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EU-27 Watch

On the Project

The enlarged EU of 27 members is in a process of reshaping its constitutional and political order, of continuing membership talks with candidate countries 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 Croatia and Turkey participate in the project. 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.

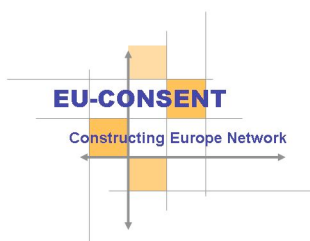
This survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire that has been elaborated in November 2008 by all participating institutes. Most of the 29 reports were delivered in February 2009. This issue and all previous issues of *EU-27 Watch* (formerly *EU-25/27 Watch*) are available on the homepage of EU-CONSENT (www.eu-consent.net) and on the internet sites of most of the contributing institutes.

Please note the **detailed table of content** that allows readers to easily grasp key information and headlines of the country reports.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How does the future of the EU after the Irish 'No' look like?

Please refer to

- the conclusions of the European Council of December 2008 on the fate of the Lisbon Treaty,
 - the upcoming European Parliament elections in June 2009,
 - the formation of the new Commission in autumn 2009,
 - the appointment of the High Representative.
-
- Which long-term implications and scenarios for the integration process itself are expected and discussed?

2. Transatlantic relations renewed after President Bush: top priorities

On 4 November 2008, the people of the United States of America voted for their new President Barack Obama.

- **What are the three top priorities for a re-definition or re-vitalisation of the transatlantic and EU-US relationship?**
- **What is needed on the part of the EU?**

3. Financial crisis and challenges of global governance: the EU response

The financial crisis demonstrated once more the increased economic and social interdependence on a global scale.

- **What are the expectations towards the EU in this context? How is the performance of the EU in the financial crisis so far perceived, discussed and evaluated in your country?**
- **Which shifts in the international power constellation are expected? What are the consequences for the EU?**

4. Looking back at the French Presidency

The French Presidency had to deal with many current events, like the Irish 'No', the financial crisis and the Georgian war.

- **In this regard, what is the general evaluation of achievements, failures or weaknesses of the French Presidency?**
- **What are the expectations in your country for the main priorities of the Czech Presidency?**

5. Prospects for ENP and enlargement after 'Georgia'

The military conflict in Georgia might well have repercussions for the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and enlargement of the EU.

- **Please outline the positions in your country with regard to the future of the ENP and with regard to further enlargement of EU and NATO.**
- **Are such issues of high salience in your country?**

6. Current issues and discourses in your country

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

INTRODUCTION

The EU in 2009 – a reassuring outlook even in times of crisis?

Tanja Leppik-Bork, Christina Minniberger and Julian Plottka

In the second half of 2008 the European Union has been faced by many crises: the 'ratification' crisis, the 'Georgian' crisis, and last but by no means least, the financial and economic crisis. These crises touch the institutional architecture and the future shape of the EU, its neighbourhood and external relations, and the financial and economic policies within the EU. During these 'hard' times, one of the founding members of the EU was holding the presidency of the EU – and some say luckily so.

In this last issue of EU-27 Watch within the lifetime of EU-CONSENT, all those issues are dealt with and a prospect for 2009 is given, a year that might well be a year of opportunities but also of uncertainties:

- the future of the EU after the Irish 'No',
- the priorities for transatlantic relations after President Bush,
- the EU response to the financial crisis and the challenges of global governance,
- the evaluation of the French Presidency and expectations for the Czech Presidency,
- prospects for European Neighbourhood Policy and enlargement after 'Georgia', and
- other current national issues.

As in the other issues of EU-27 Watch, the country reports give a unique snapshot of discourses and debates on those topics in all 27 member states as well as in Croatia and Turkey.

What becomes obvious when dipping into the reports is that while there is consensus on some of the issues, there is also a lot of heterogeneity. This may not be too surprising given the different experiences, economic and political situations of the 27 member states, and the two candidate states.¹

Future of the EU: waiting for the second Irish referendum

With regard to the future of the EU after the Irish 'No', most member states seem to be satisfied with the agreement reached at the European Council meeting in December 2008: Ireland has got some concessions and agreed, in exchange, to hold a second referendum, probably in autumn 2009. These concessions include special arrangements regarding sensitive areas where Ireland's neutrality could

¹ See also Barbara Lippert/Timo Goosmann: Introduction: A portrait of the Union in a puzzling state of mind, in: Institut für Europäische Politik (Ed.): EU-25 Watch, No. 2, January 2006, Berlin, available at: http://www.iep-berlin.de/fileadmin/website/09_Publikationen/EU_Watch/EU-25_Watch-No2.pdf (last access: 19 March 2009), pp. 8-17.

be touched upon such as taxation policy, family, social and ethical issues, and Common Security and Defence Policy.² The further concession, the agreement to keep the principle of 'one Commissioner per member state', has been the most controversial. While some governments welcomed the fact that all countries will keep 'their' Commissioner,³ especially the Benelux countries deplored the keeping of this principle as a "step back"⁴ with regard to the supranational character of the European Commission.⁵ The Belgian Prime Minister emphasised that the ratification "should not happen at the expense of the treaty's essential elements".⁶ Some media were even less enthusiastic, for example, an Italian analyst pointed out, "quoting a popular phrase by opera singer Maria Callas, 'once you start making too many concessions, you'll never be able to stop, since people will expect you to do so automatically'".⁷

Regarding Turkey and Croatia, the latter seems to be quite optimistic about the accession process commencing as planned, whereas Turkey fears that enlargement is currently not among the EU's main priorities.⁸

Other institutional issues influenced by the still unclear future of the Lisbon Treaty, e.g. the formation of the next Commission, or the 'personal tableau' (President of the European Parliament, President of the European Commission, President of the European Council, High Representative), so far have not received much public attention besides first speculations about possible candidates.⁹

Interest in the upcoming European Parliament elections in June 2009 varies significantly throughout Europe – from high expectations and support in some new member states, for instance Cyprus and Poland, to disillusion in other member states, such as Finland and Belgium. As stated in the French report, regarding voter participation and public attention, "one should not expect a miracle for the next elections".¹⁰ Contrary to this, in Poland the European Parliament is seen as "a serious, democratic institution"¹¹ and no concerns are mentioned regarding the turnout of the election.

² For further details see Conclusions of the European Council, available at: http://www.eu2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/1211_Conseil_europeen/European_Council_12-12-2008_Conclusions_EN.pdf (last access: 17 March 2009).

³ Mentioned, for instance in the Austrian, French, or Slovenian chapters on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

⁴ Belgian chapter on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

⁵ See the Belgian, Dutch and Luxemburg chapters on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

⁶ Quotation is taken from the Belgian chapter on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

⁷ Quotation is taken from the Italian chapter on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

⁸ See Croatian and Turkish chapters on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

⁹ See, for instance, the Bulgarian, Czech, or Dutch chapters on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

¹⁰ French chapter on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

¹¹ Polish chapter on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

Transatlantic relations: high expectations and hopes for more multilateral relations

The election of Barack Obama as 44th President of the United States in November 2008 was warmly welcomed all over Europe. The new US administration is widely believed to provide an opportunity to re-define or revitalise EU-US relations and also bilateral relations with the US. The following areas were mentioned in most of the country reports to be of top priority in this context: regional conflicts (Afghanistan, Iraq, Middle East), energy and climate policies, and the financial and economic crisis. In general, there seems to be a wish for a shift from unilateralism or bilateralism, to multilateral transatlantic relations on a more equal footing. But despite all the enthusiasm and optimism concerning President Obama's election, Europeans also have to be aware, as the Portuguese report put it in a nutshell, that "no matter how much Obama was acclaimed as the 'candidate of the Europeans' he will be the 'American President'".¹²

What is underlined in most reports as well is that the EU will also have to become more active at the global level. As summarised by a French journalist, Florence Autret, "on all these issues (diplomacy, economy or environment) the election of Barack Obama will place Europe face to face with its own responsibilities".¹³ Most criticised in this context is the inability of Europe to speak with "one voice"¹⁴ and, for example noted in the Bulgarian report, the focus of the EU on internal problems. Commissioner for External Relations Benita, Ferrero-Waldner, also emphasised that Europe would not get a better partnership for free.¹⁵

The financial and economic crisis – the EU response

During 2008, the financial and economic crisis crossed the Atlantic and finally reached the European continent in the second semester of the year. But, as the reports clearly show, the 29 national economies have been hit quite differently. Some financial systems like Denmark's or Luxembourg's came early under strong pressure,¹⁶ while other, for example Croatia's,¹⁷ still stand strong. In the real economy the consequences diverge as well among the reporting countries. For example, the European Commission expects a 29 times higher economic growth than the Eurozone average for Cyprus.¹⁸ While some of the governments and societies have to struggle hard with the economic downturn,¹⁹ other

¹² Portuguese chapter on transatlantic relations (chapter I.2).

¹³ Quotation taken from the French chapter on transatlantic relations (chapter I.2).

¹⁴ Mentioned, for instance, in the Croatian, French, or Slovenian chapters on transatlantic relations (chapter I.2).

¹⁵ Quotation taken from the Austrian chapter on transatlantic relations (chapter I.2).

¹⁶ See the Danish and Luxembourgian chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

¹⁷ See e.g. the Croatian, Cypriot and Czech chapters on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

¹⁸ See the Cypriot chapter and for other countries, experiencing modest consequences of the crisis in the real economy, e.g. the Czech and Finnish chapters on the on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

¹⁹ See e.g. the Danish, Estonian, Greek, Latvian and Turkish chapters on the on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

governments could prepare measures against the approaching recession.²⁰ That provoked individual reactions of the member states at first. This is widely discussed in the reports. Some criticise “the lack of an answer from the EU at the beginning”,²¹ as it is reported from the Belgian Prime Minister, while others, e.g. the Lithuanian government, emphasise that “every state should take in to account its own situation before choosing concrete actions”.²²

In summer 2008, politicians were mainly concerned with seeking “a tangible response to turbulence on financial markets”,²³ as the agenda of the French Presidency showed. This searching process became constructive during a series of summits starting with a meeting of the four European G8 member states – France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom – on 4 October 2008,²⁴ followed by the Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 7 October 2008,²⁵ and the first meeting of the heads of state and government of the Eurozone member states and the British Prime Minister on 12 October 2008.²⁶ Finally the European Council on 15 and 16 October 2008 endorsed, among other measures, the principles the Eurozone member states had previously agreed on. As the consequences for the real economy had already become more obvious, the European Council invited “the Commission to make appropriate proposals” “to support growth and employment”.²⁷ After a first communication on 29 October 2008²⁸, the European Commission published “A European Economic Recovery Plan” on 26 November 2008.²⁹ In line with this communication, the European Council on 11 and 12 December agreed on the “European Economic Recovery Plan”.³⁰

²⁰ See e.g. the Croatian chapter on the on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

²¹ See the Belgian chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

²² Lithuanian chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

²³ Council of the European Union: Work Programme for the Council (Economic and Financial Affairs), Doc. 11204/08, 27 June 2008, available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st11/st11204.en08.pdf> (last access: 16 March 2009).

²⁴ See French Council Presidency: Summit on the international financial crisis, 4 October 2008, available at: http://www.eu2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-10_2008/PFUE-04.10.2008/sommet_crise_financiere_internationale (last access: 16 March 2009).

²⁵ See Council of the European Union: 2894th Council meeting Economic and Financial Affairs, press release, Doc. 13784/08 (Presse 279), 7 October 2008, available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ecofin/103250.pdf (last access: 16 March 2009).

²⁶ See French Council Presidency: Summit of the euro area countries: declaration on a concerted European action plan of the euro area countries, 12 October 2008, available at: http://www.eu2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-10_2008/PFUE-12.10.2008/sommet_pays_zone_euro_declaration_plan_action_concertee (last access: 16 March 2009); Council of the European Union: Summit of the Euro Area countries – Declaration on a concerted European Action Plan of the Euro Area countries, Doc. 14239/08, 14 October 2008, available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st14/st14239.en08.pdf> (last access: 16 March 2009).

²⁷ Council of the European Union: Brussels European Council 15 and 16 October 2008. Presidency Conclusions, Doc. 14368/08, 16 October 2008, available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/103441.pdf (last access: 16 March 2009).

²⁸ European Commission: Communication from the Commission to the European Council. From financial crisis to recovery: A European framework for action, COM (2008) 706, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0706:FIN:EN:PDF> (last access: 16 March 2009).

²⁹ European Commission: Communication from the Commission to the European Council. A European Economic Recovery Plan, COM (2008) 800, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0800:FIN:EN:PDF> (last access: 16 March 2009).

³⁰ Council of the European Union: Brussels European Council 11 and 12 December 2008. Presidency Conclusions, Doc. 17271/1/08, 13 February 2009, available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/104692.pdf (last access: 16 March 2009).

Whether these initiatives are an adequate response to the economic challenges and why the European Union acted as it did, is controversially debated in the country reports. The evaluations cover the whole spectrum from being “right and very ambitious”,³¹ as the former Austrian Chancellor is quoted, to regarding the European Economic and Recovery Plan as the best proof that the European Union is institutionally not able to “have a single strategy”.³² The controversy about concrete measures is even stronger: Should the member states stick to the Stability and Growth Pact? Are protectionist measures justified? Does Europe need an economic government? But on one point almost all reports agree: The Euro is a factor of stability and the European Central Bank’s crisis management was efficient. Thus, some speculations about countries joining the Eurozone are made. Just one country seems to be immune against such ideas: the United Kingdom.³³

Regarding the global stage, the current crisis is regarded as “a time of change in the global architecture”.³⁴ Concerning the direction of change, there is a broad consensus among the reporting countries that the world will become much more multi-polar and the so called ‘rising powers’ will enter the political stage. Just about the time frame when this will take place, disagreement is found in the reports: The Hungarian report e.g. expresses the expectation of change in the “near future”,³⁵ while others regard a decade³⁶ as being a realistic time frame.

Praise for efficient French crisis handling, mixed expectations for Czech Presidency

The French Presidency was regarded as a highly successful one by most member states, especially praising its efficient decision-making and its ability to represent the EU as a strong unity.³⁷ Some,³⁸ though, criticised the ‘Sarko show’ for being too personified and omnipresent, and smaller member states felt especially ignored and left out. These mixed feelings were reinforced by President Sarkozy’s speech to the European Parliament, when he stated that “larger European countries do not have special duties, but they do have special responsibilities”.³⁹ The Czech report also stresses critically that “Sarkozy’s glamour and energy seemed to overshadow occasional reports about logistical problems and organizational chaos”.⁴⁰ Yet, the main results: road map for the further ratification process, energy and climate package, dealing with the Georgian and financial crisis, were welcomed. Also, the Union for the

³¹ See the Austrian chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

³² Hungarian chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

³³ See the British chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

³⁴ Romanian chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

³⁵ Hungarian chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

³⁶ See, e.g., the German chapter on the financial crisis and challenges of global governance (chapter I.3).

³⁷ Mentioned, for instance, in the Greek, Maltese, or Swedish chapters on the French Presidency (chapter II).

³⁸ Mentioned for instance, in the Czech and Romanian chapters on the French Presidency (chapter II).

³⁹ Quotation taken from the Portuguese chapter on the French Presidency (chapter II).

⁴⁰ Mentioned in the Czech chapter on the French Presidency (chapter II).

Mediterranean – a matter of specific importance for the French President – perceived positive feedback especially in Southern member states, such as Cyprus, Malta and Italy.⁴¹ Furthermore, the Energy and Climate Package was strongly supported and warmly welcomed. For instance in Sweden and Denmark it is perceived as a crucial basis for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.⁴² Nevertheless, among others, the Finnish Member of the European Parliament, Satu Hassi, critically remarked that “the EU copped out and gave too many concessions to the industries’ lobbying”.⁴³

While most agree with the importance of the Czech Presidency’s priorities (the so called three E’s – Economy, Energy and Europe in the World⁴⁴), some member states⁴⁵ are concerned because of the eurosceptic Czech President, Vaclav Klaus. Especially his statement that people like Sarkozy harm Europe and trample the basic idea of Europe because they do not respect diversity and plurality of ideas, overshadowed relations between Brussels and Prague.⁴⁶ However, especially new member states, for example Poland, are looking forward to the performance of the Czech Presidency, seeing it as a benchmark for their future presidencies. Despite some European-wide scepticism, German experts also estimate that “a smoother Czech EU-Presidency is a necessary change to the stressful last six months of the French predecessors”.⁴⁷

These evaluations in the country reports bring to mind discussions over whether big founding member states, like France, are on principle more capable of representing the EU at the international level and brokering agreements than smaller and newer member states.

Repercussions of the ‘Georgian’ crisis

The Georgian crisis underlined once more the importance of stability and peace in the EU’s neighbourhood. While most member states were highly satisfied with the common EU response to this crisis, the consequences for the future strategic goals of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and enlargement seem to be far from clear.

While some member states, like Hungary and Lithuania, emphasised especially the importance of the Eastern Partnership, others like Latvia highlighted the importance of offering a membership perspective for the Western Balkan countries, or the need for an “open door” policy of the EU, as stated for example in the Lithuanian report.

⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Cypriot report expressed concerns about the conflict-resolving role of the EU in the Mediterranean area, especially concerning its inability to solve the Cyprus conflict.

⁴² See Danish chapter on the French Presidency (chapter II).

⁴³ Quotation taken from the Finnish chapter on current issues and discourses (chapter IV).

⁴⁴ See Work Programme and Priorities of the Czech EU Presidency, available at: <http://www.eu2009.cz/en/czech-presidency/programme-and-priorities/programme-and-priorities-479/> (last access: 19 March 2009).

⁴⁵ Mentioned, for instance, in the British chapter on the French Presidency (chapter II).

⁴⁶ Quotation from the Czech chapter on the French Presidency (chapter II).

⁴⁷ German chapter on the French Presidency (chapter II).

Looking into the reports, it can be observed that discussions about ENP seem to be of higher salience in Eastern European countries. The focus of many of these newer member states lies first and foremost on guaranteeing security, a statement emphasised by the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs describing the ENP as “instruments that we have at our disposal for pursuing our security policy in the neighbourhood”.⁴⁸ Overall, despite the lack of clear strategic goals, it seems that the ENP is widely regarded as an important instrument to create a “ring of prosperous and democratic neighbours”.⁴⁹

Another issue of high importance are relations with Russia – a topic that has been discussed very controversially in the reports. While the German and Luxembourg Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Jean Asselborn caution against the isolation of Russia,⁵⁰ other member states, for example Estonia, showed concerns about Russia being treated too privileged by stating that “Europe has not given its neighbours the same privileges as have been given to Russia”.⁵¹ Concerning NATO enlargement, no European strategy could be observed. Some common ground was found concerning the need for stabilising conflicts between Russia and Georgia as well as Ukraine – with or without an enlargement perspective for the latter.

Financial crisis, energy security, and climate change high on national agendas

The other issues currently on national agendas show a picture of diverse national topics/events and common challenges. Besides internal problems like corruption scandals, all European countries are currently dealing with the consequences of the financial and economic crisis. Furthermore, the threat posed by the gas conflict between Ukraine and Russia, revitalised the discussions about securing energy supply. Throughout Europe the fight against climate change seems to be an issue of high salience. The consequences of illegal immigration is an urgent topic especially in, among others, Italy and Malta. Besides those Europe-wide concerns, exceptional internal events have taken place for instance, in Belgium, where the government resigned after a scandal in the twilight of the financial crisis. Also, Latvia is sincerely suffering from a loss of confidence in the national government, parliament and political parties.⁵² Furthermore, as covered by international media, Greece was hit by a wave of mass protests after the death of a 15-year-old, while Germany is celebrating the 20-years-anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

⁴⁸ Quotation taken from the Romanian chapter on the prospects for ENP and enlargement after ‘Georgia’ (chapter III).

⁴⁹ Mentioned in the Dutch chapter on the prospects for ENP and enlargement after ‘Georgia’ (chapter III).

⁵⁰ Mentioned in the Luxembourgian chapter on the prospects for ENP and enlargement after ‘Georgia’ (chapter III).

⁵¹ Quotation taken from the Estonian chapter on the prospects for ENP and enlargement after ‘Georgia’ (chapter III).

⁵² See Latvian chapter on current issues and discourses (chapter IV).

Outlook

Overall, what can be deduced from the country reports is that while the member states and the EU face many challenges, the general mood seems not to be too pessimistic. As mentioned in the Bulgarian report, a crisis can also be seen as a chance.⁵³ Thus, although at the beginning of 2009 there are still many uncertainties ahead, there might also be some opportunities lying ahead.

In addition, the French Presidency also demonstrated the ability of the EU to reach results and effective policy making in 'vital'/popular areas such as energy, climate, immigration, etc., even in time of crisis.

What is reassuring is that almost four years after the French and Dutch 'No' to the Constitutional Treaty, the member states and the EU are still capable of policy-making, establishing new 'European' policies (e.g. energy policy), and dealing with current crises and challenges despite the increased internal heterogeneity after the 'big bang' enlargement in 2004/2007.

⁵³ Mentioned in the Bulgarian chapter on the future of the EU (chapter I.1).

Chronology of Main Events

(between July 2008 and February 2009)

- 1 July 2008** France takes over the EU-presidency.
- 7-8 July 2008** At the G8 summit in Toyako-cho the heads of state and government agree on a 50 percent reduction of CO₂ emission until 2050.
- 13 July 2008** At a summit in Paris the heads of state and government from the EU and the Mediterranean and the European Commission launch the “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”.
- 21 July 2008** Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karad_i_ who is accused of war crimes is arrested. The lack of Serbian support for the United Nations war crime tribunal in The Hague has been a longstanding conflict between Serbia and the European Union.
- 8 August 2008** Between Georgia and Russia a military conflict breaks out.
- The opening ceremony of the Olympic games in Beijing: After having earlier suggested to abstain from the ceremony as a sign of protest against the Chinese Tibet policy the French President Sarkozy attends the ceremony “on behalf of the European Union”. Members of the European Parliament oppose this decision.
- 12 August 2008** Russia and Georgia agree on a six-point plan brokered by French President Sarkozy which shall pave the way for peace. European politicians criticise the plan as being too vague.
- 1 September 2008** Heads of state and government meet in Brussels to discuss the European relations to Russia. They agree:
- to postpone the negotiations about a new partnership agreement with Russia (originally scheduled for the 15 and 16 September) until Russian troops have withdrawn to the positions held in Georgia prior to 7 August.
 - to contribute to the OSCE observer mission in South Ossetia by sending observers.
- 7 September 2008** The US government steps in to bail out mortgage lenders “Fannie Mae” and “Freddie Mac”.
- 8 September 2008** The French President Sarkozy meets the Russian President Medvedev in Moscow. Russia and Georgia agree on

implementing the plan from 12 August.

- 15-16 September 2008** The General Affairs and External Relations Council decides to send an independent civilian observer mission to Georgia under the European Security and Defence Policy.
- “Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc.” files for bankruptcy protection in the US.
- 1 October 2008** The “European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia” (EUMM) is deployed.
- 12 October 2008** The summit of the Euro area countries and the United Kingdom in Paris agrees on a “concerted European Action Plan of the Euro Area countries”.
- 15-16 October 2008** The European Council in Brussels:
- adopts the “European Pact on Immigration and Asylum”.
 - hears the Irish Prime Minister’s analysis of the Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.
- 18 October 2008** French President Sarkozy, US President Bush and the President of the European Commission Barroso meet in Camp David to discuss the financial and economic crisis.
- 3-4 November 2008** The “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean” ministerial conference in Marseille agrees on institutional structures of and a working programme for the “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”.
- 4 November 2008** Barack Obama wins the US presidential elections.
- 5 November 2008** In his address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation the Russian President Medvedev announces the plan to deploy the “Iskander missile system” in the Kaliningrad region as a reaction to the American missile defence system on Europe.
- 14 November 2008** The EU-Russia summit in Nice is dominated by the Georgian crisis, the security situation in Europe and the world financial crisis. The EU and Russia agree to continue the postponed negotiations about a partnership agreement.
- 16 November 2008** The first G20 summit on the level of the heads of state and government in Washington agrees on a common statement on the financial and economic crisis.

20 November 2008	The Swedish parliament “Sveriges Riksdag” ratifies the Treaty of Lisbon.
1-12 December 2008	The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznań ends with a clear commitment from governments to shift into full negotiating mode next year in order to shape an ambitious and effective international response to climate change.
8 December 2008	<p>The General Affairs and External Relations Council adopts the decision on the launch of the operation “EU NAVFOR Somalia”, which shall protect ships against piracy off the Somalian coast.</p> <p>French President Sarkozy, British Prime Minister Brown and the President of the European Commission Barroso meet in London with representatives of banks and economists to discuss the current economic crisis.</p>
11-12 December 2008	<p>The European Council in Brussels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - approves a European Economic Recovery Plan, which provides a common framework for the efforts made by member states and by the European Union to tackle the economic crisis. - reaches agreement on the energy and climate change package. - establishes an approach to enable the Treaty of Lisbon to come into force before the end of 2009.
12 December 2008	Switzerland becomes member of the Schengen area and the Dublin system, that aims to determine which member state is responsible for examining an asylum application lodged by a third-country national.
13 December 2008	The operation “EU NAVFOR Somalia” reaches initial operational capability.
17 December 2008	The European Parliament agrees on the energy and climate change package.