

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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Lithuania**Looking east, looking north****Jurga Valančiūtė***

Iceland's accession is strongly supported and the Croatian accession negotiations should be finished as soon as possible

Lithuanian officials favour further EU enlargement and are convinced that bilateral disagreements should not influence the accession negotiations of the candidate countries – former Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Vygaudas Usackas expressed his support for the European Commission's estimation that Croatian accession negotiations can be finished in 2010.¹ Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Vice-Minister Asta Skaisgirytė Liauskiene recently said that the Croatian accession negotiations should be finished as soon as possible.²

Iceland was the first state to recognise Lithuania's independence 20 years ago. Today Lithuania favours the integration of this state into the EU and, as Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė said, "Lithuania strongly supports the aspiration of Iceland to become an EU member state and is willing to provide all the necessary support for Iceland's accession negotiations."³

Regarding other countries, Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Vygaudas Usackas expressed Lithuanian support for the European Commission's proposal to start accession negotiations with Macedonia. He expressed his hope that the European Commission will positively evaluate the applications for EU membership by Albania and Montenegro. He hoped that in 2011, when Lithuania will hold the Presidency for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and later in 2013, when Lithuania will hold the council presidency, there would be a significant move towards the creation of a free and united Europe.⁴

Concerning Turkey, Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Audronius Azubalis urged Turkey to continue implementing EU reforms and to seek progress in the accession negotiations. He reiterated that Lithuania is ready to help Turkey on its way into the EU.⁵

Active participation in the Eastern Partnership – a Lithuanian foreign policy priority

While the Union for Mediterranean is a low salience issue in Lithuania, the Eastern Partnership attracts a lot of attention and is one of the most important current EU initiatives to Lithuania, because, as a former Soviet Republic, Lithuania can share its experience on how to develop relations with the EU's eastern neighbours. Both former and current Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Ministers claim that, since its membership in the EU, Lithuania has consequently supported and initiated such partnerships between the EU and its eastern neighbours.⁶

Lithuanian officials recognise the high importance of the new EU initiative. According to the Foreign Affairs Minister Audronius Azubalis, "[the] Eastern Partnership embodies a new era of the relationship with eastern neighbours and it is an important measure fostering the reforms and economic integration in these states and helping to facilitate the movement of people."⁷ Former Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Vygaudas Usackas expressed his belief that the "independence, security and stability of Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia and other states participating in the Eastern Partnership is not only a premise for the security and stability of the three Baltic states, but also a premise for the stability and security of the whole Europe."⁸ Audronius Azubalis says that the active participation of Lithuania in the Eastern Partnership programme has become one of the top priority fields of Lithuanian Foreign policy.⁹

All necessary material support must be provided

Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Audronius Azubalis emphasised that it is important to start implementing specific projects with the Eastern Partnership countries as soon as possible.¹⁰ He urged EU member states to provide a perspective of visa free regimes for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. He also emphasised that it is important to provide the necessary financial resources for the

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implementation of Eastern Partnership projects.¹¹ The Foreign Affairs Minister also urged eastern EU neighbours participating in this initiative to fully use all the Eastern Partnership instruments and measures – association agreements, free trade agreements and visa facilitation agreements – and to cooperate more intensively in the field of energy.

Visas for Belarusian citizens should be cheaper

The Former Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Vygaudas Usackas said he was especially worried about the development of the EU's and Lithuania's relations with Belarus. According to the former Minister, Lithuania would like to see an independent and stable Belarus moving towards the establishment of an open democratic society and functioning market economy. He urged the stopping of discriminatory policy towards the citizens of Belarus, who have to pay twice as much for a visa to enter the EU compared with citizens of other Eastern Partnership states.¹²

Lithuania actively provided proposals for the development of the Eastern Partnership

Lithuania finds the Eastern Partnership an important field of action where it can provide different unilateral and multilateral proposals for the development of this initiative. At the end of 2009, Lithuania, together with Ukraine and Belarus, prepared a wide list of possible common projects and continues to provide concrete suggestions to the European Commission for the support of the eastern neighbours, implements common projects with these states and shares its EU integration experience with them.¹³ The committee on foreign affairs of Lithuanian parliament also proposes to develop the parliamentary dimension of the Eastern Partnership.¹⁴

¹ Foreign Affairs Ministry: The preparation for the forthcoming European Council has been deliberated in Brussels (Briuselyje aptartas pasirengimas artėjančiai Europos vadovų tarybai), press release, 8 December 2009, available at: <http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/10303389> (last access: 9 June 2010).

² Foreign Affairs Ministry: Lithuania supports the Croatian aspiration to finish the accession negotiations soon (Lietuva remia Kroatijos siekį baigti derybas dėl narystės ES artimiausiu metu), press release, 10 May 2010, available at: http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/10358663/?Lietuva.remia.Kroatijos.siekis.baigti.derybas.del.narystes.ES.artimiausiu.metu=2010-05-19_15-10 (last access: 9 June 2010).

³ Baltic News Service: Grybauskaite: Lithuania strongly supports the Iceland's aspiration to become an EU Member State (Grybauskaite: Lietuva tvirtai remia Islandijos siekius tapti ES nare), 16 March 2010, available at: http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/10321304/?Grybauskaite..Lietuva.tvirtai.remia.Islandijos.siekis.tapti.ES.nare=2010-03-16_16-16 (last access: 9 June 2010).

⁴ Foreign Affairs Ministry: V. Usackas: The progress in the Western Balkans is evident, but to achieve the goal there is a need to concentrate the efforts (V. Užackas: Vakarų Balkanuose pažanga akivaizdi, tačiau dėl tikslo dar reikia susitelkti), press release, 8 December 2009, available at: <http://www.urm.gov.lt/index.php?-154276899> (last access: 9 June 2010).

⁵ Foreign Affairs Ministry: Lithuania supports the Turkish reforms implemented on its way to the EU (Lietuva remia Turkijos kelyje į ES vykdomas reformas), press release, 24 February 2010, available at: http://elta.lt/zinute_pr.php?inf_id=1160140 (last access: 9 June 2010).

⁶ Foreign Affairs Ministry: Eastern Partnership initiative stimulates the rapprochement of EU and its Eastern Partners, says Foreign Affairs Minister (Rytų partnerystės iniciatyva skatina ES ir Rytų kaimynių suartėjimą, teigia užsienio reikalų ministras), press release, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.urm.lt/index.php?237482786> (last access: 9 June 2010); former Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Vygaudas Usackas: Lithuanian foreign policy: continuity and change, rhetoric and practice, speech at Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.urm.lt/index.php?-1877806041> (last access: 9 June 2010).

⁷ Foreign Affairs Ministry: Eastern Partnership initiative stimulates the rapprochement of EU and its Eastern Partners, says Foreign Affairs Minister (Rytų partnerystės iniciatyva skatina ES ir Rytų kaimynių suartėjimą, teigia užsienio reikalų ministras), press release, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.urm.lt/index.php?237482786> (last access: 9 June 2010).

⁸ Press release of the Foreign Affairs Ministry: Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian trilateral projects of the EU Eastern partnership have been presented in Brussels (Briuselyje pristatyti Lietuvos, Baltarusijos ir Ukrainos trišaliai projektai ES Rytų kaimynystei), 8 December 2009, available at: http://www.esnaujienos.lt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1665:briuselyje-pristatyti-lietuvos-baltarusijos-ir-ukrainos-trialiai-projektai-es-ryt-partnerystei-&catid=86:lietuvos-atstovavimas-es-institucijose&Itemid=95 (last access: 9 June 2010).

⁹ Foreign Affairs Ministry: Eastern Partnership initiative stimulates the rapprochement of EU and its Eastern Partners, says Foreign Affairs Minister (Rytų partnerystės iniciatyva skatina ES ir Rytų kaimynių suartėjimą, teigia užsienio reikalų ministras), press release, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.urm.lt/index.php?237482786> (last access: 9 June 2010).

¹⁰ Foreign Affairs Ministry: The Ukrainian election results, EU actions in Afghanistan and the forthcoming European Council have been discussed in Brussels (Briuselyje aptarti rinkimų Ukrainoje rezultatai, ES veikslai Afganistane ir būsimoji Europos vadovų taryba), press release, 22 February 2010, available at: <http://www.ue2013.lt/index.php?647304910> (last access: 9 June 2010).

¹¹ Foreign Affairs Ministry: EU members and Eastern neighbours have to use all the Eastern Partnership measures and instruments, claims the Foreign Affairs Minister (ES šalys ir Rytų kaimynės turi išnaudoti visas Rytų partnerystės priemones ir instrumentus, teigia užsienio reikalų ministras), press release, 2 March 2010, available at: www.urm.lt (last access: 9 June 2010).

¹² Press release of the Foreign Affairs Ministry: Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian trilateral projects of the EU Eastern Partnership have been presented in Brussels (Briuselyje pristatyti Lietuvos, Baltarusijos ir Ukrainos trišaliai projektai ES Rytų kaimynystei), 8 December 2009, available at:

http://www.esnaujienos.lt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1665:bruselyje-pristatyti-lietuvos-baltarusijos-ir-ukrainos-trialiai-projektai-es-ryt-partnerystei-&catid=86:lietuvos-atstovavimas-es-institucijose&Itemid=95 (last access: 9 June 2010).

¹³ Foreign Affairs Ministry: Eastern Partnership initiative stimulates the rapprochement of EU and its Eastern Partners, says Foreign Affairs Minister (Rytų partnerystės iniciatyva skatina ES ir Rytų kaimynių suartėjimą, teigia užsienio reikalų ministras), press release, 9 December 2009, available at: <http://www.urm.lt/index.php?237482786> (last access: 9 June 2010).

¹⁴ Foreign Affairs Ministry: Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian trilateral projects of the EU Eastern partnership have been presented in Brussels (Briuselyje pristatyti Lietuvos, Baltarusijos ir Ukrainos trišaliai projektai ES Rytų kaimynystei), press release, 8 December 2009, available at:

http://www.esnaujienos.lt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1665:bruselyje-pristatyti-lietuvos-baltarusijos-ir-ukrainos-trialiai-projektai-es-ryt-partnerystei-&catid=86:lietuvos-atstovavimas-es-institucijose&Itemid=95 (last access: 9 June 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?