

# 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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**Ireland****New coalitions of the willing**

Shane Fitzgerald\*

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The former Taoiseach (Fine Gael party) and influential political and economic commentator, Garret FitzGerald, recently argued that the governance of the EU has evolved in a disturbing direction and that European Council meetings on the Greek crisis showed that the “big three” of France, Germany and the UK now dominate proceedings.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, speaking at a recent Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) seminar on the future of European foreign policy after Lisbon, Martti Ahtisaari and Mark Leonard made the point that many traditional EU responses to crises are now off the table.<sup>2</sup> Treaty change is not an option in the current political climate. Neither will high-minded rhetoric and solemn declarations suffice. Leonard described a world where more informal relations between powers are taking the place of much of the formal architecture of global governance in which the European powers, and the EU, have traditionally done so well. And he noted that this resurgence in realpolitik was much in evidence inside the EU’s borders as well as out. Just as the global economic crisis has proven that globalisation is an asymmetric process, so too is it demonstrating that European integration is not the same for everyone.

A key point of Leonard’s was that the difference between the surging powers of the developing world and the increasingly sclerotic ones of the West was not one of capacity but one of will. The EU’s tendency towards fragmentation of policy and power has been exacerbated by the crisis even as the BRIC countries are emerging leaner and meaner. His message to the EU chimes with that of the recent Reflection Group on the Future of the European Union: reform or decline.

Talk of a two-speed Europe is often met with alarm in Ireland, which has always subscribed to the idea of a strong, treaty-based Union and would not countenance the prospect of ending up in the slipstream of a Eurosceptic UK as a core Europe forges ahead with the European project. However, there is increasing recognition of the need for new “coalitions of the willing” in order for Europe to avoid stagnation and move forward on various issues in various ways. Ireland has been understandably preoccupied with domestic problems in recent months, but as people here begin to look forward to economic recovery and political renewal, they necessarily do so in an international, and especially a European, context. There is much talk of how to leverage Irish influence abroad in the service of Irish interests, and a strong and activist role in the EU is high up the list of priorities in any conversation. The European External Action Service is a tremendous opportunity to transform European, and Irish, external relations even as the internal EU response to the crisis is creating new tensions and new synergies between member states. This shifting polarity is dangerous for Ireland insofar as it creates large structural gulfs between the Eurozone and non-Euro states, but it too affords an opportunity, this time to forge new coalitions and power blocs to counteract the dominant influence of the Commission and the “big three”. Ireland’s newfound links through migration with Poland and other central and eastern European states are just one way in which it might try to rejuvenate its role in the European project.

*A smart economy strategy*

Because research and innovation are at the core of José Manuel Barroso’s EU 2020 Strategy, and Ireland’s own ambition is to create a “smart economy” based on strategic investments in specific areas of science such as biopharmaceuticals and green technologies, Maire Geoghegan Quinn’s recent appointment as the Commissioner for Research and Innovation was welcomed in Ireland. Although Commissioners are prohibited from favouring projects in or seeking political advantages for their home states, it is hoped that Geoghegan Quinn’s new profile and position within the international research and innovation community will encourage Irish enterprise, academia and policymaking in subtler ways, for example by participating fully in her project of creating an “innovation Union”. Martin Schuurmans, chairman of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), for example, says that the appointment represents a tremendous opportunity for Ireland to enhance its reputation in this area and should be viewed as a major coup for the State.<sup>3</sup> This view is generally shared in Ireland also.

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Times: Governance of EU has evolved in a disturbing direction, 3 April 2010, available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2010/0403/1224267608801.html> (last access: 18 May 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Video and audio podcasts of this event are available at: <http://www.iiea.com/events/europe-after-lisbon> (last access: 18 May 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Irish Times: EU portfolio a 'coup' for Ireland, 12 February 2010, available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/finance/2010/0212/1224264265830.html> (last access: 18 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?