

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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Hungary

Rigid mandate for the European Commission was a mistake

Krisztina Vida*

Weak outcome after ambitious preparations

Hungary shares the EU wide general perception that the outcome of the Copenhagen conference was a disappointment for the Union, which wanted to reach a target-specific and legally binding agreement there. Having said that, Hungary of course supported the conclusions of the March 2010 European Council, in which the member states subscribed to a swift implementation of the Copenhagen Accord and also to the gradual formation of the EU's negotiating position during the next conference to be held in November 2010 in Cancun (COP16). In a stance similar to that of all member states, Hungary also agrees that the Cancun conference "should at least provide concrete decisions anchoring the Copenhagen Accord to the UN negotiating process and addressing remaining gaps, including as regards adaptation, forestry, technology and monitoring, reporting and verification."¹

While the official Hungarian position is not revealed at this point, Csaba Tabajdi, leader of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) within the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) in the European Parliament, emphasised in his speech² at the end of January 2010 that even though the Union's ambitious goals were good, they were not convincing enough, due to the EU's poor negotiating strategy. He pointed out that the EU "misunderstood" the commitment of China and other emerging countries, as well as the room for manoeuvre of the President of the USA. The EU was also unable to build a coalition with developing countries. In his view, giving a rigid mandate to the European Commission was a major mistake. A better result could probably have been achieved if the Commission would have obtained a more flexible mandate, namely, "elasticity" downwards from 20 percent emission cuts and not only upwards. According to Tabajdi, the EU's negotiation strategy needs to be revised while preparing for Cancun. János Áder, another Hungarian Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from the European People's Party (EPP), was even more critical, stating that the failure of Copenhagen was due to the lack of a single EU position.³

No change in basic policy targets but a more assertive attitude is needed

According to a high official at the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,⁴ the European Union does not have to change its own energy and climate policy. The EU has actually been taking the lead in the fight against global warming and has done unilaterally the most since 2008 for global climate protection. The ambitious goals of the EU should be maintained and they should become acceptable for other countries, too, as there is no alternative to them. Furthermore, the EU must keep on striving for a legally binding outcome of the COP16 and following conferences. The EU should be open to various alternative solutions as well, such as technological development or a ban on deforestation.⁵

A global binding agreement within the UNFCCC should remain a priority

Hungary (together with all other EU member states, except for Malta and Cyprus) belongs to the so-called Annex I countries within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This means that Hungary is ready to reduce its green house gas emissions below 1990 levels. In full harmony with the EU position, Hungary is in favour of imposing binding agreements on all parties to the UNFCCC in the next conferences. According to a high official at the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,⁶ in general, the UNFCCC framework is a good one, embracing in one way or another nearly all countries of the world. But this framework should be further tightened and in this respect the EU should assert its ambitious position more strongly, better reflecting its economic weight.

Political support and financial contribution

Despite its limited financial resources Hungary fully agrees with such efforts. Hungary takes part in the Union's recent initiative to assist developing countries fighting climate change. In this framework, in

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December 2009, the 27 member governments committed 7.2 billion Euros for this purpose to be spent in the three years between 2010 and 2012. The Hungarian contribution to this envelope amounts to six million Euros in total.⁷ During the European Council meeting at the end of March 2010, Hungary also subscribed to the Union's joint commitment with other developed countries to "mobilise \$100 billion per year by 2020 to help developing countries fight climate change."⁸

¹ European Council: European Council 25/26 March 2010. Conclusions, EUCO 7/10, p. 8, available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/113591.pdf (last access: 17 May 2010).

² The speech of Csaba Tabajdi was delivered at a conference in Budapest, 26 January 2010.

³ See the press communication of János Áder, 21 January 2010, available at: <http://ader.fidesz-eu.hu/hu/cikk/20/> (last access: 10 June 2010).

⁴ Interview done at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 12 May 2010.

⁵ See the article on the Hungarian site EnergiaOnline, 21 January 2010, available at: <http://www.energiaonline.hu/cikkek/84> (last access: 17 May 2010).

⁶ Interview done at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 12 May 2010.

⁷ See the report of the Hungarian electronic news magazine "Parameter", 11 December 2009, available at: <http://www.parameter.sk/rovat/kulfold/2009/12/11/eu-csucs-72-milliard-euro-fejlodo-oroszagoknak-klimavedelemre> (last access: 17 May 2010).

⁸ European Council: European Council 25/26 March 2010. Conclusions, EUCO 7/10, p. 9, available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/113591.pdf (last access: 17 May 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?