

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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Luxembourg**Positive stance towards Iceland – public opposition to Turkey**

Jean-Marie Majerus*

Luxembourg's government has a positive attitude concerning the Icelandic application for EU membership. However, Iceland, as every other candidate state, has to pass the normal accession procedure. In fact, this will be much easier since Iceland, as a member of the Nordic Union, is already a member of the Schengen Information System and the European Economic Area. As Eurobarometer polls show, Luxembourg's population has no problems admitting Icelanders, which might not only be explained by the presence of an Icelandic community in Luxembourg, but also because Icelandic Airways used Luxembourg's Findel Airport as a hub for its continental European flights. The bad performance of some Icelandic banks in the most recent financial crisis did not really jeopardise this positive approach.

Luxembourg's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean Asselborn, visited the Western Balkans in February 2010 and used this opportunity to explain the Luxembourgish approach towards EU enlargement in the Western Balkans. After his meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister Milan Rocen from Montenegro, Asselborn praised the efforts made by this Western Balkans' nation to come closer to the EU. Asselborn especially praised the efforts made over the past years in the field of visa free entrance into Schengen-countries, and he recalled the stabilisation pact signed by Montenegro in 2007. Furthermore, the efforts made by Montenegro to respond to the EU questionnaire were also highly appreciated. Asselborn reaffirmed Luxembourg's firm commitment to offer the Balkan states a place inside the EU. He reiterated his encouragement to Western Balkan nations to reinforce their reform process and to strengthen their regional cooperation.

In Skopje, capital of (the Former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia (FYROM) the Ministers of Foreign Affairs Asselborn and Milososki underlined the positive character of the progress reports presented by the European Commission. Obviously, the debate on the official name of FYROM continues to be the main obstacle to the EU membership of Macedonia. Asselborn could not present a magician's solution to this most difficult problem. However, he compared the Greek-Macedonian conflict with German-French relations after World War II: "Only a resolute future-oriented spirit may be able to offer a solution. This solution will neither be dictated in Paris nor in Berlin and certainly not in Luxembourg."¹ Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki tried to compare the Macedonian situation with relations between the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Belgian province of Luxembourg.² Asselborn was satisfied with the significant progress made by Macedonia in the fields of justice and police affairs. Furthermore, the government of Macedonia stabilised, in his eyes, the national institutions respecting fundamental rights and common law.³

Asselborn's position reflects the general opinion of the Luxembourgish public as it is expressed in the press and parliament.⁴

As the Eurobarometer opinion surveys taken over the past years confirm, there is an outright majority in Luxembourg's public opinion which opposes any admission of Turkey into the EU in the foreseeable future.⁵ Luxembourg has nevertheless accepted, like its partners, to start an open-ended negotiation process leading to possible Turkish EU membership. So far, this situation has not changed. There are political and economic analysts in Luxembourg who do see advantages in a possible Turkish membership.⁶ Generally speaking, the membership perspectives of Turkey or other countries which are not included in the next enlargement round are not a topic on the political agenda of the public opinion and political class in Luxembourg. In general, Luxembourg's voters do not like any further enlargement of the EU before consolidation of the last one.⁷

In his last declaration on foreign and European policy, Minister Asselborn pointed out that he supports all efforts to create stability and prosperity beyond the EU's outside borders in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. Luxembourg wants to offer the necessary diplomatic, financial, economic and political instruments within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Luxembourg gives equal importance to relations with the south, meaning the Union for the Mediterranean and the Barcelona

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Process, as it gives to the Eastern Partnership. In the Luxembourgish parliament, no political party contested this point from the Minister of Foreign Affairs' declaration.⁸

¹ Europaforum.lu: Les questions européennes au centre du "tour des Balkans" de Jean Asselborn, 9-11 February 2010, available at: <http://www.europaforum.public.lu/fr/actualites/2010/02/asselborn-balkans/index.html> (last access: 22 June 2010).

² In fact both situations cannot be compared for historical, geographical and political reasons. See: RTL Radio Letzebuerg: Den Ausseminister op Viste am Balkan, 10 February 2010.

³ Europaforum.lu: Les questions européennes au centre du "tour des Balkans" de Jean Asselborn, 9-11 February 2010, available at: <http://www.europaforum.public.lu/fr/actualites/2010/02/asselborn-balkans/index.html> (last access: 22 June 2010).

⁴ La Voix: L'ARYM aux portes de l'UE, 11 February 2010; Tageblatt: Die schwierige Überwindung der Vergangenheit, 11 February 2010.

⁵ Eurobaromètre 69: L'opinion publique dans l'Union européenne, printemps 2008, Luxembourg.

⁶ Serge Kennerknecht: Gestärkt, geschwächt, Tageblatt, 31 March 2010.

⁷ Eurobaromètre 69: L'opinion publique dans l'Union européenne, printemps 2008, Luxembourg.

⁸ The policy defined in this declaration has not changed in the meantime. See: Jean Asselborn, Ministre des Affaires étrangères: Déclaration de politique étrangère à la Chambre des députés, 18 November 2009.

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?