

EU-25/27 Watch

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EU-25/27 Watch

On the Project

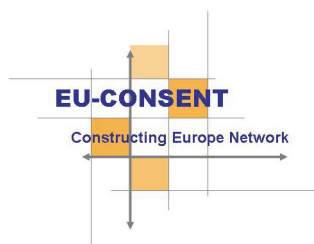
The enlarged EU of 27 members is in a process of reshaping its constitutional and political order and at the same time of expanding its membership and taking on new obligations in international politics. This project sheds light on key issues and challenges of European integration. Institutes from all 27 EU member states as well as from 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 August 2006 by all participating institutes. Most reports were delivered by the end of November 2006. Issues of *EU-25/27 Watch* are available on the homepage of EU-CONSENT (www.eu-consent.net) and on the internet sites of most of the contributing institutes.

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Questionnaire

1. Expectations for the German Presidency

- **What is expected from the German Presidency?**
- **Taking into account the timeframe until the second semester of 2008, defined by the June 2006 European Council, that attributes to each Presidency a particular responsibility to ensure the continuity of the reform process, which initiatives and contributions concerning the TCE should be taken by the Merkel government?**
- **Considering the double track approach, which priorities in other fields should be pursued by the German Presidency?**

2. Elements for the Berlin declaration

In the June 2006 Presidency Conclusions the “European Council calls for the adoption, on 25 March 2007 in Berlin, of a political declaration by EU leaders, setting out Europe's values and ambitions and confirming their shared commitment to deliver them, commemorating 50 years of the Treaties of Rome.”

- **Which elements, ideas etc. should be put into this declaration?**
- **Can this declaration be helpful for continuing with the constitutional process and “double track approach”?**
- **Which kind of text would be suitable, which areas and topics should be covered, which principles confirmed and prospects delineated?**

3. Scenarios

Taking into account that the consultations with the member States related to the future of Europe have already begun:

- **What are/could be the different scenarios for the future negotiations of the Constitutional Treaty?**

What are the the most probable and looked-for solutions:

- The Continuation of ratification (probably with the addition of declarations or protocols) ?
- A “mini treaty” drawn from the Constitutional Treaty ?
- A new process of negotiations (often referred to as “Nice plus”)?

4. Absorption capacity

In the run-up to the December European Council, the European Commission will publish a report on the EU's capacity to absorb new member states.

- **What are the reactions in your country?**
- **Which points are considered as most important?**
- **What are the implications for the future of EU enlargement?**

5. European Energy Policy

Please outline the energy policy of your country: current energy mix, price level and prospects as well as the future policy strategy.

- **What are controversial points and aspects of energy policy?**
- **Is energy security a high salience issue?**
- **To what extent is energy policy discussed in a security context?**
- **What are expectations in this field with regard to the European Union?**
- **Since the 2006 spring council invited “the Commission and the Council to prepare a set of actions with a clear timetable enabling the adoption of a prioritised Action Plan by the European Council 2007 spring session”, which are the priorities and suggestions within your country?**

6. Justice and Home Affairs/European Immigration Policy

- **Considering the challenge of immigration, especially affecting the Mediterranean countries, which aspects of this policy field should be dealt with on a European level?**
- **What would be concrete claims and proposals concerning a European Immigration Policy?**
- **What are the positions with regard to removing the national veto on issues on justice and home affairs?**

- **Initiatives like the Treaty of Prüm show a trend towards fragmentation and splitting up in different groupings inside and outside the EU in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. How are these developments perceived in your country?**

7. Lebanon/Middle East

- **How is the EU's performance during the Lebanon war and with regard to the establishment of an international force (UNIFIL) perceived, discussed and evaluated?**
Please differentiate between the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the EU Presidency and the member states.
- **What are the expectations towards the EU, and which proposals for improvement are currently debated?**

8. Russia and the European Neighbourhood Policy

- **The first Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) with Russia and the Ukraine will expire soon. What should be the legal and political framework and key elements of the new agreements?**
- **How is the German initiative for a new Eastern Policy (Ostpolitik) of the EU received?**

9. Current/Upcoming events and issues in your country

- **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? Do they bear any influence on your country's positions in key issues on the EU level?**

Make or break – The EU in 2007

Barbara Lippert / Timo Goosmann

"Europe – succeeding together!" – the motto which the German government adopted for its presidency of the council of the EU encourages and warns the now 27 member states of the Union to undertake all efforts to solve the most pressing problems and rise to the challenges of an insecure, rapidly changing world.

This issue of "EU-25 Watch", which after the accession of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007 is now relabelled "EU-25/27 Watch"¹, covers the following key topics of European policy:

- Expectations for the German Presidency
- Elements for the "Rome Declaration 2007"
- Scenarios for the future of the Constitutional Treaty
- Absorption capacity and the future of enlargement
- European Energy Policy
- Justice and Home Affairs/European Immigration Policy
- Lebanon/Middle East
- Russia and the European Neighbourhood Policy
- Upcoming events and issues in your country

The quest for a Constitutional settlement

Great expectations rest on the German government, which holds the council presidency of the EU in the first six months of 2007. These mostly concern the mandate to continue consultations with the member states regarding the fate of the Constitutional Treaty (TCE) and to come up with an instructive "assessment of the state of discussion with regard to the Constitutional Treaty and explore possible future developments" in June 2007.² However, the narrow margin in which the German government has to operate is widely acknowledged by member states.³ Namely the presidential and parliamentary elections in France (April-June 2007) are a significant constraint because they leave a very small time window of only a few days. In a number of other member states, for example in Poland, the Czech Republic or the Netherlands, where changes within and of governments and problems of forming effective governments after recent elections occur(ed), the presidency will find difficult partners. Moreover, political leadership in other member states is weakened through national uprisings and political confrontations (like in Hungary) or expected changes at the top of the government (Prime Minister Tony Blair in the UK). The German government by comparison is based on a broad and stable majority due to the coalition of the biggest parties. In the previous issue of EU-25 Watch, Chancellor Merkel was identified as the strongest leader among the heads of state and government in the Union, and in particular when compared to President Chirac and Prime Minister Blair, who is expected to step down in the course of 2007.⁴ Thus, neither the Franco-German engine nor the triangular leadership of France, the UK and Germany is effectively working towards EU-European solutions. This was deeply felt in the Lebanon crisis and the controversy leading to the mandate for the UNFIL mission in summer and autumn 2006.⁵ Germany, however, possesses other assets as EU

¹ "EU-25/27 Watch" has been chosen to provide continuity with the established title "EU-25 Watch" while at the same time acknowledging the accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

² Cf. Council of the European Union: Presidency Conclusions. Brussels European Council, 15/16 June 2006, 10633/1/06 REV 1, 17 July 2006, p. 18.

³ Cf. the Danish, Portuguese and Romanian chapters on expectations for the German EU presidency (question 1) and Michael Dauderstädt / Barbara Lippert / Andreas Maurer: Die deutsche EU-Ratspräsidentschaft 2007: Hohe Erwartungen bei engen Spielräumen, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, International Policy Analysis Unit, November 2006.

⁴ Cf. Institut für Europäische Politik (Ed.): EU-25 Watch No. 3, July 2006, Berlin, chapter on leadership (question 3).

⁵ In many reports a deep sense of disappointment about the EU's (in)action during the crisis becomes obvious: "Powerlessness", 'lack of capacities', 'no room for action' are the words most often used by the media" in France. The Bulgarian report states that "the EU reaction had been very slow and the elaboration of a common position had been impeded by the different foreign policy visions of the EU member states." Many quite critical quotes are included in the Cypriot report, among others a Cypriot MEP stating that many "have not realized the value of a common foreign policy, which is needed in order to stand opposite the US." A similar judgement can be found in the Greek report: "Lebanon served to stress once more the effective dependence of European options and overall position from US priorities and decisions on the Middle East." A very clear position by a Romanian newspaper: "Those claiming that Romania must make a choice in its foreign policy – between the Americans and the Europeans – should think again. The EU will help us in other areas, not in this one. *There is no European*

president: Germany belongs to the majority of 18 member states that have already ratified the TCE.⁶ It remains a staunch supporter without adopting extreme positions or facing strong domestic constraints and sensitivities on specific issues of the TCE. On the contrary, in the term of the Austrian presidency⁷ the German government had signalled flexibility and prepared for a period of intensive consultations with member states, notably with the crucial (France, Netherlands) and difficult (Poland, Czech Republic, Denmark, UK) ones. Nobody believes that the German government can work miracles⁸, and Merkel/Steinmeier are persistently trying to scale down expectations.

However, to overcome the impasse is *the* test case for the success or failure of the German presidency. Moreover, the 27 EU governments avoid talking about a 'make or break' scenario – not in the least because in the past the EC/EU had recovered from all crises and found ways out. The German government declared its ambition to provide a road map for the TCE that leads to a solution, i.e. a ratified document, by 2009. From an Irish point of view, for example, "it is not sufficient to do an *etat de lieu*, rather the Presidency should add something in terms of a synthetic review of where member states are at present and suggest possible avenues of progress."⁹ The preferred scenarios of the 27 governments range from saving the treaty as it stands (Italy) to scrapping it entirely (UK, Netherlands). Although neither Prime Minister Blair's intentions nor the ones of his presumed successor Brown are clear with regard to a probable referendum, the UK government doubts the practicality of reviving the TCE because it is deemed dead. The Spanish government with tacit sympathy of the German presidency took the initiative to invite all "friends of the constitution" governments (the 18 EU member states that have ratified the stalled European Constitution) to a conference in Madrid on 26 January 2007 in an attempt to save the substance of the text. This signals the growing self-confidence and fighting spirit of the countries that completed ratification and signals the discomfort with the declared and presumed "no countries" that do nothing to come to alternative solutions and do not give credit to the 18.¹⁰ However, the 18 also increasingly accept that some sort of negotiations and a new IGC are unavoidable. The proposal for a mini treaty¹¹ offered a new point of reference¹², although the idea to restrict reforms to institutional questions as proposed by Sarkozy is rejected by many governments (e.g. Austria, Hungary, Netherlands). The alternative to a minimized treaty are amendments or added protocols that would need (extra) ratification by all member states.¹³ The bottom line seems to be that the TCE is not scrapped but is accepted as the basis for any further negotiations.¹⁴ For the Polish government the TCE is not more than a point of reference in the debate on a reform of the EU. Moreover, it insists on a reference to God and Christian values and favours other changes and adaptations beyond that. The Dutch government (both before and after the parliamentary elections in November 2006) also finds the TCE as it stands unacceptable and favours a series of reforms that follow the political agenda. This approach is popular among countries that want to focus on the "Europe of results" and the "Europe of projects", especially the UK. It is also hinting at the nearing outdatedness of the TCE, whose first draft had been finalised in summer of

foreign policy, there are no dilemmas we ought to have." All of these quotations are taken from the chapter on Lebanon/Middle East (question 7).

⁶ On 5 December 2006 Finland became the 16th member state to ratify the Constitutional treaty. Additionally, ratifications of Bulgaria and Romania became valid with accession as a part of their respective accession treaties.

⁷ Frank-Walter Steinmeier gave a statement in this sense during the EU's foreign ministers' meeting in Klosterneuburg near Vienna on 27 May 2006. Cf. Christoph B. Schilz: Deutschland will EU-Verfassungskrise bis 2009 lösen, in: Die Welt, 29 May 2006.

⁸ No ground breaking progress possible, says e.g. the Austrian press: "In many articles and comments, the high expectations towards the German presidency are perceived as understandable but also as highly overdrawn in the face of the many problems of the European Union." The Portuguese report states that "regarding the Constitutional Treaty, it is obviously assumed, in line with the division of labour set forth by the June 2006 European Council, that Germany will make no ground-breaking progress. Like elsewhere in Europe, the ultimate fate of the Treaty is generally thought to hinge primarily on the results of the French presidential election." Similar statements can be found in several other reports, cf. the chapter on expectations for the German presidency (question 1).

⁹ Cf. the Irish chapter on expectations for the German presidency (question 1).

¹⁰ Jean-Claude Juncker declared that that he was "not amused" that some member states who had not even started the ratification processes, such as the United Kingdom, Portugal and Sweden, "now feel free to give lessons to the member states having accepted and ratified the treaty. They are not entitled to adopt this provocative attitude until they have done their homework". Cf. the Luxembourgian chapter on scenarios (question 3).

¹¹ Cf. speech of Nicolas Sarkozy to the Amis de l'Europe and the Fondation Schumann, Brussels, 8 September 2006, available at: <http://www.robert-schuman.org/actualite/bruxelles/discours8sept.pdf> (last accessed 25 November 2006) as well as Institut für Europäische Politik (Ed.): EU-25 Watch No. 3, July 2006, Berlin, French chapter on the reflection period (question 1).

¹² Cf. e.g. the Croatian, Cypriot, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Luxembourgian and Dutch chapters on scenarios (question 3).

¹³ Cf. e.g. the Austrian, Estonian, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Portuguese and UK chapters on scenarios (question 3).

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. the Austrian, Cypriot, Estonian, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luxembourgian, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish chapters on scenarios (question 3).

2003. The Czech parties ODS (backed by president Klaus) and the Social Democrats are still deeply divided on the issue. These divisions, however, could be smoothed over given the more positive attitude of the Czech citizens and the fact that any Czech government fears inheriting a still unsolved TCE-problem in its first ever presidency in 2009. Probably the most crucial country, France, finds itself in limbo during the presidential campaign. Both candidates, Sarkozy and Royal, confirm that there is no way back to accepting the TCE that had been turned down by French citizens. The speeches that the candidates have presented in the run-up to the elections¹⁵ hint to substantive connections to traditional European debates in France in terms of economic and social policy, the role of Europe in the world and the debate on enlargement. Although both candidates for president claim to exemplify a new style of politics, up to now their European policy discourses demonstrate more continuity than change.

The Berlin declaration as a test case

Still, the French country report outlines the faint hope that there is a window of opportunity between the German and French presidencies. Although France is key to a solution, a declared Franco-German approach could be rejected as a coup of the “big bosses” and thus be counterproductive for finding a consensus. On this background the German government pursues a cautious approach of systematic, inclusive (in particular with regard to small and medium sized countries) and intensive consultations. It asked all governments to name sherpas for this exercise. The German government made it clear that it expects some countries, i.e. the “no countries”, to show particular flexibility.¹⁶ As field of experiment and trial, the German government will use the preparation of the so called Berlin declaration to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Rome treaties. There is hardly any debate about the content and the symbolic and practical value of the declaration apart from a few countries.¹⁷ Moreover, the modest response is also explained with reference to not being a founding country (Denmark, UK). The European Council reaffirmed the significance of the Rome treaties and welcomes the opportunity of its anniversary to confirm the values of the European integration process.¹⁸ However, according to the country reports most member states claim to go beyond the declaration of common values and avoid any empty rhetoric.¹⁹ The declaration should be brief, clear and political in that, besides listing achievements, it addresses first of all the challenges and objectives of the EU.²⁰ Most new eastern European members claim a commitment to both enlargement (which should be declared as a success story) and deepening.²¹ For example, from the Hungarian point of view, most important are: “a) the Eastern enlargement should be mentioned as a successful enlargement of historical importance; b) the traditional evolution of the EU – namely the coexistence of deepening and widening – should not be abandoned; c) any kind of deepening should occur upon consensus, embracing all the member states and not leading to a Europe of several speeds.” The Romanian report stresses that “the declaration’s positive impact on the actual results of the double track approach, as agreed upon within the European Council, depends on the consistence of the messages and the success in coordinating the two documents: on the one side, the declaration and, on the other side, the first report of the German Presidency assessing the status of the consultations during the ‘reflection period’ and exploring potential developments in the constitutional process.” As several reports underline, the target group for the Berlin declaration is the citizens. Also in Berlin, where the heads of state and government will meet on 24/25 March 2007 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome, a series of festivals, popular celebrations and a “European Night of clubs and museums” are planned. In more practical terms, the Berlin declaration should help to regain the citizens’ interest in and support for European integration.

The Constitution is not the only problem on the agenda of the German presidency. Member states expect Germany to also give particular attention to energy policy (energy security and climate

¹⁵ Cf. the French chapter on scenarios (question 3).

¹⁶ German minister of foreign affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier stated that “some EU member states have to move more than others” to reach a compromise between those who already have ratified the treaty and those who do not react or whose public voted against it, cf. German chapter on scenarios (question 3).

¹⁷ Cf. the Austrian, Bulgarian, German, Greek, Hungarian and Italian chapter on the Berlin declaration (question 2).

¹⁸ “The European Council calls for the adoption, on 25 March 2007 in Berlin, of a political declaration by EU leaders, setting out Europe’s values and ambitions and confirming their shared commitment to deliver them, commemorating 50 years of the Treaties of Rome.” Council of the European Union: Presidency Conclusions. Brussels European Council, 15/16 June 2006, 10633/1/06 REV 1, 17 July 2006, p. 18.

¹⁹ Cf. the Austrian, Czech, French, Irish, Italian, Polish and Spanish chapters on the Berlin declaration (question 2).

²⁰ Cf. the Finnish, French and Portuguese chapters on the Berlin declaration (question 2).

²¹ Cf. the Bulgarian, Croatian and Estonian chapters on the Berlin declaration (question 2).

change), which is the other big issue gaining EU-wide high salience, neighbourhood policy and notably EU-Russia relations, the future of the Western Balkans (Kosovo), as well as economic reforms under the Lisbon agenda.

Tacit controversy on the future of enlargement

Over the last months, the debate on the EU's capacity to absorb members beyond the current 27 has calmed down. The European Council endorsed a communication of the Commission which relabelled the term 'integration capacity'.²² The debate on the absorption capacity which was originally promoted in particular by France, Luxembourg and Austria, was welcomed as "useful" (Netherlands), "valuable" (Ireland) and "inevitable" (UK). However, it is still suspected to be used as a new hurdle and criterion to work against Turkish membership.²³ Therefore, it is viewed critically in most of the new member states like Estonia, Czech Republic, but also in Finland. Also, other states call for a fair and balanced treatment of current and future candidates (e.g. Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, UK). Promoters of the concept of absorption capacity refer to (negative) public opinion as the major reason for this consideration. Only few come up with concrete assessments of the probable implications of further enlargement for reform of the EU of today. Nevertheless some insist that no further enlargement beyond the 27 shall take place unless:

- institutions are reformed²⁴
- the constitutional problem is solved²⁵
- the economy recovers²⁶
- limits of EU are drawn²⁷
- conditionality of membership (implementation of Copenhagen criteria) is rigorously applied.²⁸

As far as implications for further enlargement is concerned, the country reports confirm the solid support for the Western Balkans' membership perspective, although no timetable or target dates are identified. All in all, the debate on integration capacity, although important, did not gain further political momentum.

High expectations concerning energy policy

Among the issues and policies of high salience, energy is at the top of the agenda. The EU shows great variations as far as the energy mix in the respective member states are concerned, but nearly all currently show high and increasing levels of dependence on energy imports.²⁹ Therefore, diversification of supply is high on the agenda of what the EU should do in this field. In this respect, Russia is clearly identified as the most important, powerful and difficult export country on which energy security rests in the EU. The Central and Eastern European members in particular claim solidarity of EU partners and a coherent and unified policy vis-a-vis Russia.³⁰ To build this unified front would strengthen the EU in negotiations with Russia, which exports 62 % of its gas exports and 53% of its oil exports to the EU.³¹

²² European Commission: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007. Including annexed special report on the EU's capacity to absorb new members, COM (2006) 649 final, Brussels, 8 November 2006.

²³ The Portuguese report states that "absorption capacity has clearly become shorthand for 'stalling Turkey's accession' by adding a hidden criterion to those publicly stated, which should apply equally to all EU candidates and hopefuls, and one to which furthermore the latter are powerless to comply." The Spanish report hints to a similar direction, pointing out that "blaming enlargement for all the EU's ills may help the EU feel better in the short-term, but it will not cure it in the long-term." Cf. the Portuguese and Spanish chapters on absorption capacity (question 4).

²⁴ Cf. the Cypriot, French, Estonian and Luxembourgian chapters on absorption capacity (question 4).

²⁵ Cf. the German chapter on absorption capacity (question 4).

²⁶ Cf. the Austrian chapter on absorption capacity (question 4).

²⁷ Cf. the Danish chapter on absorption capacity (question 4).

²⁸ Cf. the Irish and Dutch chapters on absorption capacity (question 4).

²⁹ Cf. e.g. the Austrian, Bulgarian, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian, Luxembourgian, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian and Spanish chapters on energy policy (question 5). Extreme cases: While Latvia receives 100% of its natural gas from Gazprom, Malta is dependant on importing *all* of its energy supplies.

³⁰ Cf. Poland, Bulgaria and the Baltic countries in this respect, but also the Irish chapter on energy policy (question 5). The report from the Czech Republic, however, stresses that Russia is not perceived as a threat in this respect.

³¹ The European Commission's Delegation to Russia: EU-Russia Energy Dialogue, available at:

http://www.delrus.cec.eu.int/en/p_217.htm (last accessed 4 January 2007).

Many member states, e.g. Austria, stress that they do not want the EU to interfere in their choices for energy sources. There is a new trend to use nuclear power and also build new plants (Baltics, Hungary). The EU is also divided on other issues, such as the further liberalisation of the energy market (UK for, France against). Another topic to be dealt with at EU level should be storage systems.³² Some, including Italy, call for more leadership on these issues from the Commission.

In 2007 the EU wants to start negotiations with Moscow on a comprehensive agreement to succeed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which will expire in November of this year. Currently the Polish government is blocking the mandate because of Russia's embargo against Polish meat and also because of its concern for energy security. Compared to the old member states, the new ones strongly emphasise to explicitly base the relationship with Russia on values common to the EU members.³³ Old member states also look for a broad and comprehensive approach covering all four spaces.³⁴ However, the perspective of an economic area and energy cooperation are more in the foreground of the old member states. After enlargement to the East, but also with regard to Russia's recent power politics towards transit countries like the Ukraine and Belarus, the interest constellation and perceptions in the EU are in experiencing a process of change. They diverge less on the substance but more on how to deal with Russia.

The 27 increasingly see the need and the opportunities to use the EU as an important instrument to manage migration flows and deal with illegal immigration and asylum.³⁵ That is also why some are in favour of using more majority voting on these issues.³⁶ Denmark, which has an opt-out arrangement on Justice and Home Affairs, including immigration issues, now occasionally opts into concrete Schengen-relevant instruments on an intergovernmental basis, e.g. the Border Fund and Frontex.³⁷ The Prüm treaty is viewed with criticism by some countries because of its potential to fragment EU Justice and Home Affairs even more (Ireland, Poland), while others are more positive and are considering joining the treaty.³⁸ Depending on the success of the German EU presidency's negotiations to introduce the Prüm acquis into the EU framework, this issue might soon be resolved.³⁹

Upcoming elections in the EU-27 include the eagerly awaited presidential elections in France (22 April/6 May 2007), parliamentary elections in Estonia (4 March 2007), Northern Ireland (7 March 2007), Netherlands (Senate, 7 March 2007), Finland (18 March 2007), Scotland/Wales (3 May 2007), Belgium (10 June 2007) and France (10/17 June 2007). Additionally, elections for European Parliament in Bulgaria and Romania are scheduled for May 2007, and on 11 February 2007 a referendum on abortion will be held in Portugal.

Issues that currently enjoy high salience in member states are primarily related to the national reform agenda⁴⁰, the state of coalition governments or the relationship between head of state and head of government⁴¹ and in some cases to constitutional questions.⁴²

Outlook – Succeeding together?

The Romanian report points out a crucial aspect that can be observed in many chapters of this survey: the relationship between growing heterogeneity of preferences, conditions and capacities on the one hand and the question of solidarity and coherent action on the other. The author Gilda Truica notes in her analysis that "as the two EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007 have increased and will increase the

³² A very interesting case can be found in the Turkish chapter on energy policy (question 5).

³³ Cf. the Bulgarian, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish chapters on Russia and the European Neighbourhood Policy (question 8).

³⁴ Cf. the Austrian, Cypriot, Finnish, German, Greek, Maltese and Dutch chapters on Russia and the European Neighbourhood Policy (question 8).

³⁵ Some reports, however, stress that border control is not enough to prevent illegal immigration: "In the opinion of the government, border control is not the sole answer towards illegal migration, but special attention should be given to prevention, development, the fight against human trafficking, asylum, protection in the region, capacity-building and cooperation with countries of origin and transit." Cf. the Dutch chapter on Justice and Home Affairs (question 6).

³⁶ Cf. the Finnish, Hungarian, Luxembourgian, Dutch, Polish and Spanish chapters on Justice and Home Affairs (question 6).

³⁷ Cf. the Danish chapter on Justice and Home Affairs (question 6).

³⁸ Especially the original signatories (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Spain) as well as other countries that have recently joined or expressed interest to do so (Finland, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia). Cf. the chapter on Justice and Home Affairs (question 6).

³⁹ Cf. the German chapter on Justice and Home Affairs (question 6).

⁴⁰ Cf. the Croatian, Cypriot, Hungarian, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovenian and Turkish chapters on Events and Issues (question 9).

⁴¹ Cf. the Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian and Slovenian chapters on Events and Issues (question 9).

⁴² Cf. the chapter on Events and Issues (question 9).

Member State typological and viewpoint diversity, the need to include on the German Presidency's agenda of general priorities the identification of ways to revive the impetus for a renewed solidarity between all 27 Member States is also brought into discussion. The primary reason is that, although the increased diversity affects to a lesser degree the functionality and effectiveness of the Union, it may have a major impact on its credibility before European and international public opinion.⁴³ In order to regain the public support of the European citizens it will not be sufficient just to publish a thoughtful declaration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. The ideas presented by the German presidency – praised by the Cypriot report as “being rational, of moment and of the moment”⁴⁴ – seem a fair basis to succeed together.

⁴³ Cf. the Romanian chapter on expectations for the German EU presidency (question 1).

⁴⁴ Cf. the Cypriot chapter on expectations for the German EU presidency (question 1).

Spotlight

Spotlight on the current state of debate on EU issues in all 27 EU member states, Croatia and Turkey

Austria

The Austrian presidency in the first six months of 2006 has increased the interest and also the positive attitude towards the European Union among the traditionally highly sceptical Austrians. Many observers attribute this to the fact that there had been more information by the media on EU related subjects, which in turn has also led to an intensified public debate on the EU.⁴⁵

At the same time, scepticism towards the EU policies and the actions of the European Commission remains high. Despite a good organisational performance the Austrian presidency has been highly criticised as having brought no substantial achievements and having been void of any content: *'Everything went well, nothing happened'*.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the perceived lack of clarity as regards decision-making processes on EU-level and the over-bureaucratisation of its institutions render the European Union a highly ephemeral project.⁴⁷

Fears and insecurities as regards immigration, integration and globalisation related to the European project make matters worse. Despite the fact that Austria has profited the most from recent enlargements, there is a strong feeling that the enlargement has engendered new streams of immigration and has made the labour market less secure, mainly due to resettlements of economic investments in member states where labour costs are lower than in Austria. The fear of a growing disparity between the rich and the poor, further loosening the social cohesion of society both in Austria and on an EU-level is also a major concern expressed by the trade unions and such diverse NGOs as those working in the social sector or on globalisation issues.⁴⁸

This scepticism towards further enlargements is also discernible as regards the debate of the possible accession of Turkey, which currently is the most debated EU-subject in Austria. Concerning further enlargement, 48 % of Austrians are of the opinion that Turkey should not join the EU even if all criteria are fulfilled. The overall refusal of Turkey's EU-membership⁴⁹ also reflects however another aspect

⁴⁵ DER STANDARD, online version, 11 July 2006; DIE PRESSE, online, 16 September 2006; See also the creation of an EU information centre in October 2006 in Vienna with the explicit aim as a participatory tool (DER STANDARD, online, 10 October 2006)

⁴⁶ DER STANDARD, online version, 16 June 2006. This has also been a major reproach of the then opposition party, the Social Democrats, whose secretary Cap criticizes that 'the Austrian EU-presidency has left no traces' (DER STANDARD, online, 27 June 2006).

⁴⁷ This concerns also its credibility. Looking at the Austrian newspapers and comments in the field of EU-politics, the credibility of the EU as regards the gap between ambitious aims and promises and their lacking realisation is discussed as a major reason for its crisis of legitimacy (DIE PRESSE, online, 18 July 2006). The gap between political aims and their realisation is also criticised as regards the effective implementation of EU policies on a national level, where EU directives are successfully countered by national interests, such as has happened with the liberalisation of the energy sector (DER STANDARD, online, 26 February 2006).

⁴⁸ Especially the social sector in Austria is concerned about the growing disparity within Austria and the EU countries and the decrease of societal solidarity as a principle and value of the Austrian society and of Europe as a whole. This would also lead to an increase in xenophobia and intolerance towards others (see Interview with the president of the Austrian CARITAS, DER STANDARD, online, 18 July 2006)

⁴⁹ The accession of the countries of the Western Balkans is perceived with less scepticism in the Austrian population. Not the least because of a common history, the successor states of the former Yugoslavia are perceived as an integral part of Europe and their future integration into the European Union an important step towards the stability of the region and Europe as a whole (DER STANDARD, online, 26 September 2006, DIE PRESSE, online, 15 November 2006). The negative attitude towards the former Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Slovenia also comes forward in the

which provides a strong undercurrent in the accession debate, i.e. the question of a European identity as a political and geographic essence, which came forward in the highly emotional and controversial public debate dominated by the populist leaders of the two right wing parties and the biggest newspaper of the country, the Kronen Zeitung. The highly xenophobic and populist debate is perceived as having contributed to an increase in anti-EU sentiments again (Interview with Anton Pelinka, political scientist).⁵⁰

The strong domination of EU politics by the right wing parties claiming Austria's EU membership as the major factor responsible for further immigration, globalisation and rising rates of unemployment and crime related to them, also appears to be the reason why other political parties hardly took up EU subjects during the election campaign. In this respect, most parties did not profit from the bonus of the presidency. At the same time, the occupation of EU politics in such a highly negative way by the right wing parties also provided a good excuse for the other parties to avoid tackling the highly controversial issues related to the future form of the EU, including further liberalisation policies, a common asylum policy, the future enlargement, and finally, the TCE. The latter is in fact, hardly reflected in everyday discussion. Against background of the strong scepticism, an outcome of a referendum on the current TCE would in fact be very uncertain at the moment.

Belgium

In the recent Belgian debate about key EU issues, one did not try to escape considering the deep crisis the European Union is going through. At the centre of the preoccupations of politicians, think tank contributors and other actors in the public debate was the European citizen, for whom it appears urgent to take the necessary measures in order to regain his confidence in the European project. With fidelity to the European ideal and the belief that the work achieved for the Constitutional Treaty will bear its fruit in the future, it appeared clear that the time has come for pragmatism in launching necessary actions in the fields of energy, immigration and economic policy, as well as the institutional reforms that are urgently needed in order to make the Union viable at 27.

Bulgaria

Just weeks before the EU accession of Bulgaria, public debate on EU issues in the country is more active than ever. Although "hot", the EU debate in the Bulgarian media is predominantly concentrated on possible Bulgarian gains and losses from accession. Apart from that, the gradual "internalization" of EU priorities and agenda items into Bulgarian policy making and the domestic political and public debate has already started, although in a fragmented manner, at a slow pace, and in a specific direction "from the outside inwards" – i.e. first in the field of EU external relations and only to a very limited degree in the field of internal EU policies. Thus, Bulgarian foreign policy priorities are already conceptualized from the perspective of a future EU member state (hence, the focus on the Western Balkans and the Black Sea area). On the contrary, "internally" oriented policy fields (i.e. EU immigration policy, EU energy policy, etc.) – where political and economic institutions are not in such an intensive and immediate contact with Brussels – still demonstrate a short term policy horizon and are not yet adjusted to the new "EU reality". In the third place, EU agenda items touching upon the direction of the Union's strategic development (i.e. the EU constitutional debate) have remained, for the time being, within the interest field of specialized academic circles and have failed to enter the broad political and public discourse. Following this logic, we can expect that the deepening of Bulgaria's integration will gradually transform EU politics and policies into an important part of the Bulgarian internal debate. And the dominant dimension of the EU public debate in the country, which is limited to the level of emotions, and expression of hopes and fears, will change its focus significantly.

attitude towards a Central European Partnership within the EU similar to the BENELUX countries. The majority of the Austrians are strictly against it, largely for fear of further job losses due to a cheaper labour force from these countries.

⁵⁰ DER STANDARD, online, 6 July 2006

Croatia

The European Union is primarily viewed in Croatia from the enlargement perspective. To a certain extent it also relates to the constitutional crisis, which should be solved, among others, in order to make the case for the continuation of enlargement. There is also a “dual” perception of the EU –in that it is at the same time seen as a goal to be achieved in its own right and as a means to solving Croatia's own internal problems while catalysing social and economic progress. The key question in the process of integrating into the EU is how to find the creative compromise between protecting national specificities and comparative advantages on one hand, and on the other achieving benefits as the outcome of EU integration⁵¹. The political consensus related to Croatia's integration into the EU that was achieved during past few years is in dissonance with the public support of Croatian citizens, which is deteriorating⁵². Most of recent Government efforts were directed towards process of screening, while three equally important areas received less attention: reforms, practical harmonisation of legislation with the *acquis* and communication strategy⁵³. However, the current debate within political parties reflects that there is a shift from the fixation with the timeframe towards the content of the negotiations and underlying reforms. No plausible political alternative to EU integration is seen for Croatia, although an increase of euro scepticism is noticeable within some political parties and general public.

Cyprus

Current debate in Cyprus focuses overwhelmingly on EU enlargement. Inevitably, the emphasis is placed on Turkey's unfulfilled obligations and the concomitant problems in its accession course. Turkey's protracted refusal to abide by its obligations towards the EU (including the implementation of the Customs Union protocol) is being viewed with dismay. Thus, when government officials warn of a probable “train crash”, they do not seem prepared to rule out the possibility of a suspension in the negotiations. On another issue, given Cyprus' anticipated accession into the Eurozone in January 2008, preparatory seminars and exhibitions are being carried out, in addition to financial surveys aimed at establishing a healthy environment for the Republic of Cyprus' life with the euro in the European Monetary Union.

Czech Republic

Domestic Politics Trumps All EU Issues

After the election stalemate in June, the country has been absorbed in negotiations about a way out of the crisis (be it creation of a stable majority in the Parliament or an agreement on early elections). As a result, almost all foreign policy issues, including the Constitutional Treaty, the EU's Eastern policy, and energy issues have been sidelined. The only question relating to the EU that has received some broader public attention was the discussions on the delayed enlargement of the Schengen Area. As a result, the Czech EU presidency in 2009 raises concerns regarding how the current political problems will affect the presidency, which is conceived as being a test for Czech diplomacy and administrative efficiency.

Denmark

The biggest surprise in the current Danish debate is that there is still very broad coverage of EU issues involving the media and public conferences, particularly regarding the Constitutional Treaty, energy and the environment, enlargement to South Eastern Europe and beyond, and more recently the difficult relations between Russia and the EU. The public debate over the Constitutional Treaty is active, while the government looks forward to what the German Presidency, as well as the ‘No’ countries, put forward as suggestions after the French Presidential elections. Following Denmark's

⁵¹ Ivan Siber, Ph D, «European fears and hopes», in Vjesnik, November 6th, 2006.

⁵² Nenad Zakosek, «Croatian policy and accession», in Vjesnik, November 6th, 2006.

⁵³ Neven Mimica, Predsident of the Parliament Committee for European integration, in Novi list, November 2, 2006.

four-point suggestion at Lahti for an EU energy policy, the Danish concerns over renewable supply, increased efficiency, a liberalised market, and more research in order to improve energy security have heightened. After the Commission's report on enlargement and integration capacity, the Danish debate has focused on support for the Croatian bid for EU membership, whilst emphasising the need for considerable reforms in Turkey. Finally, following the rebuke by Denmark, Sweden, Estonia and Poland in Lahti on the question of human rights in Russia after the murder of Anna Politkovskaya, the failure to overcome the Polish-Russian impasse at the EU-Russia summit is also important in the Danish debate.

Estonia

The Estonian government actively supports the revival of the Constitutional Treaty and insists on the continuation of enlargement. Domestically, the government's integrationist position goes largely unchallenged: in conditions of extraordinary economic growth and increasing prosperity, public support for membership has reached an all-time high. The delay in joining the eurozone and the Schengen area, as well as the massive sugar fine imposed by the EU, have caused some disappointment. The interrelated topics of energy security and relations with Russia are also high on the agenda. Given the continuously poor state of relations with its Eastern neighbour, Estonia increasingly hopes to deal with Moscow "via Brussels."

Finland

Despite widespread europessimism within the ranks of the Finnish population, an air of optimism can be discerned regarding the role of the EU as a credible and ethical actor in world politics. There have been signs of consensus and unity among member countries in EU external affairs during the reporting period of this issue of EU-25 Watch. At the same time, however, certain actions of bigger member countries have lately been perceived as self-serving and somewhat unscrupulous, to the detriment of the functioning of the Union. Poland, blocking the EU's Partnership Agreement negotiations with Russia with its demands on trade and energy issues, serves as a good example of this.

France

The debate on the EU in France has three main characteristics. First, in the face of globalization, there is a general consensus that European cooperation is necessary. Even "anti-European" parties do not refuse Europe as such. They simply want "another Europe". Second, there is a growing scepticism among the French as to the future of Europe. Europe seems increasingly paralyzed by its size and its divisions. A growing number of people, particularly among the political community, seem to think that we must lower our expectations as to what the Union can be and do. Lastly, the debate on the EU is dominated by social and economic issues. The French want the Union to contribute to economic growth, better employment and high social standards. They want the Union to regulate globalization and not intensify its effects.

Germany

Due to Germany's presidency in the Council EU topics catch the headlines in the media and reach a wider audience of interested citizens. Although the importance of the presidency is not overrated public opinion supports the government, by the majority stating that Chancellor Merkel will "do a good job" during the presidency. Most important issues are the reduction of bureaucracy as well as strengthening the EU economies' competitiveness in relation to India and China.⁵⁴ For Chancellor Merkel in particular the double presidency (EU Council and G8) is a welcome opportunity to prove the strengths and ambitions of her government and that it enjoys high international reputation. However, among experts, media and citizens, uncertainties prevail whether the Merkel government is capable

⁵⁴ Cf. Elisabeth Noelle/Thomas Petersen: Ein Hauch von Isolationismus, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 24 January 2007, p. 5.

and willing to handle imminent domestic policy issues in a decisive and sustained way: the reform of the health care system, the second stage of reforming the federal system, a significant reduction of unemployment within a recovering economy and the comeback of Germany to the forefront in education, research and development as well as in environmental policy.

Hungary

The key message from Hungary regarding the future of the European Union would be unity instead of fragmentation. The Union must continue to become an ever closer union of the countries and peoples of Europe. Despite all its internal problems the European venture is a unique and successful model of international cooperation for lasting peace and increasing prosperity. All the present achievements must be preserved and further enriched – but this should be done together, in concert with all member states. The EU can only be efficient and successful in keeping together and not getting fragmented. This unity could then turn into external efficiency as well.

Ireland

The current debate on the EU in Ireland focuses to a large extent on the European Constitutional Treaty and its future prospects. Other issues include: energy policy and energy security/efficiency, climate change, immigration and integration. For some the EU is seen as a manifestation of globalisation, for others it is seen as the best mechanism to deal with globalisation.

Italy

Public debate about European issues in Italy is hardly structured and articulated or continuous in time. A real public and in-depth discussion has seldom emerged, and media coverage of EU issues is occasional. Initiatives to revitalize the debate promoted by some prominent personalities (such as former President Ciampi, current President Napolitano and ministers Amato, Bonino, and others) have often remained isolated. A serious and continuous debate on EU issues indeed exists, but is too often confined to restricted circles of academics and experts. Nevertheless, approval of European integration by the population and political leaders remains high, even if more critical and disenchanting points of view are emerging.

Latvia

At the end of 2006, the average Latvian did not show much interest in the larger issues such as the future of the Constitutional Treaty. Instead, he was very much concerned about developments that affect his daily life, such as the following:

1. Restrictions by Russia on the import of fish products and meat from EU countries.
2. Imminent end to the production of sugar in Latvia and the necessity of farmers who used to cultivate sugar beets to switch to other crops.
3. Raising of the excise tax on tobacco, alcohol, etc., in line with the EU recommendations.
4. Implementation of restrictions, in line with EU recommendations, on places where smoking will be tolerated.
5. Resolving, with the help of the EU, the massive congestion of trucks at the Latvian-Russian border.

Lithuania

The issues of the enlargement of the Schengen area and energy security have lately attracted exceptional attention in Lithuania. Lithuania seeks to join the Schengen area as soon as possible and it strives for the implementation of the Portuguese proposal to join the SIS I+ system. Lithuania holds the position that the EU member states and the European Commission should take all possible

actions that the Schengen enlargement happen in 2007 as planned. Being in energy isolation and being heavily dependent on Russia in the field of energy supply, Lithuania is concerned about its energy security and strongly favours the development of a common European energy policy as a guarantee of the energy supply at the Community level.

Luxembourg

Current debates on the EU in Luxembourg in 2006 touch mostly the implementation of EU Commissions directives if they are not linked to European policy aspects such as the constitutional treaty, energy policy, justice and home affairs of even the new EU members' admission. In 2005 the EU commission urged Luxembourg to change its 1929 legislation on holding companies provoking a national debate in the Grand-Duchy. The main benefit of this Law is that the Holding 1929 company is fully exonerated from income tax and withholding tax in Luxembourg. The commission's argument was that this specific Luxemburgish legislation is contrary to free market conditions with its special tax shelter aspects. Nevertheless the 1929 law was considered in Luxembourg to be "the" foundation act of the Luxembourg financial centre and hence a corner stone of the country's wealth. The opposition parties as well as financial and banking lobbies regretted the abolition of the 1929 special regime. Treasure Minister Frieden was in a bad shape. Finally a new legislation taking account of the commission's grievance was passed on December 22d 2006. This law abolishes the special fiscal regime of the 1929 holding but as agreed in a deal with the commission a transition period lasting until 2011 will allow the country to adapt its financial policy to the new situation.

Malta

By taking advantage of its membership in different international organisations, especially the "soap box" that EU membership has provided since 2004, Malta has succeeded in focusing international attention on this major security challenge in the Mediterranean. The EU's decision to launch joint naval patrols, and a more recent plan by the European Commission to consider rapid reaction teams of border guards, interpreters and medics to help frontline states cope with the influx of illegal immigrants is evidence of how much is being achieved.

The next step must now be to ensure that the EU's fledgling Frontex border control agency, lives up to its commitment to a multilateral mechanism for monitoring, managing and channelling flows of illegal migrants. This is the debate that will focus the attention of Malta in 2007.

Netherlands

In the period leading up to the parliamentary elections of 22 November, to the surprise of many experts, 'Europe' almost disappeared from the agenda. Instead of adhering to the call for politicising European Affairs, the dossier was carefully avoided in the election campaigns of political parties. The aftermath of the referendum and the decision to not ratify the Constitutional Treaty is still making politicians hesitant to actively participate in the debate on the future of Europe. Whether these tactics of delay and postponing the issue for a new government will be helpful in regaining public support in the near future is very doubtful. It certainly is not in line with communicating more Europe to the Dutch citizens.

Poland

According to the Polish government the key priority issues are of an internal, national nature. Law and Justice came with the priority programme based on "*de-communisation*" and the struggle with corruption. This inward orientation resulted in a series of parliamentary inquiry committees, which were expected to show the post-communist mechanisms of power and of corruption. The social programme called for a family-friendly policy, job creation and the stimulation of residential construction. Within the external priorities there were no substantial changes in reference to previous governments, as since the early 1990s there was a permanent agreement of all political forces on the

two priority areas: NATO and EU membership. However, there was a positive attitude evolution of the Law and Justice stand on European integration - from truly euro sceptic and against deeper integration to more favourable in reference to European integration, reinforced in certain areas, like security and the struggle with crime, which was presented more prominently, and to openness to new proposals in the area of EU constitutionalisation.

At the level of open public debate, during the period of the last six months, an increasing role was played by the issue of energy supply, by the relationship with Ukraine, Belarus and Russia (described above). The recent events dealing with the Russian embargo on Polish food appeared to be a test of solidarity for the EU – at least it has been presented this way by Polish politicians.

The overall list of Polish citizens' priorities looks quite different. The majority of the society (92%)⁵⁵ states that job creation is the biggest priority for ordinary people (the second issue is internal security). In the area of European matters, people are most interested in the European job market and the abolition of all restrictions for workers and services provision that remain in some EU countries.

One extremely important issue that draws the attention of Poles right now is the sensitivity of the German-Russian relationship in the context of the common EU strategy of relations with Russia. The nature and roots of this sensitivity was recently analysed by The Institute of Public Affairs⁵⁶. According to its report based on the public opinion poll: "Poles have some very deeply rooted views on Russia and Germany, resulting from historical experience and a relatively high level of knowledge about the situation in both of the countries." 67% of respondents are afraid of Russia (the same figure for the year 1990 amounted to 25%). Currently, only 21% of Poles are afraid of Germany (the same figure for the year 1990 amounted to 88%). Despite Polish membership in NATO and the EU, Poles seem to fear the close bilateral co-operation between Russia and Germany. "When asked whether the closer relations between Germany and Russia pose a threat to Poland, nearly 61% replied "yes" and over 27% - "no" ⁵⁷. This means that the historical *souvenirs* are still alive and that these fears are linked to the danger of the *deja vue* of the agreement between Russia and Germany made above Poles' heads.

Portugal

The decision to put the national referendum on the Constitutional Treaty on hold has led to a virtual freeze on debate around potentially divisive issues concerning the future of Europe which, however, in the wake of the French and Dutch referenda, were shrinking the lead of the Yes vote in opinion polls to the barest minimum.

After two decades, the European debate has certainly lost much of its past novelty and glamour. Europe has been 'internalised' to an extent that makes it hard to distinguish between national and European expectations in areas rapidly expanding into those where the EU has only limited powers. The 'internalisation' of the European debate, however, was not accompanied by any visible breach in the marked consensus in virtually all aspects of Portugal's EU agenda between the main political parties in the pro-European camp, which forms an overwhelming political majority. There is little room for competing proposals and clearly diverging views on EU-related issues, whether in internal or external affairs, within this vast political camp which practically only excludes the old Communist Party. This has an impoverishing and stifling effect on the European debate. No political force has ever campaigned, not even in European elections, for one identifiable issue as regards Lisbon's EU stance or a preferred course for the EU itself.

This sets the background for *nuance* or outright rejection to be voiced primarily from the euro-sceptic and the residual anti-EU camp, which is as vocal – thanks to disproportionate media exposure every time the debate peaks – as it is scattered across party or social groups lines. On the euro-sceptic side, the main issues in the European debate are tied to the old recurrent debate around loss of sovereignty and identity that arise from "surrendering" national constitutional law to the European Union. The pro-European camp has been affected by the current impasse and the pervasive disillusionment, and finds itself more often than not on the defensive regarding the EU. The main issues are tied to Europe's role

⁵⁵ According to the poll made by OBOP, Warsaw, November 2006.

⁵⁶ Public opinion on fears and hopes related to Russia and Germany, Warsaw, 2006.

⁵⁷ As above, p. 9.

in the world, the ways of ensuring equality and solidarity among all Member States, old and newer, and the best way to ensure Portugal's drive towards modernity takes irreversible hold.

The growing intertwining of the national and the European debate around the same kinds of issues, be it the social model and immigration or justice, freedom and security, notably so under the Sócrates administration, caused the tendency to alternately shed blame (more often) and praise on 'Brussels' to decline markedly.⁵⁸ How this will affect public attitudes towards the EU, which remains broadly supportive but less enthusiastic about net benefits gained from membership, remains to be seen.

Up to the 1992 EU presidency, if one were to capture the main focus of the debate into one sentence, this would perhaps be 'what can we get from Europe?'. In 2000, the core issue was 'how can we shape Europe?'. In 2006-7, the question could perhaps be rephrased as 'how can we, in Europe, shape our future?' The outcome of the national debate, and with it the outcome of a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, although it will most certainly be influenced by the mood across Europe, may ultimately depend on the expectations of the Portuguese towards an improvement of their future prospects or in other words how Europe is seen to affect those prospects.

Romania

In Romania, the debate has rather focused during this period on the short-term impact of Romania's accession to the European Union. The attention has been drawn to topics such as: Romania's representation in the European institutions and structures (the climax of these discussions was reached in October and November, when controversies on the appointment of the future European Commissioner emerged), the mixed picture of the labour market opening towards Romania and Bulgaria (highlighting restrictive decisions), the structural funds absorption capacity, and the impact of EU regulations on the business environment and agriculture. The wider topics of the European agenda are reserved to specialized circles.

Though, the membership perspective has engendered, at the least in the recent months, a switch in the messages and positions of Romanian officials from the concerns of the last demands conditioning Romania's accession in January 2007 to the arena of the major issues on the European agenda. The perspective convergence, still in an incipient stage, has been stimulated in the last half-year by the efforts of the actors involved in Romania's EU accession process – both at the political and administrative level and within the concerned academic and think-tank field – to transfer the interests of the Romanian public from the definitely national pole to the European one. Within this context, the subject of the "national interest", which was until now approached from the standpoint of overcoming the obstacles before the accession, enjoys a more subtle debate.

Slovakia

Since the composition of Slovakia's current ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Robert Fico and composed of the SMER-Social Democracy (SMER-SD), the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), domestic discussion on the EU initially centered on the theme of this government's political credibility within the European Union. Once it became clear that Fico's coalition would not face international isolation comparable to the period of the Vladimír Mečiar-led coalition government in Slovakia from 1994-1998, the debate has focused largely on Slovakia's preparedness to achieve successfully full integration into all policy areas, especially with respect to the eurozone and the Schengen regime. Compared to the Mikuláš Dzurinda-led government from 2002 to 2006 which claimed distinct interest, for example, in the Lisbon agenda and in EU engagement with Belarus and Ukraine, the Fico-led government has not clearly articulated its distinct political priorities vis-à-vis the European Union. Issues of domestic politics have become predominant in domestic discourse while questions of foreign policy including intra-EU matters have generally been of marginal importance.

⁵⁸ A powerful illustration of this attitude is the radical reversal in official discourse as regards fiscal discipline: no longer is this portrayed defensively as an imposition from 'Brussels' or a target that must be met to avoid looking bad and paying the penalty for non compliance with SGP, but as a national interest on which meeting self-set targets which are part of a broader framework combining social cohesion and competitiveness is heavily dependent.

Slovenia

In Slovenia there is a clear lack of public debate on the EU-related issues beyond those with a direct impact on people's lives or those which deal with the position of Slovenia within the EU. In this respect the introduction of the Euro and the establishment of the "Schengen border" were the only EU-related issues with a certain continuity in the media. On the other hand the Government dominates the public space with its formal preparations for the Presidency over the Council of the EU, which Slovenia will hold in the first half of 2008. Preparations are well under way and so is the coordination within the presiding Troika (Portugal, Germany, Slovenia), but the increasingly clear set of priorities is evidently lacking the content, and one could judge that the Slovenian Government is preparing for a mediating role to help solve the issue of the fate of the Constitutional Treaty.

Spain

Spain awaits the presidential elections in France to produce a leader able to forge a new compromise on EU integration and carry it through with determination. EU institutions may have to improve the ways it communicates with citizens, but the leadership element to the current crisis, both at the EU and the national level, cannot be neglected. Spain would also like to see other EU member states pushing ahead for 'more Europe' as a solution to the problems which Europeans confront daily, especially in the realms of foreign policy, justice and home affairs, energy security and immigration. The current crisis shows how necessary the Constitutional Treaty is for the EU to be able to efficiently tackle these problems: dismissing it or downgrading it will not help the EU meet the challenges ahead.

Sweden

The new center-right government has already made clear that it wants Sweden to play a more important and more active role in the EU than the previous government. Enlargement features (again) as a fundamentally important issue in the debate, and here all major political actors in Sweden underline the strategic interest and moral obligation of continuing enlargement to the Balkans and Turkey.⁵⁹ The new EU minister Cecilia Malmström has repeatedly extended this logic, in a long-term perspective, to Ukraine and Moldova.⁶⁰

In his inaugural address on October 6, the Prime Minister also underlined that the Swedish EU Presidency in the fall of 2009 will be at the center of public debate and government preparation in the years to come.

Turkey

Analysing the current political discourses of the government, opposition, political parties, civil society organisations, media and public opinion in Turkey, contemporary debates concerning the EU do not essentially focus on the current developments in the EU - in the search of its values and ambitions - but mainly focus on the current state and the future of relations between Turkey and the EU. On the Cyprus issue, the EU demands of the Turkish government to present a shadow on the future of the accession negotiations. The prevailing view in Turkey is that the accession negotiations are likely to come to a halt, albeit temporarily, while the Turkish general elections are only less than a year away. More importantly, however, the same view underlines that a delay in the negotiation process may be worth enduring, since the EU continues to fail to eliminate what is perceived as an unfair situation in which the Turkish Cypriots gain nothing for the manifestation of their willingness to accept the comprehensive solution outlined in the Annan Plan in 2004 while the Greek Cypriots are rewarded

⁵⁹ See for instance Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt's government declaration to the Parliament 2006-10-06, pp. 2, 5, article by Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, "Open wide Europe's doors", International Herald Tribune, 2006-11-08, articles by EU Minister Cecilia Malmström, "Kärnan i Europa", Östgöta Correspondenten 2006-10-21 and "Vänd inte Turkiet ryggen" in Göteborgs-Posten 2006-11-11), all available at www.regeringen.se, as well as the websites of the Social Democratic Party, www.socialdemokraterna.se, the Green Party, www.mp.se, and the Left Party, www.vansterpartiet.se.

⁶⁰ Speeches by Cecilia Malmström, "Svensk vilja och förmåga i den nya världen" 2006-10-18 and "Tal på Utrikespolitiska Föreningen i Uppsala" 2006-12-04, both available at www.regeringen.se; article by Cecilia Malmström, "Kärnan i Europa", Östgöta Correspondenten 2006-10-21.

with full membership in the EU for saying “no” to it. The present Turkish government justifies its refusal to extend the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement to all EU members despite the fact that it signed it in July 2005 on the grounds that the EU itself has not fulfilled its promise made in the wake of the 24 April 2004 referendum in Cyprus. That is to say, the Turkish government’s decision for the extension is made conditional on the removal of the economic embargo on the Turkish Cypriots by the EU. However, there is no sign yet that the EU considers this an option. Hence the current stalemate.

United Kingdom

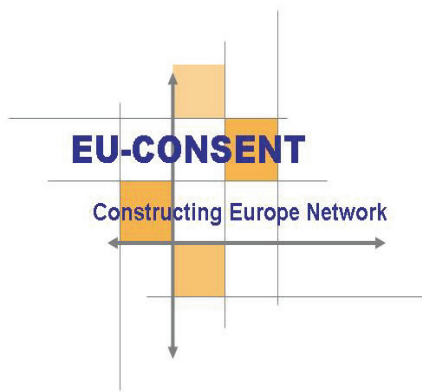
The UK government thinks that the debate on a Constitutional treaty referendum is one that Britain does not need to have. In fact, holding a political debate on the revival of the Constitutional treaty is harmful rather than helpful to the UK debate on Europe.

Chronology of Main Events

(between July 2006 and January 2007)

1 July	Finland takes over the EU-Presidency for the second half of 2006.
10-11 July	Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development in Rabat, Morocco.
11 July	First broadcasted council meeting (ECOFIN) in line with new Transparency Guidelines.
12 July	Hezbollah captures two Israeli soldiers, triggering first Israeli land incursion into Lebanon since 2000.
15-17 July	G8 Meeting in St. Petersburg.
18 July	International Conference on Darfur with the UN and African Union, Brussels
26 July	Lebanon Conference in Rome fails to end conflict. The US and UK block demand for an immediate ceasefire.
1 August	Extraordinary Meeting of Foreign Ministers to discuss the crisis in Lebanon. The Finnish Presidency announces EU commitment to contribute 7000 troops to the UN led mission UNFIL. Iran defies latest UN deadline to stop nuclear activities
11 August	UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1701 on Lebanon calling for a "full cessation of hostilities" and a 15,000-strong force to replace Israeli forces in southern Lebanon
14 August	Ceasefire between Israel and the Hezbollah comes into force.
1-2 September	Informal meeting of Foreign Ministers, 'Gymnich Meeting'
8-9 September	ECOFIN Meeting, Helsinki
9 September	EU-China Summit, Helsinki. Representatives of the EU and China agree on the start of negotiations for a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.
10 –11 September	Asia-Europe Meeting, Helsinki
20- 22 September	Justice and Home Affairs Council Meeting, Tampere. The Finnish proposal to abolish the unanimity in Justice and Home Affairs is rejected by the majority of member states.
9 October	North Korea conducts Nuclear Test. On October 14, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to impose sanctions.
20 October	Informal Meeting Heads of State and Government, Lahti. General agreement to renew the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Russia, which expires in the end of 2007.
24 October	EU-Russia Summit, Helsinki. Poland vetoes the mandate for a renewal of the PCA with Russia.
25-26 October	Interior ministers from six largest EU member states propose to launch a common European immigration policy.
27 October	EU-Ukraine Summit, Helsinki

29 October	Congo's incumbent president, Joseph Kabila, wins 58% votes in runoff elections.
8 November	European Commission adopts enlargement strategy, including a special report on the EU's capacity to integrate new members. European Commission adopts progress reports on Turkey, criticising the slowdown of reform efforts in the past year, as well as on Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
22 – 23 November	EU-African ministerial conference on migration and development in Tripoli, Libya.
28-29 November	NATO Summit, Riga. General Secretary de Hoop Scheffer indicates next enlargement could take place during the first half of 2008, including Albania, Croatia and Macedonia as possible candidates.
4 December	Communication from the EU commission on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy
5 December	Finland becomes the 16th country to ratify the Constitutional treaty by parliamentary decision: 125 out of 200 members of parliament vote in favour of the treaty
12 December	Belarusian opposition leader, Aliaksandr Milinkevich, is awarded with the EP's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.
14-15 December	European Council, Brussels. Heads of state and government endorse the EU foreign ministers' decision from 11 December to partially suspend EU membership negotiations with Turkey (8 of 35 chapters).
1 January 2007	Germany takes over EU-presidency for the first half of 2007 Bulgaria and Romania join the EU. Slovenia adopts the Euro as the official currency.



Presentation of EU-CONSENT

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)
- 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)

The network involves 52 institutional partners, including 27 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.consnet.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).

