

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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Finland**Between ethical considerations and political interests**

Tuulia Nieminen, Johanna Nykänen and Aaretti Siitonen*

The debate in Finland on climate and energy policy drifted between economic interests and a wider sense of responsibility. On the one hand, the Copenhagen conference was viewed from an ethical perspective, maintaining that we have a shared responsibility for our planet, and, as such, we would need to take all necessary actions to ensure that a binding global agreement was reached. As one commentator put it: “Without the sacrifices of our predecessors, Finland would not exist. It remains to be seen what our great grandchildren will say about us.”¹ On the other hand, political concerns were raised over Finland’s monetary contributions towards climate change prevention schemes and both Finland’s and the EU’s political interests in the negotiations. In a parliamentary meeting prior to the conference, True Finns Member of Parliament (MP) Pirkko Ruohonen-Lerner pointed out: “Although we negotiate as part of the EU delegation, we must ensure that Finland’s delegation has national interest as its core priority.”²

The Social Democrats highlighted that those lower on the income ladder in Finland should contribute less than high earners. Environment Minister Lehtomäki responded with an ethical approach: “I am a little saddened that Finland’s climate bill is facing criticism of this magnitude. What is essential here is whether our generation pays the bill or whether we pass it on to our children and grandchildren with huge interest.” Then Prime Minister Vanhanen further pointed out that domestic burden sharing was not among the main concerns in preparation for Copenhagen. National Coalition MP Sanna Perkiö stated that, rather than focusing on monetary issues, Finland should calculate how much the country could benefit from a climate agreement. Such optimism was shared among many other MPs – including government ministers – with Centre Party MP Kimmo Tiilikainen offering the most far reaching figure of 100,000 new jobs in Finland with the “green revolution”. The Left Alliance, spearheaded by MP Paavo Arhinmäki, demanded a minimum of 40 percent carbon cuts for developed countries.

Finland was among the first EU member states to promise funds to help developing countries cope with their climate burden, but the fact that part of that money came from Finland’s development budget caused some criticism in the media.³ Also, the EU’s means of reaching its bio fuel targets by 2020 were criticised for pushing millions of people towards starvation in the developing world. As Finland’s leading newspaper Helsingin Sanomat put it in its main editorial: “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”⁴ When it came to the results of the Copenhagen conference and the EU’s climate change and energy policies, different views were present in the Finnish public debate. National Coalition Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Sirpa Pietikäinen asserted that, in Copenhagen, it was the process rather than the outcome that was the most important thing: “The Copenhagen conference is a milestone in a series of several national and international actions.”⁵ Another National Coalition MEP Eija-Riitta Korhola highly criticised the EU’s climate policy, arguing that it was bureaucratic and inefficient.⁶ In his often critical newspaper column, Finland’s previous Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen stated that the EU should refrain from praising its self-perceived moral superiority in global climate politics and focus on reaching a global climate strategy with other significant actors, including the USA, China, India and Brazil.⁷ Finally, Foreign Minister Stubb voiced his disappointment over the Copenhagen conference, arguing that it resulted from certain weaknesses in the UN system and the lack of strategic cooperation between world powers. He remained nevertheless optimistic and pointed out that environmental protection, besides being a moral and ethical responsibility, is also a business opportunity that both Finns and Europeans should exploit. What is now needed, he argued, is strong EU leadership, an EU-wide carbon tax and a 30 percent carbon reduction target.⁸

Following a government decision to allow the construction of two more nuclear power stations in Finland, the post-Copenhagen debate transformed into an argument over nuclear energy. Again, the main bifurcation in the debate was between ethical considerations and political and economic interests. According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in autumn 2009, a majority (67 percent) of Finns believed that nuclear energy is a way of tackling climate change. There were still prominent voices – mainly from the Green Party – calling for reductions in nuclear energy production. For example, Green MEP Satu Hassi stated that “it is in the interest of Finland to wake up from its nuclear

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hypnosis and join the green revolution.”⁹ The Centre Party newspaper Suomenmaa attacked Helsingin Sanomat for being a “servant of the nuclear business” and disregarding the importance of EU cooperation.¹⁰ Suomenmaa did however acknowledge that the EU target for Finland – 38 percent renewable energy by 2020 – was a challenging one, a sentiment shared by many commentators, including another provincial newspaper Kaleva: “The target that the EU has set for Finland is tough, but there are no other options”.¹¹ Indeed, the mood in some circles was that nearly impossible targets had been imposed on Finland from outside, but this reaction was immediately challenged from an ecological point of view: It seems that “for Finland industry is more important than climate.”¹² The critical article discussed Finland’s hesitation to pledge to make 30 percent carbon cuts, suggesting that it will negatively affect Finland’s image as a green and progressive EU member state.

Finally, with its rich natural resources, Finland was envisaged as the future leader in green politics. For example, Centre Party MP Kyösti Karjula suggested: “Finland could become the forerunner in business-led sustainable bio economy. That requires bold political choices and visionary decisions.”¹³ The EU was criticised for its “green protectionism” that prevents bio fuel industry from growing more rapidly.¹⁴ Turun Sanomat wished that Finland had received more appreciation for its role as a major producer of bio energy, but concluded that ultimately what matters is that we all work together towards the common good.¹⁵

¹ Aamulehti: Ilmastovastuullisuus on mahdollista, 8 March 2010.

² Helsingin Sanomat: Ilmastomuutoksen lasku köyhille huolestutti eduskuntaa, 3 December 2009.

³ Helsingin Sanomat: EU:n kolehti: vanhaa, uutta ja lainattua, 12 December 2009.

⁴ Helsingin Sanomat: Tie helvettiin on kivetty hyvillä aikomuksilla, 28 February 2010.

⁵ Nykypäivä: Pietikäinen: Kööpenhaminan tulos ei ratkaise kaikkea, 18 December 2009.

⁶ Nykypäivä: Korhola: EU:n uusittava ilmastopolitiikkaansa, 12 February 2010.

⁷ Turun Sanomat: EU:n kohtalon hetket ovat käsillä, 5 March 2010.

⁸ Kaleva: Ilmastopolitiikka ei pysähtynyt Kööpenhaminaan, 5 May 2010.

⁹ Helsingin Sanomat: Tuulivoima ajaa ydinvoiman ohi, 13 March 2010.

¹⁰ Suomenmaa: Pekkarisen ministeriön arvioihin pitää voida luottaa, 21 April 2010.

¹¹ Kaleva: Pakosta nieltävä energiatavoite, 16 April 2010.

¹² Helsingin Sanomat: Suomelle teollisuus on ilmastolupauksia tärkeämpi, 16 March 2010.

¹³ Suomenmaa: Suomi EU:n biopolitiikan edelläkävijäksi, 16 March 2010.

¹⁴ Helsingin Sanomat: EU:n tukipolitiikka vaarantaa biopolttoaineiden käytön kasvun, 28 March 2010.

¹⁵ Turun Sanomat: Bioenergialla suuret lupaukset, 30 March 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?