

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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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
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
Internet: www.iep-berlin.de

Turkey**Union for the Mediterranean must not be an alternative to Turkish membership**

Çiğdem Üstün*

Enlargement

Turkey started its accession negotiations in 2005 and since then Turkey has been more interested in its accession process than the enlargement debate regarding other countries, i.e., Iceland and Croatia. It has been perceived that Turkey's accession to the EU is not considered part of any previous enlargement rounds (i.e., 2004, 2007) or any future enlargements either. In this framework, Iceland's membership to the EU was not widely discussed in Turkey. Iceland's membership has been seen as a consequence of the economic crisis affecting the whole world and Europe as part of it. It has been argued that Iceland's integration to the EU would have a minimum effect on the EU's governance structures due to its small size. The main problems seen in the accession negotiations are related to agricultural and fisheries policies due to the common market and regulations on fishing, i.e., whales.¹

Turkey has been supportive of the EU's enlargement to the Balkans, and, therefore, Croatia's membership to the EU has been perceived as a positive step towards unifying Europe. However, Croatia's faster accession negotiations have been disappointing for Turkey. As Croatia and Turkey started the accession negotiations at the same time, there had been hesitation and negotiations came to a halt frequently in Turkey's case. It has been argued that the main reasons for slowing down Turkey's accession negotiations and speeding up Croatia's are: population, relatively easy integration of Croatia in the EU, cultural and religious values, and identity.²

European Neighbourhood Policy

Turkey has been attentive to European Union's policies towards the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. When the Mediterranean Union debates started after Nicolas Sarkozy suggested a separate union for the Mediterranean countries, Turkey perceived this as an alternative to its EU membership and opposed this idea. The Turkish government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, civil society organisations and the public in general criticised the Mediterranean Union. Sarkozy's opposition to Turkish membership in the EU and Sarkozy's statements, such as "Turkey would instead form the backbone of the new Mediterranean Union", created discomfort and disappointment in Turkey. Turkish President Abdullah Gül stated, "Turkey is a country that has started [accession] negotiations with the European Union. The negotiations started on the basis of a [European Union] decision which was taken unanimously, including France."³ However, after France gave assurance that the Mediterranean Union is not an alternative for Turkey and would not hamper Turkey's accession negotiations, Turkey, as a Mediterranean country which does not want to be excluded from the regional cooperation mechanisms, decided to join the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). In the statement given by the Prime Ministry of Turkey it is clearly stated that the UfM is a continuation of the Barcelona Process and that "Turkey decided to participate in the Barcelona Process and the Union for the Mediterranean project, which has been established by the EU for rendering the Barcelona Process stronger and more effective."⁴ Although Turkey has accepted to participate in the UfM, the criticism over this mechanism continues. The assurances given by Sarkozy and the French government are not perceived as totally convincing;⁵ however, as a Mediterranean country, Turkey feels it necessary to participate in international mechanisms such as the UfM.

Regarding the Black Sea region, Turkey welcomed the EU's efforts to establish more cooperative relations with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) as part of the Black Sea Synergy which was initiated in 2008. It has been argued that stronger cooperation between the EU and the BSEC could bring stable relations between EU and non-EU Black sea countries, including Russia and the Caucasus. However, the EU's ensuing steps establishing the Eastern Partnership (EaP) have been criticised by Turkey because the partnership initially excluded Turkey and Russia. It has been the general perception that any policy which excludes these two countries is doomed to be unsuccessful. After negotiations between Turkey and the EU, the EU decided to include Turkey as well as Russia in some projects. However, this attempt by the EU was not enough to change the Turkish attitude

* Center for European Studies / Middle East Technical University.

towards the EaP. Turkey still supports the Black Sea Synergy and closer relations between the EU and BSEC in the region. It has been argued that it is important to keep the relations between the EU and Black Sea regions at an institutional level, which would not disturb any of the countries' interests in the region, including Russia. Turkey's policies towards the region aimed to keep the status quo which prevents the EU from creating a sphere of influence around its borders which may clash with the interests of Russia and create disturbances in the region as a whole.

¹ AB Haber EU-Turkey News Network: İzlanda AB Yolunda, available at: <http://www.abhaber.com/haber.php?id=26752> (last access: 31 May 2010).

² S. İdiz: Hırvatistan AB'de niçin Türkiye'nin önüne geçti?, Milliyet, available at: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2007/06/02/yazar/idiz.html> (last access: 31 May 2010).

³ Renata Goldirova: Turkey Slams Sarko's "Mediterranean Union", businessweek.com, 18 May 2007, available at: http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/may2007/gb20070518_262522.htm?campaign_id=rss_daily (last access: 31 May 2010).

⁴ Turkey assured, ready to join Mediterranean Union, 12 July 2008, available at: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=147343> (last access: 31 May 2010).

⁵ Mensur Akgün: Akdeniz Birliği'ne katılmasak ne olur?, Referans Daily, available at: http://www.referansgazetesi.com/haber.aspx?HBR_KOD=99276&YZR_KOD=11 (last access 31 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?