

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

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**Romania****Croatia, Iceland, Turkey, Moldova**Agnes Nicolescu

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*Croatia most likely to join the EU*

As reflected in the Romanian press,<sup>1</sup> the most likely country to join the EU is Croatia, followed by Serbia, despite the lagging dispute over Kosovo. The focus is on the economic progress achieved by Croatia so far, as compared to countries like Romania and Bulgaria – which are already members of the EU – and on the fact that interruptions and delays in Zagreb’s path towards EU membership were mostly connected to the consequences of the armed conflicts in the early 1990s. Some experts suggest that, should it not have been for the territorial disputes with Slovenia, Croatia would have become an EU member in 2004.<sup>2</sup>

Croatia’s efforts to meet the accession criteria are viewed in a positive light by Romanian officials. On the occasion of a meeting between Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Baconschi with Gordan Jandroković, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia, the head of Romanian diplomacy “appreciated the accelerated pace of negotiations for accession to the European Union, emphasising the important role the Republic of Croatia plays in the region.”<sup>3</sup>

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, underlined<sup>4</sup> the importance of the presence of Serbian president Boris Tadić at a summit of Balkan countries, organised following a joint Slovenian-Croatian proposal.

As far as Iceland’s EU application is concerned, the Romanian mass media underlines that, despite serious economic and financial difficulties, Brussels considers Reykjavik a strong candidate for EU membership. Materials tackling this topic focus on the recommendations given by the EU for the opening of accession negotiations on grounds that Iceland could almost immediately finalise 24 out of 35 negotiation chapters. Through Iceland, the EU could gain access to the Arctic region, which holds “strategic importance”<sup>5</sup> due to its mineral resources.

*Still No Perspectives for Turkey’s EU membership aspirations*

The Romanian press points to Germany’s and France’s strong stances against Turkey’s EU bid as a major factor which obstructs Ankara’s European path. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel has reiterated a “privileged partnership” status for Turkey, which, however, does not mean anything more than already exists. The liberal Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Alexander Graf Lambsdorff has even suggested that the EU should introduce for certain countries – such as Turkey or Ukraine – an intermediary membership status superior to the so-called privileged partnership quality.<sup>6</sup>

Romanian media dealing with the visit of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Paris quote Cengiz Aktar of Bahcesehir University in Istanbul, who believes “that the most important result of the encounter was the fact that President Sarkozy accepted the invitation to [go to] Turkey at the end of this year.”<sup>7</sup> Unlike his predecessor, Jacques Chirac, under whose mandate Ankara started accession negotiations to the EU, Nicolas Sarkozy has blocked the opening of five out of the 35 mandatory chapters of the accession talks. Other countries, among which are Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom, are strongly in favour of Turkey’s EU application, welcoming its geostrategic role as a link to Islamic civilisations.

*Moldova must maintain the current fast pace of reforms*

The Eastern Partnership holds a particular strategic significance for both Romanian decision-makers and the public opinion, being viewed as a chance to bring Ukraine and Moldova closer to the EU, which can only increase Romania’s and the EU’s security and stability in the eastern area. Romanian officials strongly support the Eastern Partnership and, particularly, Moldova’s Europeanization efforts and, ultimately, EU membership aspirations, although the process is deemed by most analysts as full of challenges. Experts from think tanks maintain a reserved yet reasonably optimistic view on

Moldova's recent progress, stressing the need for it to continue its current fast pace of reforms as set in the "Rethink Moldova" strategy. Cristian Ghinea and Victor Chirilă<sup>8</sup> believe this strategy of "pre-emptive implementation" adopted by Moldova will pay off in the medium and long-term, as Chişinău has already adopted the set of pre-conditions needed for a visa liberalisation road map, without being asked to. The Romanian President Basescu is more optimistic about Moldova's European destiny, emphasising the strategic partnership between the Republic of Moldova and Romania and aiming to support Moldova's European integration.<sup>9</sup>

The Romanian journalist Flavius Ţone analyses some of the findings of a report by Andrew Wilson, who recommends the stimulation of a positive competition between Ukraine and Moldova and a refraining from any hostile actions against Romania.<sup>10</sup> Particular attention is also paid to the contradictions surrounding Ukraine's European aspirations, in a context in which Kyiv seems set to choose a *pragmatic rapprochement* to Russia instead of the time-consuming EU accession process.

As far as the Union for the Mediterranean is concerned, press coverage has focused on identifying connections between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, highlighting the need for an integrated approach to European maritime security (Black Sea – Mediterranean Sea – Baltic Sea).<sup>11</sup> This topic is tackled from the perspective of the concrete solutions it could offer for regional issues of shared interest, such as the Arab-Israeli peace process.

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<sup>1</sup> Claudia SILAGHI: Croația la portile Uniunii Europene. Ne dati ori nu ne dați?, 29 March 2010, available at: <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-7078414-croatia-portile-uniunii-europene-dati-ori-nu-dati.htm> (last access: 17 May 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Baconschi meets with Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gordan Jandroković, press release, 30 April 2010, available at: <http://www.mae.ro/index.php?unde=doc&id=15386&idlnk=2&cat=4> (last access: 18 May 2010).

<sup>4</sup> România liberă: Catherine Ashton susține organizarea unui summit pe tema integrării în UE a țărilor din Balcani, 16 February 2010, available at: <http://www.romanialibera.ro/actualitate/mapamond/catherine-ashton-sustine-organizarea-unui-summit-pe-tema-integrarii-in-ue-a-tarilor-din-balcani-177564.html> (last access: 7 May 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Cristina OROVEANU: Islanda în UE: datorie contra energie, Adevărul, 25 February 2010, available at: [http://www.adevarul.ro/international/europa/Islanda\\_in\\_UE- datorie\\_contra\\_energie\\_0\\_214779013.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/international/europa/Islanda_in_UE- datorie_contra_energie_0_214779013.html) (last access: 17 May 2010).

<sup>6</sup> William TOTOK: Germania în continuare împotriva aderării Turciei la UE, RFI, available at: <http://www.rfi.ro/stiri/externe/Germania-in-continuare-impotriva-aderarii-Turciei-la-UE.html> (last access: 17 May 2010).

<sup>7</sup> A. SIMSEK: Sarkozy stă în calea aderării Turciei la UE, Southeast European Times, 20 April 2010, available at: <http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/ro/features/setimes/features/2010/04/20/feature-02> (last access: 16 May 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Cristian GHINEA/Victor CHIRILĂ: EU-Moldova negotiations – What is to be discussed, what could be achieved?, CRPE, 11 May 2010, available at: <http://www.crpe.ro/eng/eu-moldova-negotiations> (last access: 18 May 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Romanian Presidency Press release: Declarație de presă comună a președintelui României, Traian Băsescu, și a președintelui interimar al Republicii Moldova, Mihai Ghimpu, 27 April 2010, available at: [http://cms.presidency.ro/?pag=59&year=2010&sid=12295&id\\_p=12296](http://cms.presidency.ro/?pag=59&year=2010&sid=12295&id_p=12296) (last access: 18 May 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Flavius ŢONE: Cum poate fi Ucraina menținută lângă Europa, Adevărul, 29 March 2010, available at: [http://www.adevarul.ro/international/foreign\\_policy/Cum\\_poate\\_fi\\_Ucraina\\_mentinuta\\_langa\\_Europa\\_0\\_233977086.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/international/foreign_policy/Cum_poate_fi_Ucraina_mentinuta_langa_Europa_0_233977086.html) (last access: 7 May 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs press release: Foreign Minister Teodor Baconschi meets with the Minister of Political Development from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Dr. Musa Maaytah, 7 April 2010, available at: <http://www.mae.ro/index.php?unde=doc&id=15302&idlnk=2&cat=4> (last access: 17 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?