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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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Portugal**The Implementation of the Lisbon Treaty from a Portuguese perspective****Luis Pais Antunes***

The instability which resulted from the new political scenario¹ together with the worsening of economic and social conditions clearly marked the first semester of 2010 and, most probably, will continue to be at the centre of Portuguese politics until next year's summer.² As a result of this, the European debate in Portugal was far from active in most recent times and, to a large extent, limited to Europe's response to the economic and financial turmoil.

Initial reaction to the appointments of Herman Van Rompuy, as the new President of the European Council, and of Catherine Ashton, as the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, was far from enthusiastic. Some spoke about "perplexity" and "shock" all over Europe, while others considered that the real problem did not lie in the personalities which were chosen but in the Treaty of Lisbon itself, as it did not simplify the functioning of European institutions, but instead added new European top representatives to the existing ones, i.e., the President of the Commission and the head of state or government of the member state holding each rotating presidency.³

Since that initial moment, things do not seem to have substantially changed. The general impression is that Europe is facing a very complicated period in its life and appears to be incapable of adopting the necessary measures to move forward. This is particularly true from an institutional point of view, as there are no real signs that the new "balance of powers" resulting from the Lisbon Treaty has come into force. The main feeling is that the existence of a new President of the European Council and of a new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – who is also the Vice-President of the European Commission – just added two new players to an already complicated puzzle where there are too many people in the driver's seat.

Former President Mário Soares⁴ expressly states that Europe has no single command, "the confusion being now even greater" with the new President Van Rompuy, "the English diplomat, Catherine Ashton", the President of the Commission, Barroso, and the transition between Zapatero and Leterme in the framework of the rotating presidencies. He accuses the 27 member states of the Union and the 16 of the Eurozone, in particular Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, as well as Spain and Poland, of being incapable of reaching a convergent and concerted strategy to face the crisis. The governor of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, qualified as being "a Frenchman who is pretty much in favour of Germany". He is also accused of adopting very restrictive measures to reduce the deficits and public and private debts, as well as forgetting the people, the rising unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

Using different words, the President of the Portuguese Republic, Anibal Cavaco Silva, also addressed the same issues at the 25th anniversary of the signature of Portugal and Spain Accession Treaties by stating that "the European integration is weakened by the lack of a strategic direction and failures of responsibility and solidarity both by member states and European institutions", concluding that it is necessary to give an impulse to the economic union ("the weakest link of the European Union") and to the Euro, without which "the survival of the European project may be at risk".

One of greatest uncertainties created by the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty was the outcome of the rotating presidencies in the new institutional scenario. It is true that no substantial changes were expected from the very beginning and 2010 was already anticipated as being a sort of "transitional period", but there was some curiosity on how this "two-headed" presidency would work in practical terms. It is still too soon to draw any conclusions. The Spanish Presidency seemed to be quite distant from the expectations, which might be explained by the country's very complex internal situation with a rate of unemployment over 20 percent, a significant economic downturn and substantial problems in public finance. In any case, the European agenda in this first semester was clearly dominated by the "Greek problem" and the need to find a prompt response to the severe challenges that most – not to say all – European economies are facing. This is clearly the kind of situation where the role of a rotating presidency could be secondary.

* Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais.

Apparently, everybody is very cautious about the future of rotating presidencies and it seems that there is a consensus that we will have to wait sometime before being in a position to draw any definitive conclusions. Ultimately, the success of this model will depend on the affirmativeness of the President of the European Council and on the finding of a sound balance between his powers, the powers of the High Representative – who chairs the Council for Foreign Affairs – and the powers of the heads of state and government of the presiding member state. Any significant breach of this balance will, inevitably, lead to an institutional crisis and to the risk of “parallel diplomacy”.

Contrary to some other member states, the setting up of the European External Action Service (EEAS)⁵ was not a matter of great debate in Portugal, as it was generally seen as complementary to national diplomacy. As explained by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Luis Amado, at the beginning of the year, “we do not see the European [External Action] Service as a limitation to the action of the member states, but rather as a complement that may reinforce said action. For a country like Portugal, it is possible to express its interests through that service in several regions of the world. It is true that the great member states will have more relevance in the projection of their interest, but that’s the reality”.⁶

It is expected, however, that some controversy may arise after the designation of the future European ambassadors, in particular if the final result of this exercise does not recognise the privileged relationship which exists between Portugal and some regions of Africa and South America or if it is considered as a “downgrade” when compared to the actual situation (the current heads of the European Commission delegations, for instance, in Angola and in Brazil are Portuguese nationals).

More recently, Amado also addressed this issue in another interview where he stressed the fact that thirty Portuguese diplomats were among the candidates to the EEAS and that he is expecting that the designations will be based upon their merits and respect for a sound balance between the different member states. In particular, Amado stated that, besides João Vale de Almeida, former chief cabinet of the President of the Commission and now EU Ambassador to the USA in Washington, the Portuguese government would be pleased to stay represented in Angola and Brazil, although it recognises that it is not directly involved in the selection procedure.⁷

The debate on the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI)⁸ is almost inexistent so far. Apart from some few articles published in the press or in blogs⁹ after the European Commission presented the proposal defining the rules and procedures for the ECI at the end of March 2010, it is quite difficult to find any references to the initiative and even official institutions appear not to pay great attention to this subject. Recent experiences – such as the 2009 European Citizens’ Consultation organised in Portugal by the Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais (IEEI) – tend to show that, although this kind of initiatives is highly appreciated, the degree of effective participation is clearly below expectations.

¹ See the Portuguese chapter on current issues.

² The five year term of the President of the Republic, Aníbal Cavaco Silva, is coming to its end, a new election is scheduled for the beginning of 2011. The Portuguese Constitution does not allow for the dissolution of Parliament and a subsequent general election during the last six months of the presidential term.

³ Teresa de Sousa/Isabel Arriaga e Cunha, *Público*, 21 November 2009. Former President Mário Soares also criticised the appointment of Herman van Rompuy by stating that “Europeans in general don’t know who he is, and that’s a bad thing”.

⁴ *Visão*: Europe: from bad to worst, 15 July.

⁵ Proposal for a Council Decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service, 25 March 2010, available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/docs/eeas_draft_decision_250310_en.pdf (last access: 30 March 2010).

⁶ Interview in the newspaper *Público*, 3 January 2010.

⁷ Interview in the newspaper *Expresso*, 24 July 2010.

⁸ European Commission: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens’ initiative, COM (2010) 119, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/citizens_initiative/docs/com_2010_119_en.pdf (last access: 6 April 2010).

⁹ See, for instance, Eva Gaspar: *Quer fazer uma nova lei europeia?*, *Jornal de Negócios*, 31 March 2010; Isabel Estrada: *Iniciativa de Cidadania Europeia - precisamos mesmo de mais instrumentos?*, *Correio do Minho*, 25 March 2010; *Cidadania Europeia: O Novo Direito de Iniciativa Popular*, *Jovem Socialista*, the official blog of the Socialist Youth newspaper.

Portugal

Portugal: a supporter of further enlargement

Luis Pais Antunes*

Portuguese support to the accession of new member states, in particular in the cases of Iceland and Croatia, is clearly not a priority in these difficult times. There are several reasons for this. Of course, the feeling that Europe should find the most adequate instruments to face the current crisis before opening its doors again is probably the main one. But the fact that we are talking about distant countries may also justify this apparent lack of interest. In the last available Eurobarometer, Portuguese level of support to the accession of Iceland and Croatia was clearly below the EU-27 average. One of the few cases where the Portuguese level of support was greater than the EU-27 average was Turkey (with around 50 percent compared to 45 percent).

Among the government and the main political parties there is an apparent consensus over the fact that no candidate should be in a privileged position and that the normal procedures have to be respected. Delegations of candidate countries often pay a visit to Portuguese institutions (not only parliament and government, but also civil society organisations) and receive encouragements on their quest.

A very recent statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Luis Amado – on the request of Equatorial Guinea to enter the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) – seemed to confirm the official position of the Portuguese government. Amado stated that it would have to follow the same path as Turkey and Croatia are following, by adopting the necessary reforms to adapt themselves to the requirements imposed by the European Union.¹ But the lack of a specific reference to Iceland at this point in time could also be interpreted as a turning point vis-à-vis last year's declaration when Amado stated that there was no short track for Iceland, being in a similar position as any other candidate, such as Croatia, Serbia or Turkey.

¹ Newspaper "i", 23 July 2010.

Portugal

Greek situation discussed for a long time

Luis Pais Antunes*

The Greek situation and the possible consequences of the severe economic and financial crisis that Europe is facing are amongst the most discussed subjects in Portugal since our country's accession to the European Union. Opinion makers, economic analysts and political parties spread their views on these topics on an almost daily basis. The main reason for this lies in the fact that, although there are substantial differences between the Greek and the Portuguese situation, it is common sense that the Portuguese economy is quite fragile and may be affected by the spill-over effects of financial markets' instability in the Eurozone.

The main concern of the Portuguese authorities at the time the Greek case was reported was to highlight the differences between the two countries. This strategy – which was endorsed almost unanimously – proved to be correct, as it appears now that the said differences were recognised by the market, notwithstanding the generalised downgrade of Portuguese public debt by the main rating agencies. However, this strategy forced the Portuguese authorities – also as a result of the pressure from the Commission and the biggest member states – to adopt very strict budgetary measures, which created social instability and a significant concern about economic growth perspectives. This was only possible as a result of an agreement between the Socialist Party minority government and the newly elected leader of the main opposition party, Partido Social Democrata (PSD).

The immediate reaction to the approval of the finance package for Greece was a feeling of relief, although some considered that this could lead market speculators to change the direction of their attacks towards the Portuguese markets. But the overall opinion is that Europe was too slow in finding the necessary consensus and in adopting the required measures to tackle the Greek case with the risk of creating a very complicated situation for the Eurozone as a whole. As previously mentioned, special emphasis was put on the lack of coordination between member states, Germany, but also France, being regarded as the main responsible parties for this situation. In any case, most analysts seem to consider that the way Europe responded to the need to find a Euro(pear) solution for the Greek case was clear evidence that, mainly in times of crisis, member states still focus on national interests instead of concentrating their efforts on a global solution.

The Greek case clearly illustrated the need to strengthen the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), in particular its preventive side, and showed that without creating instruments that take account of the general interest of the Euro area and the European Union as a whole, the future of the Monetary Union could be at risk. But the Greek case also demonstrated Europe's weaknesses in dealing with "systemic crisis", as it seemed too paralysed at the time to adopt effective crisis-management mechanisms.

The reform of the SGP is seen as an urgent need, not only in order to ensure greater budgetary discipline, but also to find new ways to reduce disparities in competitiveness between member states' economies. As a matter of fact, there is some criticism as to the level of importance which is attributed to the "G element" of the SGP, considered by some as not being duly taken into consideration.

It is also worth mentioning the suggestion made by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Luis Amado, in an interview¹ for the introduction of a specific provision in the Portuguese Constitution establishing limits to the levels of deficit and public debt. But this suggestion was rapidly rejected both by Prime Minister Sócrates and the opposition parties.²

The idea of "a strong coordination of economic policies in Europe" seems to be quite well received in Portugal. There is a broad consensus over the fact that it is necessary to give a real impulse to the economic union and to strengthen economic governance. This is not really new as many in the past have pointed out that a single monetary policy would hardly survive without an equivalent level of coordination of economic policies.

* Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais.

Former Minister of Finance and current President of the Court of Auditors, Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins, strongly pleaded in favour of an effective coordination of economic policies which still do not exist in the European Union and stated that this failure to coordinate economic policies is the result of "a lack of boldness" of member states and European institutions.³ Several voices also point to the need of ensuring a greater social cohesion within the European Union and are afraid that the reforms in progress will not take this issue in due consideration.⁴

Apparently, the key objectives which were defined by the task force on economic governance, which met for the first time on 21 May 2010, are broadly accepted. But it is common ground to say that they are still too vague and one should wait for more detailed information before coming to any conclusions. The debate on the possible solutions to be adopted only began at end of June 2010, when the first concrete measures were outlined. New penalties, either financial or non-financial, were already expected and did not raise any special concerns. The new budgetary procedure, providing for some coordination between the member states on the basis of the budget guidelines each one will have to submit by the end of the first semester, seemed to be quite well accepted.

Contrary to its predecessor – the Lisbon Agenda – the Europe 2020 Strategy seemed not to be a preferred topic for discussion, to say the least. The reason for this lies probably in the fact that everyone is paying too much attention to the economic and financial crisis, as referred by former European Commissioner António Vitorino.⁵

Social and economic priorities for the next ten years in terms of economic growth and job creation are crucial for the future of the European social model, Vitorino says. But the fact is that very few seem aware of the importance of this debate. João Cravinho, former Minister in several Socialist governments and currently member of the board of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBDR) has recently made severe critiques of the lack of debate on the Europe 2020 Strategy in his weekly programme at Rádio Renascença.⁶ He said that it is very strange that this subject is being totally ignored, including by the government. Cravinho urges the government to take the lead and to promote a great public discussion on this subject. So far, there is nothing but silence. Not even the agreement on the new strategy reached by the European Council on 17 June 2010 or its public announcement changed the situation. Apart from the news published in the press, there is still no sign of any debate.

¹ Newspaper Diário Económico, 17 May 2010

² Newspaper Diário Económico, 18 May 2010.

³ Lusa news agency, 31 May 2010.

⁴ As it is the case of former President Soares, cited above, or presidential candidate Manuel Alegre in several public speeches in his ongoing campaign (namely in Bragança, 19 March 2010, in the candidate's blog).

⁵ António Vitorino: Condenados a entenderem-se, Diário de Notícias, 18 June 2010.

⁶ Available at: http://www.rr.pt/informacao_prog_detalhe.aspx?fid=114&did=94077 (last access: 27 July 2010).

Portugal**Disappointment due to wishful thinking****Luis Pais Antunes***

There were great expectations in Portugal for the Copenhagen conference. Secretary for Environment, Humberto Rosa, qualified the results of the conference as “deceiving” but in any case “better than nothing”¹, in line with most of the European representatives. As Minister Amado recently acknowledged, the disappointment was mainly the result of wishful thinking about how the other interested parties would accept the negotiation terms. Amado expressly mentions that the European position “was a little bit naïve” in trying to take leadership in a subject matter where it could find an easy consensus among the member states, without understanding the concerns of its main partners. According to Amado, Europe, which still lives under the strategic dependence from the USA, tried to use the climate issue as an opportunity to take the lead and clearly failed, which also proves that it still faces significant limitations as to its status as a global actor.²

Excluding Japan, the most conservative European proposals in Copenhagen seemed to be far in advance of those of the other main international players, but this should not necessarily be a reason to cause the European Union to change its own energy and climate policy.³ It is necessary to give a new impulse to the international negotiations in view of the COP16 at the end of the year in Mexico, although one should not be too optimistic about the outcome of the next conference. Europe by itself will not be in a position to impose its own views without a clear change of US policy under the Obama administration.

Climate change is a world issue. Of course, nothing prevents Europe from adopting measures to take the lead, as it did in the last decade. But under the current economic scenario, one fails to see any possible alternative to a global agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to fight climate change.

Portugal supports the financing of mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries, as per the National Strategy of Adaptation to the Climate Changes adopted by the Portuguese government in March 2010.

¹ Lusa news agency, 20 December 2009.

² Interview in the newspaper Expresso, 24 July 2010.

³ Viriato Soromenho Marques: Entre a crise e o colapso. O desafio ontológico das alterações climáticas, Brot'ria, December 2009.

Portugal

Current issues in Portugal

Luis Pais Antunes*

2009 was a peculiar year in Portugal, with the country focused on an ongoing electoral process as three general elections (European, national and local) took place within a short 4-month period between April and October 2009. At the same time, the impact of the economic downturn became more visible with a clear increase of unemployment figures and of the number of companies becoming insolvent.

The political landscape has also suffered a slight, but significant, change. After having lost the European elections in June 2009 to the main opposition party (centre-right PSD), the Socialist Party managed to win the national elections in September 2009, although without a majority in the parliament, as was the case during the five preceding years. In the absence of real conditions for the setting-up of a coalition government, the Socialist Party and Prime Minister José Sócrates were "forced" to form a minority government and to negotiate the budget for 2010 (which was finally approved at the end of April) and the new Stability and Growth Programme .

Public debate in Portugal remains very largely focused on the economic crisis and on the measures which are currently being adopted in the framework of the SGP, following an agreement between the government and the main opposition party (PSD). The increase of taxes (VAT, tax revenues) and the severe cuts in the budget (affecting, in particular, social benefits) together with a rising unemployment rate and a generalised downgrading of Portuguese public debt by the main rating agencies are still in the newspapers' front pages, although the economic indicators for 2010's first quarter were a little better than expected. Recently, the Portuguese central bank reviewed its forecast for 2010, but already anticipates that 2011 will be a year of poor economic growth as a result of the severe constraints introduced by the ESP.

From now on, attention will be mainly directed at the evolution of the political scenario and, in particular, to the ability of the minority government to survive the current economic and social crisis in a moment where the coming presidential elections at the beginning of next year prevent any possible dissolution of the parliament. An increasing number of analysts predict that a major crisis will occur by the end of the year during the budget discussions, and some senior statesmen invoke the need for the two main parties (the Socialist Party and the PSD) to make a governmental coalition in order to establish a stable and durable solution which none of them seem to accept.

International matters are still dominated by concerns over the crisis and the effectiveness of the responses which were adopted. Although there is still room for matters of traditional interest to Portugal, like the traditional relationship with African Portuguese-speaking countries and Brazil, such matters tend to be eclipsed by the internal situation.

* Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais.

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?