

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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Macedonia**Lisbon Treaty brings hope for Macedonia**

Biljana Janeva*

The news about the Lisbon Treaty in Macedonia was followed with great attention. Macedonia has been a candidate country since 2005 and has been praised for its progress in the reforms in the last two Progress Reports of the EU Parliament. After the news about the Lisbon Treaty, the Macedonian media and public opinion have turned to positive and hopeful expectations. Although overshadowed by the internal issues and the overall debate about the EU integration process of the country, the main interest in the Republic of Macedonia in terms of the Lisbon Treaty was enlargement. “Will the Lisbon Treaty speed up the integration of the Western Balkans? What will happen next?” These were the questions posed in many talk shows and opinion pieces in the newspapers and TV. According to the Macedonian public, the treaty has a much more flexible approach in terms of the other questions and issues. The Lisbon Treaty is expected to ease the EU accession of the Republic of Macedonia, because it clearly states that all countries may become part of the Union, says the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Antonio Milososki.¹

Is the EU prepared for a direct democracy? This was one of the main questions circulating in the Macedonian media. Also, there is a lot of discussion regarding the willingness of the “new EU” to embrace the candidate countries and the possible “tiredness” of the EU for enlargement and the wish of the EU to be left alone to deal with its internal problems first. In Macedonia, these EU opinions and movements are followed with a great attention, mainly because it is regarded that EU integration is the first and foremost important strategic and security priority of the country.

The debate in the country between the political leaders is mainly in the domestic arena, in regard to the progress reports, the reforms needed for advancing Macedonia’s position and getting an accession date, reciprocal accusations between the political leaders about who’s to blame for not getting a date for negotiations, etc.

The new functions in the EU

The new function of the President of the European Council was positively viewed, and always tied to the implications for Macedonia from the creation of this new function. Herman Van Rompuy was seen in a positive light, as a leader who would give a voice to the EU regarding key issues, such as enlargement. A big debate is the constant shift in direction by the EU presidencies. While sometimes helpful, this can be somewhat burdensome. The debate revolves around the question: is a stable presidency or a changing presidency better for Macedonia and its European future?

With the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the focus of the EU can be put back on the Western Balkans. That is how most of the analytics and politicians view the election of the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. It was recognised as a positive signal towards the enlargement of the EU to the Western Balkan countries. It shows that the process is alive, many experts from the NGO sector analyse. Although both of the new functions don’t have competences in the negotiation process of the candidate countries, their role is still viewed as positive, dialogue enabling, and helpful in the accession of candidate countries, in opening or closing some of the negotiation chapters, and in preventing vetoes from member states.²

European External Action Service and European Citizens’ Initiative

The news about the European External Action Service was commented differently. One aspect emphasised was the concentration on foreign policy and enlargement, but also the creation of new structures within the EU. On the other hand, there was a debate over the mandate of the EU to sign international treaties in the name of its member states and open embassies around the world, establishing itself as a global power. Will that be at the cost of the member states? Will the EU act as a single state and is this transfer of power sustainable? These were some of the questions posed in the Macedonian media, without having answers this early in time.³

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In Macedonia, the debate about the new European Citizens' Initiative was not so strong. There were reports, mostly in the written media, that EU citizens will be able to demand that the EU Commission propose new laws. It is still unclear how this "direct democracy" experiment will function in practice and if this is a good idea at all.

¹ Statement from Minister Milososki for the news portal Time.mk, available at:

<http://www.time.mk/read/cbcf09afa7/ae14c1077d/index.html> (last access: 20 March 2010).

² Part of these statements available at: <http://www.dw-online.eu/dw/article/0,,4919103,00.html> (last access: 27 April 2010).

³ Analysis of the daily Biznis, available at: <http://biznis24.com.mk/node/5161> (last access: 10 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?