

# 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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## Editorial Team

Publisher: Prof. Dr. Mathias Jopp  
Executive Editor: Dr. Katrin Böttger  
Managing Editor: Julian Plottka  
Editorial Staff: Daniela Caterina, Gregory Kohler, Christoph Kornes  
Layout: Matthias Jäger

Contact: [info@EU-27watch.org](mailto:info@EU-27watch.org)  
[www.EU-27watch.org](http://www.EU-27watch.org)

 Institut für  
Europäische Politik  
Bundesallee 23  
D-10717 Berlin  
Tel.: +49/30/88.91.34-0  
Fax: +49/30/88.91.34-99  
E-mail: [info@iep-berlin.de](mailto:info@iep-berlin.de)  
Internet: [www.iep-berlin.de](http://www.iep-berlin.de)

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**Sweden****Implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the Swedish Presidency's contribution**

Gunilla Herolf\*

Herman Van Rompuy was initially described as a person about whom little was known outside Belgium. Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, when asked in March 2010 about his opinion concerning Van Rompuy, indicated that he did not know him too well as of yet.<sup>1</sup> Among the newspapers, judgments about Van Rompuy have gone from wait-and-see to describing him more and more often, in the words of one newspaper, as “an accomplished player in the power game, determined to take a lead position in Brussels.”<sup>2</sup> Within a very short time, he has, among other things, built up a cabinet of experienced Belgian diplomats, called EU heads of state and government to an extra meeting and suggested far-reaching proposals on EU policy.<sup>3</sup>

Fredrik Reinfeldt, when asked about the changes taking place after the Lisbon Treaty, brought up the fact that he saw only heads of state and government around the table as compared to the previous situation in which foreign ministers were present. A positive consequence of having fewer persons present, as he saw it, was that the discussion became freer. Another positive consequence expected to take place with a President of the European Council, appointed for two years, is to have greater continuity. This effect is, of course, not yet possible to see. A not so positive consequence of the present set-up, according to Reinfeldt, was the discussion on who should be present at which meetings in which the presence of Van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso were set up against each other. At this early stage, most of the changes have, however, not yet come into place and not much more can be said at this point.<sup>4</sup>

Generally, the Swedish comments about Catherine Ashton have centred on describing her tasks as very difficult and the situation surrounding her position as a tough fight for power in which different actors do their utmost to increase their own influence over the new European External Action Service (EEAS). Foreign Minister Carl Bildt was, however, highly critical after her appointment of Barroso's aide, João Vale de Almeida, as EU Ambassador to the United States. He referred to the fact that member states had not been consulted and to the break of an “understanding” reached in 2004 that the Washington position should go to “a person with experience from a high political post.” Bildt repeated his criticism at the following foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels, at which Ashton defended the appointment, claiming that she had followed exactly the right procedure.<sup>5</sup> Together with then British Foreign Minister David Miliband, Bildt wrote another letter to her, just before the foreign ministers' meeting in Cordoba in early March 2010. In this letter, the two gave her advice on which competences they believed that the EEAS should have. “We want to strengthen Ashton vis-à-vis the Commission. This is how the letter should be seen”, said Bildt. Indirectly, however, the letter contained criticism towards her.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, the Swedish Foreign Minister prefers to have Ashton's position close to the Council rather than to the Commission.

Sweden, having the Presidency of the EU during the autumn of 2009, was also the author of the report outlining the EEAS. Two important factors included in this report, which was accepted by the European Council in late October 2009, were the need for budget restriction and the manning of the EEAS. According to the EEAS report, one third of the personnel were to be member state representatives. As described by State Secretary Frank Belfrage to the parliamentary committee on EU affairs, these two principles are an absolute demand from member states, including Sweden. As he saw it, it would both be costly and lead to a loss of expertise if, by not sticking to the level of one-third being manned by present diplomats, experienced diplomats would be left outside the EEAS. Member states, again including Sweden, do not agree with the European Parliament's idea that Ashton should also have three political aides in order to give the EEAS the possibility to devote more time to the Parliament. Belfrage expressed the hope that this could be settled early and that rivalry among institutions would not delay this question longer.<sup>7</sup>

On the proposal for a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), the Swedish standpoint in the debate in the Council of the European Union has been that it has to be user-friendly. Sweden is therefore arguing for a simpler model than the one proposed by the Commission. The risk with the present proposal, Sweden argues, is that the initiative becomes so complicated that it might lose its power as a new

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\* Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

democratic tool. In particular, the so called “control stations” are seen as overly bureaucratic. This view also found support among the parties in the parliamentary committee on European affairs. As stated by members, the issues included in such European Citizens’ Initiatives would be restricted to those that are within the competence area of the Union (or actually of the Commission), but it was seen as important that the mechanism for deciding this would not be of the kind in which considerations of political nature might play a part.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fredrik Reinfeldt before the Parliamentary Committee on EU Affairs, 30 March 2010, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ingrid Hedström: Rompuy tar rodret [Rompuy takes the helm], Dagens Nyheter, 27 March 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Henrik Brors: Smutsig maktkamp om EU:s utrikespolitik [Dirty power fight about the foreign policy of the EU], Dagens Nyheter, 5 March 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Fredrik Reinfeldt before the Parliamentary Committee on EU Affairs, 30 March 2010, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Toby Vogel: Swedish Minister criticises Washington appointment, European Voice.com, 22 February 2010, available at: [www.europeanvoice.com/article/2010/02/swedish-minister-criticises-washington-appointment/67223.aspx](http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2010/02/swedish-minister-criticises-washington-appointment/67223.aspx) (last access: 8 July 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Henrik Brors: Pressad Ashton fick stöd efter hård kritik [Ashton under pressure got support after hard criticism], Dagens Nyheter, 6 March 2010; David Charter: David Miliband tells EU’s foreign chief how to do the job he rejected, TimesOnline, 5 March 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Belfrage before the Parliamentary Committee on EU Affairs, 23 April, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

## 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?