Klima-Gipfel in Kopenhagen wartet auf Europa, Welt Online, 11 December 2009, available at: <http://www.welt.de/die-welt/politik/article5494941/Klima-Gipfel-in-Kopenhagen-wartet-auf-Europa.html> (last access: 27 April 2010).

¹⁰ Cf. Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung: Krise statt Krönung, 20 December 2009, available at: <http://www.presseportal.de/pm/58964/1533648/neue-osnabruecker-zeitung> (last access: 27 April 2010).

¹¹ Cf. Hönighaus, Reinhard: Die Lehren für Europa aus dem Klimagipfel, Financial Times Deutschland, 22 December 2009, available at: <http://www.ftd.de/politik/international/weltordnung-die-lehren-fuer-europa-aus-dem-klimagipfel/50053600.html> (last access: 27 April 2010).

¹² Cf. Röttgen, Norbert: Den Klimawandel gestalten, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 30 April 2010, available at: http://www.bmu.de/presse/artikel_und_interviews/doc/45954.php (last access: 17 May 2010).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cf. Die Klimapolitik der Bundesregierung, official website of the German government, available at: <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/un-klimakonferenz/DE/KlimapolitikDerBundesregierung/klimapolitik-der-bundesregierung.html> (last access: 6 May 2010).

¹⁵ Cf. Stabenow, Michael: EU will "Koalition der Gleichgesinnten", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22 December 2009, available at: <http://www.faz.net/s/RubC5406E1142284FB6BB79CE581A20766E/Doc--E3A0812B9C5624A0AA795666CDF872DC1~ATpl-Ecommon~Scontent.html> (last access: 28 April 2010).

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- ¹⁸ Cf. SPD: Die Konferenz in Kopenhagen, available at: <http://www.spd.de/de/politik/Weltklimakonferenz/Klimakonferenz.html> (last access: 17 May 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?