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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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Italy**Divergent views over Van Rompuy and Ashton seem largely negative in Italy**

Jacopo Leone*

Since his appointment as the new President of the European Council in November 2009, Herman Van Rompuy has inspired sceptical comments and pessimistic analyses, both at the political level as well as in the Italian media coverage. Indeed only few voices, although highly respected, have appeared to reject this general negative opinion.

The Italian political leaders expressed common frustration on the appointment of Van Rompuy. Pierluigi Bersani, leader of the main opposition party, has spoken of a “low profile” personality, which symbolises a bad start for the EU after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.¹ More prudent in his statement has been the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who described the decision as “the only possible compromise.”²

Moreover, a deep scepticism over the political figure of Van Rompuy also characterises the comments in the Italian press and research community. The ‘opaque Flemish leader’ has often been judged as a minimalist choice, lacking the strong personal authority which is deemed necessary to effectively operate in a fragmented and confused EU.³ Van Rompuy’s nomination seemed, therefore, to suggest a lack of political ambition, the loss of a truly pro-European sentiment among national leaders, and the demise of any aspiration of global leadership by the EU.⁴

Despite this generally negative attitude, Mario Monti, former member of the European Commission, judged the appointment of Van Rompuy in a rather optimistic way. In particular, Monti believes President Van Rompuy to be the right man to further the construction of the European project, and to create political consensus and mediate between divergent national interests.⁵ As another respected commentator wrote, “the relatively low profile of Van Rompuy fits perfectly well with the wording of the Lisbon Treaty”,⁶ since the very limited role attributed to the President of the European Council focuses mainly on the creation of political synthesis and institutional continuity.⁷

Recent events seemed to mirror this divergence of views over President Van Rompuy. If, on the one hand, his speech at the College of Europe in Bruges (Belgium) received positive comments in the Italian press,⁸ his leadership has been considered, on the other hand, unconvincing in response to the current Greek economic crisis.⁹

However, the main problem behind these evaluations seems to remain the new institutional framework introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, which, by maintaining the rotating presidency system alongside the new President of the European Council, risks to create a paralysed EU in the exercise of its powers.¹⁰

In Italy, the reactions to the appointment of Catherine Ashton as the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy have been mainly negative. Indeed, the news that the Italian candidate, Massimo D’Alema from the Socialist Party and backed by the government for the position of High Representative, was defeated aroused pessimistic and frustrated comments. Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission and former Italian Prime Minister, confessed to be shocked by the choice of Ashton, a decision he qualified as ‘mind-blowing’.¹¹ Giuliano Amato, a respected Italian political figure, suggested that a logic of compensation and self-serving national interests had prevailed, which would negatively influence the future of the European project.¹²

Unquestionably, the first months as High Representative have represented a troublesome period for Ashton. Probably due to the vast range of her duties, her performance has been widely criticised in the Italian public debate – in reference to, for example, her absence from Haiti after the earthquake, or her comment regarding the possibility of a common EU seat at the UN Security Council.¹³ However, on a different note rests Franco Frattini, current Italian Foreign Minister and former European Commissioner, who expressed on several occasions his support and appreciation for Ashton.¹⁴

Although the general view of Ashton remains sceptical, the post of High Representative in its “double-hat” design appears to present some institutional difficulties in itself. Indeed, the effort to create a

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“single voice” for EU external relations and a better coordination of policies ranging from development aid to commerce gives Ashton an almost unmanageable amount of responsibilities, and makes it often hard to address them successfully. As suggested, the High Representative faces an “heroic mission”,¹⁵ with the ambitious aim to achieve a political cohesion within a still fragmented European foreign and security policy. Moreover, a new institutional balance needs to be reached. That both Ashton and the President of the Commission José Manuel Barroso sent a message of condolence after the earthquake in Chile of February 2010 without previously consulting each other seems to represent, in a harmless way, the difficulties faced by the EU during the process of creating a coherent and coordinated voice.¹⁶

During the last months, the Italian debate on the establishment of a European External Action Service (EEAS) has been rather meagre. Probably due to the technical nature of this topic, the Italian press and media have only briefly covered its institutional progress, primarily highlighting the political difficulties inherent to the attainment of a shared EU position, which the High Representative Ashton has to ultimately facilitate.¹⁷

On the political side, the Italian Foreign Minister Frattini continues to reaffirm his support for Ashton and the creation of the EEAS, considered the main tool for a new European global identity.¹⁸

Nevertheless, what emerged within the Italian research community is a situation in which domestic interests compete with each other for those positions and resources which the new diplomatic body will introduce. As Sergio Romano, a well-known political analyst, wrote, only when the recruitment of the European diplomatic personnel will be open and public could we overcome the present fragmented and self-serving situation.¹⁹ Moreover, without a clear definition of its duties, the EEAS is likely to further an incoherent system of representation, which is ultimately subdued by national interests.²⁰

The concept of an EU diplomatic service, in its rationale and intended aims, is largely perceived in a favourable way. However, it is still unclear if the proposal pushed forward by Ashton on 25 March 2010 and partially modified on 26 April 2010 will be approved by all the European institutions involved, and will thus be able to avoid the risk of an internal competition, enhancing the efficacy of the EU external action.²¹

In Italy, the debate on the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) has registered little attention from either the press or civil society, remaining largely confined to the national political institutions. In particular, the committees of both the Senate (the upper chamber of the Italian parliament) and the Camera dei Deputati (the lower chamber) have analysed the issue extensively and with widespread interest.

The result is a series of recommendations, fairly technical and selective, on the ECI procedures and rules suggested by the European Commission in its proposal. A strong position is taken by Italian representatives, for example, regarding the question of how many member states need to be represented in a given ECI in order for it to be accepted. Although the Commission proposal set the limit to 1/3 of the member states, Italian Members of Parliament (MPs) repeatedly expressed their preference for a 1/4 threshold, in line with the position of the European Parliament.²² Moreover, the four-month period in which the Commission should examine the initiative is deemed too short, and a one-year period is instead suggested.²³

Overall, however, the creation of a system for ECI is evaluated mainly in a positive way. As Andrea Ronchi, the Italian Minister for European Affairs, has remarked, the ECI is one of the most important provisions included in the Lisbon Treaty, and even though it has been rather overlooked until now, Italy should dedicate considerable attention to its institutional definition.²⁴

¹ Quotidiano.net: UE, Van Rompuy presidente permanente, Esteri alla Ashton, D’Alema sconfitto, 19 November 2009, available at: http://quotidianonet.ilsole24ore.com/esteri/2009/11/19/262298-rompuy_presidente_permanente.shtml (last access: 15 April 2010).

² La Repubblica: UE, Berlusconi sulla bocciatura di D’Alema “Nomi scelti unico accordo possibile”, 21 November 2009, available at: <http://www.repubblica.it/2009/10/sezioni/esteri/ue-unione-europea/frattini-deluso-da-bocciatura/frattini-deluso-da-bocciatura.html> (last access: 15 April 2010).

³ Enrico Brivio: Un leader haiku per l’Europa, Il Sole24Ore, 20 November 2009, available at: <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnLine4/dossier/Italia/2009/commenti-sole-24-ore/20-novembre-2009/haiku-leader-europa.shtml> (last access: 14 April 2010).

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- ¹¹ Il Sole24Ore: Lo stupore di Prodi: "Ashton? Ma chi è?", 19 November 2009, available at: <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnline4/Mondo/2009/11/ashton-commento-prodi.shtml?uuid=1f128ce4-d53e-11de-b4c7-32ad3fd513a> (last access: 19 April 2010).
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- ²¹ Raffaello Matarazzo: Braccio di ferro sul servizio diplomatico europeo, AffarInternazionali, 26 March 2010, available at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1424> (last access: 19 April 2010).
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- ²⁴ Audizione parlamentare, Audizione del ministro per le politiche europee Andrea Ronchi, Camera dei Deputati, 17 March 2010, available at: http://nuovo.camera.it/470?shadow_organo_parlamentare=1507&stenog=/dati/leg16/lavori/stencomm/0314/audiz2/2010/0317&pagina=s010 (last access: 20 April 2010).

Italy**Inclusive attitude towards possible new members**

Jacopo Leone*

In the Italian debate, it is common opinion that Croatia and Macedonia are the best candidates to enter the EU in the next enlargement round. In this regard, comments are usually positive. Indeed, the national political establishment has traditionally supported the access of the Balkan countries to the EU. In the words of Italian Foreign Minister Frattini, Croatia and Macedonia have both overcome several obstacles, and it seems legitimate to imagine Zagreb in the EU in the course of 2011.¹ The same opinion is expressed by the research community, which noticed how the recent election of Ivo Josipović as Croatian President substantially increased the odds of the country joining the EU.²

The case of Macedonia appears more problematic. The Italian government is striving to push Brussels to open negotiations as soon as possible, leaving aside the thorny debate with Greece over the name of the former Yugoslav Republic.³

The forthcoming European membership of both Croatia and Macedonia are thus considered with favour by the Italian political parties and public opinion. As reported in the National Strategic Concept of the Ministry of Defense, the reason is mainly geostrategic.⁴ This approach is therefore likely to remain consistent in the near future, concerning the whole Balkan area.

The inclusive attitude towards possible new European member states is maintained by Italy also in regard of other, more problematic, candidates. Montenegro, Albania and Serbia are all examples of this state of affairs. Although there are still concerns about their political/economic performance, the Italian government and the Foreign Minister Frattini have demanded a rapid solution concerning their admission requests, raising their chances to join the EU significantly.⁵

The case of Kosovo appears, however, to be more complex. Diplomatic divisions over its fresh independence still persist in Europe, and a solution seems improbable in the short term.⁶ Nevertheless, Frattini recently stated that Kosovo has a European future, acknowledging at the same time the need for a more balanced rule of law system in the country.⁷ The same position is also maintained on the European future of Serbia, for which Prime Minister Berlusconi hoped a rapid admission into the EU.⁸

Interestingly enough, however, the last available Eurobarometer shows that the Italian public, thinking that the EU has enlarged too rapidly in recent years, remains against new enlargement rounds.⁹

In addition, it is important to underline here the Italian position regarding the controversial candidature of Turkey. Although the issue remains divisive at the national political level, the government recently restated its support to an eventual entrance of Turkey into the EU.¹⁰

The Mediterranean Sea is an important geostrategic region for Italy. This interest was recently restated when Foreign Minister Frattini called, in an article appearing in one of the most important national newspapers, for the creation of an economic community in the Mediterranean, able to mirror the European project and further the creation of future common values and political stability.¹¹ Therefore, Italian support for the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) seems rather natural. Even if the project is going through a phase of deep reflection, the Italian government renewed during a meeting with the French President Sarkozy its support for the UfM and its will to working for the successful implementation of its activities.¹²

Uneasiness towards the poor results of the initiative has been expressed by the President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano, who highlighted that its unexpressed potentialities continue to prevail over tangible results.¹³ Moreover, the Italian research community also expressed scepticism, noting how the UfM continues to exist only on paper, far away from the goal included in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of the creation of a free-trade area in the Mediterranean.¹⁴ The upcoming conference in Barcelona, scheduled for June 2010, will probably give more information regarding

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these difficulties and the future of the UfM, although the usual contrasts between Israel and Arab countries risk to frustrate any potential improvement.

On the other hand, less interest has been expressed on the Eastern Partnership. Indeed, the subject has been somewhat sidelined by the Italian press and public debate, and few declarations have been made by the Foreign Minister Frattini. During a meeting with his Moldavian counterpart, Frattini reaffirmed Italy's great interest in the Eastern Partnership, hoping to transform this cooperation tool through several association agreements with the Caucasian countries, which had been previously done with Moldova and Ukraine.¹⁵ The same position had been maintained before in regard of Belarus.¹⁶

For its part, some members of the Italian research community preferred to highlight the weak influence the Eastern Partnership has on several latent conflicts in its geographical area. In this regard, the foundation of a stronger cooperation between Brussels and Moscow is ultimately suggested as a possible way forward. The role for Italy is to favour this complicated political dialogue with Russia, and assess whether the role of non-governmental actors within the Eastern Partnership is possible.¹⁷

¹ Franco Frattini: Intervento del Ministro Franco Frattini all'International Desk Forum sugli "Scenari di sviluppo dell'Area Adriatico-Balcanica", Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 8 March 2010, available at: http://www.esteri.it/MAE/IT/Sala_Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Interventi/2010/03/20100308_InternationalDesk.htm (last access: 21 April 2010).

² Giovanna Casa: La Croazia più vicina all'UE dopo la vittoria di Josipovic, AffariInternazionali, 13 January 2010, available at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1363> (last access: 21 April 2010).

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⁶ Pietro Paolo Proto: La tormentata strada del Kosovo verso l'UE, AffariInternazionali, 16 February 2010, available at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1394> (last access: 21 April 2010).

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¹⁵ Il Piccolo: Frattini-Leanca 'Moldova a un passo dall'UE', 26 February 2010, available at: http://www.esteri.it/MAE/IT/Sala_Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Interviste/2010/02/20100226_MoldovaaunpassodallUE.htm (last access: 22 April 2010).

¹⁶ Il Messaggero: Nella UE ci può essere posto anche per la Bielorussia, 29 September 2009, available at: http://www.esteri.gov.it/MAE/Templates/IntervIntervTemplate.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID=%7B773A0E29-DD83-46C6-B7D7-6B037B5362DD%7D&NRORIGINALURL=%2FMAE%2FIT%2FSala_Stampa%2FArchivioNotizie%2FInterviste%2F2009%2F09%2F20090929_Frattini_Bielorussia.htm&NRCACHEHINT=Guest (last access: 22 April 2010).

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Italy**Unanimity rule paralysing European economic policy**

Jacopo Leone*

Since the emergence of the Greek financial and economic crisis, Italy has always approved and encouraged an European coordinated action to resolve the situation. As Prime Minister Berlusconi maintained, if the EU is not willing to help a member of the Euro area afflicted by a severe economic crisis full of perilous potentials, then the EU has no reason to exist.¹ On the same line, the Italian Minister for Finance and Economy Giulio Tremonti, commented that the finance package to support Greece was the right thing to do.² More sceptical, however, was the opposition leader Enrico Letta, highlighting how the decision to involve the International Monetary Fund (IMF) undeniably discards the idea of a possible European Monetary Fund (EMF).

In this particular regard, the research community and various opinion-makers have adopted a rather severe and rigid position. Indeed, the agreement on the first rescue package, announced at the end of March 2010, has been described as a last minute solution, in which Germany seems to have obtained the most concessions.³ According to a comment which appeared in the Italian leading economic journal *Il Sole 24 Ore*, the financial package was a reasonable outcome aimed at lowering the risk of moral hazard. Germany is right in its restrictive approach to the Greek situation, and to deem the creation of an EMF a futile and complicated operation.⁴ Although necessary, Daniel Gros suggested that the IMF is not able to offer Greece enough money, and that the EU will probably have to participate with its own resources.⁵ In conclusion, it has been noted that politicians should not confuse European patriotism with financial irresponsibility, since the future of the whole EU economic project is involved.⁶

Following the latest financial and political developments of the Greek crisis, including the tragic death of three people in Athens on 5 May 2010, an improved European rescue package has been promptly announced. With the realistic danger of a massive European financial infection, the Italian press shifted its attention to the political aspects of the crisis, asking for a substantial and rapid intervention, which indeed materialised.⁷ In this regard, the Italian government expressed satisfaction with the 750 billion Euro agreement, with the President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano praising the Italian role during the political negotiations.⁸ Nevertheless, some analysts noted that this solution represents only a second best, and that the EU ultimately needs to reform its economic institutions, creating automatic mechanisms to effectively control future crises.⁹

Mario Draghi, current Bank of Italy's governor and candidate to head the European Central Bank, noted that one of the main results of the Greek crisis has been to underline the need for a more robust and comprehensive Stability and Growth Pact (SGP).¹⁰ Generally, the same opinion is shared by Italian politicians and public opinion. Stricter rules are deemed necessary, and the European Commission should be allowed to indicate targets/actions and, when required, impose the Europe 2020 Strategy.¹¹ But the reform of the SGP cannot be limited to sanctions. Indeed a structural approach able to offer a more solid and balanced European economic organisation is also needed.¹²

As has been highlighted, however, the Greek crisis is both economic and political. Therefore, any reform has to find a common political agreement among the EU member states, which seems to be, according to the last analysis, the main problem of an EU in which the current global financial crisis has brought an acute mutual distrust.¹³

The possibility of a European economic governance, which has been suggested on several occasions during the Greek financial crisis, has remained rather unexplored in Italy. Nevertheless, some ideas have emerged from the public debate. Finance Minister Tremonti, for instance, admitted the need for a European direction of public investments, the first step towards an improved coordination between member states' economic policies.¹⁴ Moreover, the institution of new agencies aimed at the creation of a financial regulation system could be a complex development for the European economy, since such a system would have to be successfully applied to all the member states of the Eurozone. After all, the credibility of the whole EU is at stake, and the consequences that a failure or a weak system could trigger are indeed pervasive.¹⁵

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In a nutshell, a coordinated governance of the European economy is a vast political operation, in which all the European institutions should receive a precise and improved role. Italian researchers and politicians appear rather favourable in principle, but it will take time before a concrete agreement is going to be reached.¹⁶

Just after the release of the Commission's proposal for a new Europe 2020 Strategy, the Italian government expressed support for the document, in particular with regard to its references to innovation, the value of small/medium enterprises, and the attention posed on international markets.¹⁷ The Italian Minister for Finance and Economy, Giulio Tremonti, called the text interesting, as long as it is not understood as an instrument to incentivise public expenditure by the member states.¹⁸ Moreover, following the Franco-Italian summit of April 2010, both parties have argued that a stronger role for Common Agricultural Policy should be inserted in the final version of the Strategy.¹⁹

However, the economic provisions contained in the document are probably not enough. In fact, it appears to be indispensable to also deal with the structural weaknesses of the European economic project, like the unanimity rule, which is ultimately paralysing most present EU actions. Only in this way does a better and more coherent economic future for the EU seem achievable.²⁰

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² La Repubblica: Atene alla prova bond: 16 miliardi entro Maggio, 26 March 2010, available at: <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2010/03/28/atene-alla-prova-bond-16-miliardi-entro-maggio.html> (last access: 26 April 2010).

³ Paolo Guerrieri: Europa delle patrie, AffarInternazionali, 29 March 2010, available at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1428> (last access: 26 April 2010).

⁴ Alberto Alesina/Roberto Perotti: Processiamo le cicale greche non le formiche tedesche, Il Sole24Ore, 27 March 2010, available at: <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnLine4/dossier/Italia/2009/commenti-sole-24-ore/27-marzo-2010/salvataggio-grecia-accordo-francia-germania.shtml?uuid=f773d266-3978-11df-9fa9-1d4f0b3be0c7&DocRulesView=Liber0&fromSearch> (last access: 26 April 2010).

⁵ Daniel Gros: Dilemmi Greci, La Voce, 23 March 2010, available at: <http://www.lavoce.info/articoli/-europa/pagina1001622.html> (last access: 26 April 2010).

⁶ Francesco Giavazzi: Più che un fondo serve coraggio, Corriere della Sera, 11 March 2010, available at: http://www.corriere.it/editoriali/10_marzo_11/giavazzi_e253ab20-2cd2-11df-a00c-00144f02aabe.shtml (last access: 18 May 2010).

⁷ Marco Onado: Ora la politica curi l'infezione, Il Sole24Ore, 7 May 2010, available at: <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnLine4/dossier/Italia/2009/commenti-sole-24-ore/7-maggio-2010/crisi-euro-politica-curi-infezione.shtml?uuid=6d2c43b4-599d-11df-acb8-823383602e85&DocRulesView=Liber0> (last access: 10 May 2010).

⁸ Corriere della Sera: "Il premier ha sbloccato i negoziati". Napolitano "Italia ha fatto la sua parte", 10 May 2010, available at: http://www.corriere.it/economia/10_maggio_10/chigi-napolitano-frattini_fd247162-5c1d-11df-92dd-00144f02aabe.shtml (last access: 10 May 2010).

⁹ Tito Boeri/Tommaso Monacelli: Non aggiungiamo miopia alla miopia, La Voce, 10 May 2010, available at: <http://www.lavoce.info/articoli/-europa/pagina1001702.html> (last access: 10 May 2010).

¹⁰ La Stampa: Draghi: Governo economico Ue e con regole più severe, 20 March 2010, available at: <http://www.lastampa.it/redazione/cmsSezioni/economia/201003articoli/53316girata.asp> (last access: 26 April 2010).

¹¹ Antonio Villafranca: The future of Euroland after the Greek crisis, ISPI Policy Brief n. 179, March 2010, available at: http://www.ispionline.it/it/documents/PB_179_20101.pdf (last access: 26 April 2010).

¹² Giancarlo Corsetti: Cambiamo il Patto di stabilità, La Voce, 16 February 2010, available at: <http://www.lavoce.info/articoli/pagina1001560.html> (last access: 26 April 2010).

¹³ Antonio Missiroli: Of Greek and gifts, ISPI Commentary, 4 March 2010, available at: http://www.ispionline.it/it/documents/Commentary_Missiroli_4%20marzo%202010.pdf (last access: 26 April 2010).

¹⁴ Giulio Tremonti: Un ruolo per il Fondo monetario nel salvataggio della Grecia, Il Corriere della Sera, 6 March 2010, available at: http://www.corriere.it/economia/10_marzo_06/tremonti-grecia-fondo-monetario_c2a71ffc-28f2-11df-a5a9-00144f02aabe.shtml (last access: 26 April 2010).

¹⁵ Nicolas Veron: Il fallimento che l'Europa non può permettersi, La Voce, 23 April 2010, available at: <http://www.lavoce.info/articoli/pagina1001661.html> (last access: 26 April 2010).

¹⁶ Romano Prodi: La speculazione, l'Europa divisa e la speranza di Kohl, Il Messaggero, 9 May 2010, available at: http://www.romanoprodi.it/articoli/italia/speculazione-europa-divisa-e-la-speranza-di-kohl_1494.html (last access: 18 May 2010).

¹⁷ Governo Italiano: Strategia Europa 2020 condivisa dal Governo Italiano, 3 March 2010, available at: <http://www.governo.it/Presidenza/Comunicati/dettaglio.asp?d=56062> (last access: 26 April 2010).

¹⁸ ANSA: Tremonti a Ue, strategia 2020 non sia bancomat spesa, 16 March 2010, available at: <http://notizie.it.msn.com/business-news/articolo.aspx?cp-documentid=152597706> (last access: 26 April 2010).

¹⁹ ANSA: Strategia 2020 Italia e Francia puntano sull'agricoltura, 30 March 2010, available at: <http://www.newsfood.com/q/3600765e/strategia-europa-2020-italia-e-francia-puntano-sullagricoltura/> (last access: 26 April 2010).

²⁰ Giampiero Gramaglia: Europa 2020 chi fa da se fa per tre, AffarInternazionali, 4 March 2010, available at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1404> (last access: 26 April 2010).

Italy**Europe's voice was no source of influence in Copenhagen**

Jacopo Leone*

In Italy, as in most European countries, the meagre results achieved during the Copenhagen Summit have produced a palpable frustration. In this regard, the words of the Italian Minister for Environment Stefania Prestigiacomo sharply highlighted this feeling, noting that the conference has been a substantial political failure and a deeply disappointing experience.¹ However, while still discouraged by the summit's results, Carlo Carraro, an Italian member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has been more cautious. In his view, although insufficient, such a weak outcome was indeed the only possible. The EU appears to be the real loser, since it had considerable ambitions which had not been met during the conference.²

This EU failure has also been revealed by the Italian press and the research community. In particular, it has been noted that the EU is once again incapable of speaking with one strong voice which is the real reason at the base of its marginalisation.³ Moreover, such an alarming development is well represented by the new cooperation between the US and emergent economies, from which the final political decision emerged at the last minute of the conference.⁴

In conclusion, the achievement of a more comprehensive agreement was rather unrealistic. Nevertheless, the EU appeared weak and divided, unable to make its voice a real source of influence during the entire Copenhagen conference.⁵ The approaching summit in Bonn will tell us whether the institutional changes included in the Lisbon Treaty will represent a solution to the current state of things.

The Italian debate on energy and climate policy has stressed, on several occasions, the potentially leading role of the EU in this sector. Indeed, the ambitious Europe 2020 Strategy ultimately gives the EU an enhanced credibility on environmental aspects at the international level, which should be used to create a strong political agreement for the post Copenhagen phase.⁶ In order to do so, however, it appears necessary to first overcome the divisions within the EU itself, and then find a common agreement between those member states that want to "lead by example" and those that would like a more global commitment.⁷

An effective way to achieve such an international credibility would be to adopt concrete actions in the framework of the pending European economic strategy by including a clear obligation towards strict environmental measures in the final document.⁸ In this way, a new impulse to the next round of international negotiations could be offered by the EU, which, as the recent European sustainable energy week demonstrates, is in several aspects a leading actor on the issue.⁹

It may be noted in this overview that in Italy the issue of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as possibly the best strategy to fight climate change has not yet been discussed. The main reason is probably to be found in the highly technical level of the topic and the low domestic interest over the issue.

The same lack of material characterises the Italian position on financing mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries. Arguably, the reason is again the very limited public interest on the issue and the specificity of its nature.

¹ La Stampa: In soli 5 minuti USA e Cina hanno affossato il Summit, 20 December 2009, available at:

<http://www.lastampa.it/redazione/cmsSezioni/clima/200912articoli/50552girata.asp> (last access: 30 April 2010).

² La Repubblica: Parla l'esperto italiano all'ONU 'Al Summit troppe aspettative', 21 December 2009, available at:

<http://www.repubblica.it/2009/12/sezioni/ambiente/conferenza-copenaghen-2/intervista-carraro/intervista-carraro.html> (last access: 30 April 2010).

³ La Stampa: Il flop dell'Europa: troppe primedonne e neanche un leader, 20 December 2009, available at:

<http://www.lastampa.it/redazione/cmsSezioni/clima/200912articoli/50548girata.asp> (last access: 30 April 2010).

⁴ Nòva: Il clima di Copenhagen: ne dobbiamo prendere atto, Il Sole24ore, 21 December 2009, available at:

<http://antonellopasini.nova100.ilssole24ore.com/2009/12/il-clima-di-copenaghen-ne-dobbiamo-prendere-atto.html> (last access: 30 April 2010).

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⁵ Umberto Bertelè: Copenhagen e il nuovo ordine mondiale, AffarInternazionali, 21 December 2009, available at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1346> (last access: 30 April 2010).

⁶ Marzio Galeotti: La rigida primavera del clima, La Voce, 26 March 2010, available at: http://www.lavoce.info/articoli/-energia_ambiente/pagina1001627.html (last access: 5 May 2010).

⁷ Annalisa D'Orazio: Italia a corto di strategie sul clima, La Voce, 26 January 2010, available at: http://www.lavoce.info/articoli/-energia_ambiente/pagina1001520.html (last access: 5 May 2010).

⁸ Villaggio Globale: Nuovi obiettivi Ue per mantenere la leadership, 13 March 2010, available at: http://www.vglobale.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11564%3Aclima-nuovi-obiettivi-ue-per-mantenere-la-leadership&Itemid=124&lang=it (last access: 5 May 2010).

⁹ La Stampa: Al via lunedì settimana europea dell'energia sostenibile, 19 March 2010, available at: <http://www3.lastampa.it/ambiente/sezioni/news/articolo/lstp/161812/> (last access: 5 May 2010).

Italy**Miscellaneous current issues in Italy**

Jacopo Leone*

Immigration: At the beginning of 2010, an impressive social uprising took place in southern Italy, involving numerous African crop-pickers and the Italian police. Clashes lasted several days, and the news was reported on all national media.¹ This is just one episode which well describes the Italian concern over illegal immigration and its connection with crime. Public opinion seems increasingly worried about the lack of public order, sometimes even in big cities, where closed racial neighbourhoods have emerged in the last decade.

Corruption: The past six months have seen a series of political scandals, connected in various ways to corruption and the illegal use of public money.² Both sides of the Italian political establishment seem to be involved in the events, leaving a deep sense of dissatisfaction in the national public opinion towards politicians in general.

Afghanistan: Following the arrest in Afghanistan of three Italian aid workers of Emergency, a charity organisation funded by Gino Strada, accused of supporting a plot to assassinate the Governor of the Helmand province, a tense debate emerged in the Italian press and political establishment.³ The episode obtained large coverage in TV shows and parliamentary auditions, even after the release of the three prisoners.⁴

Regional Elections: With thirteen out of twenty regions involved in the vote, Italy registered a low turnout (64 percent) in the regional elections held on 28 and 29 March 2010. Although at the centre of a series of scandals and political controversies, the centre-right party, headed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, managed to snatch four regions away from the centre-left and emerged as the main winner. The abstention rate was the highest of the last 15 years.⁵

Thailand: In recent weeks, the unstable political situation in Thailand has received much attention by the Italian press. Although no specific political comments have been made on the topic, the public opinion follows the evolution of the clashes between demonstrators and the local government with interest.⁶

¹ Corriere della Sera: Rosarno, altri quattro immigrati feriti. Spari e scontri in strada: è battaglia, 8 January 2010, available at: http://www.corriere.it/cronache/10_gennaio_08/rosarno-scontri-maroni_cef157a6-fc32-11de-98e4-00144f02aabe.shtml (last access: 1 July 2010).

² Corriere della Sera: L'appartamento di Scajola e le falle nella tesi del ministro, 3 May 2010, available at: http://www.corriere.it/cronache/10_maggio_03/appartamento-scajola-sarzanani_6e658120-5685-11df-ae23-00144f02aabe.shtml (last access: 1 July 2010).

³ Natalino Ronzitti: L'Italia in Afghanistan dopo il caso Emergency, AffarInternazionali, 19 April 2010, available at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1438> (last access: 1 July 2010).

⁴ Unita: Frattini in Parlamento 'Uno dei tre volontari forse libero', 14 April 2010, available at: http://www.unita.it/news/97381/frattini_in_parlamento_uno_dei_tre_volontari_forse_libero (last access: 1 July 2010).

⁵ La Repubblica: Elezioni Regionali, 28-29 March 2010, available at: <http://www.repubblica.it/static/speciale/2010/elezioni/regionali/index.html> (last access: 1 July 2010).

⁶ Corriere della Sera: Thailandia, 20 vittime negli scontri, 11 April 2010, available at: http://www.corriere.it/esteri/10_aprile_11/thailandia-scontri-vittime-camicie-rosse_fdb7b568-4547-11df-93de-00144f02aabe.shtml (last access: 1 July 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?