


# 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](http://www.EU-27Watch.org).

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**Macedonia****Current issues in Macedonia**

Biljana Janeva\*

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According to the official “Programme for work of the Government of Republic of Macedonia”, Macedonia’s foreign policy for the current period was devoted to five strategic priorities: NATO membership, starting accession negotiations with the EU and membership in the EU, liberalisation (abolishing) of visas for Macedonian citizens, overcoming the name dispute created by Greece, and strengthening its economic and public diplomacy. Also, these were the questions and issues most discussed by the Macedonian media and institutions in the past period.

NATO membership remains a very painful burden for Macedonia. After the fiasco at the Bucharest Summit in 2008, when Macedonia did not get its promised (and earned) membership because of the name dispute with Greece, it still continued with its army reforms and contributions to NATO missions abroad. The Republic of Macedonia has completed the longest preparations for membership in the alliance’s history and is the fifth largest contributor to NATO’s international missions, with regard to population, compared to all NATO members.<sup>1</sup>

The other big debate is EU membership: the criteria, the presidencies, the benchmarks, the reforms to be passed and the tempo of the reforms (100 laws are to be passed in 2010). Also, a big issue is the creation of national negotiating teams for EU integration and their competencies.

One of the most important foreign aims in Macedonia was a complete liberalisation of the visa regime with countries in the Schengen zone, which happened on 19 December 2009 and brought unprecedented joy and hope for the Macedonian people.

Regarding plans for multilateral activities, the biggest foreign-political engagement in the Republic of Macedonia in 2010 is the Presidency with the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from May until November. The priorities of the Macedonian Presidency with the Council of Europe are the fight against corruption, the reform of the European Court of Human Rights through an increase in the efficiency of the judiciary and education of the judges on a national level, integrating national minorities into European societies, the promotion of the position of the Roma people, protection of the cultural heritage and religious dimension of the inter-cultural dialogue, as well as more active inclusion of the youth in the political and democratic developments of the countries from South-eastern Europe. Unfortunately, the Macedonian Presidency of the Council of Europe has not passed without scandals and problems. Again, Greece blocked this important Macedonian engagement with opposition to its name, saying that it shouldn’t be called the Macedonian Presidency, but the Presidency of FYROM. This would have been a new precedent in the Council of Europe, as every country, regardless of its official name, bears the presidency by its first name. That was why the Macedonian Presidency was left as such. After all the energy lost in the disputes and explanations, Macedonia was finally able to focus on its Presidency programme.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the most burning issue, and the issue most present in the public domain, is the name dispute with Greece. Regarding the negotiations that the Republic of Macedonia participates in with Greece under the patronage of the United Nations, a big step forward was evident in the last period. There were a number of direct meetings between state officials of the two countries, which brought a sign of improvement of relations between the countries. The negotiations continue, however, and real progress hasn’t been made in the last months.

The experts’ opinion regarding the foreign policy of the Republic of Macedonia is that it is still burdened with internal political processes. It should be qualitatively strengthened, which requires a national consensus by all political parties regarding the priorities of the Macedonian foreign policy, as well as the means for its successful realisation – diminishing the influence of internal cross-party disputes and building and promoting unity in the representation of Macedonian foreign-political priorities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The material is taken from the text of Biljana Janeva for the Leadership Monitoring Report N. 2, published by the OHRID Institute, p. 32, available at: <http://oi.org.mk/upload/Foreign-affairs-2.pdf> (last access: 20 July 2010).

<sup>2</sup> More information can be found on the news portal Time.mk, available at: <http://www.time.mk/read/10c69c2744/b4d33562/index.html> (last access: 21 May 2010).

<sup>3</sup> In the Leadership Monitoring Report N. 2, published by the OHRID Institute, p. 37, available at: <http://oi.org.mk/upload/Foreign-affairs-2.pdf> (last access: 20 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?