


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.

Dialog Europa Otto Wolff - Stiftung

cfce Centre internationale
de formation européenne



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

Latvia**Latvia supports the fight against climate change****Dzintra Bungš***

As in many parts of the world, the prevailing view in Latvia has been that the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly known as the Copenhagen summit or the Copenhagen climate conference, was by and large a failure. Latvia had wholeheartedly supported the proposals of the EU that had been approved at the Council of the European Union on 29-30 October 2009 in Brussels. The only caveat of the Latvians was that the plans adopted in Copenhagen on 7-18 December 2009 should take into consideration the economic and financial situation of each country committing itself to the common goals.¹

Already before the conclusion of the UN climate conference, Latvia's Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis, who attended the international gathering in the Danish capital, predicted that the conference would end without an agreement on any of its ambitious goals. He told the Latvian TV journalists that, in all likelihood, the questions discussed at the conference would serve as a basis for hammering out, at a later time, an accord to limit climate change.² These views were shared by the Environment Minister, Raimonds Vējonis, who said after the conference that all the proposals leading to substantive action fell through and that everything would have to start again from the beginning, because the accord that was finally agreed upon is so weak. He added that "regardless of the results of the Copenhagen summit, which, barring a few exceptions, disheartened the whole world, Latvia must continue to do what it has started to do: insulate dwellings so as to reduce energy consumption, switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, and improve technologies so as to diminish air pollution."³ Stressing that Latvia shares the EU view that mankind is to blame for the climate changes, Vējonis observed that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by all countries.

Equally critical of the outcome of the conference was the Latvian researcher, Reinis Āboltiņš, who specialises in issues related to energy policy at the Centre for Public Policy Providus in Riga. In a post-conference assessment, Āboltiņš noted the meagre results and commented: "the Copenhagen climate conference has shot itself in the foot" in that the only ones satisfied with the outcome of the conference, it seems, are those whose welfare depends on manufacturing or other activities which have a clearly negative effect on the environment.⁴

The question of changing the European Union's own energy and climate policy in order to provide a new impetus to the international negotiations is not a topic of current discussion in Latvia. The Latvian experts and the media appear to share the opinion that the poor results of the Copenhagen climate conference are primarily the consequence of great power interests, rather than any specific shortcomings in the EU energy and climate policy.

Latvia supports the Union's energy and climate policy in general, despite the fact that there are reservations regarding some EU positions and procedures. This is also true regarding the Union's position at the Copenhagen climate conference in December 2009, because there are no major differences between the Union's position and Latvia's on the issues that were discussed. The Latvian government approved its position paper already on 22 September 2009.⁵ In a nutshell, Latvia believes that global commitment is essential if a dent is to be made in stopping climate change.

In anticipation of the EU environment ministers meeting on 15 March 2010, the Latvian government issued another policy paper. According to that document, Latvia agrees in general with the Council's conclusions regarding the Copenhagen conference and regarding what should be done before the follow-up conference in Cancun, Mexico in late 2010. In the policy paper, the Latvian government reiterates the importance of agreeing upon a global framework regime for reducing climate change after 2012. To achieve this, the EU should develop a strong strategy and assess the potential effect of future policies on EU member states, as well as continue active cooperation with other countries to explain the ideas and goals of climate policy and win their support. For Latvia, it is essential that the EU's transition to reducing its emissions occurs on the condition that other developed and developing countries also assume equitable commitments for reductions or adequate investments. To ensure this, the Commission must assess the goals of other countries and use them as a basis to decide whether

* Latvian Institute of International Affairs.

the EU should set stricter emission goals. At the same time, the Commission should analyse the potential socio-economic effects of adaptation to the goals of reducing emissions by 30 percent and show the effects on the EU as a whole and on each of the member states.⁶

Given the preceding clarifications of Latvia's position and its emphasis on the necessity to make reducing climate change a global commitment, it follows that the Latvian government is not contemplating alternatives to the strategy that the European Union is following or the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Furthermore, it is felt that despite its imperfections, the UNFCCC functions and that all of the possibilities and options it offers have not been exhausted.

Concerning the financing of mitigation and adaptation efforts to the various undertakings designed to reduce climate change, in its position paper of 22 September 2009, the Latvian government stated that all this must be a part of a global framework accord, because achieving coordinated action to reduce climate change is in the Union's and Latvia's best interest. Such a framework accord must also recognise that the Union assumes an *equitable* share of the total financial burden. "Latvia believes that *all countries*, except the least developed, must accept financial responsibility to reduce emissions and to implement adaptive projects. Consequently, Latvia cannot accept the notion that rich developing countries become recipients of financial assistance, while the poor countries or the developed countries with low emissions serve as their donors."⁷ Therefore, the Union should not assume unilaterally ambitious commitments when there is not an adequate or commensurate commitment from other developed or developing countries.

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Press Release, 30 October 2009, available at:

<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/Pazinojumi/Presei/2009/oktobris/30-01/> (last access: 14 July 2010).

² LETA, 18 December 2009, available at: <http://www.delfi.lv/archive/print.php?id=28797277> (last access: 14 July 2010).

³ LETA, 19 December 2009, available at: <http://www.delfi.lv/archive/print.php?id=28806589> (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁴ Reinis Āboltiņš: Nominatīvs — Kas? — nenoteiktība Lokatīvs — Kur? — Kopenhāgenā (in English "Nominative – What? – Ambiguity. Locative – Where? – Copenhagen"), available at: http://www.politika.lv/temas/vide_un_ilqtspeja/17909/ (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁵ Informatīvais ziņojums par nacionālo pozīciju "Par ES nostāju starptautiskajās sarunās par klimata politiku pēc 2012.gada (gatavošanās ANO Klimata pārmaiņu konferencei 2009.gada 7.-18.decembrī)", available at: <http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40145038> (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁶ Par Latvijas nacionālajām pozīcijām Eiropas Savienības Vides ministru padomes 2010. gada 15.marta sanāsmē izskatāmajos jautājumos, available at: http://www.mk.gov.lv/doc/2005/VIDMZino_080310.632.doc (last access: 14 July 2010).

⁷ Informatīvais ziņojums par nacionālo pozīciju "Par ES nostāju starptautiskajās sarunās par klimata politiku pēc 2012.gada (gatavošanās ANO Klimata pārmaiņu konferencei 2009.gada 7.-18.decembrī)", available at: <http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40145038> (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?