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# EU-25 Watch

## No. 3 - Summary

ISSN 1610-6458

Issued in July 2006

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**Edited by the Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin**  
in collaboration with the

Austrian Institute of International Affairs, Vienna  
Bulgarian European Community Studies  
Association, Sofia  
Center for European Studies / Middle East Technical  
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# EU-25 Watch

## On the Project

The enlarged EU of 25 members is in a process of reshaping its constitutional and political order and at the same time of expanding its membership and taking on new obligations in international politics. This project sheds light on key issues and challenges of European integration. Institutes from all 25 EU member states as well as from acceding/candidate countries participate in this survey. The aim is to give a full comparative picture of debates on European integration and current developments in European politics in each of these countries.

This survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire that has been elaborated in February 2006 by all participating institutes. Most reports were delivered by the end of May 2006. Issues of *EU-25-Watch* are available on the homepage of EU-CONSENT ([www.eu-consent.net](http://www.eu-consent.net)) and on the internet sites of most of the contributing institutes.

The Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) in Berlin coordinates and edits *EU-25 Watch*. The IEP is grateful to the *Otto Wolff-Foundation*, Cologne, for supporting its research activities in the field of “Enlargement, consolidation and neighbourhood policy of the EU”. Contact persons at the IEP are *Barbara Lippert* ([barbara.lippert@iep-berlin.de](mailto:barbara.lippert@iep-berlin.de)) and *Timo Goosmann* ([tgoosmann@iep-berlin.de](mailto:tgoosmann@iep-berlin.de)). Kristina Kurze and William L. Metzger assisted in editing this issue.

### *Recommended citation form:*

Institut für Europäische Politik (Ed.): *EU-25 Watch*, No. 3, July 2006, Berlin.



EU-25 Watch is part of EU-CONSENT, a network of excellence for joint research and teaching comprising more than 50 research institutes that addresses questions of the mutual reinforcing effects of deepening and widening of the EU. EU-CONSENT is supported by the European Union's 6th Framework Programme.



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## Questionnaire

What are the highlights of your national debate on the future of the EU during the reflection period?

- **Is the European Constitution a point of reference?**
- **What are the opinions of political actors regarding the future of the charter of fundamental rights?**
- **How much importance is generally attached to the reflection period, and how much reflection is actually going on?**
- **Who takes initiatives in a proactive way (e.g. government, civil society)?**
- **How actively are the media involved in the debate?**

How are the costs and benefits of EU membership perceived in your country?

- **Is this a high salience issue in your country?**
- **What are the arguments that are used in this respect?**
- **Who are the actors that are most actively engaged in this discussion?**
- **Include general trends in public opinion regarding the mood towards the EU and refer to related national polls.**

Looking around in the EU and its member states, who are the actors that are considered to play a leading role?

- **Taking into consideration that the current situation of the EU has been widely interpreted as a crisis of leadership, who might be capable of playing a leading role – personalities, countries, institutions, the EU presidency?**

Which discourses on political and societal issues in other member states and/or neighbouring countries are given particular attention to and are covered in the media?

### What were the reactions to the publication of the Lisbon ranking in your country?

- How were the recommendations of the EU Commission regarding your country's national action plan on the implementation of the Lisbon Agenda received?
- What were the most important reactions to the results related to the Lisbon Agenda of the Spring European Council March 2006?

### Which future for the Western Balkans and EU-Enlargement?

- This question concerns the perspectives of the Western Balkans as seen by political actors in your country with regard e.g. to:
  - *the status of Kosovo and Montenegro,*
  - *the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina,*
  - *the relationship/interdependence between a regional multilateral free trade agreement of the Western Balkan countries and the membership perspective.*

### Which future for the Greater Middle East?

- Please point out the role that the EU should take up with regard to:
  - *Iran (nuclear question)*
  - *the Israel-Palestinian conflict (after the elections in Israel and for the Palestinian Legislative Council)*
  - *the question of energy security (also with regard to Russia, Southern Caucasus etc.)*

### Upcoming events and issues

- What are the most important upcoming political events that will probably impact on EU-policy / policy making in your country?
- Which are the four or five priority issues that emerge on the national policy agenda?
- Speculate on the influence these issues and events might exert on your country's positions in key issues on the EU level

## Calming down and setting the sights lower – The EU recovers in the period of reflection

Barbara Lippert/Timo Goosmann

After the shock of the negative referenda on the constitutional treaty (TCE) the EU is slowly recovering and engaged in a lot of business as usual. “Europe at work”<sup>1</sup> as well as the ongoing “broader debate”<sup>2</sup> on Europe are reflected in this new edition of EU-25 Watch. Covering the period from January up to May 2006 EU-25 Watch gives an insight into the national debates on topics and trends related to European integration.

In our previous stocktaking, EU-25 Watch No.2, published in January 2006, we made some general observations which are confirmed and specified by this new survey. The five major observations are:

- After enlargement heterogeneity and diversity of preferences, conditions and capacities increased and have become a dominant feature of the EU-25.
- Problems of governance and legitimacy of the EU are perceived as a lack of leadership that aggravates the existing gap between the citizens and political class.
- In many member states a wait and see attitude prevails with regard to the fate of the TCE.
- After the big bang enlargement of the year 2004 enlargement fatigue is sweeping through many of the old member states of the former EU-15.
- External factors – globalisation of the economy and security challenges – are increasingly driving European integration.

The set of new questions of EU-25 Watch No. 3 covers the following issues that are related to these five major observations. Authors from all 25 member states and three candidate countries (Croatia, Romania and Turkey) analyse the situation in their countries. In light of national debates the following issues are addressed:

- Period of reflection
- Costs and benefits of EU membership
- Leadership in the EU
- Discourses of interest in other EU or neighbouring countries
- The Lisbon process
- Developments in the Western Balkans and enlargement of the EU
- Middle East and energy policy of the EU
- Upcoming events and issues.

### Heterogeneity and diversity of economies and societies

The state of the economies and welfare systems differs significantly from member state to member state. When looking at the reactions to the services and working time directive we observed diverging preferences of old and new members. Moreover, at the periphery of the EU we identified dynamic countries with high growth rates and with a record of reforming the welfare systems, while core economies (Germany, France, Italy and also the Netherlands) are lagging behind and struggle with sluggish performances and cautious reforms of the social security systems and labour markets. The diverging modernisation cycles lead to different preferences.<sup>3</sup> The Lisbon process to improve competitiveness and to stimulate growth and employment basically relies on the activities and strategies pursued by the actors at national levels. The open method of coordination only foresees the role of a supervisor for Community institutions that are often interpreted as toothless paper tigers. The lack of real incentives, sanctions and other leverage is obvious and also reflected in the national reports. Hardly any member state recognises the Lisbon process as a helpful framework that would

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<sup>1</sup> Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 15/16 June 2006, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Barbara Lippert/Timo Goosmann: Introduction. A Portrait of the Union in a puzzling state of mind, in: Institut für Europäische Politik (Ed.): EU-25 Watch, No. 2, January 2006, Berlin, p. 10.

work as a point of reference for shaping national strategies.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a lack of ownership is evident (e.g. Germany). Reactions to the interim reports of the Commission are few (Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal) and the whole exercise treated at best with benign neglect (Denmark, France, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Italy, Latvia) if not total ignorance or open scepticism (e.g. Greece). In the absence of a formal ranking of countries and of naming and shaming of the underperforming EU members there are of course countries which feel justified in their course through the evaluation by the Commission. The model pupils are relaxed even if some elements of their strategies are criticised. To the top benchmarkers belong Finland, the UK (which thinks that Lisbon is for the others only<sup>5</sup>), similar is the self-perception in “heroic” Estonia<sup>6</sup>, but also in Sweden and the Netherlands satisfaction is widespread.

Heterogeneity and diversity among the member states is prevalent when looking at the top issues and events coming up in the countries.<sup>7</sup> Of course national elections are a focus of political debate and of speculations about the implications for the EU itself. The change of government in Poland, Italy, Slovakia and the ongoing attempts to form a coalition government in Prague are cases that might impact on EU decision-making not in the least with regard to ratifying the TCE. Also therefore they become an issue and are discussed in other EU member states. Upcoming elections are scheduled for the second half of 2006 in Sweden, Latvia, Austria and the Netherlands. In 2007 elections are due in Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland and also Turkey.

Also other events are selected as important ones. The accession of Bulgaria and Romania is an important step for Hungary, especially taking into consideration the fact that 1.5 million Hungarians live in Romania. Hungary also commemorates the 50th anniversary of the revolt against the Soviet army claiming that “the glorious days of 23 October to 4 November shall be commemorated so as to draw the world’s attention to this historically so important moment.”<sup>8</sup> In other countries, like Estonia, fierce debates concern the “historical truth”, a debate that in the Estonian case has been revolving around a Soviet-era monument in the centre of Tallinn and even led to an increase of ethnic tensions.

These examples illustrate two things: Firstly, identity related questions (historical, cultural and religious issues) are a point where heterogeneity and diversity of outlooks are more profound and persistent compared to commonplace EU issues that are dealt with in a more or less rationalist framework where interests and preferences can be related to distinct groups, parties etc. in the member states. In the latter cases transnational convergence is more probable and developing faster. The second observation is that EU-Europe, in particular after enlargement, is not a community of shared memories and historical experiences.<sup>9</sup> Legacies of the past, often intertwined with recent events or historical anniversaries, come up and influence perceptions and positions taken by EU governments. On occasions such as the Polish-German dispute on the Baltic Gas Pipeline they can spill over into the EU arena, sometimes unintended and often unexpected by others.

That is why it is also lamentable that a shared area of communication is not very far developed in the EU. Some authors found it hard to even address the question (no. 4) which discourses in other EU countries or neighbouring non-EU countries were followed with special interest and attention. Close looks beyond the borders or even interaction with representatives and speakers of these discourses occur on very seldom occasions. Major topics that gained Europe-wide attention were the youth uprisings in the French banlieues and the subsequent protests against the CPE proposal<sup>10</sup>, which was followed by media, politicians, and the wider public in nearly all member states (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain). Most authors explained that the risk of spill over effects, of similar trends and challenges in their countries were at the heart of this interest. Second ranks the conflict about the

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. the answers to question 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the UK chapter on the Lisbon Agenda (question 5).

<sup>6</sup> In a recent study Estonia has been referred to as the absolute “hero” of the Lisbon process among all member states, cf. the Estonian chapter on the Lisbon Agenda (question 5).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the answers to question 8.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. The Hungarian chapter on upcoming events and issues (question 8).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Peter Graf Kielmansegg: *Integration und Demokratie*, in: Markus Jachtenfuchs/Beate Kohler-Koch (Hrsg.): *Europäische Integration*, Opladen 2003, S. 49-85.

<sup>10</sup> To reduce unemployment among young workers, the French government wanted to loosen job protection measures with the controversial *Contrat Première Embauche* (CPE) or first employment contract.

Mohammad cartoons (Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Spain) that was also to a large extent interpreted in terms of the respective domestic debates.

Prominent issues in domestic debates were – for example in the Czech Republic, Finland, Estonia, Poland and Sweden – relations with neighbours of the EU. In particular the role of Russia is seen as critical. Immigration is an issue in the UK, and given recent events also in Spain and Malta, but also Danish immigration policy was an issue in Sweden even before the cartoon conflict. Some of the new members discuss joining the Eurozone (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia) in the near future. The triangle Greece, Cyprus, Turkey as pictured in the three country reports shows a strong focus on if not an obsession with viewing domestic and EU affairs through the lenses of the tensions between them. This makes them rather special cases within the EU, also when compared to central and eastern European newcomers that have entered the mainstream of the EU also as far as principally multidimensional domestic debates are concerned.

### **Leadership – Waiting for the German Presidency?**

In all member states and beyond a lack of leadership is realised in the EU. German chancellor Merkel figures in most member states as a credible, not yet exhausted but fresh politician who can and shall play a leading role in the EU.<sup>11</sup> Besides Merkel only few politicians – for example Blair – are named explicitly. Many think that the importance of a German-French tandem would be conducive for the EU (Croatia, Czech Republic, Romania, Spain). However, severe doubts about the political and also economic strength of these key countries are expressed: According to the Polish report the Franco-German tandem is a “locomotive that is out of order.”<sup>12</sup> The Portuguese report states that the old “Franco-German axis” is “a shadow of what it used to be, but still irreplaceable, since there is no alternative leadership in sight.”<sup>13</sup> Given that Germany takes over the presidency in 2007 many expect a new impetus for the constitutional process and the functioning and coherence of the EU at large (Italy, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, Sweden). The French report is quite clear regarding prospects of leadership: “It would be fair to say that, in the eyes of French public opinion, only the French President could be a credible leader for the Union”<sup>14</sup>. Notwithstanding the problem of discontinuity that results from rotating presidencies, the 6 months rhythm is also a vehicle for hope that things will improve in the course of new faces and approaches. Moreover, the affinities felt in some countries towards others (as in the case of Sweden and Finland) is another trust-building resource of rotating presidencies. Size (big or small(er)) and geographic location (core – periphery), language and other interconnections are relevant factors that influence expectations and assessments of presidencies from the point of view of other member states. While, apparently, the Commission cannot fill in the leadership gap (Slovenia: the Commission fails to safeguard European interests against national interests) the European Parliament (Slovenia: the bad conscience of the EU<sup>15</sup>) has gained credibility in the course of the Europe-wide controversy about the services directive. The lack of trust in the European Commission can also be explained with widespread criticism concerning the leadership of José Manuel Barroso (France: “José Manuel Barroso is not popular in France and is regarded as an excessively liberal leader”)<sup>16</sup>. As far as the Council is concerned, the euro-group, as some hope, could develop into a centre of political gravitation<sup>17</sup>.

### **The period of reflection and the TCE: Inching forward without excitement, illusions or a mega project?**

Referring to the recent issue we described the period of reflection as the sound of silence.<sup>18</sup> Again, in some member states there is hardly any debate either on the future of Europe or on the TCE in particular (e.g. Slovenia<sup>19</sup>). In other member states a debate and sometimes even a structured

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the Austrian, Belgian, Croatian, Cyprian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian and UK chapters on leadership (question 3).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the Polish chapter on leadership (question 3).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the Portuguese chapter on leadership (question 3).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the French chapter on leadership (question 3).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the Slovenian chapter on leadership (question 3).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the French chapter on leadership (question 3).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the Belgian chapter on the reflection period (question 1) and the Italian chapter on leadership (question 3).

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Lippert/Timo Goosmann: The State of the Union: Period of Reflection or the Sound of Silence. *Análisis del Real Instituto Elcano*, No. 29/2006, [www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/924.asp](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/924.asp), latest access: 22 June 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the Slovenian chapter on the reflection period (question 1).

dialogue has been launched. Therefore mostly an initiative taken by the political leadership (parliament or government or parties) is needed (Denmark, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands). The intensity varies also depending on whether the TCE has already been ratified (as in Lithuania or Malta) or not (“in the UK the Constitution is widely seen as dead”<sup>20</sup>). But even if not, in several countries the EU sceptics take the lead (the outcome of the Czech and the Polish elections seem to point into this direction), while pro-integrationist (such as the former socialist government of the Czech Republic<sup>21</sup>) fear that pro-campaigning could be counter-productive. At the time of publication the TCE was not yet ratified in the following ten member states: Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly, the TCE is hard to sell and most governments and NGO’s aim at improving the overall context for a rational and problem-oriented debate on Europe and on the EU. That is why in the period of reflection topics beyond the TCE are widely addressed, e.g. in Denmark: “At the same time, both the Government and the pro-EU opposition parties [...] have made a more pragmatic effort to reduce the focus on the Constitutional Treaty and institutional reforms. They wish to concentrate on concrete policy initiatives in the EU. A job-plan for Europe, democratic reforms, economic reforms, a stronger focus on citizens’ rights in the EU, more forceful actions against organised crime and trafficking, and a strengthening of the EU’s global role, are some of the features that these parties wish to emphasize in the future EU.”<sup>23</sup> There is a general feeling that European cooperation on mega projects has passed its peak. No such mega projects are in sight. Therefore cooperation on concrete and smaller projects as described in the Danish statement is promoted by a number of governments, e.g. the French.

The picture is still mixed when it comes to finding ways out of the constitutional deadlock. There is no strict objection against continuing with ratification (Finland, Italy). Some governments like the British (supported by many think tanks such as the Centre for European Reform) declare that the TCE is dead, others say that the TCE in its present edition is not for ratification any more (Netherlands), others oppose cherry picking and argue that the TCE still represents the best possible compromise that so far has no convincing alternative (Germany, Lithuania, Spain).

Apparently the debate is now more relaxed but still uninspired. This signals that the EU tries to progress from the passive wait and see approach to a new stage. However, the debate has so far been quite timid and cautious. In the Dutch report the situation is compared with “a soccer match in which the audience waits impatiently while the players still sit in the dressing room instead of playing the game.”<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, the two critical countries that said no to the TCE so far have not developed any perspective how to move on. The French debate seems to have cooled down. Europe and the Constitution will probably be one of the top issues in the campaigns for the presidential and parliamentary elections in May/June 2007. However, it is unclear whether this will harden existing cleavages and polarise political camps or lead to a more flexible and constructive approach to overcome the deadlock. The current position is that the TCE has to be renegotiated but the scope of the revision is controversial between the political parties. In the Netherlands the collapse of the Balkenende government which continues as a minority government up to the predated general elections in November might be a step to move the Netherlands out of the ratification deadlock. But on a short term basis it has to be noted that the government welcomes the extension of the reflection period and, as Foreign Minister Bernard Rudolf Bot has put it in January, considers the current version of the TCE as “dead”, even though the necessity of long term treaty change remains undisputed.<sup>25</sup>

In some countries, like Germany and Portugal, costs and benefits of EU membership are taken up as a topic by the political elite.<sup>26</sup> They want to highlight and often remind the citizens of benefits that are taken for granted (mobility, welfare gains, peace etc.). At the same time political leaders more openly accept and pronounce a utilitarian approach when taking specific stances on EU issues. So the practical effects and the concrete output are regarded as an important factor of any increase of the EU’s legitimacy. In other countries like Ireland a shift from the pro-integrationist attitude of the citizens to a more qualified support is expected, so that it better reflects the new role and position of the former

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the UK chapter on the reflection period (question 1).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the Czech chapter on the reflection period (question 1).

<sup>22</sup> For the state of debate in the respective countries by the end of May 2006 see question 1 of the country reports.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the Danish chapter on the reflection period (question 1).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the Dutch chapter on the reflection period (question 1).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the French and Dutch Chapters on the reflection period for a more detailed outlook (question 1).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the answers to question 2.

net recipient Ireland as an affluent member state as of today. A critical mood is on the rise in Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Austria, in the latter connected with the net payer question (as in Germany). Interestingly the net payer logic in budgetary terms is underlying most of the assessments of costs and benefits. Only rarely a more complex and differentiated set of factors is taken into consideration.<sup>27</sup> Most of the new member states are still satisfied (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia) and some even “celebrate” the second anniversary of their membership as a success. But also member states of the former EU-15 like Greece, Spain and Luxembourg have a clear understanding of the many benefits that stem from their membership. It is hardly surprising that this debate is very intense in accession/candidate countries such as Romania, Croatia or Turkey. In Denmark and also Hungary the discourse is quite unemotional and down to earth. In the UK also political benefits of membership are subject of debate: “Leading politicians or commentators speak of the European Union's important role in the areas of environment, the fight against terrorism, trafficking and organised crime, and foreign and defence affairs. Generally, however, a ‘political’ European Union is regarded with great suspicion in the United Kingdom, both as a threat to national sovereignty and as a vehicle for illiberal micro-economic attitudes.”<sup>28</sup> The opposite perception of the “EU as a Trojan horse of liberalism” prevails in France. The French “think that Europe has a negative impact in four key areas: the cost of living, jobs, agriculture, and small businesses. Similarly, 54% think that Europe allows us to improve our control over the negative effects of globalisation, which is a rather low figure. It shows the concern of the French with the ‘liberal’ nature of Europe. The French think that Europe is the right tool, but that we don’t use it properly.”<sup>29</sup>

In the fortunate countries that are at ease with their membership, costs and benefits are not an issue of high salience. In countries where pro- and anti-integration attitudes form a cleavage, debate is far more intensive on this issue (see Finland and the Czech Republic).

### **Despite the enlargement fatigue: Clear European perspective for Western Balkans**

Despite the enlargement fatigue that is growing in many old member states and the rising debate on the absorption capacity of the Union that shall be taken into consideration when taking in new members EU governments are convinced that the membership perspective is essential for the Western Balkans in order to stabilise the region permanently and to give incentives for democratisation and transformation. The statement from Luxembourg that the “South-East-European nations must get a ‘European perspective’” since “the European project is and must be a peace project as it was in Western Europe in the immediate post-war period” can be considered quite typical for the positions presented in the majority of the reports.<sup>30</sup> Croatia’s membership is due after Romania and Bulgaria will have joined. However, there is no time pressure to give a date for membership. Of course neighbouring countries and those close to the region, like Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic or Italy, take special interest in developments in the post-Yugoslav countries. The *acquis* on the Kosovo status talks that are led by the UN envoy are supported and not controversial so far. All in all the EU accepts its key role in helping to build lasting peace and fostering economic recovery in the Western Balkans. However, only citizens in the new member states support EU membership of the countries of the Western Balkans in larger proportions.<sup>31</sup>

### **External challenges – collective responses**

As far as macro-conflicts like the Iran nuclear challenge or the Israeli/Palestinian conflict after the victory of Hamas are concerned, the EU acts on a solid *acquis* which is widely shared by its members (with the exception of Greece).<sup>32</sup> Of course the preferences and the intensity of interests vary from country to country. For example Finland, that holds the presidency in the EU in the second half of 2006, has a pro-Palestinian profile while other countries, like Germany in particular but also Hungary, seek a more balanced approach. Other countries like Estonia do not seem to have a profound position or traditional policy of their own on the specific questions in relation to these conflicts and the Middle East region. As part of the EU’s CFSP they follow the EU’s line without reservations. As far as these

<sup>27</sup> Cf. especially the Polish and Portuguese chapter on costs and benefits of EU-membership (question 2).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. the UK chapter on costs and benefits of EU-membership (question 2).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the French chapter on costs and benefits of EU-membership (question 2).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the Luxembourg chapter on the Western Balkans and EU enlargement (question 6).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the results of Eurobarometer 65, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb65/eb65\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb65/eb65_en.htm).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. the answers to question 7.

two conflicts are concerned enlargement did not add value in terms of policies or diplomatic resources. Some like Italy are particularly critical that the EU-3 handles the Iran diplomatic conflict but that regular CFSP channels and procedures involving all member states are not used.

Energy security can be regarded as a new issue and horizontal aspect of security policy that might become more prominent also in shaping the European neighbourhood policy in the coming years. Particularly the new and the smaller member states that do not rely on energy resources of their own claim responsibility and efforts of the EU to integrate energy policy in its internal and external dimension more fully at the level of the Union. How and to which degree this should be done is not yet clear.

### **Outlook – Europe at work?**

“Practical Europe”, “Europe of projects” and “results” as promoted in the French debate is one track to overcome the ratification crisis and immobility of the EU. This survey by and large confirms that ideas revolving around a relaunch and new impetus for the constitutional process as a second track is neither a top issue of a wider public nor prepared by intensive diplomacy and consultation between the member states. While it would be unfair to scapegoat France and the Netherlands for saying no to the TCE it is still interesting to note that the debate in these two countries does neither reflect a special responsibility nor develop initiatives. This can also be explained by the upcoming elections in both countries. Moreover, this survey illustrates that the ‘Europeanisation’ of debates, the taking into consideration of what we see as discourses on issues of great importance in other member states is widely underdeveloped, albeit slowly increasing.

Besides identity related questions that sharply mark heterogeneity and diversity between member states the EU so far has not found a functioning set of incentives and rules that could cope with the huge economic differences across the EU. Lisbon is seen as a new failure and even too irrelevant to instigate profound reform. It will thus be very interesting to observe the way important controversies regarding the future economic development of the EU will shape the EU’s quest to engage in “Europe at work”.

## **Chronology of Main Events** (between January and July 2006)

<b>1 January</b>	Austria takes over the EU Presidency for the first half of 2006.  Gazprom cuts off gas supplies to Ukraine (live on TV), triggering concerns regarding the security of energy supply in the EU.
<b>25 January</b>	Hamas receives the absolute majority (74 of 132 seats) in parliamentary elections.  European Commission presents its Annual Progress Report on the Lisbon Strategy, including a first evaluation of the National Reform Programmes.
<b>26-28 January</b>	Conference 'Sound of Europe' in Salzburg on the future of Europe, organised by the Austrian Presidency in memorandum of Mozart's 250 <sup>th</sup> birthday.
<b>30 January</b>	The 'London declaration' of the foreign ministers of the EU-3, the US, Russia and China calls for consultations on Iran within the IAEA to be reported to the UN Security Council
<b>February</b>	The 'Cartoon Crisis' escalates into violence across the Arab World.
<b>8 February</b>	Parliamentary ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in Belgium.
<b>27 January</b>	EU Foreign Ministers decide to re-launch aid flows to Palestinian Authority.
<b>8 March</b>	European Commission issues Green Paper on European Energy Policy.
<b>10-11 March</b>	'Gymnich Meeting' on the situation in the Middle East after the election of Hamas and on EU enlargement.
<b>23 March</b>	General Affairs and External Relations Council decides on sending EU troops into Congo to secure the first free elections taking place in July 2006.
<b>23 –24 March</b>	European Spring Council in Brussels on the economic, social and environmental situation in the Union, reviewing the Lisbon Strategy. Heads of State and Government agree on the services directive and on the new 'Energy policy for Europe'.
<b>28 March</b>	More than 1 Million people demonstrate across France against the first employment law (CPE).
<b>4 April</b>	European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agree on the Financial Perspective (2007 – 2013) with a budget of 864,4 billion Euro.
<b>7 April</b>	EU and US suspend aid flows to the Palestinian Authority.
<b>10 April</b>	Second meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between the EU and Croatia takes place in Luxembourg
<b>9 May</b>	Parliamentary ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in Estonia.
<b>11-13 May</b>	EU, Latin America and Caribbean (EU-LAC) Summit in Vienna.
<b>16 May</b>	Commission presents Monitoring Reports on Romania and Bulgaria.

<b>21 May</b>	Montenegrin independence referendum, 55,5 % vote in favour of dissolving the state union with Serbia, thus meeting the required threshold of 55% set by the EU.
<b>25 May</b>	17th EU-Russia Summit in Sochi.
<b>27-28 May</b>	'Klosterneuburg Meeting', Foreign Ministers agree on extending the 'reflection period' to agree on the future legal basis of the Constitutional Treaty by 2009.
<b>12 June</b>	Opening of first chapter and start of substantial negotiations with Croatia and Turkey.
<b>15-16 June</b>	European Council: Heads of State and Government agree on Slovenia's entry to the Eurozone in 2007. With regard to the Constitutional Treaty, a 'two-track' approach is adopted, focussing on delivering best results within the existing treaty framework, while drawing up a report on the future of the Constitution to be presented in 2007.
<b>21 June</b>	EU-US Summit in Vienna, focussing on Iran, the Middle East, Energy and Trade issues (Doha Round).
<b>1 July</b>	Finland takes over the EU Presidency for the second half of 2006.
<b>9 July</b>	After an all European semi-final, Italy wins the football World Cup, followed by France, Germany and Portugal.
<b>10-11 July</b>	Euro-African Conference on Immigration and Development on Migration and Development in Rabat.
<b>11 July</b>	First broadcasted council meeting (ECOFIN) in line with new Transparency Guidelines.
<b>15-17 July</b>	G8 Meeting in St. Petersburg.

## WIDER EUROPE, DEEPER INTEGRATION?

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EU-CONSENT is a network of excellence for joint research and teaching which stretches across Europe.

EU-CONSENT explicitly addresses questions related to the **mutually reinforcing effects of EU deepening and widening** by analysing the integration process to date and developing visions and scenarios for the future of the European Union. The thematic focal points of the network are organised in four thematic “Work Packages”:

- 1. Institutions and Political Actors**  
(responsible: E. Best/T. Christiansen)
- 2. Democracy, Legitimacy and Identities**  
(responsible: M. Karasinska-Fendler)
- 3. Economic and Social Policies for an Expanding Europe**  
(responsible: I. Begg)
- 4. Political and Security Aspects of the EU’s External Relations**  
(responsible: G. Bonvicini/A. de Vasconcelos)

The network involves 48 institutional partners, including 25 universities, approximately 200 researchers and 80 young researchers from 22 EU member states and three candidate countries. The project started working in June 2005 and is scheduled until May 2009.

The results of the network’s activities will be incorporated in the following **special EU-CONSENT products**:

- **EU-25 Watch**, an analysis of national debates on EU matters in all 25 member states as well as four candidate countries (responsible: B. Lippert).
- **WEB-CONSENT**, the project’s website at [www.eu-consent.net](http://www.eu-consent.net), containing all relevant information and announcements (responsible: M. Cricorian).
- **EDEIOS Online School**, presenting a core curriculum of conventional and virtual study units on EU deepening and widening (responsible: A. Faber).
- **a PhD Centre of Excellence**, consisting of integrating activities for young researchers such as six summer/winter PhD schools (responsible: A. Agh).
- **an E-Library**, containing resources and papers available online as well as literature lists for all thematic focal points of the project (responsible: A. Faber/M. Cricorian).

