

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

 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

Latvia**Latvia endorses EU Enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy****Dzintra Bungš***

Latvia firmly believes in the further enlargement of the European Union. As the erstwhile Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Māris Riekstiņš told Turkey's Minister of European Affairs and chief EU negotiator Egemen Bağış on 26 February 2010, "[A]ny European country which has demonstrated its desire to join the European Union and has committed itself to carrying out the internal reforms and fulfilling the essential criteria must be given this opportunity."¹ An important reason for this, as Riekstiņš has stressed on other occasions, is the significance of the enlargement policy in securing stability in Europe.² Latvia endorses enlargement if it is grounded in an *individual approach* and the *fulfilment of EU membership criteria*.

Considering the four EU membership candidate countries, Croatia, Iceland, Macedonia and Turkey, Latvia anticipates that Croatia could become eligible for membership by the next enlargement round, especially since the border dispute with Slovenia appears to be close to settlement. Macedonia and Turkey have not made as much progress toward fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria. Moreover, a conspicuous factor standing in the way of Macedonia's progress toward EU accession is the unresolved quarrel with Greece over the name "Macedonia". According to the Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle, in May 2010 Turkey had opened 12 of the 35 negotiating chapters and closed one; more chapters could be opened up for negotiation this year provided it meets the opening benchmarks. It should be noted here that Latvia supports Turkey's EU integration efforts, even if a number of EU member states have profound reservations about the idea of Turkey's membership of the Union.

Of the potential candidates for EU membership, Latvian observers tend to only consider Iceland as a possible candidate for the next round of enlargement, provided the accession negotiations start promptly and proceed smoothly. They point out that, despite Iceland's severe economic crisis in 2008 from which it is gradually recovering, Iceland has a fine record of good governance and democratic practices and is already well integrated into many EU processes, programmes, and agencies. For those Latvians who know their history, Iceland is quite special in that it was the first country to officially recognise Latvia after it regained its independence in August 1991.

While Latvia clearly supports the EU perspective of the Western Balkan countries, Latvia also recognises that these countries have much ground to cover in order to advance to the status of candidates for EU membership. Since each potential candidate country has its own particular hurdles to surmount, it is difficult to predict which one will make the speediest progress and when a particular country might become eligible for EU membership. At the same time, as Riekstiņš has pointed out, united EU support to the European integration efforts of the Western Balkan countries is essential for the success and continuity of their reform process.³

Latvia fully supports the European Union's active interest in its neighbourhood, and, therefore, "especially appreciates the two initiatives of 2008 in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), namely the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the Union for the Mediterranean. For Latvia, it is particularly important to continue to develop close relations with the eastern neighbours by way of implementing joint projects in the framework of the EaP and lending support to each of the EaP countries".⁴ Such a choice is natural, given Latvia's location and the resources available. Furthermore, like Latvia, the EaP countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – were once a part of the Soviet Union. Since regaining its independence, Latvia has developed active bilateral relations with these countries and encouraged their European orientation. This is borne out by the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Economics Ministry.⁵

The views expressed above by Māris Riekstiņš on the EaP and the ENP are shared by Aivis Ronis, who succeeded Riekstiņš as Minister of Foreign Affairs on 29 April 2010. Addressing a meeting of foreign ministers of EU member states and EaP countries in Sopot, Poland on 24 May 2010, Ronis stressed the positive role of the EaP initiative in strengthening the reform processes in neighbouring countries and noted that successful development of the initiative requires appropriate financing,

* [Latvian Institute of International Affairs](#).

including investments earmarked for structural reforms in these countries. Ronis also emphasised the importance of promoting active engagement of each EaP country in the EaP process and the necessity to evaluate the progress of each country individually.⁶

Because of Latvia's focus on the EaP, more specific observations, based on actual experience, can be offered here only about the EaP. The most recent comprehensive assessment by Latvia of the initiative was offered by its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Māris Riekstiņš, on 8 December 2009 at a plenary session of the foreign ministers of EU and EaP countries in Brussels. The next such meeting is being planned for late 2010. At the plenary session, Riekstiņš argued that the achievements of the EaP are connected with the joint abilities of the participating countries to create *tangible* results of practical cooperation, thus also deepening the political relations. The results achieved so far serve as a good foundation for further action, whether bilateral or multilateral. Noting the progress of the Eastern partners in the realm of economic integration, Riekstiņš urged for a speedy conclusion of the talks regarding the deep and comprehensive free trade area.⁷ In the realm of energy, Riekstiņš welcomed the intensification of cooperation between the EU and EaP countries and reported about the conference for experts on energy efficiency and renewable energy, which took place in Riga on 26 November 2009.⁸ Concerning the comprehensive institution building programme, Riekstiņš affirmed his country's readiness to continue its successfully launched projects of sharing bilaterally with the EaP countries Latvia's experience and know-how in areas such as border control and customs, environment, phytosanitary standards, and consumers' rights.⁹

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Press Release, 26 February 2010, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2010/februaris/26/> (last access: 14 July 2010).

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Press Release, 28 March 2008, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2009/marts/28-2/> (last access: 14 July 2010).

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Press Release, 28 March 2008, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2009/marts/28-2/> (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁴ Māris Riekstiņš, Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, addressing the GAERC of 27 April 2010, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2009/aprilis/27-2/> (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁵ More information is available in the sections on bilateral relations and external economic relations of the internet site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas/> (last access: 14 July 2010) and the Ministry of Economics, available at: <http://www.em.gov.lv/em/2nd/?cat=30113> (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Press Release, 24 May 2010, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2010/majis/24-03/> (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Press Release, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2009/decembris/09-01/> (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁸ The conference programme is available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2009/novembris/16/programma/> (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Press Release, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2009/decembris/09-01/> (last access: 14 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?