

EU-27 WATCH



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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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Malta**New posts for more coherence****Stephen Calleya***

The new President of the European Council is regarded as the individual who is supposed to bring further coherence to EU policy-making. As former Belgian Prime Minister, he is highly respected and was well received during his brief visit to Malta earlier this year. There is an assumption that his role will supersede the role previously held by the member state of the rotating presidency, but there is a great deal of ambiguity among public opinion about the exact extent to which the rotating presidency modality will be made redundant. The fact that the Spanish EU Presidency has adopted a more or less "business as usual" attitude when it comes to their presidency has not helped to clarify the precise role that the new President of the European Council is expected to play.

The new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is regarded as an important new actor that should provide a more coherent foreign policy perspective to the EU decision-making process. Criticism of Catherine Ashton in the international media has not been mirrored in the Maltese press. Most of the attention has focused on the policy platform that she is seeking to introduce in line with the Lisbon Treaty agenda with a particular focus on reform of the EU's diplomatic service.

The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) is regarded as a positive development as it should bring more coherence to the EU's diplomatic representation globally. An issue of concern is the extent to which every EU member state will have sufficient representation in the future EEAS. Similar to other small states in the European Union, the major concern of Malta's government is that a future EEAS should not be set up at the expense of small states being underrepresented in the new EEAS. Malta is thus lobbying to ensure that a significant number of diplomats from Malta are selected to also play a direct role in a future EEAS.

Malta would also like to see future EEAS diplomatic training provide a focus on issues pertaining to the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, which has provided post-graduate training to more than six hundred diplomats since opening its doors in 1990, has been identified as a venue where such training can take place.¹

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) has not been widely discussed in Malta. The media and certain civil society spokespersons regularly refer to the importance of the EU addressing its democratic deficit. In this respect, if the ECI can offer a clear and transparent mechanism through which the voice of citizens of the EU can be heard, then it would be a welcome development.

¹ Hon. Dr. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta, speech, seminar on the Spanish Presidency of the EU and the Mediterranean, 18 March 2010.

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Malta**Croatia's membership promoted****Stephen Calleya***

The government of Malta has been a consistent proponent of Croatia's membership application. The foreign ministries of both Croatia and Malta have interacted regularly in an effort to promote Croatia's membership bid. Thus, Malta believes Croatia will become a member of the EU in the next round of enlargement. Such a development will have a positive impact on strengthening stability across the Balkans and further enhance the Mediterranean dimension of the European Union.

Malta is also supportive of the EU applications of Montenegro and Iceland.¹ Malta's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also been in close contact with both countries and offered support to further their EU accession negotiations.

Discussion regarding EU membership applications is primarily carried out at a governmental level with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs publicly commenting on this issue. There is a consensus across the political spectrum in Malta that only those states that fully meet the Copenhagen Criteria should be allowed to join the European Union. No consideration should be given entertaining transitional phases of enlargement when it comes to countries that have yet to carry out the necessary political and economic reforms.

At a civil society level, the membership of Turkey is also often discussed. A significant proportion of people are uncertain about the eligibility of Turkey to conduct further EU accession negotiations due to geographic and political issues. Issues of concern include Turkey's Middle East geographic dimension, Turkey's human rights' track record and Turkey's stance towards the Cypriot issue.

Located in the centre of the Mediterranean, Malta's main foreign policy focus has been on supporting the evolution of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as a complementary mechanism to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) that was launched in November 1995.

It is fundamentally clear that the Euro-Med Partnership coupled with the Union for the Mediterranean offer a unique opportunity to strengthen political, economic and cultural ties across the Euro-Mediterranean area. But such progress will only be registered if all the Euro-Med countries direct their actions at the causes rather than the symptoms of contemporary disparities and security risks. This is not to say that humanitarian and development assistance is not essential, but this should not become a substitute for efforts that are geared towards increasing higher levels of cooperation between the countries of the Mediterranean.

The Union for the Mediterranean offers the blueprint to address the physical architectural deficit that has prevented the Mediterranean area from becoming a coherent functional economic regional space. The specific project areas that have been highlighted, including those concerning renewable energy, de-pollution of the sea, better transport connections and a civil protection network, focus on improving the physical dimension of the regional framework that to date has been lacking.

The launching of an enhanced political dialogue through the Union for the Mediterranean provides the EU with an excellent opportunity to introduce two basic features that have been absent from the EMP: responsibility and accountability. Both will upgrade the Mediterranean states participation in the UfM. Responsibility and accountability will provide the Mediterranean with a sense of ownership of a process that has to date been largely EU driven. It will also assist in eliminating the "us and them" perception that the Mediterranean countries have had of the EMP.

The Union for the Mediterranean must thus be seen as a litmus test of the European Union's objective of assisting the improvement of livelihoods in states that border its own member states. Moreover, the UfM track record will also have a major bearing on the extent to which the European Union is able to positively influence development in Africa and the Middle East.

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Parallel to the UfM economic targets, it is essential to re-visit the headline goal of the Barcelona Process to establish a common security agenda and mechanism for the Mediterranean. More than a decade has passed since the Guidelines for a Security Charter were published at the Euro-Med foreign ministerial meeting in Stuttgart in April 1999.

Economic development as envisaged by the Union for the Mediterranean will only take place if investors believe they are committing themselves to a strategic environment where the rule of law and security are guaranteed. The re-launching of a political dialogue that seeks to build a common security platform to address the long list of security risks and threats, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, organised crime, and environmental degradation, will create a more conducive strategic context within which UfM goals can be pursued and achieved.

If the EU wants to increase security in the Mediterranean at a human level, it needs to decide whether it is going to export more jobs to its southern neighbours or whether it is prepared to absorb some of the excess employment capacity that is due to grow further in the next decade. Current projections estimate that the population of North Africa and the Middle East is due to grow from 200 million to 300 million by 2020.

Unless the countries along the southern shores of the Mediterranean are able to significantly increase their economic growth to above six percent per annum, unemployment figures in this part of the world are scheduled to increase rapidly in the next ten years. This demographic time bomb is, therefore, certain to be a source of instability in the Euro-Mediterranean area if not tackled in a concerted manner in the near future.

The Union for the Mediterranean therefore provides a very important strategic re-assessment of the EU's policy towards its southern neighbourhood. When all the hoopla surrounding the multilateral initiative launched by France is done away with, the UfM boils down to being a vehicle that seeks to correct the numerous deficits that the Euro-Med Partnership has suffered since its inception. These include addressing the issue of co-ownership, enhancing visibility of the process and focusing on delivering more tangible results in the form of numerous regional projects that are crucial to connecting the Mediterranean to the larger international system.

The Union for the Mediterranean introduces a very important perspective that to date has been absent when it comes to promoting regional integration in the Mediterranean. The UfM project will enhance Euro-Mediterranean interdependence, a prerequisite to being able to encourage confidence and eventual trust between states in the area. The rising political and economic interests and stakes will serve as an insurance policy against self-centred and myopic policy-making that for too long has hindered trans-Mediterranean integration.

The Eastern Partnership is also regarded positively as a vehicle that can enhance stability along Europe's eastern borders. This dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy is, however, much less discussed when compared to its southern dimension, given the dominance of Mediterranean security issues on the agenda in Malta.

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 April 2010, available at: <http://www.foreign.gov.mt/default.aspx?MDIS=21&NWID=974> (last access: 12 July 2010).

Malta

Rigorous monitoring mechanisms necessary

Stephen Calleya*

There is a general consensus that the action taken to address the deteriorating economic situation in Greece was necessary to shore up the single currency. There is, however, also a clear understanding at a political and civil societal level that economic assistance must be coupled with rigorous monitoring mechanisms to ensure that reforms and restructuring are actually implemented.

It is clear that a more accountable and transparent system of economic surveillance at a European level is required to safeguard against future Greek style economic collapses. It is not enough to have clearly defined economic criteria to manage the economies of Eurozone member states. Enforcement of the criteria must also occur if mismanagement of certain economies is to be avoided. At a governmental level, there is also support for a contingency fund to further strengthen the position of the Euro.

There is a positive attitude towards having strong coordination of economic policies in Europe. The principle of solidarity is often referred to when it comes to supporting those states that are under economic pressure, especially those states that are part of the Euro group. One area where there is reluctance to introduce closer economic cooperation is taxation.

With regards the Europe 2020 Strategy, Malta is fully in favour of such an approach as it is very much the plan of action it is seeking to implement through its own Vision 2015 policy document. As highlighted on the Office of the Prime Minister's web site www.opm.gov.mt, this policy perspective is the main focus of all policy planning in Malta at the moment. A summary of the Vision 2015 document can be found on the OPM web site.

The Europe 2020 Strategy has been widely welcomed by all in the political sector and also the private sector. The main focus has been on introducing the necessary measures to develop a green economy that will result in a more environmentally friendly country and also a more technologically innovative industrial sector. Earmarking more research and development resources for scientific measures is regarded as a high priority if Europe is to become more competitive in the future. Learning from the previous Lisbon Strategy's lessons is also seen as essential if the Europe 2020 Strategy is to become a more effective policy vehicle during the decade ahead.

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Malta

Climate and energy policy: more credible targets needed

Stephen Calleya*

The Copenhagen conference in December 2009 has been regarded as a failure due to the fact that it did not succeed in producing a binding agreement. The conference also provided unique insight into the limits of the European Union's influence in this sector as a result of American and Chinese dominance during the negotiating stages of the conference.

It appears that the EU needs to adopt a higher profile and more credible targets when it comes to its energy and climate policy if it wants to become more influential on the international stage. The Copenhagen conference clearly highlighted the weak position that the EU possesses in the climate change debate. If the EU is to regain the initiative, it must adopt more coherent and consistent policies in both areas.

A global agreement within the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the most effective policy framework to pursue, as it would ensure the most comprehensive approach possible to addressing such a global phenomenon.

Malta fully supports financing such efforts in developing countries, as long as such measures are seriously monitored.

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Malta

Illegal immigration and spring hunting

Stephen Calleya*

The issue of illegal immigration remains a priority issue with the government of Malta now officially deciding to withdraw from participating in Frontex Operations in the Mediterranean. The government officially declared that this decision was taken due to the decreasing number of illegal migrants arriving in the course of last year. But this decision coincides with the EU's announcement that all migrants rescued by Frontex operations will now be taken to the country conducting the rescue operation prompting everyone to believe that Malta's decision to withdraw was taken due to this new provision.

Another major issue dominating politics in Malta in recent months is the issue of spring hunting. The government of Malta decided to open this year's spring hunting for one week, much to the dismay of activists in favour of birds. The government has announced that it will be discussing this issue extensively with the EU in the coming months before deciding whether to open the season for a lengthier period next year, as the hunter's association have been consistently requesting.

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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?