

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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Spain**The domestic assessment of the Spanish Presidency****Ignacio Molina***

The very high domestic expectations linked to the Spanish 2010 EU Presidency and the highly challenging economic context that emerged after the Greek debt crisis – which hit Spain very harshly – make for an overall evaluation of the semester that is far below what would be expected from simply adding up what was achieved in the different areas of the Presidency’s programme.

The scenario of the EU after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty required ambition, and Spain – a mid-size or even large country within the expanded EU, with solid pro-European convictions and organisational and leadership skills that were proved by its earlier turns as EU President – seemed to be one of the states willing to take on the challenge. In fact, leading government officials and the ruling Socialist Party, rather than opt for a moderate approach as to what could be expected from this six-month period, chose to raise expectations by stressing the historic importance that the challenge held for Spain and for Europe. However, it soon became clear that the challenge – perhaps not quite historic but in any case quite important – was a very difficult one to meet.

In undertaking its Presidency, the Spanish government tried to make a legitimate, albeit complicated, connection with its major goals in domestic and foreign policy. But it did not pay enough attention to the institutional limits that rotating presidencies have always had and the fact that the Lisbon Treaty imposes even more limits, as it lowers the political profile of these six-month stints in power.

From an institutional standpoint, and despite uncertainty surrounding the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the delay in forming the European Commission, Spain correctly carried out its legislative role in the Council. It encouraged consensus, organised things efficiently and, above all, addressed the development of the treaty and future political debates properly: an ambitious diplomatic service, bringing the EU closer to its citizens, solidarity with Greece, strengthening economic governance, supporting innovation, progress in enlargement, attention to Latin America, etc.

However, the adverse combination of political and economic factors and broad and excessively high ambitions ended up overshadowing the final result of the Spanish Presidency. Today, the general political perception of the recently concluded Presidency – pending public opinion polls and a more thorough analysis from experts – is more on the negative side. The Spanish government made a naturally self-congratulatory assessment of the Presidency, calling it “tireless, efficient, committed, showing solidarity, and pro-European”. The overall judgment will probably be more critical, but it would not be fair for the assessment to be totally negative either.

* Elcano Royal Institute.

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?