

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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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).

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?