



The Reflection Group Horizon 2020-2030

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This Note considers the Reflection Group established by the European Council in December 2007 to discuss the future of Europe.

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1 Background

On 14 December 2007 the European Council decided to establish the independent “Reflection Group horizon 2020-2030. The group – also known as the “Group of Wise Men” - was initially the idea of the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, who, many believed, wanted it to focus on the borders of Europe and enlargement issues, in an attempt to block Turkey’s accession. However, there was opposition from several Eastern European Member States and the UK to limiting the Group’s mandate and the European Council agreed a broader agenda: the Group would identify the key issues faced by the EU in order to help it “anticipate and meet challenges more effectively in the longer term” and would present its report to the European Council in June 2010.

The Presidency Conclusions stated:

Taking as its starting-point the challenges set out in the Berlin Declaration of 25 March 2007, the Group is invited to identify the key issues and developments which the Union is likely to face and to analyse how these might be addressed. This includes, inter alia: strengthening and modernising the European model of economic success and social responsibility, enhancing the competitiveness of the EU, the rule of law, sustainable development as a fundamental objective of the European Union, global stability, migration, energy and climate protection, and the fight against global insecurity, international crime and terrorism. Particular attention should be given to ways of better reaching out to citizens and addressing their expectations and needs.

9. The Group shall conduct its reflections within the framework set out in the Lisbon Treaty. It shall therefore not discuss institutional matters. Nor, in view of its long-term nature, should its analysis constitute a review of current policies or address the Union's next financial framework.

10. In its work, the Reflection Group will need to take into account likely developments within and outside Europe and examine in particular how the stability and prosperity of both the Union and of the wider region might best be served in the longer term.¹

2 Membership

The Group consists of 12 people, selected from across the European Union on the basis of merit. The December 2007 European Council decided on the leadership of the Group as follows:

Chair Felipe González Márquez, former Spanish Prime Minister, known to be sceptical about Turkish EU membership.²

Vice-Chairs Vaira Vīe-Freiberga, former President of Latvia³

Jorma Ollila, Finnish Chairman and Chief Executive Office of Nokia

The Chair and Vice-Chairs submitted a list of nine names to be considered by the European Council during the French Presidency in the second half of 2008 and the European Council decided at its meeting on 15-16 October 2008 on the other members as follows:

Lech Wałęsa, leader of the Polish anti-communist movement 'Solidarność' and former Polish president⁴

Mario Monti, former Italian competition commissioner

Richard Lambert, director general of the Confederation of British Industry and former editor of the Financial Times⁵

Lykke Friis, University of Copenhagen

Nicolas Notat, French former leader of the CFDT trade union

Wolfgang Schuster, German conservative and mayor of Stuttgart

Rainer Muenz, Austrian economist

Rem Koolhaas, Dutch architect

Kalypso Nicolaidis, Greek professor.⁶

The European Council also decided that the "General Secretariat of the Council will provide the Group with material and logistical support".⁷

¹ Presidency Conclusions 14 December 2007 at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf. See also *EurActiv* 17 December 2007 at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/uk-france-clash-future-eu-vision/article-169166>

² *Reuters* 14 December 2007 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSL1431764520071214?sp=true>

³ See *European Voice* 14(42) 13 November 2008 pp12 for biographical profile by Gary Peach

⁴ For comment see "The Polish government wants Lech Wałęsa to join EU's group of wise men. Is this a good idea?" report for Polish radio by Michał Kubicki 13 October 2008 at http://www.polskieradio.pl/zagranica/news/arttykul93441_Lech_Walesa_to_join_EU_group_of_wise_men.html

⁵ For Prime Minister's views on this appointment, see press conference with Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary 15 and 16 October 2008 at <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page17206>

⁶ Presidency Conclusions 15-16 October 2008 Annex 1at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/103441.pdf

The Secretary General of the Group is Dr Žiga Turk, Professor and Chair in Construction Informatics, Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering at the University of Ljubljana, who writes about his views on *Blogactiv*.⁸

3 Cost

In November 2008 the Commission published a Letter of Amendment on the Preliminary Draft Budget to cover the Group's expenditure:

This requirement could not be specified when the preliminary draft budget for 2009 was drawn up, as the proposal by the Chairman of the Reflection Group and its two Vice-Chairmen, regarding the composition of the Group, was not approved until the European Council meeting on 15 and 16 October 2008. At that meeting, the European Council also decided that the Group would start work as soon as possible and that the General Secretariat of the Council would provide it with material and logistical support.

In the light of the Reflection Group's specific activity, and for reasons of budget transparency, it is proposed that the expenditure relating to the Group's proceedings be presented under a separate title (Section II - Council, Title 4: "Reflection Group") in the 2009 budget.

The draft letter of amendment comprises the following elements:

(a) a sum of EUR 260 000 in non-differentiated appropriations, to enable the General Secretariat of the Council to engage a special adviser to act as secretary-general to the Reflection Group;

(b) a sum of EUR 220 000 in non-differentiated appropriations, to cover the expense of travel to Brussels by members of the Reflection Group and their daily subsistence allowances during meetings;

(c) a sum of EUR 200 000 in non-differentiated appropriations, to cover the cost of interpretation made available to the members of the Reflection Group as necessary;

(d) a sum of EUR 300 000 in non-differentiated appropriations, to cover the cost of seminars and studies by external experts in line with the Group's mandate as adopted by the European Council;

(e) a sum of EUR 30 000 in non-differentiated appropriations, to cover the costs of representation, and a sum of EUR 50 000 in non-differentiated appropriations, to cover other operating expenditure.

Material and logistical support for Reflection Group meetings (Secretariat officials, offices and meeting rooms) would be provided by the General Secretariat of the Council at no additional cost.

The Reflection Group's total operating expenditure for 2009 would thus be EUR 1 060 000. It is proposed that this sum be taken from the contingency reserve (EUR 2,5 million) which is included in the preliminary draft budget for 2009.⁹

⁷ Ibid

⁸ <http://zturk.blogactiv.eu/archives/107>

4 To meet in private or public?

Žiga Turk noted in his blog on 10 December 2008:

The issue for the members is, should they keep quiet in public, should the group deliberate in the locked room until it comes with a carefully worded final report. But the goal of the group is also to "Particular attention should be given to ways of better reaching out to citizens and addressing their expectations and needs." There are few better ways but to use the internet. So I plan to write something from time to time. And I hope so will the members of the Reflection Group.¹⁰

Felipe González told the EP's Constitutional Affairs Committee on 21 January 2009 that the Group had not yet decided whether it will work behind closed doors or open the discussion up to the public via an Internet consultation. Insisting that he was presenting his personal views, Mr González said the Group was still in doubt as to whether its work should be "not secret, but discreet", or "open to the entirety of society in an interactive way".¹¹

The Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported on the only meeting so far on 26 June 2008 in Riga, Latvia, at which the Group's leadership discussed potential candidates for membership of the Group:

In accordance with the mandate approved at the European Council, the leaders of the Reflection Group debated the issues of the European Union's future and its prospective challenges in a globalised world. Themes to be reviewed in the Group's final report for 2010 will be decided by the complete membership.

The members of the Reflection Group also discussed developments topical for the EU following the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland and agreed that its negative outcome would not influence the Reflection Group's mandate which does not include the consideration of the European Union's institutional issues.¹²

5 The key questions

Felipe González was reported to have told the Constitutional Affairs Committee in January that the Group would try to answer the question as to how the EU can become more relevant to its citizens and the rest of the world. He outlined his proposed priorities:

- How to maintain Europe's model of social cohesion in the 21st century, based on the Lisbon agenda, the results of which he called "unsatisfactory";
- Energy and climate change, which in his view requires a "revolution" in the use of energy sources. He also spoke strongly in favour of nuclear energy;
- Migration flows, in the perspective of answering the demographic needs of the 'Old Continent';

⁹ Letter of Amendment No 3 to the Preliminary Draft Budget 2009 – Statement of Expenditure by Section - Section II – Council, 15845/08 FIN 501, 17 November 2008, SEC(2008) 2840 final at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SEC:2008:2840:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹⁰ <http://zturk.blogactiv.eu/>

¹¹ *EurActiv* 22 January 2009 at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/eu-wise-men-group-hesitates-go-public/article-178723?Ref=RSS>

¹² <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/2008/June/26-5/>

- Responding to the challenges of terrorism and organised crime;
- Responding to challenges stemming from conflict zones and failed states. In this respect, he mentioned the Caucasus and possible conflict scenarios should Ukraine denies Russia a renewal of its rental contract for the Black Sea port of Sebastopol, which expires in 2017.¹³

Mr González also told the Committee the Group would consider how to take advantage of the new US administration and would discuss the notions of a European identity and European values. He outlined his views on the former US administration's planned missile shield in Europe, relations with Russia in the light of the recent Georgia and gas crises, and whether leaving the EU should be possible.

6 Other views

6.1 UK

A Downing Street press briefing on the British Government's views in December 2007 stated:

Asked what kind of issues the Government wanted to see in the remit for the Reflections Group, the PMS said that the Government did not think it necessary for the group to reopen the question of institutional reform, nor were we anticipating much focus on defence issues. The main issue was to look ahead over the next 20 or 30 years and look at the challenges that would come from globalisation, climate change and migration flows. These kinds of issues were what European people and European businesses really cared about.

Asked who would be in the group and would there be any British representatives included, the PMS replied that the main discussion would be around the remit and it was possible that there may be an outcome in terms of a chairman for the group, but further names should not be anticipated. The PMS added that the Government would like to see British representation in this group and it was something we were pushing for. However, the Government was not anticipating the whole composition of the group being finalised today. Asked if the Prime Minister was concerned about the coverage of his arrival in Lisbon, the PMS reiterated that the Prime Minister's view was that it was a complete fuss about nothing and the most important thing was that we focus on the real issues that really matter to the people of Europe and that's what would be discussed today.¹⁴

Parliamentary questions:

December 2007

Lord Strathclyde: On the substance of the summit, we are reassured that the new reflection group is said explicitly not to be able to discuss institutional matters. But is it not disappointing that it is equally not permitted to consider current EU policies? Where does that leave, for instance, the Lisbon process? The communiqué says that it is "delivering". That is a bit of old new Labour-speak for you. Where is it delivering? How many EU directives and regulations

¹³ *EurActiv* 22 January 2009

¹⁴ 14 December 2007 at <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page14066>

have been scrapped since the Lisbon process began, and how many have been introduced? I wonder if the noble Baroness could tell us.¹⁵

To which Baroness Ashton replied:

The reflection group is not looking at Lisbon. The 2008-11 cycle of the Lisbon strategy will be agreed in the spring Council. Instead, the reflection group is looking longer term, to 2020 and 2030, and our priorities are firmly on the agenda.¹⁶

April 2008

Lord Dykes asked Her Majesty's Government:

What proposals they intend to submit to the committee chaired by Felipe Gonzalez which is considering the future of Europe after the Lisbon treaty. [HL2959]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Malloch-Brown): There was clear consensus at the December 2007 European Council on the mandate for the Reflection Group, namely: strengthening and modernising the European model of economic success and social responsibility, enhancing the competitiveness of the EU, the rule of law, sustainable development as a fundamental objective of the EU, global stability, migration, energy and climate protection, and the fight against global insecurity, international crime and terrorism. The Government will work with the group to ensure that this mandate is fulfilled and that the Government's Global Europe agenda is reflected in its work.¹⁷

6.2 Turkey

Dr. Mehmet Ozcan, writing for the Turkish research body, the International Strategic Research Organisation in January 2008, commented:

Sarkozy's Reflection Group dealing with the long term future of EU between 2020 and 2030 was also one of the most discussed subjects before and during Lisbon Summit. The discussions were mostly related to the extent of the areas which the group would responsible for. Sarkozy had regarded the Reflection Group as a platform which would focus on preventing possible accession of Turkey. The functions of the group, however, were revised in the end and do not cover the further enlargement of EU. The leaders decided to make the reflection group responsible on immigration, terrorism, economic and social threats (globalization) and global warming. The Reflection Group will present their study in 2010.

That the Reflection Group is not supposed to discuss the Turkey's future is regarded positively by many. Still, one should be careful at this point. An expert view on the possible membership of Turkey may indeed have many positive contributions on the issue. My personal opinion is that such a study can be more advantageous for Turkey. Even if the conclusion of such a study would

¹⁵ HL Deb 17 December 2007 cc493-5 at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/71217-0004.htm#0712172000145>

¹⁶ Ibid c 498 at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/71217-0005.htm>

¹⁷ HL Deb 22 April 2008 c WA282 at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/80422w0002.htm#08042289000390>

propose a Europe without Turkey, Turkey could have the opportunity to see its future in EU in 2010, without having to wait until 2015. Furthermore, we would not give the leaders as Sarkozy and other politicians in similar ideological path, the opportunity to instrumentalize Turkey in order to serve for their domestic policies. On the other hand, if the would be conclusion would advise the EU to shape its future together with Turkey, a more detailed analysis could be achieved. Such a detailed study would give a clearer answer to the following question “what kind of Europe that we are willing to have including Turkey?” One more important thing worth mentioning is the fact that the Reflection group has to cooperate with Turkey in fields of terrorism and immigration. Thus, the study of the Reflection Group that leaves the analysis of Turkey’s membership out of their work will be left incomplete.¹⁸

6.3 Poland

The nomination of Lech Walesa as a member of the Group initially met with some opposition from the Polish President, Lech Kaczyński, who is known to be an opponent of Mr Wałęsa. However, Mr Kaczynski did not block the membership.

6.4 Conference of Presidents of Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG)

6. The Presidents will continue contributing to the debate on the future of the EU. REGLEG will therefore monitor closely the agenda of the reflection group ‘Horizon 2020-2030’ headed by Felipe Gonzalez. REGLEG requests to be involved in the groups activities through hearings or structured dialogue meetings in order to ensure the input of Regions with Legislative Power to the reflection on the future of the EU and in particular with regard to democratic legitimacy of the Union.¹⁹

7 Further reading

- “A Chance for Wise Men”, *spotlight europe* 2007/07, October 2007, Matthias Chardon and Sarah Seeger (Center for Applied Policy Research), Dominik Hierlemann (Bertelsmann Stiftung), at http://www.euractiv.com/29/images/spotlight_A%20Chance%20for%20Wise%20Men_tcm29-167763.pdf
- *Financial Times* “Rebel seeks innovators to shake up Europe”, Leslie Crawford January 15 2008 at http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9b9f228e-c30e-11dc-b617-0000779fd2ac.html?nclick_check=1
- *Open Europe* “Labour ask: why all the fuss on Europe?”, Gabriel Milland Express 15 December 2007, at <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/media-centre/article.aspx?newsid=2055>
- *Financial Times*, 6 December 2007 “EU reins in Sarkozy 'wise men' plan”, Tony Barber.

¹⁸ International Strategic Research Organisation, By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet OZCAN, USAK 3 January 2008 <http://www.usak.org.tr/EN/makale.asp?id=662>

¹⁹ Declaration of Brussels 4 - 5 December 2008 adopted by the 9th Conference of Presidents of Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG) at <http://www.regleg.eu/downloads/activities/declaracion5dec08.pdf>