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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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Romania**Constitutional review, US missile defence systems, and the Danube Strategy****Agnes Nicolescu and Mihai Sebe**

A new Constitution – A universal panacea?

Among the changes brought by the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Romanian authorities are trying to modify the Romanian constitution in order to adjust its provisions to the new realities. The main argument is the November 2009 referendum in which “Romanians pronounced themselves for a unicameral parliament and for the reduction of the number of parliamentarians to a maximum of 300.”¹ Having those “red lines” in mind, which they cannot surpass, government officials launched on 21 April 2010 a project of law regarding the revision of the Constitution.² The main idea of the project, as stated by Emil Boc, the Romanian Prime Minister, would be the creation of a single chamber, the Chamber of Representatives, made up of 300 elected representatives. Other main ideas regarded the simplification of the legislative process and the establishment of a clearer relation between the President and the parliament. The project immediately faced staunch resistance from the opposition parties. One of the most criticised ideas was that of a unicameral parliament. The Social Democrat Party wants to maintain the bicameral system, claiming that the Lisbon Treaty stipulates the existence of an upper chamber made of representatives of the regions.³ The dispute remains open, being recently overshadowed by the austerity measures announced by the Romanian President and government.

US Ballistic missile defence system in Romania – an ongoing debate

Romania’s decision on 4 February 2010 to host elements of the American ballistic missile defence system in Europe on its national territory has sparked off significant debates, which have highlighted both the benefits and costs involved. The Romanian President assured the public that the missile system was not aimed against Russia and that it was meant to protect the entire national territory against threats originating from the Middle East with land-based rocket systems.⁴

Reactions from the Romanian public opinion were also prompt. It has been highlighted that the authorities should have launched a public information campaign well ahead of the announcement of the actual decision was made. The mass media insisted that public opinion lacked important information on the details of the bilateral agreement. Questions were raised as to the financial and security implications of the decision, counterarguments pointing out the possible inconveniences of a “freeze of relations with Russia, as well as the necessity to correctly evaluate Moscow’s response.”⁵ As a consequence, national authorities and experts have gradually started informing the public with regard to details for understanding the need to enhance national security through a ballistic missile shield system, as part of international obligations (reference was made to the strategic partnership with the USA signed in July 1997),⁶ and the agenda of specific bilateral negotiations. The implementation of elements of the US ballistic missile defence system on Romanian territory has therefore started being considered as a consolidation of national security, and in strong correlation with the establishment of a similar component in Poland and Bulgaria, both NATO member states with a relevant position in the Alliance’s eastern flank.

Danube Strategy: a regional instrument with benefits for local communities

The Danube Strategy has been important this year, considering that Romania is currently defining its position towards this document. In order to allow for contributions from regional actors, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has invited local communities to have their say on the Strategy. During a meeting with representatives of local authorities, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Baconschi referred to the Danube Strategy as “a communitarian instrument with a regional profile allowing Danube’s transformation into a European connector.”⁷

¹ President Traian Băsescu, press release: Declarația de presă a președintelui României, Traian Băsescu, la finalul consultărilor cu partidele politice și formațiunile politice reprezentate în Parlamentul României, 15 March 2010, available at: http://www.presidency.ro/index.php?_RID=det&tb=date&id=11944&_PRID=search (last access: 17 May 2010).

² Romanian Presidency, Proiect de lege privind revizuirea Constituției României, 21 April 2010, available at: http://www.presidency.ro/static/Proiect_Revizuire_Constitutie.pdf (last access: 19 May 2010).

³ Victor Ponta, SDP president, in a Press Conference on 15 March 2010: "First of all, the Social-Democrat Party wants that the structure of the Parliament remain in the form in which the Deputy Chamber, selected by uninominal vote by the citizens, through a direct vote, to be supported, as the Treaty of Lisbon stipulates, by an upper chamber which will represent the local communities and that will be made of members elected by the local and departmental counselors, practically by our local elected people." See: Victor Ponta: press conference, 15 March 2010, available at: http://www.psd.ro/newsroom.php?newi_id=3245 (last access: 18 May 2010).

⁴ Mihail Ionescu: Country Reports, Ballistic Missile Defense System In Europe: The Romanian Component, available at: http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/29/2/-/dokument_id-18978/index.html (last access: 24 March 2010).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press release: Întrevederea ministrului Afacerilor Externe, Teodor Baconschi, cu reprezentanții autorităților locale, pe tema Strategiei UE pentru regiunea Dunării, 12 May 2010, available at: <http://www.mae.ro/index.php?unde=doc&id=43540&idInk=&cat=4> (last access: 17 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?