

EU-27 WATCH



No. 9
July 2010

ISSN 1610-6458

www.EU-27Watch.org

EU-27 Watch

Contributing partners are

Austrian Institute of International Affairs, Vienna
Bulgarian European Community Studies Association,
Sofia

Center for European Studies / Middle East Technical
University, Ankara

Centre d'études européennes de Sciences Po, Paris
Centre d'étude de la vie politique, Université libre de
Bruxelles

Centre d'études et de recherches européennes Robert
Schuman, Luxembourg

Centre of International Relations, Ljubljana

Cyprus Institute for Mediterranean, European and
International Studies, Nicosia

Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen

Elcano Royal Institute and UNED University, Madrid
European Institute of Romania, Bucharest

Federal Trust for Education and Research, London

Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki

Foundation for European Studies - European Institute,
Łódź

Greek Centre of European Studies and Research,
Athens

Institute of International Affairs and Centre for Small
State Studies at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik
Institute for International Relations, Zagreb

Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian
Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Institute for Strategic and International Studies, Lisbon

Institute of International and European Affairs, Dublin

Institute of International Relations, Prague

Institute of International Relations and Political
Science, Vilnius University

Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome

Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Riga

Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies,
University of Malta

Netherlands Institute of International Relations
'Clingendael', The Hague

Ohrid Institute for Economic Strategies and

International Affairs, Skopje

Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
(SIPRI)

University of Tartu

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.

The EU-27 Watch No. 9 receives significant funding from the **Otto Wolff-Foundation, Cologne**, in the framework of the *"Dialog Europa der Otto Wolff-Stiftung"*, and financial support from the **European Commission**. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.



Disclaimer

Institutes/authors are responsible for the content of their country reports. The publisher and editorial team cannot be held responsible for any errors, consequences arising from the use of information contained in the EU-27 Watch or its predecessors, or the content of external links on www.EU-27watch.org or in the EU-27 Watch. The content of the EU-27 Watch is protected under German copyright law. The articles of the EU-27 Watch can be printed, copied, and stored for personal, scientific, and educational use for free. Articles of the EU-27 Watch may not be used for commercial purposes. Any other reprint in other contexts is not allowed without prior permission from the publisher. For permission or any other question concerning the use of the EU-27 Watch please contact: info@EU-27watch.org.

Editorial Team

Publisher: Prof. Dr. Mathias Jopp
Executive Editor: Dr. Katrin Böttger
Managing Editor: Julian Plottka
Editorial Staff: Daniela Caterina, Gregory Kohler,
Christoph Kornes
Layout: Matthias Jäger

Contact: info@EU-27watch.org
www.EU-27watch.org

iep Institut für
Europäische Politik
Bundesallee 23
D-10717 Berlin
Tel.: +49/30/88.91.34-0
Fax: +49/30/88.91.34-99
E-mail: info@iep-berlin.de
Internet: www.iep-berlin.de

Hungary

New Hungarian government upon landslide victory of FIDESZ-KDNP and the Hungarian Council Presidency in 2011

Krisztina Vida*

The most important topic currently discussed in Hungary is the incoming government and its programme. In April 2010, after two electoral rounds, the Hungarian Civic Union and the Christian Democratic People's Party (FIDESZ-KDNP) alliance won over two-thirds of the seats in the Hungarian (single chamber) parliament. These elections were almost revolutionary in the sense that no such landslide victory was achieved by any party or party alliance since 1990, the first democratic elections after the systemic change. This means that the incoming government has huge popular support, a very strong legitimacy and also the immense responsibility to lead the country out of the crisis. This support and legitimacy is of course accompanied by high expectations. Actually, during the eight years of socialist (and for a long time socialist-liberal) ruling, most of Hungary's macroeconomic indicators had a deteriorating trend, in spite of the favourable economic environment in Europe. Thus, Hungary seemed to be the only new member state that, prior to the global crisis, could not really benefit from EU accession in terms of catching up. At the same time, during the past couple of years, corruption reached unprecedented levels, involving the highest layers of politicians. Moreover, due to belated and harsh austerity measures, the level of key public services (such as schooling, health care, internal security) continued to decrease.

All these phenomena led to a paradigm shift in Hungarian internal politics. Beyond the already mentioned victory of FIDESZ-KDNP, there are now three smaller factions in parliament, two of which are brand new political forces, while the two biggest parties leading the country into parliamentary democracy in 1990, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), were both wiped out by the electorate. As for the two new parties, the Politics Can Be Different party (LMP) is a liberal-minded political group with a strong emphasis on environmental protection, while the extreme-right Jobbik is a radical and Euro-sceptic party (also represented in the European Parliament). The third and biggest party in opposition is the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), which lost the recent elections and shrunk in size significantly. Thus, in the 386 member Hungarian parliament, the distribution of seats is as follows: FIDESZ-KDNP: 263, MSZP: 59, Jobbik: 47, LMP: 16 and 1 independent.

Another topical issue is the nearing Hungarian Council Presidency to be held in the first half of 2011. Beyond the "inherited" topics on the agenda, there is one particular issue that Hungary will advocate. This is actually a new approach to regionalism: the European Danube Strategy. Although emphasis is put on better water management, this Strategy embraces various priorities such as environment protection, or regional development and cooperation. This Strategy is wholeheartedly promoted by the biggest umbrella organisation for "green values", namely, the National Council for Sustainable Development. As it pointed out in a recent position paper, it supports "the endeavour according to which Hungary feels great responsibility and commitment towards the successful preparation of the Strategy, with special regard to the circumstance that the adoption thereof in the European Council will expectedly take place in the first half of 2011, which may be an outstanding achievement of the Hungarian EU Presidency due at that time."¹

¹ Euractiv: Hungary to push water policy overhaul at EU helm, 14 April 2010, available at: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/Hungary-to-push-water-policy-overhaul-at-EU-helm-news-442324> (last access: 17 May 2010).

* Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

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?