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On the project

Due to the new treaty provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and the economic crises the enlarged EU of 27 member states is on the search for a new *modus operandi* while also continuing membership talks with candidate countries. The EU-27 Watch project is mapping out discourses on these and more issues in European policies all over Europe. Research institutes from all 27 member states and the four candidate countries give overviews on the discourses in their respective countries.

The reports focus on a **reporting period from December 2009 until May 2010**. This survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire that has been elaborated in March and April 2010. Most of the 31 reports were delivered in May 2010. This issue and all previous issues are available on the EU-27 Watch website: www.EU-27Watch.org.

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Netherlands**The Netherlands and the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty: a wait and see attitude**

Simone Wolters*

Herman Van Rompuy

With regard to the appointment of the President of the European Council, the Dutch media speculated about the Dutch Prime Minister, Jan Peter Balkenende, as a rival to Van Rompuy.¹ Balkenende himself denied that there was an active lobby from his side to obtain the position.² The national parliament debated about the position of Balkenende in this procedure. The opposition stated that the credibility of the Dutch Prime Minister was downgraded by his apparent ambition to become the first President of the European Council. Politicians in The Hague had mixed feelings about the appointment of Van Rompuy. However, they share a positive view on the appointment of a representative of a small member state.³

Little reference has been made in the last months to the role and person of Van Rompuy. The attitude of the Dutch press could be interpreted as an attitude of "wait and see". The few articles that refer to Van Rompuy himself describe him as a calm consensus seeking person and a pragmatic.⁴ In the Netherlands, the idea of more European Council summits, as proposed at the informal summit in February 2010, was not received well. The Dutch Prime Minister has stated that in his opinion four summits should be sufficient.⁵

Several newspapers and both chambers of parliament are paying attention to the new division of power between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council as a result of the entering into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. A monthly summit would give the heads of state and government more possibility to take initiative at the expense of the European Commission. As one of the smaller EU member states, the Netherlands is historically in favour of a strong Commission.⁶ It is feared that the new function of the President of the European Council could result in a shift towards a more intergovernmental European Union.⁷

The new role of the rotating presidency

The EU presidency of Spain is viewed as a test case for the new constellation of the rotating presidency under Lisbon.⁸ Because of the new and more specific role for the presidency, the achievements and tasks are less visible for the public and the media than before.⁹

Catherine Ashton

Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Verhagen has made the observation that a well functioning High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and European External Action Service (EEAS) are in the Dutch interest because they promote the possibility to speak with one voice.¹⁰ To make sure that the High Representative can carry out a clear, strong and unified standpoint, the member states should be prepared to work constructively on common visions on important dossiers. Verhagen underlined the necessity for Catherine Ashton to have enough financial assets and instruments at her disposal to make sure that she can work in an effective way. The Dutch Foreign Minister states that she needs the possibility to appoint deputies because in practice it is impossible to be in three places at the same time. These should be high placed people within the EEAS, for example the Secretary General or his deputies. Ashton would be politically responsible for her deputies.¹¹

With regard to Catharine Ashton, there has been even less attention than for the President of the European Council. In February, former Dutch State Secretary of Defence Jack de Vries stated on Twitter that "she is conspicuous by her absence."¹² The Dutch media reported some criticism of Ashton.¹³ Minister Verhagen defended Ashton during the Summit in Cordoba and talked about the growing pains of her function: "It is something completely new. It has to settle down." He acknowledged that a considerable number of member states and media pose questions about the

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functioning of the High Representative: “But it is in the interest of the Netherlands to have a strong High Representative. I do not believe that it is useful to join the choir of criticism.”¹⁴

The Netherlands are reasonably satisfied with the draft decision on the EEAS

Foreign Minister Verhagen holds the view that member states have to be prepared to compromise with regard to the Union’s external policy. Efficiency in formulating an external EU policy is vital.¹⁵ According to Verhagen, the Netherlands are reasonably satisfied with the draft decision on the EEAS because the proposal is closer to the line of action of October 2009 than was anticipated. It provides room to the High Representative to fill in some of the details at a later stage.

The Dutch government wants more certainty on the outline of the EEAS before approving the proposal. The Foreign Minister will not give a *carte blanche* without a clear view of how certain positions will be filled and how the EEAS will be financed. It is also important to know how the top of the organisation will function, internally and externally, including its relation to the European Parliament.¹⁶

The Dutch government sticks firmly to its position that one third of the functions of the EEAS should be filled by EU member states. There are several reasons for this. First of all, this allows for the appointment of already highly experienced diplomats from each member state. Secondly, combining experience in the civil service and foreign policy will contribute to a high quality of common European external policy. Importantly, this does not mean that quality should come second to equal geographic spreading, i.e., allowing all member states to appoint a certain share of personnel.¹⁷ It is of vital importance to the Dutch government that the EEAS will present a coherent and integrated external EU policy to the outside world. After the final implementation of the EEAS, the Netherlands expect to employ 15-25 of its diplomats in the service of the EEAS.¹⁸ The status of *agent temporaire* will assure that all employees of the EEAS will have the same rights and duties. This has been an important point for the Dutch government.

As a result of the Lisbon Treaty, EU delegations can operate in international organisations and third countries under the directive of the High Representative. According to the Netherlands, this is important for the coherence of external EU actions. The draft-decision states that Union delegations should be able to assist member states in their diplomatic relations and give consular protection to EU citizens. The Netherlands is satisfied with the option of giving the EEAS consular tasks, and will push for a speeding up of its introduction. In addition, the Dutch government is a supporter of a transfer of the former tasks of the rotating presidencies to Union delegations. This will include tasks such as external representation of the EU and internal coordination of foreign policy positions.¹⁹

The Netherlands deems it essential that the deputies of the High Representative are clearly organised. The Secretary General of the EEAS and his deputies are seen as possible representatives of the High Commissioner. The Netherlands does not oppose deputies of the High Representative to be directly answerable in the European Parliament, although this should not be the standard situation. The Dutch government is in favour of the transition of the geographic desks from the Commission and the Council Secretariat to the EEAS to prevent duplication. It is also emphasised that there should be enough capacity at the EEAS to perform its programming tasks, for example in the case of development aid.²⁰

In line with these positions, the government has demonstrated its favour regarding a proper balance between the readiness of the EEAS – by giving it its own capacity and by using the capacities of the Council Secretariat – and the services of the Commission. The Dutch government stresses the need to continuously evaluate the implementation process leading to the formation of the EEAS in order to identify and solve insufficiencies (like the unification of institutions and shifts between institutions and budgets). Preferably, the High Representative would report to the European Council on the functioning of the EEAS. According to the Dutch government, the 2014 evaluation should be as broad as possible. Besides this, the Netherlands attaches much importance to budgetary control of the EEAS by the European Parliament.²¹

According to Foreign Minister Verhagen the coordination of development aid will become easier because the EEAS will also set the strategic programming of the EU.²² The Netherlands highly values EU development aid and emphasises that the EEAS should take care of setting the development priorities. The Dutch government stresses that enough attention should be given to specific development aid policy guidelines.²³

European Citizens' Initiative, discussion about numbers

The Netherlands is a supporter of the European Citizens' Initiative because the introduction of this instrument could lead to more involvement of citizens within the EU. The government underlines that the instrument should be as simple and workable as possible. The Dutch government feels the current proposal is in line with these requirements. At the same time, the Netherlands will closely watch the balance between, on the one hand, accessibility, and, on the other hand, representation. The possibility to register declarations of support online, improving the accessibility of the instrument, is appreciated. However, the Netherlands is critical towards the rules, which force the initiators and supporters to provide a multitude of information. This acts contrary to the accessibility of the instrument. It is also deemed unnecessary because of the introduction by the Commission of a receptivity test after 30,000 signatures are collected.

The Dutch government agrees with the current proposal that 1,000,000 necessary signatures must be collected within one year and should be from at least one third of the member states. But the Netherlands is critical about the minimum amount of signatures required per member state. The Green Paper originally stated that the minimum would be 0.2 percent of the population per member state, but the proposal determines the minimum amount of signatures per member state by multiplying the number of Members of European Parliament (MEPs) from the member state by 750. That would amount to the same as 19,500 signatures from the Netherlands (approximately 0.12 percent of the population). The Netherlands would prefer to set the minimum amount of signatures from its own country at 40,000 (around 0.2 percent of the population).

Finally, the Netherlands and the Commission share the opinion that the responsibility of the authenticity check lies with the member states. The privacy aspect will have the full attention of the Dutch government during the development and implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative.²⁴

¹ Ron Meerhof: Balkenende voorkwam in Brussel 'eindeloos gedoe', De Volkskrant, 21 November 2009.

² NRC Handelsblad: Premier erkent dat zijn naam viel, 2 December 2009.

³ De Volkskrant: Gemengde reacties op benoeming Van Rompuy, 20 November 2009.

⁴ Martin Visser: Homo pragmaticus in roerige tijden, Het Financieele Dagblad, 10 April 2010.

⁵ Jeroen van der Kris: EU-leider wil vaker topoverleg, NRC Handelsblad, 13-14 February 2010.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1080; Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1110.

⁸ Leonoor Kuijk: Roulerend voorzitter voortaan ondergeschikt aan nieuwe EU-president: EU-voorzitter Spanje is proefkonijn, Trouw, 19 December 2009.

⁹ Iñaki Oñorbe Genovesi: Een discrete voorzitter, maar vooral onzichtbaar, De Volkskrant, 19 April 2010.

¹⁰ Tweede Kamer: vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 21 501-02, nr. 958, 18-19.

¹¹ Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1111.

¹² Petra de Koning: Wrevel over optreden Ashton groeit: In ogen van regeringen kan EU-buitenlandchef weinig goed doen, NRC Handelsblad, 26 February 2010.

¹³ Ibid; Marc Peeperkorn: Buitenlands gezicht van EU worstelt met Imago, De Volkskrant, 24 February 2010.

¹⁴ De Volkskrant: Verhagen neemt 't op voor Ashton, 5 March 2010.

¹⁵ Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1116.

¹⁶ Tweede Kamer: vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 21501-02 nr. 962, p. 1-6, Kabinetsappreciatie EDEO, 19 April 2010.

¹⁷ Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1113.

¹⁸ Tweede Kamer: vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 31 384 (R1850), nr. 28, 5.

¹⁹ Tweede Kamer: vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 21501-02 nr. 962, p. 1-6, Kabinetsappreciatie EDEO, 19 April 2010.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1114.

²³ Tweede Kamer: vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 21501-02 nr. 962, p. 1-6; Kabinetsappreciatie EDEO, 19 April 2010.

²⁴ Tweede Kamer: vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 21501-02 nr. 960, p. 1 and 5; Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1112.

Netherlands

The Netherlands: “firm but fair” towards new EU member states

Simone Wolters*

The Netherlands' position is lukewarm towards further EU enlargement. Many political parties hold sceptical views towards a possible accession of new member states. All political parties have clear standpoints regarding the possible accession of certain countries or regions to the EU. During last year's elections for the European Parliament and in the upcoming national elections the possible accession of Turkey to the EU is a point of discussion, with the Party for Freedom (PVV) being particularly vocal about its opposition to Turkish EU membership. Almost all political parties state specific standpoints on EU enlargement on their websites and a majority of these websites report on possible enlargement with certain countries. Regarding a possible EU enlargement, some political parties raise the issue of the EU's absorption capacity and the necessity to increase this absorption capacity before new countries can enter the Union.¹

The countries of the Western Balkan are a special case. The Netherlands sees cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as a condition for entry into the EU. Foreign Minister Verhagen stated furthermore that the Netherlands would be firm but fair regarding the Copenhagen criteria, in the sense that countries that want to access the EU have to fulfil these criteria as well as implement the *acquis*.²

The “Icesave case”

Dutch public opinion and media are critical towards Iceland's application for EU membership. The prime reason is the bankruptcy of Iceland's banking sector, which affected Dutch consumers and local authorities with savings on Icelandic banks. The popular Icesave bank may be seen as an example. Initially, the Dutch government, which had agreed on a repayment scheme with the Icelandic government, compensated Dutch victims of Icesave's bankruptcy. However, in March 2010, the Icelandic people voted against the agreement to pay back compensation loans to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in a referendum. This has had a negative effect on relations between Iceland and the Netherlands.³

Foreign Minister Verhagen has made two considerations regarding the application for EU membership by Iceland. Firstly, without the Icesave discussion there would not have been a discussion about Iceland's application for EU membership. Secondly, if Iceland wants to become an EU member, the country should apply the *acquis communautaire* like every other candidate state. Part of the duties that arise from the *acquis* are the duties regarding the European Economic Area (EEA) of which Iceland is a member. The compliance with the directive on deposit-guarantee schemes is part of the duties of the EEA. At this moment, the Netherlands is waiting for Iceland to return to the negotiation table. The Netherlands is prepared to talk about the provisions under which Iceland will be able to fulfil its duties. Some parties state that accession talks could create a framework and be used as additional instruments to call Iceland to order and accept its duties according to the *acquis* in a European context.

The Dutch government stated that it is absolutely out of the question that Iceland will join the EU without fulfilling the whole *acquis communautaire*, including the duties based on the deposit-guarantee scheme.⁴ The best way for Iceland to join the EU is to show the ability to meet its commitments regarding the deposit-guarantee scheme and to agree to the reimbursement of the loans of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom regarding the Icesave dispute.⁵

Special emphasis on the Western Balkan

The Netherlands perceives considerable pressure to accept the Balkan states as EU members.⁶ Regarding a possible accession of the Balkans, the Minister of Foreign Affairs does not mention dates. Rather, fulfilment of the criteria will be needed. He also opposes EU enlargement in groups. Every country should be judged on its own merits.⁷

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According to Minister Verhagen, Serbia is working seriously on the reforms needed for accession. This is clearly marked in the progress report of the Commission. In his opinion, Serbia has the most professional government of all countries in the Western Balkans. Serbia has an actual modernisation agenda and the capacity to execute these modernisations. The Dutch government considers complete cooperation with the ICTY as an important condition for possible accession.

The Dutch government is concerned about the increasing nationalistic rhetoric and political tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to Minister Verhagen, the Dayton Treaty brought peace, but the state structure and the Dayton constitution are making the country ungovernable and dysfunctional. At the same time, the patience of the international community is wearing thin. The political leaders have to take more responsibility: "We have to urge them and convince the parties that mutual cooperation is the only option. However, already promising Bosnia that it will one day be able to join the NATO or the EU could have an adverse effect."⁸

Turkey important during elections

Political parties in the Netherlands are very critical towards a possible entry of Turkey into the EU and possible accession was even considered an important discussion topic during the 2009 elections for the European Parliament. In political debates during election time, right-wing PVV has been especially opposed to Turkish accession to the EU. Other parties except for the Greens and Liberal Democrats (GroenLinks and D66), are critical on their websites and in their election programmes of an eventual accession of Turkey to the EU. On a possible accession of Turkey, Minister Verhagen stated that Turkey could have an important bridging function and could contribute to a dialogue between cultures instead of a "clash of civilisations". According to the Netherlands, the reform process in Turkey has been delayed in the last few years. The speed of these reforms should be accelerated. According to Minister Verhagen, Turkey should be aware of the fact that the negotiations are an open-ended process and Turkey has to make a move. The Dutch goal remains that accession talks are directed at accession, without the outcome being fixed.⁹

¹ See the websites of the different political parties, available at: www.cda.nl; www.pvda.nl; www.vvd.nl; www.d66.nl; www.groenlinks.nl; www.Sp.nl; www.pvv.nl; www.cu.nl; www.sgp.nl (last access: 22 June 2010).

² Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1117.

³ Melle Garschagen: Bevolking IJsland wijst Icesave-akkoord af, NRC Handelsblad, 6 March 2010.

⁴ Tweede Kamer: vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 21 501-02, nr. 958, 14-17.

⁵ Tweede Kamer: Vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 23 987, nr. 107, 3.

⁶ Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1081.

⁷ Ibid., 26-1117.

⁸ Ibid., 20 April 2010, 26-1118.

⁹ Ibid.

Netherlands
Dutch strict towards Greek aid package

Simone Wolters and Arnout Mijs*

Ever since the full extent of the Greek deficit crisis has become clear, the Dutch government has been a proponent of the involvement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in case of emergency aid.¹ After the informal Council summit in February 2010, the Dutch parliament stated that Greece is the only one to blame for its high budget deficit and financial support would be inappropriate. Former Finance Minister Bos agreed on this point and shared the opinion that Greece carries the responsibility for solving this crisis.²

In March 2010, the Netherlands, together with Germany, stated its opposition to direct emergency aid for Greece by the Eurogroup member states. According to the Dutch government, Greece should first introduce severe budget cuts and request IMF support.³ Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende stated that in case of financial support “the IMF always has to take part.” He underlined that Greece created its own financial problems and should solve them by taking drastic measures.⁴ Both houses of parliament also favoured IMF interference. On 18 March 2010, the parliament did not give permission to negotiate on a European solution for the Greek problem. Both chambers stated that IMF intervention should take place first, and only if it does should help be offered by the Eurozone countries.⁵

On 7 May 2010, the second chamber had to come back from spring recess to vote on the European support package for the Greeks. The agreement to support Greece with 4.7 billion Euros was sensitive, because the political parties tried to stave off the appearance that Greece was rewarded for what they considered financial misbehaviour. The Christian Democrats (Christian Democratic Appeal – CDA), Social Democrats (Dutch Labour Party – PvdA) and Greens stated that financial aid to Greece was inevitable.⁶ On 7 May 2010, Prime Minister Balkenende, at the Eurogroup summit, called the support package “inevitable and necessary.”⁷ Support was needed to keep the Euro stable. He stressed that Greece has to take enormous measures in return for the loans. According to Balkenende, more severe punishment of countries that do not adhere to the EU-budget rules would be a good signal.⁸

On 10 May 2010, the Dutch parliament gave its support to the emergency aid plan of 720 billion Euros aimed at stabilising the Euro despite critical remarks from a large part of the opposition (PvdA, the Socialist Party – SP, Party for Freedom – PVV, and GroenLinks).⁹ The Dutch political parties see the rescue package as a necessary evil and demand certain guarantees from EU member states with big budget deficits in exchange for their support. The Netherlands will guarantee 26 billion Euros in loans.¹⁰ During the negotiations in the night of 9 to 10 May 2010, the Dutch government refused to give a blank cheque to save what they consider the financially irresponsible Mediterranean countries. As a result, the decision on bank guarantees will have to be taken by unanimity.¹¹ The Netherlands is against EU involvement in national budget policy.

In General, the Dutch media has devoted considerable attention to the developments of the Greek deficit crisis. A considerable number of articles give an overview of the measures taken and opinions prevailing in other EU member states.

According to Foreign Minister Verhagen, the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) has not been able to avoid the escalation of the budgetary situation in certain member states, including Greece: “This indicates that we will actually need more SGP instead of less”.¹² Reinforcement of the SGP could be accomplished by stronger supervision, a stronger and independent role for Eurostat and a tightening of sanctions. The nature of these sanctions and the moment of their application should be discussed by the taskforce of the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy.¹³

Economic governance

Finance Minister Jan Kees De Jager is an opponent of the proposal to give the Commission more rights in supervising the national budgets of member states. According to De Jager, the national

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budget sovereignty of the EU member states would be infringed upon by implementing these kinds of measures. Giving the Commission insight into Dutch long-range budget estimates would not be a problem. The Finance Minister underlined that member states with large budget deficits should be dealt with much more severely. De Jager is a proponent of handing over control of budget rules to an independent institution in order to take the issue out of the political realm.¹⁴

According to Minister Verhagen, it is necessary to take measures that will make the existing rules more respected. This is much more important than thinking about new institutions like a European Monetary Fund. Economic cooperation in the EU will ask for a fundamental debate. Verhagen is in favour of automatic enforcement of penalties/fines when the SGP is violated, instead of the current decision making procedure by the Council. He is a supporter of freezing cohesion funds when needed. The Minister has a critical opinion on a permanent emergency fund because this will relieve the responsibility of the member states for healthy government budgets.¹⁵

Europe 2020 overshadowed by current events

The Dutch government welcomes the Europe 2020 Strategy: "In particular, it welcomes the focus on education, knowledge and (green) innovation, the importance of employment policy and macro-economic imbalances."¹⁶

On growth and jobs, the Dutch government was happy to note that the Strategy, corresponding to their own wishes, focuses on sustainable growth and jobs, and has a limited number of ambitious goals. However, the question remains whether the goals are achievable. The Dutch government is concerned about the poverty goal. According to the government, a higher employment rate is instrumental to social inclusion and reduction of poverty. On top of this, it offers support for social welfare. This is where the emphasis should be. Therefore, the poverty goal is superfluous. The Dutch government also remarked that no goal has been set as to the priority of competitiveness.

The government underlines the crucial importance of a balanced state budget as the basis for sustainable and stable growth. It agrees with the Commission that difficult reforms will be needed to strengthen the economic structure as well as public finance. On governance, the Dutch government considered the Lisbon Strategy to be too non-compulsory.¹⁷ However, the Dutch government is positive about the option available to the Commission to give a warning, and about the strengthened role of the European Council. This will enhance the effectiveness of the Strategy. The Netherlands opposes financial sanctions as an instrument of the Europe 2020 Strategy.¹⁸ In its reaction, the government acknowledges the advantages of a synchronised evaluation of the SGP and the Europe 2020 Strategy. However, they will stay alert in order to prevent recommendations for the Europe 2020 Strategy from becoming an alibi to evade the criteria and procedures of the SGP.¹⁹

Furthermore, the Netherlands is a supporter of the reform and modernisation of the EU budget. Its focus must be on competitiveness, sustainable growth, and jobs. The government also stresses the importance of a partnership approach. The role of social partners, provinces, municipalities, cities, regions and research institutions is vital towards labour participation, innovation, and climate change.²⁰

In discussions in the national parliament, the Europe 2020 debate has been overshadowed by the Greek crisis. Members of Parliament (MPs) usually only make some general remarks on the Europe 2020 Strategy. The different parties concur with the government that there has to be a limited number of set goals and that these goals have to be realistic. They worry about whether and how these goals can be attained. They expect that the current and new instruments are insufficient. There is also worry about "ownership" of the Strategy. The CDA and a smaller Christian orthodox party SGP (Political Reformed Party) point to agriculture as an important factor in smart and sustainable economic growth. This sector does not get the attention it deserves.

In the media, most attention was devoted to the fall of the Dutch government on 20 February 2010. In the brief media coverage, a sense of urgency to develop a viable strategy to counter the recession prevailed. However, parallels are often drawn between the Europe 2020 Strategy and its predecessor, the Lisbon Strategy. Even before the launch of the Strategy, a side notation of an article expressed: "Lisbon is dead. Long live Lisbon."²¹ After the launch of the Europe 2020 Strategy, news articles explained its very ambitious goals. Still – and maybe because of "Lisbon" – questions arose on the degree of enforceability. Dutch Member of the European Parliament Sophie in 't Veld was quoted in saying, "I do not yet see how Barroso thinks to realise these beautiful plans this time."²² Individual Ministers also reacted on the Strategy in the media. The Minister of Economic Affairs Maria van der

Hoeven expressed the opinion that poverty reduction does not need to be an explicit goal, for if you provide people with jobs and if they are well educated, that is also a type of poverty reduction. In reaction to the Europe 2020 Strategy, Minister of Social Affairs Piet-Hein Donner stated that he was disappointed about the retirement age of 64. He would have liked to see an increase of this age. Currently a fierce debate is underway in the Netherlands about raising the retirement age from 65 to 67. This debate will continue within the new coalition after the general elections of 9 June 2010.

¹ Martin Visser: Brussel ziet grote onzekerheden rond Griekse bezuinigingsplannen; Commissaris Almunia: eurolanden kunnen problemen aan zonder hulp van IMF, Financieel Dagblad, 4 February 2010; Financieel Dagblad: EU zint op Grieks noodplan: Duitsers overwegen financiële steun, Trichet schuift aan bij Europese top, 10 February 2010.

² Melle Garschagen: Geen Cent voor de Grieken, NRC Next, 12 February 2010.

³ Marc Peepkorn: Confrontatie over Griekse noodhulp, De Volkskrant, 25 March 2010.

⁴ De Volkskrant: Frans-Duits compromis over hulp aan Griekenland, 25 March 2010.

⁵ Eerste Kamer, Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1082.

⁶ Marc Peepkorn: EU-Leiders vechten voor de eurozone, De Volkskrant, 6 March 2010.

⁷ De Volkskrant: Leiders eurolanden willen paniek bezweren, 7 May 2010.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ De Volkskrant: CDA en VVD steunen noodplan Europese Unie, 10 May 2010.

¹⁰ De Volkskrant: Kamer steunt reddingsplan euro, 11 May 2010.

¹¹ Marc Peepkorn: Hoofdrol voor De Jager bij operatie 'Geen blanco cheque', De Volkskrant, 11 May 2010.

¹² Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1119.

¹³ Tweede Kamer: vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 21 501-02, nr. 958, 6-11.

¹⁴ NRC Handelsblad: Geen controle begroting EU-landen door Brussel, 18 May 2010.

¹⁵ Eerste Kamer: Algemene Europese beschouwingen, 20 April 2010, 26-1120.

¹⁶ Kamerstukken I 2009 – 2010, 22112, DP, p. 2-3.

¹⁷ Kamerstukken II 2009 – 2010, 21501-02, nr. 958, p. 10-11.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kamerstukken I 2009 – 2010, 22112, DP, p. 2-3.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

²¹ Financieel Dagblad: Europa zoekt economisch doel na mislukte Lissabon-strategie, 9 January 2010.

²² Financieel Dagblad: Veel kritiek op nieuwe EU-doelen, 4 March 2010.

Netherlands**Ambitions not achieved in Copenhagen**

Louise van Schaik*

The Copenhagen conference was widely covered in the Dutch press. The outcome was portrayed as a failure, with the EU being sidelined and upcoming powers demonstrating their increased powers in the negotiations.¹ Considerable attention was given to the chaotic process of negotiations – the EU being unable to speak with one voice – and the take-over of the Danish chairmanship of the conference by the Prime Minister away from the Environment Minister halfway through the negotiations. According to Green Member of the European Parliament Bas Eickhout, the weak statements made by the Swedish EU Presidency, that illustrated persisting disunity among the EU member states, particularly illustrated the EU's inability to operate on the basis of a strong single voice.²

The Dutch government considers the Copenhagen Summit less successful than it had aimed for. Positions of important players in the negotiations were too far apart and the process of the negotiations was cumbersome.³ Nevertheless, the Dutch government still considers that the Copenhagen Accord provides sufficient content as a starting point for future negotiations on an international climate treaty.⁴ Its strengths include the reference to keeping the maximum temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius, and the political direction it gives regarding measuring, reporting and verification of finance and mitigation commitments; mechanisms for technology transfer and avoidance of deforestation; and the set-up of a financial architecture and review in 2015. Shortcomings include that no reference is made to market-based mechanisms and that emissions from aviation, maritime, agriculture and industrial Hydrofluorocarbons were not addressed.⁵

The Netherlands is an advocate of an ambitious EU climate policy. The increase of the so called “20-20-20” reduction target to 30 percent from the current 20 percent should principally be used as a leverage to convince other countries to join the EU's efforts, but the Netherlands also seems open to consider such an increase unilaterally. For instance, in January, the Netherlands was among the EU member states that wanted to submit the 30 percent target to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for the annex of the Copenhagen Accord.⁶ Other member states only wanted to submit the 20 percent target and as a compromise the 30 percent was kept conditional upon other industrialised states undertaking a similar effort and emerging economies taking up a meaningful commitment, i.e., the original EU position. The Netherlands favours an international climate agreement which is similar to the Kyoto Protocol, although it realises it will not be easy to negotiate such a treaty, and discussions outside the UN process should also be pursued. The EU should clearly operate as a united bloc in international climate negotiations and the Dutch government is open to a larger role for the European Commission or the President of the European Council in external representation, although it underlines the right for representation by the member states.⁷

One of the priority areas of the Dutch government is climate financing. It has invested considerable efforts in stimulating debates and launching ideas on how to organise the international architecture of climate financing. It is pleased with the decision on the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund and hopes the Commission will soon present a Communication on how to operationalise it.⁸ It undertakes efforts to convince other EU member states to deliver on short-term financing. Contributions of the private sector and innovative financing need to be among the priority issues to be analysed and discussed within the context of the UN High Level Panel on Climate Financing. The Netherlands itself has promised to deliver 300 million Euros of fast track financing for the period 2010-2012. This money would be additional to funds committed earlier to development cooperation and environmental projects.⁹

¹ P. Luttikhuis: 'Kopenhagen' verdeelt wereld, NRC, 21 December 2009; M. Bezemer/G. Moes: Grote top, klein resultaat, Trouw, 21 December 2009; M. Peepkorn/M. Persson: EU heeft nakijken in Kopenhagen, De Volkskrant, 21 December 2009; M. Peepkorn: EU wil af van kater van Kopenhagen, De Volkskrant, 23 December 2009.

² B. Eickhout: Waarom Europa buitenspel stond in Kopenhagen, NRC, 22 December 2009.

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³ Brief van de Minister van Volkshuisvesting, ruimtelijke ordening en milieubeheer aan de voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 9 February 2010.

⁴ Cf. Internationaal klimaatbeleid na Kopenhagen, letter sent by the Environment Minister to Parliament, 19 March 2010.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bulletin Quotidien Europe 10061, 22 January 2010; Han Dirk Hekking: Spanje tracht scheuren in klimaatfront te repareren, Financieel Dagblad, 18 January 2010.

⁷ Cf. Internationaal klimaatbeleid na Kopenhagen, letter sent by the Environment Minister to Parliament, 19 March 2010.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Milieuraad: Verslag van een algemeen overleg, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 25 March 2010.

Netherlands**Political climate and national elections**

Arnout Mijs*

An important development in Dutch politics is the fall of the government on 20 February 2010 as a result of divergent opinions in the government on the extension of the Dutch Afghanistan mission. Elections took place on 9 June 2010. During the debate the focus shifted from immigration towards the economy, because of the recent developments. Only the anti-immigration party of Geerts Wilders, the Party for Freedom (PVV), held on to the former topic. Budgetary savings on all possible policy fields were fiercely debated and supported by strong evidence on the need for budget cuts provided by the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Planning (CPB). In the respective programmes of the political parties, foreign policy played only a marginal role. In political debates foreign politics were hardly discussed, although this is not uncommon in Dutch parliamentary elections.¹ There was one recurrent issue in the political programmes of the majority of the parties on foreign politics. They stated that if they are elected part of the next government, they will strive to reduce the Dutch contribution to the EU.² This accounts amongst others for the Liberal Conservative party (VVD), the Labour Party (PvdA), the Socialist Party (SP), and the PVV.

The results of the elections testify for a rather complex and dispersed picture of the political landscape in the Netherlands. There are seven parties with 10 or more seats. The focus on economics has been one of the main reasons why the VVD led by Mark Rutte came in first with 31 out of 150 seats in parliament. The VVD became the biggest party in parliamentary elections for the first time in its history. The party was followed by the PvdA of former mayor of Amsterdam Job Cohen with 30 seats. The PvdA lost three seats, much less than expected in the year preceding the elections. Besides Rutte, another major winner was Geert Wilders' PVV, who came in third with 24 seats (before 9). The biggest losers were the Christian Democrats (CDA) who lost almost half of their seats (from 41 to 21).

At the time of writing, the formation of a new government is ongoing. Three options seem most likely. The first option is a right wing government with the VVD, PVV and the Christian Democrats (CDA). The CDA is the party of disengaging Prime Minister Jan-Peter Balkenende, who resigned as party leader after the 20 seat loss. This is also the reason they are hesitant to step into a right wing government, besides the fact that the party is divided on whether they want to rule with the PVV.³ The second option is a neither-right-nor-left coalition formed by the VVD, PvdA, the Liberal Democrats (D66), and the Greens (GroenLinks). Until eight years ago the VVD, PvdA, and D66 also ruled the Netherlands, but now they need an extra party for a majority in parliament. The third, less likely, option is a cabinet in which VVD, PvdA and CDA join forces, although difficult in the light of earlier tensions between the PvdA and the CDA in the previous government. Either way negotiations will be tough, since the VVD is in favour of a hard-hitting economic reform policy whilst the other parties, especially PvdA, want to spread the budget-cuts over a longer period.⁴ Parties seem moreover lukewarm with regard to cooperation with the PVV, because of its strong positions and because of its lack of seats in the Parliaments' Upper House. Either way it will be a major first challenge for the new and young Prime Minister Mark Rutte, and it is not even certain that he will take up this position.

¹ M. Grevelink/J. Rood: Het Nederlands buitenlands beleid in de verkiezingen: een analyse, Online publication, Instituut Clingendael, Den Haag, 2 June 2010.

² See the websites of the different political parties, available at: www.cda.nl; www.pvda.nl; www.vvd.nl; www.d66.nl; www.groenlinks.nl; www.Sp.nl; www.pvv.nl; www.cu.nl; www.sgp.nl (last access: 22 June 2010); Gera Arts/Marko Bos: Het Europa-gehalte van de Nederlandse verkiezingsprogramma's, *Internationale Spectator*, 64(6), p. 328-331.

³ NRC Handelsblad: CDA wil nog niet praten met VVD en PVV, 16 June 2010.

⁴ NRC Handelsblad: Cohen: Wij zitten aan lage kant met bezuinigingen, 26 June 2010.

Questionnaire for EU-27 Watch, No. 9

Reporting period December 2009 until May 2010 – Deadline for country reports 21 May

All questions refer to the position/assessment of your country's government, opposition, political parties, civil society organisations, pressure groups, press/media, and public opinion. Please name sources wherever possible!

1. Implementation of the Lisbon Treaty

On the 1 December 2009 the EU-reform ended with the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty. However, the new treaty provisions still have to be implemented. Some procedures and conditions have to be determined. In other cases, procedures, power relations, and decision-making mechanisms will change due to the new provisions.

- How is the work of the new President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, assessed in your country? Which changes to the role of the rotating council presidency are expected?
- How is the work of the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, assessed in your country? Please take into particular consideration both her role within the European Commission and her relationship to the Council of the European Union.
- On 25 March 2010 a "Proposal for a Council Decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service" was presented. How is this concept perceived in your country? Which alternatives are discussed?
- On 31 March 2010 the European Commission presented a proposal defining the rules and procedures for the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). What are the expectations for the ECI in your country? What are the various positions concerning the rules and procedures?

2. Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

The European Commission has given its opinion on Iceland's application for EU-membership and a decision from the Council is expected before the end of June. Croatia seems to have settled its border dispute with Slovenia. Against this background:

- Which countries does your country expect to become members of the European Union in the next enlargement round? What are the opinions in your country on the membership of these countries?
- How are the membership perspectives of those countries discussed, which are not expected to become a member in the next enlargement round?

The Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean were the last major projects dealing with the European neighbourhood:

- How are these projects assessed in your country?

3. European economic policy and the financial and economic crisis

The European Council agreed on 25/26 March on the key elements of the Europe 2020 strategy, the successor of the Lisbon strategy. While not being on the formal agenda the economic and financial situation in Greece was discussed. The European Council agreed on a finance package combining bilateral loans from the eurozone and financing through the International Monetary Fund.

- How is the finance package for Greece assessed in your country? Are there any opinions on the process, how the agreement on the package was reached?
- Which lessons should be drawn from the Greek case for a reform of the Stability and Growth Pact?
- How is the idea of "a strong coordination of economic policies in Europe" perceived in your country? What concepts of an European economic governance are discussed in your country and which role do they assign to the Euro group?
- How is the Europe 2020 strategy discussed in your country? What are the priorities for the Europe 2020 strategy from your country's perspective?

4. Climate and energy policy

The climate conference in Copenhagen took note of the Copenhagen Accord but did not reach a binding agreement. The next conference of the parties (COP 16 & CMP 6) will take place at the end of November 2010.

- How is the Copenhagen conference assessed in your country? Please take into consideration the negotiation strategy of European Union and the results of the conference.
- Does the European Union need to change its own energy and climate policy in order to give a new impulse to the international negotiations?
- Is a global agreement within the UNFCCC the best strategy to fight climate change? If not, which alternative strategy should the European Union follow?
- What is your country's position on financing mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries?

5. Current issues and discourses in your country

Which other topics and discourses are highly salient in your country but not covered by this questionnaire?