


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**Begging, immigration and identity****Tuulia Nieminen, Johanna Nykänen and Aaretti Siitonen***

Another issue of importance in the Finnish EU discussion was the Roma beggars in Helsinki. They were still few in numbers, but attained a highly symbolic value, taking up a great deal of attention in the parliamentary and media discourse.¹ Begging on the streets of Helsinki was seen to represent the darker aspects of the EU's freedom of movement, and was often underlined in conjunction with the argument that Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU too soon. Outlawing begging was discussed, together with minority rights and European standards.²

Relating to the discussion on the freedom of movement, the wider debate on immigration was also heating up in Finland. It is not strictly an EU matter, but the Roma question raised questions of inclusivity and identity.³ An inclusive, rather than exclusive, Finnish identity tends to be tied in with a basically positive attitude towards EU integration, which also has connotations of naïveté in the Eurosceptic discourse, much as an open attitude towards immigration in particular and internationalism in general does.⁴ The expression "When in Rome..." was primarily used by the populist True Finns, but, in spring 2010, the Social Democrats also took to both using this expression and employing populist rhetoric supporting those who feel their employment threatened by immigration. Then Prime Minister (PM) Vanhanen and Foreign Minister Stubb both condemned this attitude with exceptionally harsh words, with especially the latter identifying his view of what it means to be a Finn to be essentially internationalist. Europe and Immigration Minister Thors, who has even received death threats from anonymous sources due to her allegedly uncritical attitude towards immigration, emphasised on numerous occasions that the immigration debate in Finland tends to be plagued by generalisations, oversimplifications and outright bigotry.⁵ This debate must, however, also be seen in the context of the upcoming 2011 elections.

On the whole, the received wisdom in the press was that the main identification of Finns is still the nation state. While this may be true, often the questionnaires and figures quoted for these arguments are based more on knowledge about the administrative machinery of the EU than on Europe per se.⁶ As mentioned, the discussion on federalism remained rather abstract and shallow, with the question of national independence being the main sticking point on both the Greek crisis and the Lisbon Treaty. Finland's peripheral location is a point of worry for many – will the EU bureaucracy in faraway Brussels be able to understand our exceptional conditions when it comes to farming and the welfare state, for example?⁷

On 22 June 2010, Mari Kiviniemi (Centre Party) was officially appointed as the Finnish Prime Minister, with the previous PM Matti Vanhanen resigning for reasons which he was unwilling to completely reveal. One of the characteristics of Vanhanen's time in office was the change in his EU position over time: from slightly EU sceptical to its advocate. Kiviniemi is expected to continue along the latter line. She belongs to the liberal wing of her party, and is the second female to take up the position.

¹ E.g. Parliament session, 25 May 2010.

² Vihreä Lanka: Holokaustin perintö elää, 19 February 2010.

³ Suomenmaa: Suomi elää tavallaan?, 8 April 2010.

⁴ Aamulehti: Osta pieni puhdas Pohjoismaa!, 8 April 2010.

⁵ Kaleva: Thors: EU:ssa vapaa liikkumisoikeus, 28 April 2010.

⁶ E.g. Turun Sanomat: Kansallisvaltio voimissaan, 6 December 2010.

⁷ Kaleva: Santa Claus Oulun presidentiksi, 14 December 2010.

* Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

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?