


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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Turkey**The democratic initiative, the constitutional package and change of leadership in the opposing CHP****Sait Akşit and Özgehan Şenyuva***

In 2010, three major issues and events have occurred affecting the competition and position among the political parties. First, a human rights and minority rights reform initiative proposed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) in summer 2009, which was initially called the “Kurdish initiative” and was later expanded to include various other aspects and thus came to be known as the “democratic initiative”; second, the constitutional package proposed by the AKP with an aim to expand democratisation efforts; and, third, the resignation of the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – CHP) leader Deniz Baykal in early May 2010 under very controversial conditions.

The Turkish political scene has been dominated by four major political parties since the 2002 general elections. There has been a very tense and sometimes confrontational competition between the governing AKP and the opposing CHP and Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi – MHP). Another party which is also represented in the parliament, the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi – BDP, formerly known as the Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi – DTP) is the other major actor in the Turkish political scene.¹

The democratic initiative of the AKP is a very controversial topic, and has been dominating the political agenda since summer 2009 when it was first announced.² The main problem of this initiative was related with the lack of clarity in its contents. Despite creating a lot of controversy within Turkish politics and dominating the discourse in the first half of 2010, its full scope and contents still remain unclear. Despite some changes done to the constitution by parliament (with severe opposition and objection by CHP, MHP and BDP) it seems that the democratic initiative is still short of satisfying any party or group involved in the process. In the course of 2010, the government tried to raise support for their initiative and was engaged in PR activity. To serve this purpose, different events were organised. Among these events, the ones that raised most attention and controversy were the breakfast meetings with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. So far, there have been different breakfast meetings with socialites and even celebrities consisting of movie and theatre stars, authors and poets, and even sports figures, including footballers and technical directors of football clubs. While the government stated the purpose of these meetings was to share the contents of the initiative with society and to raise support for different segments of society, the main public interest remained poor or distorted, focusing on who attended these meetings and who protested or even what food was served. In short, these efforts seem to work against the government, taking the focus away from the content of the initiative and its related actions by putting a tabloid spin on it. On the other hand, the real content of the initiative still remains unknown to larger segments of society and it is impossible to speak of a public consensus or support for this initiative. One should also note that objection by the opposition remains strong for different reasons.

The proposal on the constitutional package was another issue that received strong objections from the opposition. The constitutional package included, among other aspects, changes and amendments on making the closure of political parties difficult, the organisation and composition of the constitutional court and the supreme board of judges and prosecutors (Hakimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu – HSYK), the trial of military personnel in civilian courts for crimes other than military crimes. The package was criticised by the opposing CHP and MHP for being prepared hastily and untimely, for not involving other parties and groups in the formulation of changes, for trying to place the judiciary under the political hegemony of the ruling party and threatening its independence, and for trying to prepare a constitutional and political structure that would suit the ruling AKP.³ The BDP also put forward criticism on changes concerning the closure of political parties and lack of anything in the package concerning education in Kurdish.⁴ A joint approach was that the package would remain an AKP project, not embracing and meeting the expectations of any other group. As the package could not receive the necessary number of votes in parliament, it will be taken to a referendum on 12 September 2010. However, the position of the opposing parties remains a ‘No’ in the referendum. The position of one of the most important civil society organisations in Turkey, the Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s

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Association (TUSIAD) and a group of intellectuals who are not affiliated with any party were also critical, calling for a more comprehensive and widely accepted change to the constitution. However, the package receives support from the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD) and intellectuals who are closer to the AKP.

The third major event in Turkish politics revealed itself in a very controversial manner. On 10 May 2010, CHP leader Deniz Baykal announced his resignation. Considering that Baykal had led the party since 1992, this resignation was a very important turning point. However, the reason behind his resignation, the circulation of a video tape which allegedly showed Baykal in a bedroom with a female politician from his party, created a wide debate, especially following Baykal's accusations that the government was behind the circulation of the tape. Despite being declared fake and fabricated by different authorities later on, the tape and the following resignation of Baykal was seized as an opportunity by certain circles inside the CHP to end the eighteen year rule of Baykal.⁵

The AKP victory in the 2009 local elections, like the 2007 general elections, stimulated detailed analysis on the opposition parties and particularly criticism on their inability to offer a major alternative to the AKP. The major share of the criticism was directed towards the CHP and primarily towards its leader, Deniz Baykal. The other major opposition party, the nationalist MHP, and its leadership were free of a harsh reaction from its grassroots, mainly due to its strong hierarchy and leadership structure. However, the CHP and its leader were under severe criticism for not being able to increase their share of the vote and, according to some, being content with being in opposition.

A popular figure within the party, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who had drawn attention through his popular campaign for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in the 2007 local elections, was elected in a landslide election at the party congress on 22 May 2010. A retired high level bureaucrat from the South East region of Turkey with Kurdish-Alavite roots, Kılıçdaroğlu has raised very high expectations from the party's loyal grassroots. Since his election, different surveys have been published by different sources indicating that the CHP, led by Kılıçdaroğlu, has the potential for an increase of votes. However, these surveys were not disclosed fully, thus leaving some scientific doubt on their findings. Kılıçdaroğlu, since his election, focused on the economic policies of the government and the corruption at local and national levels. This already indicated a difference with Baykal's dominant discourse on the ideological differences with the governing AKP and his preference for polarised pluralism, mainly on the religious-secularist divide. There are expectations that Kılıçdaroğlu will take the party to a more social-democratic stance and ease up on the nationalist and statist position of Baykal.⁶ Despite including some new names in his team, Kılıçdaroğlu also received severe criticism on his coalition with Önder Sav, the long-serving secretary-general of the party, who is considered by many as the mastermind behind the curtains. There have been critical voices saying that Sav's remaining in power would mean the continuation of old policies.

How much Kılıçdaroğlu will succeed in meeting the expectations, especially in the upcoming elections, still remains to be seen. While it is true that the resignation of Baykal created some momentum and excitement among the disillusioned party supporters, how many new voters Kılıçdaroğlu will attract and how much he could be affected from a potential internal party conflict is difficult to assess at this stage. On the other hand, one should not underestimate the influence and reach of Baykal inside the party, who did not fully back Kılıçdaroğlu. There is no guarantee that, at the first hint of electoral failure by Kılıçdaroğlu, Baykal will not try to reclaim the seat that he has occupied for almost two decades.

¹ On 11 December 2009, in an unanimous decision, Turkey's constitutional court decided to disband the DTP due to its links with the outlawed PKK. The decision was made in accordance with Articles 68 and 69 of the constitution. Party leader Ahmet Türk and Member of Parliament (MP) Aysel Tuğluk were barred from politics for five years, losing their seats as MPs. The remaining MPs of the DTP formed a new group under the newly established Peace and Democracy Party.

² For a detailed analysis on the issue and political parties' positions, see Ozgehan Senyuva: Opposition for the sake of opposition? Polarized pluralism in Turkish politics, Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 13, No. 4, December 2009.

³ Ntvmsnbc.com: Baykal: Anayasa değil, Erdoğan projesi (Baykal: Not a Constitutional, Erdoğan Project), 19 April 2010; Ntvmsnbc.com: Bahçeli: Anayasa değişikliğine esastan kapalıyız (Bahçeli: We are against the Basis of Constitutional change), 30 March 2010.

⁴ Ntvmsnbc.com: Demirtaş: Anayasa tamamen değişmeli (Demirtaş: The Constitution should change completely), 23 March 2010; Ntvmsnbc.com: BDP'nin oyu: Hayır, hayır (BDP vote: no, no), 12 May 2010.

⁵ BBC: Turkish opposition leader quits over 'sex tape', 10 May 2010.

⁶ Euractiv: New opposition leader brings excitement to Turkish politics, 26 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?