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The influence of the rotating Council Presidency on the European Union's external policies

An analysis of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies in 2011 and 2013 and their influence on the EU's policies towards the Eastern Partnership countries

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Abstract (English)

In the past decades, the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union has played an increasingly important role in the Union's decision-making. From 2009 onwards, with the entry into effect of the Treaty of Lisbon, a number of reformed or newly created institutions and services took over several responsibilities of the rotating Council Presidency. However, the Presidency continues to play a crucial part in the Council. Parallel to these developments, scholarly attention for this topic has considerably grown since the beginning of the 21st century.

With this dissertation, I address several aspects of the influence of the rotating Council Presidency on the European Union's external policies. The empirical focus lies on the Hungarian (first half of 2011), the Polish (second half of 2011) and the Lithuanian (second half of 2013) Council Presidencies and how they (tried to) influence(d) the Union's policies towards the countries covered by the Eastern Partnership (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan).

The main body of the dissertation consists of four articles. The first article reviews the literature on *'success'* and *'influence'* of the Presidency and points to the crucial differences between these two concepts. It also explains how a lack of clarity on this distinction can blur discussions on how to evaluate Presidencies. Furthermore, the article discusses the *conditions for success or influence* as described in the existing literature on the Presidency.

The second article assesses the influence of the Polish Presidency on the Eastern Partnership policies. In doing so, it focuses on three dimensions of influence: the article finds that (i) Presidency influence is possible for *agendas* but not for the *contents* of decisions, (ii) most Presidency influence on external policies can be observed in the *preparatory bodies* of the Council, and (iii) Presidency influence is noted in *bilateral* as well as *multilateral* dossiers, but the nature of the incumbent country's involvement is different for both types of policies.

The third article compares the influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies on Eastern Partnership policies through Qualitative Comparative Analysis. It identifies (only) one *necessary condition* for influence – i.e. high salience of an issue to the Presidency. The analysis also points to three combinations of conditions that can be *sufficient* for Presidency influence. A complex interplay between causal conditions (size and reputation of the incumbent country, division of labour between the Presidency's decision-making centres, and political sensitivity of the topic) is revealed in this regard.

In the fourth article, I focus on the necessary condition for influence that was identified earlier with Qualitative Comparative Analysis: where does the salience of an issue come from, what are the motivations behind Presidency priorities and preferences? Using an online survey, this article seeks explanations for the strong emphasis of the Lithuanian Presidency on closer relations with the Eastern Partnership. It explores – and touches upon the limits of – *opposing theoretical logics* (consequentialism vs. appropriateness) that could explain preference formation. In addition, it finds that the place of residence of the respondents during the Presidency is only very loosely related to their visions on the Eastern Partnership.

The dissertation concludes with some general reflections on the changing roles of the Presidency, the limitations of the study and possible venues for future research, and some contributions of the research for the academic literature and beyond.

Abstract (Nederlands)

In de voorbije decennia is de rol van het roterend voorzitterschap van de Raad van de Europese Unie steeds belangrijker geworden voor de besluitvorming in de Unie. Sinds 2009, toen het Verdrag van Lissabon in werking trad, zijn een aantal vroegere taken van het voorzitterschap overgenomen door hervormde of nieuw opgerichte instituties. Toch blijft het roterend voorzitterschap een cruciale actor in de Raad. De politiek-wetenschappelijke literatuur heeft deze ontwikkelingen gevolgd en het aantal studies over het voorzitterschap is sinds het begin van de 21ste eeuw stelselmatig gegroeid.

Deze dissertatie gaat in op een aantal aspecten van de invloed van het roterend voorzitterschap op het extern beleid van de Europese Unie. De empirische focus ligt op de Hongaarse (eerste helft van 2011), Poolse (tweede helft van 2011) en Litouwse (tweede helft van 2013) voorzitterschappen, en hoe zij met wisselend succes probeerden om het beleid van de Europese Unie te beïnvloeden ten aanzien van het Oostelijk Partnerschap (Wit-Rusland, Oekraïne, Moldavië, Armenië en Azerbeidzjan).

De thesis bestaat uit vier artikels. Het eerste artikel geeft een overzicht van de literatuur over *'succes'* en *'invloed'* van het voorzitterschap, en duidt de cruciale verschillen tussen deze twee concepten aan. Het legt ook uit waarom een gebrek aan duidelijkheid over dit onderscheid de evaluatie van voorzitterschappen kan bemoeilijken. Tenslotte bespreekt het artikel de verschillende *condities voor succes of invloed* die in de bestaande literatuur naar voren worden geschoven.

Het tweede artikel analyseert de invloed van het Poolse voorzitterschap op het Oostelijk Partnerschapsbeleid. Het doet dit voor drie dimensies van invloed en besluit dat (i) het voorzitterschap invloed kan uitoefenen op *agenda's* maar niet op de *inhoud* van genomen beslissingen, (ii) als het voorzitterschap invloed uitoefent, dit meestal in de *voorbereidende organen van de Raad* gebeurt, en (iii) het voorzitterschap zowel in *bilaterale* als in *multilaterale* dossiers een invloed kan uitoefenen, hoewel het voorzittende land op zeer verschillende manieren betrokken is bij beide beleidstypes.

Het derde artikel vergelijkt de invloed van de Hongaarse, Poolse en Litouwse voorzitterschappen op het Oostelijk Partnerschapsbeleid met een Kwalitatieve Comparatieve Analyse. Hiermee wordt (slechts) één *noodzakelijke* voorwaarde gevonden voor invloed van het voorzitterschap – d.i. belang van het onderwerp voor het voorzitterschap. De analyse onderscheidt ook drie *voldoende* combinaties van condities voor invloed, en brengt een complexe interactie tussen verschillende causale condities naar voor: grootte en reputatie van het voorzittende land, (geografische) organisatie van het voorzitterschap, en politieke gevoeligheid van specifieke onderwerpen.

In het vierde artikel ga ik dieper in op de noodzakelijke voorwaarde voor invloed die werd geïdentificeerd met Kwalitatieve Comparatieve Analyse: wat zijn de motivaties achter de prioriteiten van het voorzitterschap, waarom zijn sommige zaken zo belangrijk? Via een online enquête zoekt dit artikel naar verklaringen voor de sterke nadruk die het Litouwse voorzitterschap legde op het Oostelijk Partnerschap. Ik onderzoek – en bots op de grenzen van – rivaliserende *theoretische logica* ('consequentialism' vs. 'appropriateness') die aan de basis kunnen liggen van prioriteiten en voorkeuren. In het artikel besluit ik verder dat de plaats waar de respondenten werkten tijdens het voorzitterschap slechts zeer los in verband kan worden gebracht met hun visie op het Oostelijk Partnerschap.

De dissertatie besluit met een aantal reflecties over de veranderende rollen van het voorzitterschap, de beperkingen van de studie en mogelijke onderwerpen voor verdere analyse, alsook de bijdragen van dit onderzoek aan de academische literatuur en daarbuiten.

About the author

Bruno Vandecasteele is a PhD fellow and grant holder of the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). He works at the Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University, since October 2011. He obtained a Master in criminology (2007) and a Master in international politics (2009) at Ghent University. In 2009-2010 he was a trainee at the Belgian Embassy in Lithuania and in 2010-2011 he worked for a small company that distributes solar energy systems. Bruno Vandecasteele has been a visiting researcher at the Institute of International Relations of the University of Warsaw (2012) and at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University (2013 and 2014). He has taught seminars and guest lectures on a broad range of topics, including decision-making in the EU, the EU's policies towards the post-Soviet space, and transport policy in the EU.

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Even though I cannot substantiate it with references to scientific studies, I have the impression that writing a PhD dissertation is generally seen as a lonely undertaking. This has not been the case for me: in the past years I have been surrounded by very kind, competent and supportive supervisors and colleagues, and I had the luck to meet dozens of people outside Ghent University, who in one way or another all contributed to my research. I am grateful to them all for doing what they do, and I would like to mention a few of them here in particular.

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List of abbreviations

AGRI = Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector
AS = ascription (indicator of influence)
CEPOL = European Police College
CEPS = Centre for European Policy Studies
CFSP = Common Foreign and Security Policy
CNA = Coincidence Analysis
COEST working party = working party on Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia
Coreper = Committee of Permanent Representatives to the EU
CORLEAP = Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership
COWEB working party = working party on EU relations with the Western Balkan countries
CSDP = Common Security and Defence Policy
CSF = Civil Society Forum
CSO = Civil Society Organisation
csQCA = crisp-set QCA
DCFTA = Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EaP = Eastern Partnership
EAR method = Ego/Alter perception, Researcher's analysis
EBRD = European Bank of Reconstruction and Development
EEAS = European External Action Service
EED = European Endowment for Democracy
EIB = European Investment Bank
ENP = European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI = European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EPTP = Eastern Partnership Transport Panel
ESDC = European Security and Defence College
EU = European Union
EUBAM = EU Border Assistance Mission
EuroNest PA = EU-EaP Parliamentary Assembly
EUSDR = EU Strategy for the Danube Region
FIRE = Fostering Innovative Research based on Evidence (Ghent University)
FRIDE = Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior
fsQCA = fuzzy-set QCA
GA = goal achievement (indicator of influence)
HR/VP = High Representative for CFSP and Vice-President of the European Commission
INUS condition = Insufficient but Non-redundant part of an Unnecessary but Sufficient combination of conditions
JAI-RELEX working party (JAIEX) = working party on external aspects of Justice and Home Affairs
JHA = Justice and Home Affairs
KERM = European Committee of the Council of Ministers (Poland)
KIE = Committee for European Integration (Poland)
KSE = Committee on European Affairs (Poland)
LLRA = Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (political party, Lithuania)

MEP = Member of the European Parliament
MFA = Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFF = Multiannual Financial Framework
MSZP = Social Democrats' Party (political party, Hungary)
NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD = Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCA = Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
permrep = Permanent Representation to the European Union
PESTD = EU Council Presidency Department (Lithuania)
PiS = Law and Justice (political party, Poland)
PISM = Polish Institute for International Affairs
PMG = Politico-Military Group
PO = Civic Platform (political party, Poland)
PR = political relevance (indicator of influence)
QCA = Qualitative Comparative Analysis
QMV = Qualified Majority Voting
SUIN condition = Sufficient but Unnecessary part of a combination that is Insufficient but Necessary for the outcome
Taiex = Technical assistance and information exchange
TEN-T = Trans-European Transport Network
TRACECA = Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
TTE Council = Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council of the EU
UKIE = Office of the Committee for European Integration (Poland)
VESK = Governmental Commission on EU Affairs (Lithuania)
VLAP = Visa Liberalisation Action Plan

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Information about co-authored articles

The first three articles in the dissertation are co-authored. For these articles, I conducted the desk- and field research after broad consultations with my (co)supervisors on the concepts and methods to be used. Subsequently, my drafts were reviewed by the co-author(s) and revised by me.

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The third article ('The Influence of the Council Presidency on External EU Policies: A Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies and EU Eastern Partnership Policies' was submitted with Jan Orbie and Fabienne Bossuyt to *European Politics and Society*.
Contribution of Bruno Vandecasteele: 70%.

General introduction

'If there is no political backing from a Council Presidency, the EU institutions will not continue to prioritize the Eastern Partnership' (interview 54).
'The future of the Eastern Partnership will be like all other partnerships. It will go on, it will produce certain results, there will be some disappointments, people will fight for funds, and that's it' (interview 16).
'Another Presidency [than Poland] might not want to lose its resources on the continuation of negotiations [on an Association Agreement] with Ukraine. We made everybody believe that it had to be done, that would we organize as many Corepers as necessary, even on Sundays' (interview 3).
'The Council Presidency is a kind of duty, but not an unpleasant one. If you manage to fulfil your duties, there is also space for opportunities, to increase your influence and reputation in the EU' (interview 37).

These quotes, all personal statements of different civil servants who worked for different Presidencies of the Council of the European Union (hereinafter: Presidencies), very well illustrate the puzzle that lie at the basis of this PhD dissertation. They refer to a number of pressing questions related to the influence of the Presidency on the external policies of the European Union (EU).
The aim of this introduction is, first of all, to familiarize the reader with this general research puzzle and to develop research questions. The dissertation consists of four articles that each deal with (a) specific aspect(s) of the general research topic. Empirically, the PhD project focuses on the Hungarian (first half of 2011), Polish (second half of 2011) and Lithuanian (second half of 2013) Presidencies and their influence on the formulation and development of the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) policies. The EaP serves as the umbrella under which the EU organizes its bilateral and multilateral relations with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.
Following an outline of the research questions, this introduction clarifies the meta-theoretical considerations that played a role in the dissertation, as well as its analytical framework. Furthermore, it highlights the choices I made with regard to methodology, data gathering and analysis, and the selection of countries and policies. The introduction does not contain one specific section on the status quaestionis. Instead, the (relation of my work to the) existing literature is outlined throughout this introduction – in particular in the discussions on meta-theory and the analytical framework – as well as in the four articles that make up the body of the dissertation. The final section of the introduction clarifies the structure of the dissertation: it presents an overview of the four articles constituting the dissertation, and discusses how they were developed. It also touches upon the general conclusions of the dissertation and the appendixes.

1. Research puzzle and research questions

Debates on the roles of the Presidency in EU decision-making emerged more than 30 years ago, with several scholars questioning the capacity of the incumbent country to exert influence (see e.g. Ludlow 1993 | Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace 2006 | Culley, Neisse & Raik 2011). The most sceptical among them was probably Dewost, who famously argued that the Presidency was a *"responsibility without power"* (1984, pp. 2, translated from French). However, since the early 2000s an increasing amount of studies have been pointing to the opposite, showing that the incumbent country does have several tools to increase its influence during the Presidency period (to name a few: Arter 2000 | Bjurulf 2001 | Tallberg 2003; 2004 | Schalk, Torenvlied, Weesie & Stokman 2007 | Warntjen 2007 |

Thomson 2008 | Bunse 2009). As will become clear throughout the articles of this dissertation, the three Presidencies of this study were also able to exert influence on certain aspects of the EU's EaP policies. My research does *not* look at the difference in influence of a Member State between *when it does and when it does not hold the Presidency*. Instead, it is interested in knowing *under which conditions it can exert influence* and *what the motivations are behind a Presidency's priority selection*. Despite the growing body of literature on Presidency influence, several questions remain (partly) unanswered: how and in which bodies of the Council can a Presidency exert influence? To what extent can a Presidency exert influence and under which conditions? Are relatively new Member States also able and willing to use the prerogatives of the Presidency instrumentally to steer decision-making in directions they find important? An important additional element of the puzzle is constituted by the recent changes to the institutional architecture of EU external policy-making. In the nearly six decades of its existence, the Presidency has evolved from an actor merely organising Council meetings to a crucial element of EU decision-making, not only within the Council but also as an indispensable intermediate between the different EU institutions (see e.g. Westlake & Galloway 2004). As pointed out *infra* (sections 3.4. and 3.5. on Presidency roles), the official and unofficial roles of the Presidency were thoroughly amended with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. The role of the Presidency in external policies was especially affected, because other actors such as the newly created Permanent President of the European Council, the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy who is also Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), and the European External Action Service (EEAS) took over important aspects of the Presidency's previous tasks. In addition, the competences of the European Parliament were substantially broadened. Especially the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies took place in an interesting period where the institutions, Member States and Presidencies were looking for a mutually acceptable *modus vivendi* within the new institutional context.

The post-Lisbon system for external policy-making has inspired a lively academic debate, which has thus far mostly focused on different aspects of the new actors (the HR/VP and the EEAS), but also on the global role played by the European Parliament (e.g. Stavridis & Irrera 2015). For example, on the new actors, recent contributions have focused on socialisation within the new European diplomatic service (e.g. Juncos & Pomorska 2014), aspects of agenda setting by the HR/VP and the EEAS (e.g. Vanhoonacker & Pomorska 2013), power rapports between the EEAS on the one hand and the Member States or other EU institutions on the other hand (e.g. Furness 2013 | Kostanyan & Orbie 2013 | Wisniewski 2013 | Kostanyan 2014), and the potential of a common European diplomacy in strengthening EU external action (e.g. Cross 2011 | Duke 2012 | Blockmans & Spernbauer 2013). Throughout the four articles of this dissertation, I address a number of specific questions related to '*quid* Presidency?' – questions that moved somewhat to the background in recent years, even though the Presidency is still central in the EU's decision-making process, also in external policies. As will be explained in the following paragraphs, I started from a general question and gradually came to formulate more specific questions, often based on what I found in the analysis of empirical data (especially in the second and the fourth article of the dissertation).

The first general question is an analytical one and is addressed in the first article of the dissertation: *how do Presidency 'influence' and 'success' differ from each other in evaluating Presidencies?* The article argues that the fact that the distinction between these two concepts was not clearly made in previous studies, has blurred discussions on whether or not the Presidency can exert influence on decision-making. This article also provides a framework for the further empirical research in this dissertation and reviews the possible conditions for influence (see point 5. of this introduction).

Using this analytical distinction, the analysis of empirical data soon revealed that there are important differences between influence on agendas vs. influence on the contents of decisions, and that this influence seems to differ according to the forum in which it is exerted (e.g. preparatory level vs. ministerial meetings). In addition, the data suggested that influence on bilateral relations with individual EaP countries is not the same as influence on multilateral EU-EaP frameworks. This led me to formulate three research questions, which were analysed in the second article of the dissertation with the Polish Presidency as an empirical case.

RQ 1: What type(s) of influence does the Presidency exert?

RQ 2: In which forums for decision-making is the Presidency's influence most prominent?

RQ 3: (How) does Presidency influence differ with regard to bilateral and multilateral policies?

The third article of the dissertation compares the influence of Hungary, Poland and Lithuania on the EaP policies during their respective Presidencies. It addresses the central topic of this PhD and brings together the largest part of empirical data I gathered throughout my research. The question here is:

RQ 4: What are the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for a Presidency to exert influence on EU external policies?

As we will see, the conclusions of this article reveal that, while there are several possible causal paths that can be sufficient for a Presidency to exert influence, there is only one necessary condition for Presidency influence: the topic should be of high salience to the officials of the incumbent country. In other words, the officials working for the Presidency are not generally influential, but only (possibly) exert influence in some areas that they find highly important. All other conditions for influence are not necessary in the sense that they do not always have to be fulfilled for a Presidency to exert influence.

This striking conclusion led me to analyse the reasons behind preference formation. With the Lithuanian Presidency as a case study, I analyse a topic that is generally salient to the Presidency – that is, closer relations between the EaP region and the EU. Apart from an analysis of the aims of the EaP policies as such, the fourth article addresses two more theoretical questions that are relevant to the dissertation as a whole:

RQ 5: How can the preferences and priorities of officials working for a Presidency be theoretically explained?

More specifically, RQ5 addresses the question how the opposing logics of action, i.e. the logic of expected consequences vs. the logic of appropriateness (see *infra*), can be used to explain the formation of preferences. And finally:

RQ 6: (How) does preference formation differ among officials according to the location where they work and the functions they perform?

For RQ6 it could be expected that officials who are permanently based in Brussels during the Presidency would emphasize national preferences less than their colleagues who are capital-based, because the former group is more exposed to the culture and norms of the EU institutions. Similar expectations can be formulated with regard to the officials who chaired preparatory Council meetings (as opposed to those who did not perform these functions). I elaborate on these issues in the fourth article of the dissertation.

2. Meta-theoretical considerations: pragmatism, 'isms' and 'ologies'

> *'Of course, one does not need to be a pragmatist to proceed in a pragmatic way. Precisely because it is derived from practice, pragmatic commonsense is as old as the hills'* (Friedrichs 2009, p. 646).

The author of this quote continues on the same page that, even though it is certainly valuable, such practical commonsense does not qualify as scientific methodology. This quote perfectly illustrates the role pragmatism has played throughout my research. Even though I learned about pragmatism as a methodology only after I finalized a considerable part of my empirical research, I *discovered* that there is actually a rich philosophical basis for the way I conducted my research. In other words, after having started on the basis of pragmatic commonsense, I continued my research in a more solid meta-theoretical framework.

A crucial element of pragmatism is its emphasis on methodology. In my view, one of its most important contributions to the social sciences is its emphasis on abduction as a research strategy. The term 'abduction', as one of three possible modes of reasoning, was first developed by Peirce (e.g. 1931). Whereas deduction imposes pre-defined theoretical templates on empirical observations, induction infers general rules from empirical observations. Abductive reasoning, in turn, can be seen as inference to the best explanation, to something that *may be*. There is much discussion on what the concept actually means (see e.g. Chiasson 2001), and also social scientists subscribing to a pragmatist tradition have interpreted the concept in different ways. Friedrichs (2009), for example, describes abduction as reasoning at an intermediate level between deduction and induction. Rytövuori-Apunen (2009) rejects the binary logic of deduction vs. induction and therefore refuses to see abduction as an intermediate between the two. In any case, pragmatists broadly agree that abduction is a distinct scientific methodology and that it merges creativity, experimentation, testing and adaptation. They recognize the importance of an 'individual sensation in knowing', as Rytövuori-Apunen (2009, p. 644) calls it: science should not be limited to deduction or induction, because all possible knowledge coming from these modes of inference is already included in the premises. Abduction means finding something 'new'; it allows for moving back and forth between existing theoretical knowledge and empirical observations on a topic that, for any reasons, seems interesting to the researcher. In fact, abduction is a widely-used strategy in social sciences: only very little research projects are conducted according to the strict scheme of hypothesis formulation, case selection, testing, etc. Many researchers *de facto* use abduction as a mode of inference, making only *ex post* rationalizations for what they have done when it comes to presenting the results (Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009 | Hellmann 2009).

The emphasis on methods as problem-solving tools has important implications for the two other issues that are part of what Hellmann (2009, p. 641) calls 'a sort of trinity in elaborating one's position *vis-à-vis* science and scholarship': ontology and epistemology. Pragmatism is sometimes

seen as a theory of truth or a theory of knowledge (e.g. in Franke & Weber 2011), but the essence is, according to Rorty (1980, p. 719), that pragmatists challenge 'the assumption that there ought to *be* theories about such matters'.

Hellmann (2009, pp. 641-642) argues that for pragmatists the question of ontology – what exists? – does simply not arise: 'an "as if" assumption usually suffices to deal with those aspects of reality (for example, an "international system" or a "state"), which we cannot observe directly.' He continues that 'the state is experienced as "real" when I pay taxes or refuse to go to war for it. Thus, establishing intersubjective understandings as to how to deal successfully with reality is all that is needed'. Friedrichs and Kratochwil (2009) do raise the ontological question and strongly reject ontological realism, but their alternative for dealing with ontology – that is, epistemological instrumentalism (see *infra*) – has the same implications as not raising the question at all.

Pragmatists deal with epistemology – what is the nature and scope of knowledge? – in a similar way. One aspect of pragmatist epistemology is that beliefs are seen as rules for action (James 1907, Lecture II | Peirce [1878] 1997). We acquire beliefs (knowledge) through inquiry (action), so thinking and acting are two sides of the same coin: pragmatism defends a unified theory of thought and action. Separating thought and action produces misleading questions about how we think, and can only remain at an abstract level. Another aspect of pragmatist epistemology is that it rejects a correspondence theory of truth. It is true that we have to cope with reality, but our beliefs do not necessarily have to correspond to it if we want to do so successfully (Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009 | Hellmann 2009). Kaag and Kreps (2012, p. 195) add that, even if there might a reality beyond our finite understanding of it, we can never have definitive proof of correspondence between our descriptions and the real.

The pragmatist epistemology transcends the dichotomy between positivist and anti-positivist views to scientific discovery. The problem with positivism, which emphasizes objectivity and looks for law-like mechanisms occurring in a reality independent of human observation, is that no theory can completely satisfy its demands of objectivity and falsifiability. By contrast, anti-positivism, stressing the creative role of active and subjective agents while none of them can make a claim on 'truth', leads to relativism and can be satisfied by nearly every theory. Pragmatism assesses theory according to a third criterion, i.e. its capacity to solve human problems (Rorty 1989 | Powell 2001 | Kaag & Kreps 2012): 'To a pragmatist, the mandate of science is not to find truth or reality, the existence of which are perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem-solving' (Powell 2001, p. 884).

To summarize how I make use of the pragmatist view to ontology and epistemology, I borrow from van Fraassen's argument for '*agnosticism* about the existence of the unobservable aspects of the world' (van Fraassen 1980, pp. 72, emphasis added), and I agree with Friedrichs and Kratochwil that epistemological *instrumentalism* (emphasis added) is the way to go for the production of useful knowledge. Useful knowledge is knowledge that helps 'to understand complex social phenomena and/or to explain observed social regularities' (Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009, p. 706).

Much of the attractiveness of pragmatism stems from its anti-''istic'' disposition (Hellmann 2009, p. 639); the main aim of pragmatist research is to produce useful knowledge. In this interpretation, pragmatism has no own dogmas, doctrines or predictive power. In the words of James, one of the founding fathers of pragmatism, 'any [theory] may from some point of view be useful' (James 1907, lecture II).

The anti-'istic' stance of pragmatism – a name that ironically violates its own approach – is very much what I pursued throughout my research. I agree with Lake (2011) that 'isms' are evil; Lake somewhat dramatically denounces that social scientists organize themselves into academic sects, engage in self-

affirming research and then wage theological debates between academic religions, which actually produces less understanding rather than more. He argues that social scientists should instead focus their research on problems, not on approaches; to study 'things that matter' (Lake 2011, p. 471) instead of organising around research traditions. The view of social scientists as being organized in sects is of course exaggerated: in the past decades numerous attempts were made to bridge (meta-)theoretical rifts, and concepts such as rationalism, constructivism and methodological individualism were fine-tuned in the political science literature (e.g. Checkel & Moravcsik 2001 | Fearon & Wendt 2002 | Barkin 2003 | Jupille, Caporaso & Checkel 2003 | Barkin 2010). Debates on the meaning and interrelations between theoretical concepts are also present in studies on the Presidency (e.g. Elgström 2003b | Niemann & Mak 2010 | Buchet de Neuilly 2011 | Verhoeff & Niemann 2011). However, I do agree that one should not (try to) stick to one 'ism', since this may produce blinders with regard to other possible views on the social world. Various theoretical tools and concepts are potentially useful for answering questions about this social world. The main aim of my dissertation is to make an analytical, empirical and methodological contribution to scholarly knowledge on decision-making in the EU, rather than providing support to one or several (meta-)theoretical perspective(s).

3. Analytical framework

From the 1990s onwards, but especially since the start of the 21st century, the Presidency has been studied from a variety of angles and approaches. Each individual article in my dissertation introduces the relevant literature for the specific topic and highlights the relation of my research to this literature. This introduction therefore does not include a detailed status quaestionis that discusses the existing literature that is relevant to Presidency influence. Instead, it sets out the general analytical framework that played a role throughout my research. It includes, on the one hand, theoretical considerations on the logics of action, success, power and influence. On the other hand it presents some tools to assess Presidencies, that is, the conditions under which the Presidency can exert influence on EU decision-making, as well as the roles of the Presidency and the norms that affect the performance of Presidency functions. Throughout this section, I refer to the respective articles for a deeper elaboration of the topic where applicable.

3.1. Logics of action

An important implication of my anti-'istic' stance is that I reject clear-cut assumptions on the role of the logics of action inspiring actors' behaviour. The most famous and most applied distinction is the one between consequentiality and appropriateness (often associated to the work of March & Olsen 1998). In the former logic, which follows a rationalist perspective, behaviour and preferences are seen as the result of rational calculations to satisfy pre-defined and externally 'given' interests. The latter logic, which follows a constructivist perspective, describes behaviour and preferences as stemming from the internalisation of group norms. Within the constructivist approach, Risse (2000) further distinguishes between arguing/deliberation and norm compliance. Warntjen (2010) summarizes other categorisations of logics of action, and illustrates that the existing literature on the topic is thus far inconclusive: the same empirical observations can support rationalist as well as constructivist theoretical perspectives. Warntjen argues that more specific descriptions of the differences between modes (logics of actions) should be developed, as well as theories on how these modes interact in various settings. The fact that he calls the literature 'inconclusive' (2010, p. 673) illustrates a perceived necessity to 'conclude' which logic plays when. It follows, implicitly, that either

logic should dominate according to the context, so different logics cannot be equally and simultaneously 'present' at any point in time.

The difficulty to empirically distinguish between the logics has led several authors to formulate doubts on their exclusive applicability (e.g. Elgström & Tallberg 2003, p. 204 | Barkin 2010, p. 160). In his critique on the dichotomy between two opposing logics of appropriateness vs. consequentialism, Goldmann (2005) raises three main points. Firstly, it is unclear how the logics should be understood: as a 'paradigm' underlying the researcher's view on how preferences are formed, as a theoretical explanation for behaviour that can differ according to the situation and where a combination of the two is possible, or as ideal types that serve as tools to study empirical phenomena? Secondly, there is a lack of clarity on the objects to which these logics should be applied: to scholars (rationalists vs. constructivists) and/or to political actors (i.e. the logics behind how they think, argue and act)? And if the latter is the case, does the logic apply to individuals or organisations? Is it possible that individuals act rationally, but that they take decisions on the basis of what they think is appropriate for the organisation? If so, which logic should be depicted as the 'prevailing' one? Thirdly, Goldmann notes that self-interest is not the same as selfishness: it may, for example, be rational to adhere to a norm. In such a situation, it is difficult to tell which logic underlies behaviour – a problem that was also signalled *supra* as the difficulty of assigning labels to empirical facts. For these reasons, he suggests to abandon the emphasis on two logics, and instead recognize the existence of three logics for explaining the behaviour of actors. One extreme is a logic of egotism: an actor is driven by what he/she 'thinks is best for him without any consideration of the rules of the system to which he belongs'. In the other extreme case, a logic of deontism, actors' behaviour is only 'determined by non-consequentialist rules implicit in systemically constructed identities'. Goldmann argues that both extreme logics rarely determine behaviour. Instead, an intermediate or 'mixed' logic, in which elements of the two logics overlap and simultaneously occur, inspires preferences and behaviour in most cases: 'expected consequences are evaluated on the basis of what is systemically appropriate' (Goldmann 2005, p. 41) and self-interest is defined as what is appropriate with regard to the actor's position or role. This argument thus contradicts the assumption that only one logic can dominate in a given context.

More recently, Choi (2015) made a similar reasoning as Goldmann. He identifies three ideal-typical categories to classify behaviour in international relations: self-interest driven, norms/identity driven, and a combination or conflict between the two. He states that the first two ideal types are rarely observed in practice, while combinations or conflicts between the two are most common. In addition, he makes some suggestions on how causal relations between the two extreme ideal types may differ according to the context.

Given my view to the exclusivity of theoretical accounts as outlined above, it is not a surprise that the critiques that were formulated on the dichotomy between two logics of action has been very inspirational for my research, especially for the fourth article (on preference formation).

3.2. Success, influence and power

As noted above, there has been some confusion in the literature on the distinction between success and influence of a Presidency. Sometimes the two terms are used interchangeably, despite them being quite different. As explained in the first article of the dissertation, 'success' is a broad concept according to which a Presidency can be evaluated, whether it was 'good' or 'bad'. It refers to a range of issues such as the extent to which the Presidency delivered on its priorities, the amount and importance of legislation that was approved, how the Presidency dealt with its different roles and

with unexpected situations, and how the incumbent country contributed to European unity and integration. Definitions of 'success' can be contradictory (e.g. performance of some Presidency roles may hamper legislative output) and it would be hard to include all its aspects into a clear operationalisation. Also, if Presidencies are assessed on their 'success', there should be a possible negative outcome: how to operationalize an 'unsuccessful' Presidency? Are not all Presidencies in some way 'successful'? 'Influence', by contrast, focuses on how and to what extent the incumbent country used the Presidency position to change decision outcomes (see also *infra*). This often, but not necessarily always, means that the Presidency brought these outcomes closer to its own preferences. There can be some overlap with 'success' (e.g. realisation of the priority programme, see also in Smeets & Vennix 2014, p. 1437), but 'influence' is essentially a more narrow and straightforward concept, which makes it most useful for comparing different Presidencies.

While some authors (e.g. Dewost 1984 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Thomson 2008) wrote about 'power' of the Presidency, I use the term 'influence'. The concepts of power and influence are strongly, but not linearly, interrelated (see e.g. Guzzini 2000 | Betsill & Corell 2001), and have been the subject of a wide and very heated discussion. In the broad literature of the social sciences, three 'faces' of power have been distinguished (Lukes 1974). The first face of power relates to the ability to make someone else do what (s)he would other otherwise not do. The second face of power is the opposite: the ability to prevent someone else from doing something, or from seriously considering or taking a decision (see e.g. Bachrach & Baratz 1962). The third face of power (described in, e.g., Lukes 1974) is structural: it refers to the ability to define other actors' frame of reference in which they shape their preferences. In other words, with the first face of power one can bring about events, with the second face of power one can prevent events from taking place, and with the third face of power one can modify others' wishes and desires.

This being said, control over power resources does not automatically enable actors to exert influence (Guzzini 2000). In the study of Betsill and Corell (2001) on NGO influence, power is described as a general *ability* to exert influence, whereas influence refers to concrete files, decisions or people where an actor has an *impact*. Power is not always converted into influence, and actors may exert influence even without being powerful. Applied to the Presidency: the incumbent country can have certain power resources at its disposal to exert influence, but it does not always use them. Conversely, the Presidency position does not make powerless actors suddenly powerful, but it does allow the incumbent country to make a difference in some cases.

I conceptualize influence as the possible result of an actor's intervention. Contrary to what Arts and Verschuren (1999, p. 413) suggest, this definition does not include anticipation of other actors. Anticipation is more related to power than to influence, since it happens without any interference of the powerful. With this conceptualisation of influence as the possible result of intentional behaviour, my research only aims to draw conclusions on influence related to the first and second faces of power, that is, promoting or inhibiting decision-making (see also the second article of this dissertation). I do not expect that individual Presidencies can, in the short period of six months, bring about structural changes with a lasting impact on other actors' preferences.

The definition of influence I apply is largely based on the work of Simone Bunse (2009, p. 5)[1], for whom 'influence' means the ability to 'change an outcome from what it otherwise would have been in the absence of an action'. This definition is close to the classical Weberian definition of power as

[1] A similar definition of influence was formulated by Thomson (2008), who describes it as the extent to which actions of the Presidency result in decision outcomes congruent with its preferences.

the ability of individuals or groups to carry out their will despite resistance from others (e.g. in Weber 2003 [1922], p. 53), because both definitions focus on *abilities* and not necessarily on *outcomes*. As my research progressed, I have modified the definition of influence to make it applicable in my analytical framework. In the second article of this dissertation, on the influence of the Polish Presidency on EaP policies, the reference to 'ability' was dropped and the word 'intentional' was added to the definition in order to make a clearer distinction between influence and power, thus showing that influence is the possible *result* of deliberate actions. In other words, one can only talk about 'influence' if there is an outcome. In the third article, comparing the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies, I made a second modification: 'outcome' was replaced by 'policy'. As explained in my evaluation of the Lithuanian Presidency (Vandecasteele 2014), which is available in appendix 10 of this dissertation, not all 'outcomes' constitute real developments in EaP policies. If every 'outcome' was included in the analysis, there would be an endless list of trivialities that did not have an impact on the EU-EaP relations. It thus provides a rationale for comparing Presidency influence on a fixed number of policy areas rather than influence on an exhaustive list of individual events (see *infra*).

To sum up, I consider an actor to exert influence on a policy if it *intentionally changes a policy from what it would have been in the absence of an action*. As I discuss below (point 4.2.3.), such influence is assessed on the basis of three criteria: (i) did the actor achieve its goals? (i) is this goal achievement to be ascribed to the actor? and (iii) is the outcome politically relevant?

3.3. Conditions for Presidency influence

There exists a rich literature on the conditions for Presidency influence, which I elaborate on in the first article of this dissertation[2]. A very brief summary is provided here below. I used the insights from this literature for assessing and comparing the influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies (see the third article), but the conceptualisation of the conditions has not been constant throughout my research: when matched with empirical observations, some conditions were reformulated or left out.

I identify three types of conditions for influence (as did Van Hecke & Bursens 2011, but they use the term 'success' instead of 'influence'): country specific, issue- or policy area specific, and context related conditions. The conditions are discussed below and summarized in Table 1 at the end of section 3.3.3.

3.3.1. Country specific conditions

Preparation – including planning, training and careful priority formulation – is seen as an important condition (Arter 2000 | Bunse 2009). It is of course obvious that Presidencies should prepare well; it would be rather strange that a country would not prepare for its Presidency. We will also see that all three Presidencies in this research prepare well or rather well, so it was impossible to assess the importance of this condition for influence.

Bunse (2009) also argues that Presidencies allowing large autonomy to the permrep – the so-called *Brussels-based Presidencies* – are more influential than capital-based ones, because Brussels-based officials are expected to know best where the sensitivities lie and which compromises are feasible.

[2] My first article also discusses the conditions for 'success'. They will not be summarized here, because they are not considered in the remainder of the dissertation.

The division of labour between the capital and Brussels can differ between policy areas, depending on the internal organisation of administrations, the importance of the topic or the availability of expertise.

Thirdly, the Presidency is expected to benefit from a *good reputation* if it wants to be influential (Metcalfe 1998 | Bjurulf 2001 | Baun 2009 | Bunse 2009). Quaglia and Moxon-Browne (2006) argue that a good reputation builds on the incumbent country's pro-EU attitude, its impartiality and its expertise, while Jakobsen (2009) adds that giving the 'right example' at home in the policy areas under discussion can improve a country's reputation. The three elements discussed by Quaglia and Moxon-Browne (who study 'success', not 'influence') are useful but difficult to apply to the study of Presidency influence. Firstly, it is difficult to define a 'pro-EU attitude'. To make this more tangible, I formulate it in a negative way, i.e. absence of hostility towards one or several aspects of European integration (Crespy & Verschueren 2009). Secondly, as I have discussed *supra*, there is a growing consensus among scholars that being fair is more important than being neutral/impartial. The dimension of impartiality as part of the reputation will therefore not be considered as a condition for influence. Thirdly, 'expertise' is not a clear-cut concept. Indeed, as Kajnč and Svetličič (2010) argue, hard and soft knowledge, two very different things, can both be captured with the term 'expertise'. The former includes 'why' and 'what' questions, such as dossiers, procedures, facts and history. The latter comprises 'how' and 'who' questions, referring to, among other things, skills of negotiation, management, feeling for intercultural dialogue (see also Vanhoonacker, Pomorska & Maurer 2010). Some authors have discussed networking – including alliances with other Member States, personal ties and inter-institutional relations – as something separate (Bjurulf 2001 | Bunse 2009 | Kajnč 2009 | Karoliewski & Sus 2011), but it can also be seen as a part of soft knowledge; it requires similar skills and it is part of a country's reputation. Thus, I do not use the term 'expertise' hereafter. Hard knowledge will be discussed under *salience to the Presidency* (see *infra*), because such knowledge among a country's officials is usually linked to the intensity of preferences regarding the topic. In summary, reputation in my research refers to a 'good example' at home, absence of hostility towards the EU, and investments in soft skills of the Presidency staff.

A fourth condition for influence is the *size* of the country. This has been discussed by several authors (Bjurulf 2001 | Bengtsson 2002 | Kajnč & Svetličič 2010), even though it is not clear whether small countries have more or less influence than large countries during their Presidency (Warntjen 2007). In theory, large countries can be more autonomous and thus be more influential during their Presidency (Dijkstra 2011), but at the same time they could be more constrained to do so because other countries tend to 'keep an eye' much more on large than on small States (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010).

Fifth and finally, the *domestic political and administrative context*, referring to coordination within and between Ministries and political stability, can have an impact on the influence of the Presidency (Baun 2009 | Bunse 2009, p. 64). As we will see in the third article of the dissertation and the country files (see appendixes 1, 2 and 3), we cannot draw conclusions for this condition either, because the domestic political and administrative context was stable to rather stable for the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies.

3.3.2. Issue- or policy area specific conditions

In the literature, four conditions related to specific issues or policy areas can be found. Firstly, *salience of a policy area to the Presidency* refers to the importance of the area and the willingness of

the incumbent country to spend resources (time, staff, funds) in order to achieve its goals in this area. High salience generally leads to the development and mobilisation of hard knowledge, whereas low salience entails little hard knowledge (Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007).

Secondly, the Presidency is expected to be able to exert more influence if there is a *favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors* (Member States, institutions, see e.g. Bjurulf 2001 | Bunse 2009 | Fernández Pasarín 2009). The most favourable situation would be that the other actors share the Presidency's preferences, while the least favourable situation is one with homogenous attitudes that do not correspond to the Presidency's position. Between these two extremes, heterogeneous preferences with low salience can be used instrumentally by the Presidency to push through its own ideas, whereas this is much more difficult if such heterogeneous preferences are highly salient to the other actors.

Thirdly, several authors (Elgström 2006 | Tallberg 2006a | Warntjen 2007 | Tallberg 2010) have found that the Presidency can be more influential in legislative issues that are adopted by *Qualified Majority Voting (QMV)* than by consensus, because the chair has more possibilities to invoke the 'shadow of the vote' to push through agreements. This condition will not be included in my comparative analysis of different Presidencies, for two main reasons. On the one hand, the voting method has become less relevant since the Treaty of Lisbon took effect: most policy areas are now decided by QMV. On the other hand, EaP policies do depend on legislation to a certain extent, but these policies also include important non-legislative aspects where the voting rules do not apply or are of minor importance.

Fourthly, a number of studies (Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Thomson 2008 | Warntjen 2008) have indicated that the *stage in the legislative process* affects Presidency influence. They showed that the Presidency's influence increases as the legislative process comes to its conclusion, even though the chair usually has little influence on the timing (Bjurulf 2001, p. 24). For the same legislation-related reason as for the voting method (cf. *supra*), this condition for influence will not be further considered in my dissertation.

3.3.3. Context related conditions

Scholars have also identified two conditions related to the external context. On the one hand, the *political and economic environment* can obviously enable or constrain Presidency influence (Bunse 2009). On the other hand, *unexpected external crises* can severely disturb the agenda of the Presidency (Vos & Bailleul 2002), but they can also entail opportunities for providing leadership and lasting influence (Bunse, 2009, Langdal & von Sydow 2009).

For the purposes of my research, I have reformulated both conditions. I first separated the political and economic environment, since these do not necessarily coincide. In my comparison of three Presidencies, I thus defined two context related conditions for influence: *external political context* on the one hand and *economic prosperity* on the other. In addition, I added the event of unexpected external crises as one aspect of the external political context. The analysis of Presidency influence for Hungary, Poland and Lithuania revealed that the three Presidencies took place in a (rather) unfavourable economic and political context. The impact of the above-mentioned two conditions could thus not be established: there was not enough variation on this condition between the cases. Consequently, the conclusions of the third article only apply to Presidencies taking place in a (rather) unfavourable political and economic context.

Table 1 summarizes the conditions for influence that were outlined above. More detailed descriptions of these conditions, as well as their precise operationalisation, can be found in the first and the third article of this dissertation.

Table 1: Summary of conditions for Presidency influence

Type	Condition
Country specific	Adequate preparation
	Brussels-based Presidency
	Good reputation
	Large country
	Stable domestic political and administrative context
Issue- or policy area specific	High salience to the Presidency
	Favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors
Context related	Favourable external political context
	Economic prosperity

3.4. Classic roles of the Presidency

Having reflected on the meaning of Presidency influence and the conditions that possibly enable or constrain such influence, it is useful to review different approaches on the actual roles (or functions, tasks) of the Presidency. These approaches do not occupy a central place in the articles of this dissertation, but the discussions on Presidency roles are a useful framework for linking the articles together and formulating more general conclusions on the place of Presidencies in EU decision-making. I come back to the issue of Presidency roles in point 2.1. of the general conclusion.

Quaglia and Moxon-Browne (2006, p. 351) postulated that the 'functions of the presidency of the EU do not need to be reviewed'. This is remarkable, because there is no consensus in the literature and among policy-makers on what exactly the Presidency should (and should not) do. While initially the only function of the Presidency was to convene and chair (most of) the Council meetings,[3] its tasks have expanded considerably in the past decades. As Schout (1998) pointed out, the factual tasks evolved in different directions, making it a challenge to combine them. Presidencies have a certain degree of freedom to decide which role(s) they emphasize. In addition, acting as the chair is only one role: Member States also have other roles to fulfil at the same time, such as a great power role or a non-aligned country, which can entail role competition (Elgström 2003a).

Most researchers on the roles of the Presidency (Bjurulf 2001 | Vos & Bailleul 2002 | Elgström 2003a | Tallberg 2003 | Thomson 2008 | Langdal & von Sydow 2009 | Debaere, De Ridder & Nasra 2011) agree that the incumbent country fulfils four roles or functions. As noted above, the Presidency is expected to act first of all as an *administrator/organizer/coordinator*: it organizes, convenes and chairs Council meetings in Brussels at most levels, informal meetings, conferences, cultural events and possibly summits.

[3] Currently, the 'official' functions of the Presidency are twofold: (i) organising and chairing meetings of the Council and its preparatory bodies, and (ii) representing the Council before other EU institutions (Council of the European Union n.d.).

Secondly, the Presidency sets priorities in cooperation with the European Commission and, since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, with the other members of the trio.[4] In this role, the Presidency is an *agenda setter/–shaper*. It is necessary to set priorities, because the resources of the Presidency and of the delegations are limited, as well as the available time, rooms, interpretation, etc. The chair develops a Presidency programme, which serves as the basis for the agenda of the Council meetings at different levels. This programme may introduce new topics or move some issues to the foreground, indicates where results are expected, and sometimes excludes issues from the agenda. Setting and managing the agenda does not mean that everything happens according to the planned agenda. Ojanen and Vuohula (2007) pointed out that around 35% of the agenda items of Finland's 2006 Presidency were anticipated beforehand, while 65% had to be changed due to unexpected circumstances.

Thirdly, the Presidency mediates and builds consensus between the Member States, as well as between the Council and the other EU institutions. This is the *mediator/broker* role. Initially, mediation took place mainly between the different Member States, but it has become increasingly important between the Council and the other institutions. On the Council website this is referred to as 'representation' (Council of the European Union n.d.), but this role can also be described as mediation between the different institutions.

Fourthly, the Presidency plays a role as *representative/spokesperson*. The chair speaks on behalf of the Council with the other institutions of the EU and – increasingly during the past decades, but for foreign policy no longer so since the Treaty of Lisbon (see *infra*) – in contacts with the media, non-EU States and international organisations.

Some authors (Elgström 2006 | Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Schout 2008) also identify a role of *political leader* for the Presidency: they expect the incumbent to promote political initiatives that enhance European integration or better functioning of the EU.

Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006), in turn, mention the rather controversial role of defender of *national interests*. They argue that in some situations there is a demand for defence of national interests in the EU, even by the Presidency.

Table 2 presents an overview of the different roles as identified in the literature. Six roles can be distinguished, but is should be noted that they are never all mentioned by one author, and there is also no consensus on what the roles do and do not include. For example, whereas a large group of authors identifies agenda setting as a separate (and political) role, some authors view this as part of the administrator role (Schout & Vanhoonacker 2006 | Schout 2008). Ideas on these roles are strongly linked to the extent to which the Presidency can and/or should influence EU decision-making. A strong emphasis on the roles of administrator (with or without agenda setting) means that the Presidency is not expected to exert a great influence. In turn, agenda setting, mediation and external representation are *in se* not meant to increase the incumbent country's influence, but the Presidency can use these roles for steering EU decision-making towards its preferred outcomes. Finally, the roles of political leader and national interest representation quite straightforwardly refer to Presidency influence.

[4] Formally, the system of trio Presidencies is considered to provide continuity in EU decision-making, and it is amply mentioned in official communication on the tasks of the Presidency (see e.g. Council of the European Union 2011, p. 9 | Council of the European Union n.d.). However, in practice there are little incentives to foster continuity between Presidencies within the trios or between successive trios (Bursens & Van Hecke 2011). In the articles of this dissertation, we will also see that the individual Presidency programmes are much more emphasized than the trio programmes.

Table 2: Summary of (classic) Presidency role sets

Authors	Administrator, organizer, manager	Agenda setter, -manager, -shaper	Mediator, broker	Representative (intra- and extra- EU)	Political leader	National interest representation
(Bjurulf 2001 | Vos & Bailleul 2002 | Elgström 2003a | Tallberg 2003 | Thomson 2008 | Langdal & von Sydow 2009 | Debaere *et al.* 2011)	X	X	X	X		
(Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006)	X		X	X	X	
(Elgström 2006)	X	X	X	X	X	
(Schout & Vanhoonacker 2006)	X (including agenda)		X		X	X
(Schout 2008)	X (including agenda)		X		X	

3.5. Reform of the Presidency roles with the Treaty of Lisbon

As discussed *supra*, the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, thoroughly re-designed the institutional architecture of the EU, including the position of the rotating Council Presidency. In the preceding decades, problems relating to continuity, leadership, coherence, workload and costs had emerged and persisted (Schout 2008 | Vanhoonacker, Pomorska & Maurer 2011b). Since six months is too short to introduce and finalize projects, a discontinuous stop-and-go process and a lack of follow-up of initiatives was often the result. Discontinuity existed not only between successive Presidencies, but also between two Presidencies of the same country, because of the long period between two semesters at the helm. The rotation system also entailed a lack of strategic direction and leadership, especially in external affairs. EU policies were not always coherent because different actors (Presidency, European Commission and/or High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy) were competent for different aspects of the same policy area. The growing agenda and successive enlargements of the EU had led to an increased workload and high costs for the Presidency. There were also concerns that the new and mostly small Member States would not be able to run a Presidency properly, or would represent the EU externally in a biased way.

Proposals to solve these problems included the establishment of permanent Presidencies, shared Presidencies, and enhanced rules of procedure to ensure agenda continuity (see e.g. Schout 2008). Advocates of the rotation system, mostly small and new Member States, defended it as the best

possible guarantee of equality between Member States (Bunse 2009). But the rotating Presidency has also other advantages: it helps national Ministers to extend their networks, it can lead to stronger involvement of citizens in EU decision-making, it may stimulate the incumbent Government to implement EU legislation, and it enhances expertise in national administrations (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2011b).

The Treaty of Lisbon preserved the system of rotation, except for the European Council, the Foreign Affairs Council and the Eurogroup. In Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) there is more input from the EU-level, but the final responsibility remains with the Member States and unanimity is still required for CFSP decisions (Drieskens, Van Hecke & Bursens 2010 | Bunse, Rittelmeyer & Van Hecke 2011 | Grevi 2011). External policy is the area where the rotating Presidency's role was most radically reformed. This is not surprising since the lack of continuity, leadership and coherence were most pronounced in the EU's relations with third countries and organisations (Bengtsson 2003 | Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2011b). The HR/VP represents the EU at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and ensures consistency and coherence in the external EU policies, together with the EEAS. The Permanent President of the European Council represents the EU at the level of Heads of State and Government, and co-decides on the strategic options of EU external policy. The role of the Presidency in external policy has thus changed, but did not become irrelevant (Debaere *et al.* 2011 | Gostyńska 2011 | Gostyńska & Liszcyk 2011 | Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2011b), and this for at least five reasons. First of all, the Presidency continues to chair a number of crucial preparatory bodies related to external affairs,[5] as well as all the other Council configurations and their preparatory bodies, including the external aspects of the policy areas that are dealt with in these configurations. The Presidency also chairs the Foreign Affairs Council when trade issues are discussed. Secondly, even though the HR/VP is the official representative of the EU, some third countries prefer to negotiate with individual Member States or with the Presidency. Thirdly, the agenda of the HR/VP is overfilled and Catherine Ashton, who held this position from 2009 to 2014, soon made it a habit to ask the Presidency to replace her in inter-Ministerial meetings with third countries (e.g. Cooperation Councils) or before the European Parliament (Grevi 2011). However, it should be noted that there are very limited opportunities for the Presidency to define the agendas of such events. Fourthly, the Presidency plays an increasingly important role as mediator between the different EU institutions, not least between the Council and the European Parliament (Vanhoonacker, Pomorska & Maurer 2011a | Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2011b). Finally, the Presidency can play a coordinating role in supporting the HR/VP and leading files through the different procedural steps in the Council. According to Gostyńska and Liszcyk (2011), the Presidency is neither 'decapitated' nor should there be inter-institutional rivalry between the Council and the HR/VP or the EEAS; the new rules can be mutually reinforcing.

The EU institutions play a more prominent role in EU legislation and policies since the Treaty of Lisbon became effective. The European Parliament gained more power: the previous co-decision procedure has become the ordinary legislative procedure, and Parliament's areas of competence now also include asylum and migration, culture, transport, the budget procedure and common commercial policy. The right of initiative for the European Commission was extended to areas of the

[5] The Presidency chairs Coreper I and II, all working parties related to trade and development, as well as the horizontal working parties on Foreign Relations Counsellors (RELEX), on International Aspects of Terrorism (COTER), on specific measures to combat terrorism (COCOP), on Consular Affairs (COCON), on Public International Law (COJUR), and on the Law of the Sea (COMAR) (Council of the European Union 2009, 30 November).

former third pillar issues, such as justice and police cooperation. The European Council, chaired by the Permanent President, is formally recognized as a EU institution that formulates the long term strategic options of the EU.

Mangenot (2011) has pointed out that the presidential system of the EU is in fact a set of five partially overlapping Presidencies: a trio Presidency of 18 months, a rotating Presidency of six months, a Permanent President of the European Council during 30 months, a HR/VP during five years, and Presidencies of different groups and committees, such as the Eurogroup.

As I argue elsewhere with Ramūnas Vilpišauskas and Austė Vaznonytė (Vilpišauskas, Vandecasteele & Vaznonytė 2013, see also appendix 9 of the dissertation), the aims of the reforms introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon can be summarized as follows: the Presidency's roles as administrator and mediator – between the Member States among themselves and between the Council and the other EU institutions – were to become more pronounced, whereas the tasks related to agenda setting, representation towards third countries or international organisations, and political leadership were weakened. The role of national representative was described only by a limited number of scholars and was of course never mentioned in official communications. However, as I will discuss in more detail in the conclusion of this dissertation, this new delineation of Presidency roles is not accepted just like that by the incumbent Member States: I will show that the different Presidencies did (attempt to) play other roles than those that were 'assigned' to them, including the role of national representative.

3.6. Presidency norms

The Presidency is guided by a number of – not always mutually compatible – formal and informal norms. They are relevant for the preferences, priority setting and behaviour of a Member State holding the Presidency, and closely related to the different Presidency roles[6] that were discussed *supra*.

A crucial and most discussed norm the chair has to take into account is *neutrality/impartiality* (Metcalfe 1998 | Bengtsson, Elgström & Tallberg 2004 | Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Elgström 2006 | Niemann & Mak 2010 | Charléty 2011). It is the only one formally mentioned in the Council Secretariat's Presidency handbook (Council of the European Union 2011). The chair should act in the common EU interest and not abuse its position to defend its own interests. This norm has strong connections with the roles of administrator and mediator, but also as a representative of the Council the Presidency is expected to be neutral. By contrast, Elgström (2006) argues that the neutrality norm constrains the Presidency in the exercise of its roles of agenda setter and political leader: when a chair presents biased compromises or launches initiatives that would be beneficial to him or her, (s)he feels a pressing need to legitimize this position as being in the common EU interest. The neutrality norm has been long uncontested, but several authors have recently fine-tuned the concept. Indeed, neutrality arguably has three dimensions (Niemann & Mak 2010): a relational (no closer ties with some of the negotiating parties than with others), process-related (not favouring certain parties) and outcome-related one (the results should be fair). Since the incumbent Presidency is also a Member State, it cannot just ignore its own national interests. It has thus been brought forward that being fair is more important than being neutral (Schout 1998 | Schout & Vanhoonacker 2006). In a rational institutionalist approach, neutrality can be alternatively described as 'efficiency',

[6] The role of national representative is controversial and is not linked to any of the Presidency norms. Only the remaining five Presidency roles can be described in relation to the Presidency norms.

meaning that the chair is supposed to reach *Pareto efficient* agreements: compromises should ensure that no party is worse off than if any other alternative decision is taken (Tallberg 2004). Niemann and Mak (2010) argue that a chair cannot credibly display relational neutrality, thus that only the process- and outcome impartiality should constitute the concept of Presidency neutrality.

A second principle guiding Presidency behaviour is the *effectiveness* norm (Bengtsson *et al.* 2004 | Elgström 2006 | Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006). It implies that decisions should be made in a smooth way: there is a (perceived) pressure to achieve results, to bring as many dossiers as possible to a final stage, or to achieve breakthroughs in complicated files. This norm is linked to the Presidency role of political leader, and to a lesser extent to the roles of agenda setter and administrator.

Thirdly, the *consensus* norm prescribes that the chair should do its utmost to find solutions acceptable for everyone (Elgström 2006) – which is most strongly related to the Presidency's mediator role. Indeed, the chair is inclined to seek unanimity, even if a qualified majority would be sufficient to take a decision (G. Schneider, Steunenberg & Widgrén 2006 | Juncos & Pomorska 2007 | Bunse 2009 | VoteWatch 2012, p. 4).[7] Elgström (2006) argues that this norm constrains the Presidency in its roles of agenda manager, broker and leader. Warntjen (2008), however, challenges the very existence of such a consensus norm. He argues that the high number of decisions 'unnecessarily' taken unanimously does not reflect a consensus climate, but that this results from the fact that there is no time limit in the first reading stage. If there is not enough support for a certain initiative, it can be dropped and taken up again at a later date when the political situation in the EU is more favourable. I agree that the absence of a deadline in the first reading stage is an important element, but the fact that delegations wait for the 'right time' to take a decision can also be seen as an illustration of a consensus climate. It can be argued that the Presidency only works towards a Council position in first reading if it feels that a consensus will be possible. In any case, the consensus norm is not always very strict; its effect depends on the ambition of the chair to take a decision and on the amount of vital interests at stake, as well as on the newness of policy areas in the EU. In the oldest policy areas, such as environment, agriculture and internal market, decisions are increasingly taken by majority-against-minority, whereas in 'newer' policy areas, including monetary affairs and transport, decisions are often taken by consensus (see www.votewatch.eu). Objection against a decision is not always because national interests are endangered; Ministers may also object to certain options to show to their electorate what they stand for.

Finally, Juncos and Pomorska (2006) identify a number of other unwritten rules of the Council Working Parties on external policy that apply to all delegations, not only to the Presidency. For example, there are some *domaines réservés*, sensitive issues that are not discussed in the preparatory bodies but that move immediately to the higher levels. These topics include national defence, borders, nuclear status, and special relations. In addition, delegations should display vertical and horizontal *consistency*, i.e. bring the same message in different forums and at different levels. Also *questioning earlier agreed decisions* is not done.

The Presidency is generally expected to take the above-mentioned norms and sensitivities into account as much as possible. However, some norms lead to competing expectations (e.g. neutrality and effectiveness, or effectiveness and consensus), and are thus difficult to combine (see e.g.

[7] Trying to reach consensus is not only the responsibility of the Presidency. It is widely acknowledged that decisions in the EU are usually taken with agreement of as many Member States as possible, in order to leave as little 'losers' as possible (see e.g. Peterson & Bomberg 1999).

Tallberg 2004 | Drulák 2010). In the conclusion of this dissertation, I reflect on how the Presidency norms played a role for the different Presidencies in their attempts to influence EU-EaP relations.

4. Data gathering, methods and case 'selection'

Existing studies on the Presidency most often make use of qualitative methods. This is the case for all studies that provide descriptions of the Presidency's role and legal framework (e.g. Charléty & Mangenot 2011), evaluations of success and role performance (e.g. Elgström 2003b | Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Langdal & von Sydow 2009 | Drulák & Šabič 2010 | Kaczyński 2011a; 2011b | Van Hecke & Bursens 2011) and many studies on influence of the Presidency (such as Wurzel 1996 | Tallberg 2003; 2004 | Bunse 2009). Next to this, there also exist several *large N* quantitative studies on Presidency influence (Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007 | Thomson 2008). In the articles of this dissertation, I apply and sometimes combine different methods (including qualitative as well as quantitative methods), depending on the research questions. This approach, which is a form of mixed methods, has several advantages. It leads to complementarity between the different types of methods in order to illustrate and clarify the findings, the results from one method can inform other methods, and mixing methods enhances triangulation (or confirmation) of the conclusions (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011).

4.1. Data gathering

The second, third and fourth article (that is, the articles analysing empirical information gathered through own research) of my dissertation build on a triangulation of data sources. The two articles dealing with Presidency influence are based on an analysis of official documents, in-depth interviews and secondary sources. The article on preference formation and behaviour uses the same type of data, supplemented with the results of an online survey and with less emphasis on the interviews.

4.1.1. Official documents

The official documents I used include a broad range of documents from the EU institutions such as the Council, the European Council, the European Commission and the EEAS, as well as official documents from the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian authorities (Parliaments and Governments). These documents were most useful in the first phase of my research on the different topics. They were retrieved from the respective institutions and countries' websites, and provided insight into Presidency priorities, agendas and decisions of the Council, European Commission proposals and other relevant information.

4.1.2. Secondary sources

I complemented the review of official documents with a thorough study of secondary sources. This included news reports (mainly from EurActiv, EUObserver and European Voice, but also national news sites) for information on decision-making and positions of different actors; books and articles in international journals for background information; and writings from think tanks (such as the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) and the Polish Institute for International Affairs (PISM)) for up-to-date policy analyses.

4.1.3. In-depth interviews

The information from the above-mentioned written sources was crucial to get a preliminary picture of Presidency influence. The in-depth interviews were aimed at the reconstruction of expert knowledge on specific issues, based on interviewees' knowledge and experiences that resulted from their involvement in decision-making (on the use of interviews, see e.g. Pfadenhauer 2009). Experts were contacted with regard to the decisions, policy developments and events on which I had additional questions after the review of official documents and secondary sources. In turn, some interviews led me to consult further specific documents on issues that came up during the interviews. Potential interviewees were identified on the basis of their involvement in EaP-related dossiers, and were contacted by e-mail.

The use of in-depth interviews fits in a strategy that Arts and Verschuren (1999) call the EAR method: Ego/Alter perception and Researcher's analysis. I gathered information through interviews on the influence of the respective Presidencies with officials working for these Presidencies (Ego) and officials of other Member States and/or EU institutions (Alter). The Researcher's analysis is a validity check of the perceptions of own and others' influence – in this case based on the match between these interviews on the one hand and the official documents and secondary sources on the other. If Ego and Alter perceptions disagree with each other, Arts and Verschuren argue that the Researcher's analysis is decisive. The EAR method decreases the tendencies to underestimate influence when using process tracing, and to overestimate influence with the mere analysis of preference realization (see also Dür 2008).

On the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies, I organized 29 interviews between 20 January and 23 November 2012. An additional interview, where I discussed the influence of these two Presidencies as well as the preparations for the Lithuanian Presidency, took place in March 2013. One interview was via e-mail, the others took place in Brussels (EU institutions and permanent representations), Budapest and Warsaw. There were seven interviews with Hungarian representatives, eight with Polish representatives, four with civil servants of other Member States and 11 with officials of the EU institutions.

The interviews related to the Lithuanian Presidency had a double goal: on the one hand, they served to analyse the influence of the Lithuanian Presidency on specific EaP-related files. On the other hand, they were important for the analysis of preference formation of officials, as discussed in the fourth article of this dissertation. For this reason, I contacted more Lithuanians than for the other two Presidencies. Between 19 February 2013 and 25 August 2014, I held 54 interviews, of which 45 with Lithuanians, four with officials of EU institutions, and five with representatives of other EU Member States. The interviews took place in Brussels and Vilnius.

All interviews were anonymous and semi-structured. A few questions were prepared in advance, especially with regard to specific events or procedures, but during the talks there was room to elaborate on the prepared or other questions, depending on the interviewees' areas of expertise. The topics discussed during the interviews on the influence of the respective Presidencies were very diverse. It was therefore not possible to analyse these interview data in a structured way; the data served as complementary information on Ego- or Alter perceptions of Presidency influence, and were very valuable in highlighting the involvement of actors or institutions in specific dossiers. As to the interviews that touched upon preference formation and behaviour (of Lithuanian civil servants), I did apply a more systematic analysis of the interviewees' answers. These answers were categorized under topics such as 'domestic consensus on EU policies', 'expected developments in EU-EaP

relations', 'role of Lithuania in EaP policies', 'aims of EaP policies' and 'definition of Presidency priorities'.

4.1.4. Online survey

The categorized data of the interviews with Lithuanian officials, before and after their country's Presidency, were later on translated into a limited number of questions and answers to be polled in an online survey. This survey, which was conducted in May-June 2014 through the Qualtrics online platform, was a crucial data source for the fourth article in this dissertation. Potential respondents were all Lithuanian officials working on (aspects of) EaP policies or on external aspects of internal policies in Brussels (Permanent Representation to the EU), Vilnius (the different Ministries[8]), or Embassies to EaP countries. The contact details of potential respondents were retrieved from the Lithuanian Government's website www.lrvalstybe.lt. The survey was sent by e-mail to the whole 'population' of 223 Lithuanian civil servants relevant to the topic. 105 of them started the anonymous online survey (response rate= 47,1%) and 92 respondents completed the survey (dropout rate= 12,4%).

The full survey – with questions and answer choices – is available in appendix 5 of this dissertation. The first part collected background information of the respondents: I asked questions about the policy area(s) on which they worked, where they spent most of their time during the Presidency (in Brussels or not), and whether they chaired preparatory bodies (Working Parties, Coreper). The second part of the survey polled about the respondents' ideas and preferences about the EaP policies. It included four multiple-choice questions and one open question.

The multiple-choice questions touched upon the countries and regions that were perceived as benefitting from the EaP policies, the aims of the EaP policies, the reasons why Lithuania prioritized the EaP policies during its Presidency, and whether the respondents thought Lithuania exerted influence on the EaP policies during its Presidency. In the open question, respondents could specify in which areas Lithuania was considered influential. The formulation of survey questions was the result of a careful operationalisation in order to ensure high construct validity and thus to avoid specification error – i.e. measuring other concepts or constructs than what is aimed for (Hox, de Leeuw & Dillman 2008). To this end, individual survey questions and the whole questionnaire were repeatedly tested by my colleagues at the Centre for EU Studies.

The survey was designed to gather as much information with as few questions as possible. In the actual analysis of preference formation of Lithuanian officials on the EaP, the replies to some questions were not included because this was not necessary for the research topic of this article: the background question about the policy areas on which respondents worked and the multiple-choice and open questions on the influence of Lithuania were not considered.

[8] The respondents were asked to indicate in which policy areas they worked. 6 respondents worked on 'agriculture', 3 on 'culture', 4 on 'defence', 6 on 'development cooperation', 6 on 'economy', 7 on 'education and science', 11 on 'energy', 4 on 'environment and climate', 4 on 'finance', 38 on 'foreign affairs', 11 on 'home affairs', 7 on 'justice', 8 on 'social affairs', 5 on 'trade', 7 on 'transport', and 25 on 'other' – which included self-indicated areas such as 'telecommunications', 'communication, coordination and planning', 'sport', 'general affairs', 'press and public affairs', and 'coordination and planning'.

4.2. *Influence: single case study and comparison with Qualitative Comparative Analysis*

The second article of this dissertation is a single case study of the influence of the Polish Presidency on EaP policies. In the words of Gerring (2004, p. 342), it is an 'intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units'. The latter part of this sentence should not be interpreted as a strong ambition to present generalisable knowledge (see also Gerring 2007); rather, the aim has been to develop and apply a method for measuring influence, as well as to identify a number of characteristics of Presidency influence. A single case study is an often used form of research in studying the Presidency (see e.g. Arter 2000 | Vos & Bailleul 2002 | Langdal & von Sydow 2009 | Naab 2010 | Vizi 2011).

The third article compares the influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies on the development of the EU's EaP policies. This article applies Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) for analysing possible necessary and sufficient (combinations of) conditions for the Presidency to exert influence on EU decision-making. QCA, a set-theoretic method initially developed by Charles Ragin (e.g. 1987; 2000; 2005), is less commonly used in the social sciences and therefore its principles and concepts require some clarification. It draws from an ontological approach that views the social world as constituted by complex combinations of characteristics (on this method, see also e.g. C. Q. Schneider & Wagemann 2012 | Byrne & Callaghan 2014, pp. 201-205). The crucial epistemological difference between QCA and classic quantitative methods is that the former mainly follows a causes-of-effects approach, whereas the latter adopts an effects-of-causes approach (Vis 2012): the main aim of QCA is to find explanations (causes) for a given outcome, whereas other (especially quantitative) methods typically try to establish the average effect of a cause in a given population of cases.

In using QCA, I aim to address a methodological challenge that is common to all studies of Presidency influence: none of them have systematically accounted for causal complexity, that is, different combinations of conditions that together do or do not contribute to an outcome. QCA has been very useful for exploring such complex causal combinations.

4.2.1. Key concepts and principles of QCA

An important concept in QCA is *configuration*, i.e. 'a specific combination of a factors […] that produces a given outcome of interest' (Rihoux & Ragin 2009, p. xix). The set-theoretical logic of QCA radically differs from the logic behind variable-based research: 'there really are no such things as variables which exist outside cases and have causal powers over cases' (Byrne & Callaghan 2014, p. 201). QCA rejects variable-based research, because this leads to simplistic assumptions of causal relations between disaggregated, independent variables. The method does not consider partial causal power, but tries to find causal patterns from multiple configurations. QCA makes no statements about additivity (adding up the individual effect of a variable in order to explain the result), but instead conjunctural causation (a combination of conditions related to a certain outcome). Indeed, the emphasis on conjunctural causation is another important difference between QCA and quantitative methods: Vis (2012) notes that, even though quantitative methods increasingly pay attention to interaction effects, typically combinations of two variables, such methods have a much harder time when accounting for a combination of, say, five causal variables.

Spitzlinger (2006, p. 10) points out that 'researchers using QCA always stay close to the individual cases. They can return to them during all steps of the analysis. Each single case is considered as a multifaceted entity that is to be comprehended and not forgotten in the course of the analysis' (see

also Berg-Schlosser, De Meur, Rihoux & Ragin 2009, p. 6). He continues that QCA is a 'trade-off between staying close to the data on the one hand […] and using a rigorous quantitative, holistic approach on the other hand, necessary to achieve generalizable results'. Generalisability should indeed be a goal of any research addressing causality, but it should be handled with some caution. Berg-Schlosser *et al.* (2009, pp. 11-12) call this 'modest generalization': the results obtained from a systematic comparison of comparable cases can be applied to other similar cases, on condition that they share a reasonable number of (scope) conditions.

In differentiating QCA from variable-centred research, its proponents have developed a distinct conceptual toolkit (for an overview, see e.g. C. Q. Schneider & Wagemann 2012). Researchers using QCA do not talk about independent and dependent variables, since this would be incompatible with its holistic view to the social world. Instead, the terms *conditions* (the 'factors' as mentioned *supra*, including ingredients, causal variables, stimuli etc.) and *outcome* are used respectively. Furthermore, *equifinality* refers to different (combinations of) conditions that lead to the same outcome: for example, students can pass exams by studying, cheating, bribing the teacher and/or other methods. Or, to take Presidency influence: it would be possible that large States with a bad reputation can exert influence, but also small States with a good reputation. In turn, *multifinality* indicates that certain conditions can produce different outcomes. For example, some revolutions lead to democratisation while others do not. For some Presidencies a Brussels-based organisation may enable the incumbent country to exert influence, while for others this may not be the case.

The core aim of QCA is to make statements about the social world in terms of sufficiency and necessity, expressed as → and ← respectively. It is based on Boolean logic in expressing the degree of necessity and sufficiency of conditions for a specific outcome: the logical AND is symbolized as '*', and the logical OR as '+'. The presence of a condition is usually noted as a capital letter (e.g. 'A') or a small letter (e.g. 'b'), the absence as a small letter ('a') or a small letter preceded by a *tilde* ('~b'). Sufficiency refers to a (combination of) condition(s) that produce(s) the outcome; in other words, if sufficient conditions are present, the outcome is also present. Necessity is the opposite: if a necessary condition is absent, the outcome cannot be present. In practice, single sufficient conditions are rarely found; outcomes are usually linked to several conditions. Single necessary conditions are more common, but necessary combinations of conditions can also sometimes be identified. Two acronyms are relevant here. Firstly, an *INUS condition* is an Insufficient but Non-redundant part of an Unnecessary but Sufficient combination of conditions: as such, an individual INUS condition is not sufficient, but it is necessary for the combination of conditions to be sufficient. Take, for example, a*b*~c*d → y. Here a, b, ~c and d are INUS conditions: if any of the three is missing, the combination of conditions does no longer produce the outcome. Secondly, a *SUIN condition* is a Sufficient but Unnecessary part of a combination that is Insufficient but Necessary for an outcome. For example, a*~b*(c+~d) ← y. Here c and ~d are SUIN conditions: c and ~d are individually not necessary, but one of them must be present. Simply stated, a SUIN condition is a replaceable necessary condition.

When applying QCA, the first step is to identify necessary conditions. This is mostly done for individual conditions, unless there are good reasons to assume that a combination of conditions might be necessary for the outcome. The formula for calculating the necessity of condition X for outcome Y is $\sum_{min}(X_i, Y_i)/\sum(Y_i)$, where 'min' refers to the lowest of the two values X_i or Y_i. Thus, for each case the lowest of the membership score of either the condition (X) or the outcome (Y) is divided by the membership score of the outcome (Y). The obtained result, a number between 0 and 1, expresses the extent to which the statement that 'X is necessary for Y' is consistent with empirical

observations. If the consistency score would be 1, this would mean that all membership scores of X are higher than or equal to the membership scores of Y. X is thus a superset of Y. Usually a threshold of at least 0.9 is taken to accept that a condition is indeed necessary for the outcome (see e.g. C. Q. Schneider & Wagemann 2012).

After calculating necessity, sufficiency is analysed. To this end, causation and causal complexity are visualized in a truth table, i.e. a list of statements about sufficiency. Each row of the table represents a combination of conditions and an outcome, and shows whether the conditions produce the outcome or not. The truth table typically represents all logically possible combinations of conditions. In principle, there are 2^k such combinations, where ^{k} is the number of conditions. Each condition can be viewed as a spatial dimension: if there are three conditions, there are three dimensions and thus the property space[9] (see e.g. Ragin 2000, pp. 76-78) has eight 'corners'. The property space has as many 'corners' as there are conditions. When the truth table is made, the sufficiency consistency of the different (combinations of) conditions can be calculated. The formula for assessing the sufficiency of condition X for outcome Y is $\sum_{min}(X_i, Y_i)/\sum(X_i)$, where 'min' refers to the lowest of the two values X_i or Y_i. This is similar to what we do when calculating necessity; the difference is that not the membership score of the outcome, but instead the membership score of the condition is in the denominator. For each truth table row, the lowest of the membership score of either the conditions (X) or the outcome (Y) is divided by the membership score of the conditions (X). The obtained result expresses the extent to which the statement that 'truth table row X is sufficient for Y' is consistent with empirical observations. A consistency score of 1 for a given truth table row would mean that all membership scores of X are lower than or equal to the membership scores of Y. X would then be a perfect subset of Y. The absolute minimum threshold for including truth table rows in the further analysis (see *infra*) is 0.75, but in practice the higher threshold is taken (see e.g. C. Q. Schneider & Wagemann 2012).

In order to construct truth tables, the empirical data should be assigned membership scores, a process which is called *calibration*. The two most commonly used variants of QCA are the binary crisp-set QCA (csQCA) and fuzzy-set QCA (fsQCA).[10] csQCA uses only the scores 0 and 1 to express non-membership ~s or membership s in a certain set. By contrast, fsQCA, which I apply in my research through the homonymous software fsQCA, allows expressing degrees of set membership, and thus uses all possible scores between 0 and 1. The main difference between csQCA and fsQCA is that the former variant assumes that a case cannot have a nonzero membership in both ~s and s, whereas fsQCA does allow for such cases. This variant of QCA has been developed because most data from the social world cannot be captured in binary scores. The fsQCA scores express both differences in kind (does a case belong to a set or not? The threshold for membership is 0.5) and in degree (to what extent is a case member of a set?). The standards for calibration should be clearly stated and conceptually motivated, because calibration is highly context-specific. For example, a 'tall person' is not the same in Sweden as in China. Also, when assigning membership scores to the set of 'rich countries' it would be useless to take the average of world GDP/capita as 0.5 and then define the score of each country in relation to this average; countries like Belarus and Lebanon would be considered 'rich countries'.

[9] Byrne and Callaghan (2014, pp. 26-27) refer to the property space as the 'phase space'.

[10] Thiem (2013) proposes a general-set variant of QCA (gsQCA). However, for the research questions and the conditions in this study, such an approach is not required.

The construction and calibration of conditions is typically an abductive process. It requires constant interaction between theories and empirical data, and often the conditions or their calibration is modified following provisional application to the available data.

4.2.2. Logical minimisation, limited diversity and standard analyses

After identifying causal paths that lead to an outcome of interest, it is often possible to *logically minimize* these causal paths and thus to obtain less complex results. For example, if a*b*c → y but also a*b*~c → y, this means that both the presence and the absence of condition c are sufficient for the outcome if the other conditions remain the same (in this case a*b). c is thus logically redundant and can be removed from the solution term.

Because there are 2^k possible combinations of conditions, researchers often encounter the problem of having (too) many variables and (too) few cases. As soon as there are, say, six conditions, it is likely that there will be much less empirical cases than logically possible combinations (in this case 64). This problem, which is referred to as *limited diversity*, characterizes all comparative research but is often not noticed. Since QCA works with truth tables, listing all possible logical combinations, the presence and the scale of limited diversity become immediately visible. One way of dealing with this is to keep the number of conditions as low as possible. If there are still a high number of logically-possible-but-not-observed-cases (logical remainders), one can apply three classic techniques – usually called the *standard analyses* – to analyse them (Ragin & Sonnett 2004 | C. Q. Schneider & Wagemann 2006). The first technique, the *conservative solution* or *complex solution*, bases logical minimisation only on the empirical observations and does consider the logical remainders in order to obtain a more parsimonious solution term. The advantage of the conservative solution is that its consistency is usually rather high. However, it often leads to highly complex solution terms that are difficult to interpret. With the second technique, the *most parsimonious solution*, the software makes all simplifying assumptions that make the solution less complex (= more parsimonious). A simplifying assumption to a logical remainder means that the fsQCA treats this remainder as if it were empirically observed, if doing so would make the solution term more parsimonious (and, of course, if it does not contradict the empirically observed causal paths). The advantages and disadvantages are the inverse of those of the conservative solution: it leads to causal explanations with low complexity, but also with a lower consistency. The third technique, the *intermediate solution*, combines the two previous techniques: the researcher allows the software to make simplifying assumptions, but first (s)he defines some *directional expectations* that have to be taken in to account. These directional expectations are mostly based on theory and should of course be made explicit.

Baumgartner (2012) proposes an alternative way for dealing with logical remainders: Coincidence Analysis (CNA). The motivations for this alternative method are twofold. Firstly, he holds that QCA assumes mutual causal independence among the causal conditions, and thus that the standard analyses ignore causal relationships between these conditions. I do not agree with the first part of the argument: nothing in QCA suggests that causal conditions would be independent from each other. The very fact that QCA allows to identify different causal paths for a certain outcome of interest, illustrates that the method recognizes possible causal relationships between the conditions. I do follow the second part of the argument, but this is not problematic *per se*: because one cannot research everything at once, these mutual causal relationships do not have to be explored in any given research design. For example, domestic political and administrative stability and European economic prosperity are identified as possible causal conditions that affect a Member State to exert

influence during its Presidency. There may well be mutual causal relations between domestic stability and European economic prosperity, but these do not necessarily have to be investigated for the research question at hand. If we would explore such mutual relations, we might find other factors such as the openness of the economy, the strength of labour unions, or the prominence of political parties with extreme ideologies. A detailed analysis of this would contribute little to our knowledge of the conditions under which Presidencies can exert influence in the Council.

The second reason why Baumgartner proposes CNA is that logical minimisation in QCA is in part based on empirically non-observed cases, which CNA does not do. This is true, but only for the most parsimonious and intermediate solutions. The conservative solution is strictly based on empirical observations. The other two variants, if applied prudently and with explicit justification of the theoretical assumptions underlying the data analysis, can also lead to interesting results. For these reasons, I do apply the standard analyses. This being said, the most parsimonious and intermediate solutions did not lead to very interesting results in my research. The solution terms identified in the most parsimonious solution do not yield tenable explanations for Presidency influence, and the two intermediate solution terms are merely a repetition of solution terms in the conservative solution minus the applicable directional expectations. In other words, the intermediate solution is a bit more parsimonious than the conservative solution, but the entire reduction of complexity is accounted for by the directional expectations. The only solution to be interpreted is thus the conservative solution. The detailed standard analyses are not included in the article; they can be found in appendix 4 of the dissertation.

4.2.3. Measuring influence

The method for measuring influence is inspired by the work of Arts and Verschuren (1999) and outlined in the second and third article of this dissertation (for a detailed explanation, see also Vandecasteele 2014, appendix 10 of the dissertation). The degree of influence is measured along three dimensions: goal achievement (GA), level of ascription of this goal achievement to the Presidency (AS) and political relevance (PR) of the output. The meaning of GA and AS are obvious: they refer to how many of the Presidency's goals were achieved, and to what extent this can be ascribed to the Presidency. PR reflects the political importance (i.e. the political and symbolic value of an output), the novelty (i.e. whether something new is introduced in EU policies or changes in the nature of EU policies) and the tangibility (i.e. the real and practical effects) of the output.

Similarly to the definition for 'influence', I have also changed the conceptualisation of PR while my research progressed. The reader will notice that, in the second article of the dissertation, PR refers *inter alia* to 'political impact' instead of 'tangibility'. When preparing the data for comparison with QCA, I changed this to 'tangibility' because it is more accurate and straightforward. In addition, in the second article of my dissertation the indicators for influence were expressed as verbal categories ('none', 'limited', 'substantial' and 'high'), whereas in the third article these categories are expressed by the numbers 0,1, 2, and 3. This does not change the meaning of the indicators, but only makes them suitable for comparison with QCA.

The formulation of the degree of influence as a number between 0 and 1 is made in three steps. Firstly, I take the average of GA, AS and PR. The scores of the three indicators are summed up and divided by 9: (GA+AS+PR)/9. The theoretically possible degrees of influence are thus 0, 0.11, 0.22, 0.33, 0.44, 0.56, 0.67, 0.78, 0.89, and 1. In verbal categories, scores below 0.5 are 'no influence' since they are no members of the of influential Presidencies; 0.56 indicates 'limited influence'; 0.67 and

0.78 show 'substantial influence'; and 0.89 and 1 express 'high influence'. In a second step, I check whether there is a value of 0 for any of the indicators GA, AS or PR. If this is the case, this means that the goals of the Presidency are not achieved, the output is politically irrelevant, or the output cannot be ascribed to the Presidency. In such cases, one cannot credibly claim that the Presidency has exerted influence. Therefore, if GA, AS or PR are 0, the level of political influence is also put to 0. This means that, in practice, the scores 0.11 and 0.22 will not be used. The third step is based on my definition of influence as the result of deliberate actions. AS is considered more important than the other two indicators for influence. The argument is that, even if an actor fully achieves its goals that are highly relevant, but this can be ascribed to this actor only to a limited extent, it would be strange to say that the actor had a substantial influence. In other words, the level of political influence cannot be higher than AS and the score for political influence is modified accordingly. If AS is limited (a score of 1), political influence cannot be higher than limited (0.56); if AS is substantial (a score of 2), political influence cannot be higher than substantial (0.78).

As I emphasize in the article that applies QCA, all scores in this dissertation referring to conditions and indicators for influence should not be regarded as expressions on an interval scale. The scores describe the conditions as accurately as possible, but they are linked to ordinal categories. They should thus not be seen as exact values; 0.67 is not 0.34 more than 0.33 in my analyses. In addition, it cannot be stressed enough that QCA is not a goal as such, but a tool to analyse complex relations between conditions and outcomes. The operation of QCA in itself is only a very small step in the whole research process. The numbers and scores that are used in the analysis reflect empirical information that is carefully researched and conceptualized. The empirical information 'behind' these numbers and scores is developed in the third article and its (online) attachments.

4.3. Preference formation and behaviour: analysis of survey results with SPSS

As mentioned *supra*, the main source of data for the fourth article in this dissertation was an online survey among Lithuanian civil servants. The data gathered with this survey served two aims: on the one hand, they allowed to map out the distribution of respondents' opinions in charts (available in the article and in appendixes 6, 7 and 8 of the dissertation). This shows which elements of the EaP policies are considered more/less important, and which reasons for prioritizing the EaP during the Lithuanian Presidency weighed the heaviest. On the other hand, I applied a few basic statistical techniques with SPSS to check whether there were significant differences between respondents that resided in Brussels or not and between those that did and did not chair preparatory Council meetings. This statistical analysis benefitted from a statistical consultation with Ghent University FIRE (Fostering Innovative Research based on Evidence) in October 2014.

4.3.1. Statistical tests

The Mann-Whitney U test was used for multiple-choice questions where respondents were asked to indicate to what extent a statement is applicable / the degree to which they agreed with a statement. This test allows us to discover differences between groups as to how they evaluate statements. It compares the average ranks of answers of two respondent groups, and indicates whether one group assigns systematically higher or lower scores than the other (Moore, McCabe & Craig 2009, chapter 15). The null hypothesis to be tested in these cases is that there is no difference between Brussels-based vs. not Brussels-based officials and between chairs vs. not chairs.

For questions where respondents could pick a limited number of options out of a range of possibilities, I applied the Pearson's Chi-Square test or Fisher's Exact Test to check whether some options were systematically more or less often selected by one group than by another. Both tests are based on 2x2 contingency tables. Pearson's Chi-Square test compares the expected cell count with the observed cell count for each cell of the contingency table. Expected cell counts are calculated as the multiplication of the row total and the column total, divided by the total number of cases in the sample. These differences are squared, divided by the expected count, and summed; this is called the chi-square statistic X^2. The null hypothesis is that there is no association between the row and column classification. If the null hypothesis is true, the results follow a chi-square distribution χ^2 (Moore *et al.* 2009, pp. 529-534).

Fisher's Exact Test also tests an alternative hypothesis against the null hypothesis that there is no relation between rows and columns, but in another way. It first applies the factorial operator '!' to all row totals and column totals, and sums these values. Then it does the same for all observed cell counts and the total number of observations. When the former value is divided by the latter, this gives the p-value expressing the statistical significance of the alternative hypothesis (see e.g. Fisher 1934, pp. 80-111).

Both tests cannot tell anything about the nature of the difference: a p-value below 0.05 can only indicate that membership of one group or another *does* matter. The researcher then has to derive from the values in the contingency tables in what way the two groups differ. In deciding which test result to apply, I used a common rule-of-thumb that the Pearson's Chi-Square is suitable if all cells of the contingency table contain at least five cases, whereas Fisher's Exact Test should be applied when this is not the case. This rule-of-thumb is not undisputed; McDonald (2014) claims that Fisher's Exact Test is most suitable for all samples of up to 1000. In any case, in practice the two tests never disagreed at such a level that one test claimed significance while the other did not, so this made no difference in deciding whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between two groups.

The analysis of the impact of work place and/or roles on preference formation and behaviour largely follows a deductive logic. It basically tests hypotheses derived from existing theories. However, the process through which I arrived at the question what drives preference formation and behaviour can be better characterized as abduction. Just like the formulation of conditions for influence to be tested, it was the result of moving back and forth between empirical findings (a strong interest of Lithuania in promoting EU-EaP relations combined with the findings on necessary conditions for exerting influence) and theoretical literature on preference formation and socialisation.

4.4. Constructing cases

Case-based research, be it comparative or not, focuses on cases (Gerring 2004; 2007). The question of 'what is case' can be answered in many different ways and has even been the title of a book edited by Ragin and Becker (1992). In this book, Ragin (1992) argues that anything can be considered a 'case', depending on the conditions and/or outcome of interest. An organisation can be studied in a large-N research if every member of the organisation is treated as a case, but also in a single-case study if the organisation as whole is considered one case, or in a small-N study if different departments of the organisation are compared. Any demarcation of cases thus involves an artificial process of drawing boundaries (Gerrits & Verweij 2013 | Byrne & Callaghan 2014). Ragin (1992, pp. 217-218) calls this process 'casing'. Cases are both real and constructed: they refer to things that are

empirically observed, but their configuration and expression is the result of narratives that do not necessarily correspond to empirical units in the social world.

From the start of my PhD project, I decided to focus on the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies and I knew that there would be an important comparative element to my research. Why these three Presidencies and why the EaP policies? My strategy for (comparative) case selection is a form of 'most similar' case comparison (discussed in e.g., Mackie & Marsh 1995 | Peters 1998 | Seawright & Gerring 2008): the cases are as similar as possible and the aim is to reveal causal processes that can explain differences in outcome. Practical considerations played a role as well: the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies took place during the period of my research position, and the Hungarian Presidency just before. This made it easier to contact relevant officials and experts who still had a good memory of decision-making in these periods, and allowed me to follow EaP-related events on a daily basis.

The Presidencies (Hungary, Poland, Lithuania) and the geographical scope (EaP policies) were selected for three main theoretical and analytical reasons. One reason relates to a void in the academic literature on Presidency influence, while the other two reasons are in fact scope conditions. Firstly, the influence of the Presidency on external policies has received rather little attention in the academic literature when compared to such influence in other policy areas. Moreover, existing research on Presidency influence on external policies (e.g. Arter 2000 | Tallberg 2006b | Bunse 2009 | Dijkstra 2011) focuses on empirical cases before 2009, that is, before the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force. As discussed *supra*, the Treaty of Lisbon changed the role of the Presidency, especially in the area of external policies. Its tasks related to agenda setting, external representation and political leadership were weakened; the question thus arises whether existing accounts of (conditions for) Presidency influence are still valid today. With this research, I aim to shed light on the influence of the Presidency in this new institutional setting.

The first scope condition is that, in studying the influence of the Presidency on external policies, it is of course most interesting to deal with a policy area in which the Presidency is involved to a certain extent. In this respect, EaP policies are among the most relevant of EU external policies: contrary to 'classic' foreign policy, in which the HR/VP and the EEAS now play an increasingly important role, EaP policies include a broad range of external policy areas where the Presidency still has key responsibilities at different stages of policy-making.

The second scope condition is similarity: Hungary, Poland and Lithuania have much in common with regard to EaP policies. The three countries are interested in further integration between the EU and (some of) its Eastern neighbours. Based on earlier research (e.g. Tulmets 2011), it can be assumed that these countries' representatives would invest at least some administrative and political resources in promoting their views on the EaP during their respective Presidency periods. In addition, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania are similar with regard to their recent history of transformation from a communist system to a market-based liberal democracy, their (relatively short) history of membership in the EU,[11] and the formal institutional (post-Lisbon) architecture in which their

[11] It has been suggested that the 'newness' of a Member State may affect their influence during the Presidency (see e.g. Bengtsson *et al.* 2004). In this research, however, this is not considered a possible causal condition. At the time of their Presidency, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania were no new Member States anymore: they had been EU members since at least seven years, during which the national administrations and the Brussels-based diplomats could familiarize with formal and informal rules. Moreover, the Treaty of Lisbon established new decision-making rules in various areas, especially in external policies: all Member States could thus be considered 'new' to a certain extent.

Presidency took place. In other words, I focus on Presidencies that take place in one and the same institutional context, of countries that share a number of country characteristics, and the research is limited to a geographical area in which all incumbent countries are interested to a certain extent.

The substantive articles in this dissertation are based on distinctively delimitated cases. The second article focuses on 'the Polish Presidency'. It is thus a single case study, but the analysis is based on information of a lot of smaller units: the relevant EaP-related outputs (or non-outputs) during the Polish Presidency constituted separate units of the general higher-order case. When I wrote the article in 2012-2013, Poland was an obvious choice to focus on, because this country had been much more active in promoting the EaP during its Presidency than Hungary. It was the best possible case for finding data related to the three research questions I addressed in this article.

The fourth article is a single case study on 'the Lithuanian Presidency'. More specifically, it explores the EaP-related preferences of Lithuanian civil servants and seeks to discover differences between groups of officials. Both the second and fourth article can be best described as a study of a specific example of a case (see e.g. Gerring 2004, p. 342). Also for this article, the Lithuanian Presidency was an obvious choice between the three Presidencies that are discussed in this dissertation. Practical considerations were important here: the Lithuanian Presidency was the only one for which I had the possibility to conduct desk research and in-depth interviews *before* the start of the Presidency. When I started the PhD project in October 2011, the Hungarian Presidency was already finished and the Polish Presidency was halfway. For Lithuania, I had the unique opportunity to poll key officials on their priorities and preferences before they knew how many of them they could actually realize. The survey was conducted afterwards – otherwise the impact of work place and role of officials could of course not be analysed – but the information obtained during interviews beforehand was of great value for the formulation of survey questions and to put the survey results into perspective.

The third article is the comparative part of my dissertation. It analyses the influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies with QCA. The units of comparison are the respective Presidencies' influence on eight 'areas'. There are thus three times eight 'cases' to be compared. The rationale behind this casing stems from the way in which sufficiency of causal conditions is measured with QCA. Following a first analysis of sufficiency based on all relevant EaP-related outputs for each Presidency, I noticed that this approach yields paradoxical results. For the Hungarian Presidency I identified 12 outputs, in eight of which Hungary had exerted some influence. For the Polish Presidency, there were 19 outputs with 11 of them being influenced to a certain extent by Poland. For the Lithuanian Presidency there were 31 cases and in 10 of them the Presidency had exerted influence. The analysis of these data showed four causal paths with a raw consistency of more than 0.75: two of these paths, the most consistent ones, covered Hungarian cases, and two other paths (raw consistency just over 0.75) covered Polish cases. None of these paths covered Lithuanian cases. This was due to the fact that Hungary was influential in a *relatively* higher number of outputs (compared to the total number of outputs during its Presidency) than Poland and Lithuania, even though the latter two Presidencies exerted influence on a higher *absolute* number of outputs.

In order to make the three Presidencies comparable with QCA, the number cases for comparison had to be equal for each Presidency in order to obtain results that make sense. Therefore the cases were constructed in two steps. Firstly, as in the article on the Polish Presidency, I defined the influence for each relevant EaP-related output. Secondly, I grouped these outputs into eight areas that served as units for comparison: bilateral political relations, defence, education/research/youth, energy, justice and home affairs (including customs cooperation), multilateral political and institutional framework (including formats for multilateral cooperation and EaP Summits), trade/economic relations, and

transport cooperation. I defined the areas in such a way that they included comparable outputs and that the Presidency exerted influence on at least one of them – otherwise there would be nothing to compare.

5. Structure of the dissertation

As already became clear in the first section of this introduction, the four articles are presented in the chronological order as they were written. More importantly, the order of the articles also follows the build-up of arguments. The research topic has remained largely constant since I started the PhD project in October 2011, but the specific research questions have evolved as my research progressed. The first three articles are co-authored and were drafted in a similar manner: I conducted the desk- and field research after broad consultations with my (co)supervisors on the concepts and methods to be used. Subsequently, my drafts were thoroughly commented by the co-author(s). It took between two and five rounds of editing before these articles were submitted. The fourth article is single-authored, but it has also strongly benefited from feedback by my (co)supervisors, colleagues at Department of Political Science of Ghent University, and Karolina Pomorska – *extra muros* member of my PhD supervision committee.

The first article of the dissertation is co-authored with my co-supervisor Dr. Fabienne Bossuyt and was published in 2014 in *Comparative European Politics* (Vandecasteele & Bossuyt 2014). This review article played an important role for the analytical framework of further my research in two ways. Firstly, it highlights the difference between 'success' and 'influence' in evaluating Presidencies and shows why a lack of clarity on this distinction can blur discussions on whether or not the Presidency is influential in EU decision-making. In this article we use 'performance' as an umbrella concept for both success and influence, but in my further research I avoid using this concept because it may create the impression that it is understood as having a specific meaning (as in, e.g., Jørgensen, Oberthür & Shahin 2011). Secondly, the article reviews the conditions for success and influence as described in the existing literature on the Presidency. Where applicable, it also highlights on which conditions there is consensus in the literature, and on which conditions there are debates as to their role in Presidency influence or success. In summary, the article provides the broad conceptual underpinnings of my study of Presidency influence.

The second article was published in *European Integration online Papers* in 2013 with my supervisor Prof. Dr. Jan Orbie and with Dr. Fabienne Bossuyt (Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Orbie 2013). It is based on a preliminary analysis of empirical data, applied to the Polish Presidency. The article, on the one hand, further delineates the concept of 'influence' and develops a method for measuring influence, based on the work of Arts and Verschuren (1999, see also supra under 'Measuring influence'). On the other hand, it explores three research questions: (i) the type(s) of influence that is exerted by the Presidency, (ii) the forums where the Presidency exerts influence, and (iii) differential influence of the Presidency on bilateral and multilateral policies. Through a study of the Polish Presidency and its influence on EaP policies, the article concludes first of all that the Polish Presidency could only influence the agenda to a certain extent, while it was not able to exert additional influence on the contents of decisions. In addition, we observed most instances of Presidency influence on EaP policies in the preparatory bodies of the Council, and much less at the ministerial or international level. Thirdly, we concluded that, even though the Presidency had broad opportunities to play a role in organising, hosting and managing multilateral events, these activities did often not result in political influence. By contrast, we found a relatively high number of instances of influence in

bilateral dossiers. These conclusions provide some insight in the nature of Presidency influence. They should not be seen as conditions that enhance or hinder influence of the Presidency, but rather as specifications of this influence.

The next step in the research process was a comparison of the influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies on EaP policies, which I wrote down in the third article of this dissertation. This article is co-authored with Prof. Dr. Jan Orbie and Dr. Fabienne Bossuyt, and was submitted to *European Politics and Society*. The article was revised and resubmitted after a first peer review. It addresses the central topic of my research: What are the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for a Presidency to exert influence on EU external policies? This article is based on extensive fieldwork and desk research, the results of which are written down in country files for the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies respectively. These country files, which are available in appendixes 1, 2 and 3 of the dissertation, have been the basis for the comparative study. The conditions for influence are compared with QCA for the aforementioned three Presidencies and their influence on the EU's EaP policies. Detailed results of the QCA are provided in appendix 4 of this dissertation. The article concludes, first of all, that there is only one necessary condition for Presidency influence: the topic should be of high salience to the officials of the incumbent country. The absence of any other condition for influence does as such not hamper Presidency influence. In addition, the analysis reveals three sufficient combinations of conditions for the Presidency to influence, in which the individual conditions play different roles. In other words, the officials working for the Presidency are not generally influential, but only (possibly) exert influence in some areas that they find highly important and if some other conditions are fulfilled.

Finally, the fourth article draws on the conclusions of the third one, notable the finding that only high salience to the Presidency is a necessary condition for exerting influence. The article is submitted for review as part of a Special Issue in *East European Politics & Societies* on the role of Central and Eastern European Member States in EU policies towards the post-Soviet space, co-edited by Dr. Fabienne Bossuyt and myself. It questions the preference formation of the officials working for a Presidency. Lithuania was an interesting case study because it was a clear example of a Presidency that tried to push forward an initiative that is in line with its own preferences. Also practically it was the most feasible to focus on this Presidency in the framework of my PhD research: the Lithuanian Presidency was the only one where I had the opportunity to interview officials before and after their Presidencies. In addition, there was sufficient time to develop, conduct and analyse a survey among Lithuanian officials working on (aspects of) external policies. The article draws on data gathered from a survey to which 105 respondents participated, and the survey questions were based on a large number of in-depth interviews. The survey questions and answer options are available in appendix 5 of the dissertation, and detailed comparisons between replies of different respondent groups in appendixes 6, 7 and 8. In the article, I address three research questions linked to the question why Lithuania decided to prioritize the EaP region so strongly during its Presidency and why its officials were determined to deliver on their priorities, even if there was resistance from EU Member States or institutions. Firstly, the survey provides insight into the general motivations why Lithuanian officials support closer relations between the EU and the EaP countries. Secondly, the article addresses theoretical accounts that can be used to explain the preferences and priorities of the Presidency. And thirdly, it asks (how) preference formation differs among civil servants according to the location where they work and the functions they perform. Based on the survey results, I conclude that Lithuanian officials mainly promote norms and values they consider to have acquired themselves through EU membership, but that they also pursue geopolitical goals in the region. This

finding is not revolutionary, but substantiates earlier suggestions with broad empirical data. Lithuanians' approach to the region was not toned down but instead reinforced during the Lithuanian Presidency among all groups of respondents: performing functions of chairmanship or residing in Brussels during the Presidency did not have a substantial impact on officials' attitudes, and the respondents' work place (Brussels or not) was only very loosely related to their visions on the aims of the Eastern Partnership policies. In engaging with the theoretical debate on the importance of the logic of consequences vs. the logic of appropriateness, the article points to the limitations of this approach. The findings show that a mixed logic rather than one of the extreme logics underlies preference formation and behaviour of officials, and, more fundamentally, that it is difficult to escape the difficulties to decide how the theoretical logics can be linked to empirical observations.

Table 3 (below) presents an overview of the four articles of the dissertation, including the topics and research questions they discuss, and the literature or empirical cases they focus on.

At the end of the dissertation, the general conclusions summarize and elaborate on the findings of the four articles. In this final part, I also reflect on the significance of these findings for the analysis of the Presidency roles and the norms, as well as on the contributions and limitations of the study and possible areas for future research.

Table 3: Overview of the topics, research questions and focus of the articles

Article	Topic / Research questions	Focus / cases
First article – 'Assessing EU Council Presidencies: (conditions for) success and influence'	• Definition of Presidency 'influence', contrasting influence with Presidency 'success' • Analytical framework: Overview of possible conditions for Presidency influence and success	• Review of existing literature on Presidency influence and success
Second article – 'Unpacking the Influence of the Council Presidency on European Union External Policies: The Polish Council Presidency and the Eastern Partnership'	• Development of instrument for measuring influence. • RQ 1: What type(s) of influence does the Presidency exert? • RQ 2: In which forums for decision-making is the Presidency's influence most prominent? • RQ 3: (How) does Presidency influence differ with regard to bilateral and multilateral policies?	• Polish Presidency (2nd semester of 2011) • Detailed discussion of Presidency influence in several instances related to EaP policies.
Third article – 'The Influence of the Council Presidency on External EU Policies: A Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies and EU Eastern Partnership Policies'	• Instrument for measuring influence and membership scores in conditions for influence adapted to QCA → expressed in scores between 0 and 1 • RQ 4: What are the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for a Presidency to exert influence on EU external policies?	• Hungarian Presidency (1st semester of 2011), Polish Presidency (2nd semester of 2011), Lithuanian Presidency (2nd semester of 2013) • Comparison with QCA of Presidency influence on eight 'policy areas'. • Detailed analyses per country available in country files (appendixes 1, 2, 3). • Detailed QCA results available in appendix 4.
Fourth article – 'Preference formation of officials working for an EU Council Presidency: The Lithuanian Presidency of 2013 and the Eastern Partnership'	• RQ 5: How can the preferences and priorities of officials working for a Presidency be theoretically explained? • RQ 6: (How) does preference formation differ among officials according to the location where they work and the functions they perform?	• Lithuanian Presidency (2nd semester of 2013) • Survey with 105 respondents out of 223 contacted. • Survey questions available in appendix 5. • Detailed survey results and analyses available in appendixes 6, 7, 8.

List of interviews

Interview 3. Polish Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 31 January 2012.
Interview 16. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest, 10 May 2012.
Interview 37. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 7 March 2013.
Interview 54. Lithuanian Ministry of Justice, Vilnius, 18 February 2014.

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Abstract

Scholarly attention for the EU Council Presidency has substantially grown in the past decade, as a result of increasing tasks and responsibilities of this office. A wide variety of countries, policy areas and research questions has been studied, from different theoretical angles and using a variety of research methods. The present article offers a review of the literature on the Presidency and proposes a research agenda, centred around three books. The edited volume of Charléty and Mangenot (2011) offers a detailed overview of the differentiated presidential system in the EU since the Lisbon Treaty and describes the role of the rotating Presidency in this new legal environment. It provides a framework for future analyses of the Presidency in the current institutional architecture. Bunse (2009) made a comparative analysis of Presidency influence, and the book edited by Van Hecke and Bursens (2011) discusses the success of the Belgian 2010 Presidency. The article makes two main points: first, the analytical differences between 'success' and 'influence' are underexplored in studies of Presidency performance. This is important, since different approaches may lead to diverging results. Second, more systematic and comparative research is needed, in order to enhance our understanding of the nature and origins of Presidency performance.

1. Introduction

The importance of the rotating Council Presidency (hereafter: Presidency) for EU decision-making has steadily grown since its creation in the 1950s. While initially a mere administrator, the Presidency has become a functional and accountable element of EU policy-making (see e.g. Westlake & Galloway 2004). This evolution gave rise to increased academic interest. Today, research on the Presidency is part of the mainstream study of the EU political system. While early contributions consisted primarily of descriptions of the Presidency's tasks and commentaries on individual Presidencies, the past decade has witnessed the emergence of more theoretically framed (comparative) studies.

This article takes stock of the existing literature on the Presidency. In doing so, it gives particular attention to studies assessing Presidency performance, which occupy an important strand of the literature. Such studies tend to depart from either an 'influence' or a 'success' approach, that is, they either study the extent to which the Presidency made a difference in decision-making – influence – or how the Presidency behaved and/or how much of its goals were reached – success. However, the analytical differences between these two concepts have not yet been thoroughly analysed; some authors even consider them as interchangeable. As will be argued in the present article, this has far-reaching consequences: authors examining Presidency performance have drawn partially contradictory conclusions, depending on their focus on influence or success.

The three books under review are a good starting point for analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the literature in this regard, and for developing a research agenda. The edited volume of Charléty and Mangenot offers a legal and practical analysis of the current (post-Lisbon) responsibilities of the rotating Presidency. Bunse compares the *influence* of three Presidencies (Finland, Belgium and Greece between 1999-2003) on internal market and external policies, and the volume edited by Van Hecke and Bursens discusses the *success* of the Belgian 2010 Presidency in a wide range of policy areas. While offering valuable accounts of the priorities, achievements, and internal and external contexts of the Presidency, the latter two contributions are testimony to how the failure to sufficiently clarify the concepts of influence and success impacts on research results regarding Presidency performance.

The present article makes two main arguments. First, more precise operationalizations of Presidency influence and success should be developed in order to enhance our understanding of the nature of Presidency performance. Moreover, researchers studying Presidency performance should clarify their influence/success approach and take the effect of this approach on the results into account. Second, more systematic and comparative research of Presidency performance is needed, which would allow for clear accounts of the conditions that shape this performance, and would reveal possible causal complexity.

We start with a general review of the literature on the Presidency, sketching the leading theoretical approaches, methodologies, and empirical scope, whilst highlighting the main shortcomings and gaps. Subsequently, we discuss the debates on the concepts of influence and success, and illustrate the dissimilarities between the two. We then offer an overview of the conditions for influence/success that have been identified in the literature, and show how different approaches can produce diverging results. In conclusion, we summarize the main arguments of the article, and suggest a number of areas for future research.

2. Studies on the Presidency: state of the art

We distinguish four strands in the growing body of Presidency literature (for alternative classifications, see Elgström 2003 | Niemann & Mak 2010). First, there are descriptive studies of the Presidency roles and functioning in EU decision-making (e.g. Charléty and Mangenot, 2011, Kirchner 1992 | Westlake & Galloway 2004 | Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace 2006 | Fernández Pasarín 2009). A second group of literature includes assessments of single Presidencies, such as Van Hecke and Bursens (2011), contributions to the Journal of Common Market Studies (JCMS) Annual Reviews, and various national journals. Third, a number of studies takes a comparative approach for analysing Presidency behaviour (Elgström 2003), influence and leadership (e.g. Bunse, 2009, Tallberg 2006b), and success (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Drulák & Šabič 2010). The fourth strand touches upon some specific Presidency-related issues, such as preference formation of the incumbent (Buchet de Neuilly 2011 | Verhoeff & Niemann 2011), the role of norms for Presidency behaviour (Elgström 2006 | Niemann & Mak 2010), the effect on national administrations (e.g. Charléty in Charléty and Mangenot, 2011, Wurzel 1996), or the adequateness of the rotating Presidency system for securing policy agreement and coordination in the EU (Bunse, 2009, Wurzel 1996 | Schout 2008).

The contribution of the first category is mostly empirical. For example, the edited volume of Charléty and Mangenot provides a detailed description of the rotating Presidency, its functions, and (evolving) inter-institutional relations. It meticulously sketches the surge in responsibilities, the increasing accountability of the Presidency as well as the legal and political context in which it operates, and the opportunities and limits for the incumbent to shape EU policies. As such, it is the most up-to-date account of the evolution of the Presidency and its place in the post-Lisbon institutional architecture. However, the analysis is not theoretically framed, although this was not the ambition of the editors.

By contrast, the three other categories within the literature have accommodated an increasing amount of theoretically informed research, mostly linked to the debate between rational choice and sociological institutionalist approaches (see e.g. March & Olsen 1998 | Niemann & Mak 2010). Rationalist approaches view (EU Member) States as rational actors trying to maximize their influence in negotiations; the Presidency is an additional power resource. States act according to a 'logic of anticipated consequences'. Sociological approaches explain behaviour through a 'logic of appropriateness', i.e. it is assumed that negotiators behave according to norms and role concepts, which they truly believe to be appropriate. While some studies are explicitly inspired by rational choice institutionalism (e.g. Bunse, 2009, Tallberg 2006a), others (Elgström 2003 | Niemann & Mak 2010 | Verhoeff & Niemann 2011) have attempted to build bridges and examined which logic plays under which circumstances.

Research methods used for Presidency studies are predominantly qualitative. They include legal descriptions of the Presidency (e.g. Charléty and Mangenot, 2011), single case (e.g. Van Hecke and Bursens, 2011, contributions to the JCMS Annual Reviews) and comparative studies (Bunse, 2009, Elgström 2003 | Drulák & Šabič 2010). Data are mainly gathered through document and process tracing analyses, but interviews are also an important source of information. The literature also contains a number of *large N*, quantitative studies (Schalk, Torenvlied, Weesie & Stokman 2007 | Warntjen 2007 | Thomson 2008) of Presidency influence. These studies offer valuable insights regarding the effect of timing, voting method, preference extremity and salience. However, on the down side, quantitative methods have difficulties to take less 'visible' issues such as (in)formal norms, agenda exclusion or reputation into account. In addition, existing quantitative studies focus exclusively on influence on finalized legislation, and do not consider other ways of exerting

Presidency influence, e.g. inhibiting decision-making or launching new ideas. A general remark applicable to all types of methodologies employed thus far is that they fall short in revealing causal complexity. For example, small State Presidencies could be more influential than large State Presidencies, but only if they fulfil a number of other conditions such as good reputation and extensive preparation. Existing studies do not systematically highlight combinations of factors that can explain Presidency performance.

The empirical scope of existing Presidency research is broad, both in terms of countries and policy areas covered. Ample attention has been paid to how small States can increase their influence through the office of the Presidency (Bunse, 2009, Arter 2000 | Bengtsson, Elgström & Tallberg 2004 | Thorhallsson & Wivel 2006) and, more recently, to the role of the Presidency in the post-Lisbon institutional architecture. The edited volume of Charléty and Mangenot contributes to our understanding of the Presidency's relations with and current divisions of labour/power between the different actors in decision-making. The authors identify the rotating Council Presidency as one of the five presidential functions in the EU, the others being the Permanent President of the European Council (PPEC), the 'trio' Presidencies, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President of the Commission (HRVP), and semi-permanent Presidencies of the Eurogroup and several preparatory bodies. The Lisbon Treaty introduced new rules and formalized previously existing practices that, taken together, limit the role of individual Presidencies. It changed the Presidency's responsibilities most drastically with regard to the European Council (see the chapter by Gillissen or Rittelmeyer) and external policies (see the chapter by Maurer, Pomorska and Vanhoonacker, but also Debaere, De Ridder & Nasra 2011). The contributors to Van Hecke and Bursens analyse the success of the Belgian Presidency in this new institutional framework. Future research should further investigate how the different Council configurations and policy levels relate to each other in practice, and which role the Presidency can play beyond this formal framework.

With the exception of Drulák and Šabič (2010), there is still little research on first-time Presidencies of new Member States. Niemann and Mak (2010) have identified some further blank spots in the literature, e.g. the absence of comparisons between the role of the chair within the EU and within other multilateral settings. Tallberg (2010) took an important step to fill this void with his comparison of formal leadership in the EU, the WTO and UN environmental conferences. Another shortcoming in the literature concerns the lack of knowledge on the conditions that shape Presidency performance, including the incumbent's relations with the EU institutions and other Member States, external events, experience, size, and policy areas (e.g. legislative and non-legislative policies). The relevance of policy levels (preparatory bodies vs. Council) is also largely under-researched. Wurzel (1996) discussed the different levels, but did not indicate how the Presidency's role and influence differ in this respect. We argue that these shortcomings in the literature are related to a largely overlooked problem; the definition and operationalization of the concepts of 'influence' and 'success' are often not sufficiently clarified, which has an impact on the research results. We elaborate on this in the next sections.

3. The role of 'influence' and 'success' concepts in Presidency research

Presidencies face the dilemma of 'getting things done' vs. promoting own national interests (Bjurulf 2001). The chair is expected to serve the EU and effectively manage decision-making, but national politicians and administrations may also want to use the Presidency seat to prioritize certain issues they find important. Evaluations of Presidency performance tend to be concerned with evaluating

only one side of this dilemma, and can be clustered depending on which side they focus on. When studying national interest representation, authors highlight the 'influence' of the Presidency: they discuss how and to which extent the chair has used its position to bring decisions closer to its own preferences. Conversely, authors assessing Presidencies in terms of 'success' – or alternatively 'efficiency' – usually look at the 'getting things done' side. The analytical differences between influence and success have not yet been profoundly analysed; some authors even use the concepts as quasi-synonyms (e.g. Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Warntjen 2007). This is also the case in the books by Bunse and Van Hecke and Bursens. Bunse studies Presidency influence, while defining the conditions for influence as *"conditions for success"* (p. 55-70). Van Hecke and Bursens (p. 20) draw on the work of Bunse – and the latter is one of the contributors to their edited volume – when developing their research questions on Presidency success. In other words, although both books study different questions, they refer to influence and success as synonyms. In what follows, we will first show how these concepts differ, and then illustrate how research results may vary according to the influence or success approach that is taken.

3.1. Presidency influence

Presidency influence has been the subject of much academic debate, centred around four questions.
First, not everybody agrees that the chair can, or even should, exert any particular influence. While a considerable amount of studies (e.g. Putnam 1988 | Bjurulf 2001 | Farrell & Héritier 2004 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007 | Thomson 2008 | Pintelon & Van Lancker 2011) has shown that the Presidency does exert influence on EU policies, some scholars are more sceptical. Often quoted in this respect is Dewost, who claimed that the Presidency is a *"responsibility without power"* (1984, p. 2, translated from French) and who was followed by others (e.g. Ludlow 1993 | Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace 2006). Also Culley *et al.*, contributors to the edited volume of Charléty and Mangenot, state that *"[t]he Presidency is […] neither an institution nor an instrument of power. It is a service that every Member State has to deliver to its partners"* (p. 79, translated from French).
Second, among scholars examining Presidency influence, there is disagreement on the definition of influence and its relation to power. Bunse studies the leadership capacities of the Presidency, meaning *"an asymmetrical relationship of influence in which one actor guides or directs the behaviour of others towards a certain goal over a certain period of time"* (p. 5). Influence is understood as the ability *"to change an outcome from what it otherwise would have been in the absence of an action"* (p. 5). Betsill and Corell (2001) define power as a general ability to exert influence, and influence as impact on concrete files, decisions or people. Power may be translated into influence, but this does not necessarily occur, and conversely, actors may exert influence without being powerful. Arts and Verschuren (1999) have suggested to include anticipation of others in the definition of influence, thus leaving out the intentional element that one finds in Bunse's understanding of influence, and coming very close to the concept of power as described by Betsill and Corell.
A third issue of debate concerns the notion of interests. When studying the influence of any actor, this actor is supposed to defend certain interests. While the predominant theoretical approaches – rationalism and constructivism – both recognize that Member States pursue interests in the EU and that the office of the Presidency can increase their influence, they conceptualize the nature of interests differently. Rational choice perspectives (e.g. Tallberg 2010) assume that the interests are 'given' and known by the actors. By contrast, constructivist approaches (e.g. Buchet de Neuilly 2011)

argue that preferences intensify during (preparations for) the Presidency, since policy makers expect that their role will allow them to have additional leverage and they want to take their chance.
The fourth issue of debate is methodological. Alongside the general methodological problem of a lack of insight in causal complexity (see above), an additional issue for studying influence is counterfactuality: it is impossible to know what would have happened if another country was in the chair, and to define whether a country was influential because of its Presidency role or due to other factors (Warntjen 2007; 2008).

3.2. Presidency success vs. influence

Similarly, scholars are divided on the definition of a successful Presidency. Van Hecke and Bursens define Presidency success as *"having realized the priorities that were set in the Presidency programme and having coped adequately with unexpected events"* (p. 23). Their study is based on a supply/demand framework, developed by Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006, p. 1057). They argue that the situation dictates which Presidency roles are needed: supply consists of the priorities and actions of the Presidency, whereas demand includes the expectations of other Member States and what the situation requires. Schout and Vanhoonacker used the term 'effective' instead of 'successful' for Presidency performance. In their view, a chair is effective if it provides the adequate role supply to a certain demand. It is a useful framework for *ex post* analyses of Presidency success, but it does not allow researchers to formulate expectations about the conditions under which Presidencies will or will not be effective.
Other indicators for successful or 'good' Presidencies, suggested in the literature, are: correct performance of the different roles/functions (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Maurer 2008 | Debaere *et al.* 2011); legislative output – the more (complicated) files a Presidency manages to complete, the more successful (Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | De Ville, Criekemans & Delreux 2011 | Drieskens 2011); good relations and coordination with the EU institutions (De Ville *et al.* 2011 | Drieskens 2011); continuity in decision-making, and more generally the extent to which the Presidency promotes the European integration process (Schout 1998).
In any case, it is clear that Presidency influence is not the same as success. A Presidency that delivers on its priorities can be called successful, but is not necessarily influential – for example, when the incumbent includes 'easy' issues in its programme in order to claim credit afterwards (see also Warntjen 2007). Conversely, if Presidencies manage to push through or block decisions against the will of a significant number of other Member States, they exert disproportionate influence, although this behaviour may damage their reputation and lead to negative comments about their success. Pintelon and Van Lancker (2011) were the first to clearly differentiate between Presidency influence and success. Yet, they did not engage in an in-depth analysis of the substance of and differences between both concepts. Such an analysis is still missing in the literature.
Authors studying Presidency success have a broader focus than those focusing on influence. As shown above, success has many aspects; it may even include 'leadership' as an adequate reaction to unexpected events. On the other hand, Van Hecke and Bursens argue in their concluding chapter that Belgium's Presidency was successful because it did not pursue a national agenda. In other words, exerting influence is possible in their success approach, as long as the Presidency pursues 'European' goals. The difference between influence and success approaches can indeed be framed within the national and the EU level. Studying Presidency influence is about the extent to which national Governments employ the office of the Presidency to bring decisions closer to their preferences – which may but do not necessarily contradict the 'European' agenda. In turn, authors

discussing Presidency success take the EU level as a point of reference and assess the extent to which the chair has 'done a good job'. To some extent, the supply/demand model of Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006) integrates both levels: it recognizes that the Presidency defends national as well as European interests. One of the four possible Presidency roles it discerns is that of national representative. Yet, their starting point is still a European one: national interest representation is only considered adequate in the event of a demand for this role.

As is the case for influence, studying Presidency success faces particular methodological problems, because it is difficult to measure. Success is often defined in a 'negative' way, i.e. the absence of failures: *"while failures are often attributed to particular presidencies, successes […] always have several mothers and fathers"* (Ojanen & Vuohula 2007, p. 23). Kaczyński (2011a) has proposed a more 'positive' framework with three categories of success: 'poor' (make a mistake or fail to play a relevant role), 'well' (there are some failures, neither provoked nor prevented by the Presidency), and 'very well' (a maximum of what was possible and desirable was achieved).

A large number of conditions determining Presidency performance have been proposed and analysed in the literature. In the following paragraphs, we review these conditions, and show how they are found to work differently according to the influence/success approach.

4. Conditions for Presidency performance

Conditions for Presidency performance can be divided in three categories: conditions related to the external context, national conditions, and characteristics of specific issues or policy areas.

The first category of conditions, the external context, includes both foreseeable and unexpected conditions that cannot be manipulated by individual countries. Presidencies are most likely to be influential when there is a favourable external *political and economic environment* (Bunse, 2009, Pintelon & Van Lancker 2011). *External crises* may entail opportunities for providing leadership (Bunse, 2009, Langdal & von Sydow 2009). However, the contributors to the edited volume of Van Hecke and Bursens note that the external economic and political contexts are less likely to have an impact on Presidency success under the Lisbon Treaty, since the HRVP – who chairs the Foreign Affairs Council – and the PPEC – who heads the European Council – are now the main institutional actors in those areas where the external context plays a role.

The second category of conditions, 'national' conditions, is related to the domestic context and organization of the Presidency. There is agreement in the literature on three national conditions. First, early and thorough *preparation* promotes both influence (Bunse, 2009, Arter 2000) and success (Van Hecke and Bursens, 2011, Pollak & Puntscher Riekmann 2007 | Maurer 2008 | Vanhoonacker, Pomorska & Maurer 2010 | Drieskens 2011). Second, Bunse and Van Hecke and Bursens highlight the positive effect of *Brussels-based Presidencies* – far-reaching autonomy for the permanent representation *vis-à-vis* the capital – on influence and success respectively. Third, a *good reputation* – which means giving the 'right example' in the policy areas under discussion, having a pro-EU attitude, and being impartial (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Jakobsen 2009) – is found to increase influence (Bunse, 2009, Karoliewski & Sus 2011) and success (Van Hecke and Bursens, 2011, Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Maurer 2008 | Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010). Expertise (Tallberg 2004 | Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006) and experience in multilateral negotiations (Drieskens 2011) contribute to a good reputation. Bunse notes that the reputation also depends on the personal skills of individual chairpersons.

On three national conditions, however, there is less consensus in the literature. A first point of contention is the effect of *networks* – alliances with other Member States, regional networks, personal ties, inter-institutional relations. Both Bunse and Van Hecke and Bursens, as well as other authors, identify well-developed networks as a favourable condition for influence (see also Bjurulf 2001 | Karoliewski & Sus 2011) or success (confirmed by Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Pollak & Puntscher Riekmann 2007 | Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010 | Drieskens 2011). However, Bunse (p. 68-69) raises an important remark. Good relations with the Council Secretariat give the Presidency an information advantage, but the Secretariat can also limit the chair's influence: it reminds the Presidency of the neutrality norm, it prevents the incumbent from dropping agenda items on which decisions have previously been taken, and it is not always neutral itself.

Second, the role of *size* is controversial. Some (Baillie 1998 | Bengtsson *et al.* 2004 | Thorhallsson & Wivel 2006) have pointed out that small States can use the Presidency to increase their influence on decision-making, but it is unclear whether small State Presidencies are more influential than large State Presidencies (Warntjen 2007). Maurer (2008) argued that large State Presidencies are the most successful, because they have more resources to employ labour-intensive methods, and they can function independently of the Council Secretariat. Bjurulf (2001), however, has claimed that small States can manage practical issues at least as effectively as large ones, because they are usually more motivated, have better contacts with the EU institutions, and their relatively small administrations ensure an efficient flow of communication. The latter point has been challenged in a study on the Slovenian Presidency of 2008 (Kajnč & Svetličič 2010), which showed that the intra- and inter-Ministerial cooperation is not always smooth in small States. Others have argued that small State Presidencies are often more successful because they are good alliance builders (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006) and benefit from an honest broker reputation (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010).

Third, the role of the *domestic political and administrative context* is inconclusive. Effective intra- and inter-Ministerial coordination and involvement of all relevant levels are found to contribute to influence (Bunse, 2009) or success (Van Hecke and Bursens, 2011, Kassim, Peters & Wright 2000 | Drieskens 2011). Yet, there is no agreement on the effect of the strength and stability of the Government on Presidency success. Dierckx and Vermeersch, contributors to Van Hecke and Bursens' edited volume, assert that the poorly structured preparations and the missed opportunities in social policies during the Belgian Presidency were due to the absence of a Government: there were too many uncertainties and the Ministers had a lack of democratic legitimacy. However, Van Hecke and Bursens, supported by others (e.g. De Ville *et al.* 2011), contradict this statement: if all levels of decision-making are actively involved and there is a national pro-European consensus, having a weak or caretaker Government can even be positive for Presidency success, because Ministers are less concerned with domestic politics and have more time for EU matters.

The literature is also divided on the third category of conditions, which are issue-specific or related to policy areas. The effect of the *voting method* is one such issue. According to Van Hecke and Bursens, it is easier to be successful in policy areas where Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) applies: the Presidency can use the 'shadow of the vote' to speed up decision-making. Opponents of a certain decision mostly agree with a compromise they do not like rather than being defeated in a vote, because there is a strong consensus climate in the Council. Paradoxically, Bunse invokes precisely this consensus climate for her argument that the voting method does not make a big difference in practice. Indeed, the chair usually adopts decisions only if there is a broad consensus among the Member States, even if a QMV would legally be enough. Nevertheless, several other studies (Elgström 2006 | Tallberg 2006a | Warntjen 2007 | Tallberg 2010) have pointed out that Presidencies

have more influence on decisions taken by QMV than when unanimity is required. The voting method as a condition for Presidency performance has become less relevant under the Lisbon Treaty: most policy areas are now decided by QMV. Finding an agreement with the European Parliament, which is co-legislator in an increasing amount of policy areas, may become more challenging than brokering a Council position.

Also the *distribution and intensity of preferences* may have an impact on Presidency performance. Bunse argues that *heterogeneity* of preferences in the Council as such does not prevent the Presidency to exert influence. If the other delegations' preferences are not very *intense*, the Presidency can employ this heterogeneity to build a consensus around a compromise close to its own position, provided that there is no coalition of large Member States against this proposal. Thomson (2008) concludes that Presidencies with relatively *extreme* positions have more influence on (QMV) decision outcomes than other Member States. Bjurulf and Elgström (2004) have found that, if the positions of different institutions *diverge*, a skilful chair can take benefit from this situation and link compromises to its own preferences. Warntjen (2007) has focused on preference *intensity*: he found that high importance of a policy area for the Presidency leads to increased legislative activity, and concluded that the Presidency steers the legislative agenda. Schalk and colleagues (2007) even note an increased Presidency influence on the contents of decisions in issues that are particularly *salient* to the chair. However, Van Hecke and Bursens, who study success, are more sceptical about the positive effect of heterogeneous preferences and/or high salience of certain issues for the Presidency. They conclude that diverging preferences in the Council, or between the European Parliament and the Council, makes the adoption of legislation – and thus Presidency success – more difficult.

A third issue-specific condition shaping the Presidency's abilities for influence and success is the *stage in the legislative process*. A number of studies (Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Thomson 2008 | Warntjen 2008) have shown that decision outcomes are relatively closer to the Presidency's preferences than to other Member States when a final decision is taken during the incumbent's term in office. The chair has more influence at the end of a legislative process than at other stages, but it usually has little influence on the timing of decision-making (Bjurulf 2001, p. 24). Van Hecke and Bursens briefly note a lack of time as one of the reasons for Belgian failure in some dossiers, but they do not formulate a precise conclusion on how the stage in the legislative process would determine Presidency success.

In sum, there is consensus in the literature on the effect of the external context, preparations, the gravity centre of Presidency management, and reputation. On other conditions, diverging conclusions have been reached. Good networks generally promote influence and success, while 'too' close relations with the Secretariat may limit influence. The unanimity rule seems to impede success, but may be less relevant for influence. Towards the end of legislative processes, the Presidency becomes more influential, whereas the effect of timing on success is inconclusive – which is unsurprising, since this depends on how success is defined. Diverging preferences in the Council and/or between the institutions can increase the influence of the Presidency, while such a situation mostly hampers Presidency success. It is obvious that certain conditions have a different effect, depending on the influence/success approach. But also within those approaches, there is no consensus on all conditions. It is still unclear whether the incumbent's size affects its capacity to exert influence or be successful. Also the impact of the domestic political situation on Presidency success remains unclear, and was even found to diverge across the edited volume by Van Hecke and Bursens.

5. Conclusions

As highlighted in Charléty and Mangenot, the roles of the rotating Presidency have significantly changed over the last decades; the Presidency now is a crucial actor in EU policy-making. The literature has evolved together with the growing importance of the Presidency, from mere descriptions and analyses of the 'results' to theory-based and often comparative studies of specific questions. However, there are still a number of blank spots, including the levels on which the Presidency can be relevant, the kind of policies where the Presidency plays a role, and comparisons between the Presidencies of new and old or between large and small Member States. Another question to be dealt with is about the relation between the different configurations and policy levels, and the possible roles of the Presidency beyond the formal and legal framework.

In addition, existing studies on Presidency performance display a couple of shortcomings, which should be addressed.

First, there is a lack of clarity on the concepts of influence and success. Studies on Presidency influence discuss how and to what extent the incumbent employs its responsibilities to shape EU policies in line with its own preferences. Research on Presidency success takes a broader approach, evaluating indicators such as priority realization, legislative output, norm-guided behaviour of the Presidency, the adequateness of the role(s) played, and contributions to European integration. Since the influence/success approach partially affects the research results, the starting point should be clarified.

Second, more systematic and comparative research is needed in order to elucidate the effect of certain conditions for Presidency performance – not only between, but also within the influence and success approaches. The use of (combinations of) methods that discern causal complexity would be a substantial contribution to our understanding of the nature and origins of Presidency performance.

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Second article –
'Unpacking the Influence of the Council Presidency on European Union External Policies: The Polish Council Presidency and the Eastern Partnership'

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Abstract

The special position of the rotating Council Presidency has raised a long-standing debate on the extent to which this function allows a Member State to exert additional influence on European Union decision-making, in particular in external policy. This article argues that a broader and more differentiated study of Presidency influence could further this debate. In doing so, the article analyses the Polish Council Presidency (during the second half of 2011) and its influence on the European Union's Eastern Partnership policies across three dimensions: (i) differences between influence on the *agenda* and influence on the *contents* of decisions, (ii) the *forums* (different levels in the Council and international forums) where the Presidency can exert influence, and (iii) different *types* of external policies, an area that has received relatively little scholarly attention thus far in the literature on the Presidency. The analysis shows that (i) the Presidency can determine the agenda to a certain extent, but the position of the chair does not allow the incumbent to exert additional influence on the contents of decisions; (ii) most Presidency influence of external policies is observed in the preparatory bodies of the Council, while at the ministerial or international level this influence is much smaller; and (iii) although the Presidency can play a rather prominent role in organizing multilateral events, this rarely amounts to real political influence. In turn, the Presidency's influence is most tangible in specific bilateral dossiers.

1. Introduction

While the formal tasks of the European Union's (EU) rotating Council Presidency (hereafter the Presidency) are rather limited and administrative (see e.g. Chenevière 2011), the incumbent has evolved into an accountable and functional agent in EU decision-making, often fulfilling political tasks (see e.g. Westlake & Galloway 2004). The special position of the Presidency has led to intensive academic debate on whether or not the incumbent exerts additional *influence* on EU decision-making. Some have claimed that holding the Presidency is of limited or no relevance for the influence of a Member State in the EU (e.g. Dewost 1984 | Ludlow 1993 | Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace 2006 | Vida 2010b | Culley, Neisse & Raik 2011). By contrast, others have shown that Member States holding the Presidency do exert additional influence on decision-making (e.g. Arter 2000 | Bjurulf 2001 | Tallberg 2004 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007 | Thomson 2008 | Bunse 2009). The role of the Presidency has changed since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, especially in the area of external policies, where the abilities of the Presidency to exert influence have been reduced (Charléty & Mangenot 2011 | Drieskens, Debaere, De Ridder & Nasra 2011 | Vanhoonacker, Pomorska & Maurer 2011). However, although the Presidency's influence is thus not likely to be high across the board, we argue that the incumbent can still be an influential actor in EU decision-making on external policies (on external policies, see e.g. Hix and Høyland 2011). In doing so, our aim is not so much to unconditionally support either of the competing claims on Presidency influence, but rather to provide a more nuanced picture of Presidency influence by unpacking the notion of 'influence'. In particular, we argue that Presidency influence differs according to: (i) the *type of influence*, notably influence on the agenda vs. influence on the contents of decisions; (ii) different *forums* where the Presidency can exert influence, such as preparatory Council bodies or Council meetings; and (iii) different *types of policies* where the Presidency is possibly influential.

The article examines Presidency influence on EU external policies across these three dimensions through an analysis of the Polish Presidency (in the second half of 2011) and the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) policies, covering Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The EaP was launched in 2009 at the initiative of Poland and Sweden, with a view to increase cooperation and dialogue with the EU's Eastern neighbours in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. It consists of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in a large number of policy areas, ranging from politically sensitive to highly technical topics. The bilateral track with the individual EaP countries includes financial assistance, as well as negotiations on binding treaties such as Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA), visa facilitation (at a later stage visa liberalization), and Association Agreements. The European Commission (hereafter the Commission) represents the EU in the negotiations on these treaties. The multilateral track of the EaP is less binding and includes multilateral meetings, conferences and summits, as well as thematic and technical cooperation platforms. Depending on the topic, these meetings are organized by the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Member States, and are often hosted by the EU Member State holding the Presidency.

External policy has received relatively little attention so far in the literature compared with other policy domains (for exceptions, see Arter 2000 | Tallberg 2006b | Bunse 2009), and Presidency studies have been mostly preoccupied with the Presidency's influence on legislative work in the EU. As mentioned, the role of the Presidency in external policies has considerably changed with the Lisbon Treaty. Before 2009, this was an area where the Presidency could exert influence *par excellence*, since it fulfilled important tasks of external representation for the EU. At present, its role

is less clear: on the one hand, external representation (see e.g. Bunse, Rittelmeyer & Van Hecke 2011 | Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2011) is now assumed at Heads of State level by Herman Van Rompuy (Permanent President of the European Council), and at ministerial level by Catherine Ashton (High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP)). Ashton also heads the Foreign Affairs Council for all matters except trade. Most preparatory bodies for external policies are chaired by officials of the EEAS. On the other hand, the Presidency still chairs all other Council configurations and a high number of preparatory bodies, mostly in former first and third pillar issues, which often have an external dimension. Furthermore, the chair plays an increasingly important role in the relations between the Council and the other EU institutions (Drieskens *et al.* 2011).

In this context, EaP policies are very relevant to study as a part of EU external policies: unlike 'classic' foreign policy, cooperation with the Eastern neighbourhood includes a broad range of external policy areas where the Presidency still plays a role at different stages of policy-making. Although there may be differences between the policy-specific contexts in which decisions are made (e.g. trade, transport, energy, visas), EaP policies generally constitute an area where a certain degree of Presidency influence is likely to be found. For the same reason, we focus on the Polish Presidency, one of the first Presidencies after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force. Earlier research has shown that Presidencies are most influential in areas that are highly salient to them (e.g. Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007). As one of the initiators of the EaP initiative and a well-known promoter of further integration between the EU and its Eastern neighbours (see e.g. Raik & Gromadzki 2006 | Copsey & Pomorska 2010 | Szczepanik 2011 | EUObserver 2011, 11 January), it was no surprise that, in its Presidency programme, Poland prioritized closer cooperation with the region through various policy areas in the framework of the EaP (Polish Presidency website 2011j). In sum, we assume that, if the Presidency still exerts any influence on external policies, for the Polish Presidency this will most likely be observed in EaP policies. We thus selected a Presidency and a part of external policies where we expect some influence of the incumbent. That said, the overall aim of the article is not to unveil causal relationships or to make generalizable claims as in classic case study research, but rather to illustrate that a broader and more differentiated study of possible Presidency influence is necessary to gain new insights into the debate on Presidency influence.

In what follows, we first reflect on how influence is defined and measured in the article. We then outline the research puzzle by offering three sets of competing hypotheses. These will be discussed in the subsequent section, which consists of an exhaustive examination of the influence of the Polish Presidency on the EaP. The conclusions reflect on the main findings that (i) the Presidency has a considerable influence on the external agenda but not on the contents of external policies, (ii) most influence is exerted in the preparatory Council bodies, and (iii) the incumbent generally exerts influence on bilateral rather than on multilateral policies.

2. Studying Presidency influence

2.1. Defining and measuring influence

It goes without saying that the definition of 'influence' and its relation to 'power' are highly contested in the literature. Many authors (for a review, see Guzzini 2000) have shown that control over power resources does not necessarily translate into control over outcomes. Power is not always converted into influence and, alternatively, actors may exert influence even without being powerful.

Building on Bunse's work (2009, p. 5), we define Presidency influence as *intentionally changing an outcome from what it would have been in the absence of an action*. An 'outcome' in this definition can refer to a topic that is (not) placed on the agenda, as well as to a final decision that is (not) made. This definition is agent-centred: influence is seen as an intentional process. Our research therefore focuses on the actions of the actors executing Presidency tasks and their influence on decision-making. Our method allows us to observe expressions of the so-called 'first face' of power – making another actor do what he/she would otherwise not do – as well as the 'second face' of power – bringing about non-decisions (see e.g. Bachrach & Baratz 1962). However, taking into account the strong preferences of Poland to further EU cooperation with the EaP in as many policy areas as possible, we do not expect Polish attempts to inhibit decision-making. In this article, we do not study the 'third face' of power – defining the frame of reference in which others shape their preferences (Lukes 1974), since this is more related to structure than agency. Moreover, it is unlikely that every Presidency would be able to substantially change the frame of reference for the Member States and the institutions within a short period of six months.

The method we apply for measuring influence is based on the EAR method (Ego/Alter perception, Researcher's analysis), which was developed by Arts and Verschuren (1999). Information on Ego and Alter perceptions, typically gathered during elite interviews, refer to assessments by key agents of their own (Ego) or other's (Alter) influence in decision-making. The Researcher's analysis is a validity check of those perceptions. It is a qualitative method, based on the triangulation of data collected from interviews and other primary and secondary sources. It has the advantage that it mitigates the tendency to underestimate influence when using process tracing and to overestimate influence with the mere analysis of preference realization (see also Dür 2008).

Arts and Verschuren (1999, pp. 419-421) have furthermore designed a classification system for assessing the level of political influence (PI). They propose to express PI as the product of three factors: (i) the degree of goal achievement of an actor (GA) – how much of the actor's goals are reflected in the outcome?, (ii) the extent to which GA can be ascribed to this actor (AS) – what was the contribution of the actor to the outcome in relation to the contribution of other actors?, and (iii) the political relevance (PR) of the outcome – how politically important and how binding is the outcome? Therefore, PI=GAxASxPR. For each component, they foresee scores between 0 and 3. From this formula, a number of scores are possible, to be translated in verbal assessments ranging between 'no influence' and 'great influence.'

For this article, we modified the method on three points. First, the numbers (0, 1, 2, 3) are replaced by labels; 'no', 'limited', 'substantial', and 'high', in order to avoid creating the impression that influence is quantified or measured on an interval scale, while in reality we make a qualitative assessment on an ordinal scale. Second, the 'formula' is changed so that the measurement of influence corresponds better to the definition of influence applied in this article. If, in the original method, an outcome highly reflects the preferences of the chair and has high political relevance, but can be ascribed to the Presidency only to a limited extent – e.g. because there was a broad consensus and the decision would be taken anyway – the Presidency's influence would still be considered substantial, which is an overestimation. To avoid this, we apply the rule-of-thumb that the level of Presidency influence cannot be higher than the extent to which an outcome is ascribed to the incumbent. Third, we argue that the operationalization of PR should be both broader and more specific. On the one hand, we include political novelty in the operationalization; the degree of innovation (in terms of topics on the EU agenda or the nature of EU policies) arguably contributes to the political relevance of an outcome. On the other hand, we do not consider to what extent an

outcome is legally binding, but instead assess its political impact on EU policies; also non-binding outcomes can have an impact.

The data for the assessment of GA, AS, and PR were gathered from official documents, secondary sources and interviews. Between January and November 2012, 22 anonymous, semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials from Poland, other Member States, the Commission, the EEAS and the Council Secretariat. The indicators of influence are operationalized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Indicators for Presidency influence

Indi-cator	Level	Description
Goal Achievement (GA)	No	The outcome entirely contradicts the Presidency's preferences.
	Limited	The outcome partially corresponds to and partially contradicts the Presidency's preferences.
	Substantial	The outcome is not the most preferred result for the Presidency, but does not contradict its preferences.
	High	The outcome reflects the Presidency's preferences as much as was legally and practically feasible.
Ascription (AS)	No	The Presidency was not involved in the outcome as a chair, or was involved but had no role in developing the outcome.
	Limited	The Presidency was involved as a chair to a limited extent, but the outcome was mainly developed by other actors.
	Substantial	The Presidency was involved as a chair and steered the outcome, but other actors also played a role in developing the outcome.
	High	The Presidency was involved as a chair and it is unlikely that the outcome would have been the same if another country was in the chair.
Political Relevance (PR)	No	The outcome is of little or no political importance and is not novel in terms of EU agenda or policies, and has little or no political impact .
	Limited	The outcome is politically important or novel in terms of EU agenda or policies, but has no considerable political impact.
	Substantial	The outcome has a considerable political impact, although it is of limited political importance or novelty in terms of EU agenda or policies.
	High	The outcome has a considerable political impact and is politically important or novel in terms of EU agenda or policies.

The degree of influence is established on the basis of the indicators outlined in Table 1 and according to the following rules:

1. If any of the components GA, AS, or PR is found to be 'no', there is 'no PI'.
2. If GA, AS and PR have identical levels, PI equals this level.
3. If the levels of GA, AS, and PR are all different, ranging between limited and high, there was 'substantial PI'.
4. If there are two identical levels for GA, AS, or PR, then PI equals the level of those two identical scores.
5. Rules 3 and 4 are applied on the condition that the level of PI is never higher than the extent to which the outcome can be ascribed to the Presidency. This means that, if AS scores the lowest, PI equals AS.

As stated *supra*, the debate on Presidency influence (on external policies) can be enriched by a more nuanced conceptualization of 'influence'. No straightforward 'yes' or 'no' answer can be given to the question as to whether the Presidency exerts influence; instead, one should distinguish between types of influence, forums of decision-making, and types of external policies. In the next section, we identify gaps in the literature on these aspects and formulate two competing hypotheses for each of them, which will be tested in the empirical analysis.

2.2. Competing hypotheses on Presidency influence

The first distinction we make is between agendas and contents of decisions. A political agenda is a set of issues that receive serious consideration (Princen 2009), a process which does not necessarily result in tangible decisions. Finalized decisions are more permanent and long-lasting. Taking into account the division of powers in the EU, agenda-setting by the Presidency should not be understood as independently putting new issues on the agenda, but rather as pressurizing the Commission or the HR/VP to take certain initiatives and, once formal proposals are made, speeding up decision-making on issues that are favoured by the incumbent. Existing studies of Presidency influence discuss either the Presidency's ability to determine the agenda (e.g. Tallberg 2003 | Warntjen 2007) or influence on the contents of decisions (e.g. Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Tallberg 2004 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2008). Thus far, scholars have failed to look into how Presidency influence may differ between agenda-setting and determining the contents of decisions. In addition, authors who have observed influence on the contents of decisions have focused mainly on legislative issues. Hence, it is not clear whether their findings also apply to external policies, which are often non-legislative. Two competing hypotheses can be formulated in this regard. On the one hand, one could argue that since agendas have less practical consequences than finalized decisions, the Member States and institutions grant the Presidency more discretionary power in defining the agenda than during the actual decision-making:

HYP1-A: the Presidency exerts more influence on the agenda than on the contents of decisions.

On the other hand, the (external) agenda is formally prepared by the Commission and the EEAS. At later stages, when shaping the actual decisions, the chair can have some influence while fulfilling its tasks of mediation and representation between the delegations and between the Council and the other institutions:

HYP1-B: the Presidency has more influence on the contents of decisions than on the agenda.

Secondly, we distinguish between the different forums – i.e. Working Parties, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper), Council meetings, and international forums (i.e. contacts with third parties such as countries or international organizations) – where the Presidency may (or may not) exert influence. The agency of the Presidency is 'located' in several venues, the incumbent is not a monolithic bloc. A Member State's Presidency is managed at different levels and by a large number of officials with different backgrounds. These actors' capacities for influencing agendas and decisions are not necessarily equal. Although Wurzel (1996; 2004) has described the workings of different levels in Council decision-making, the question as to what extent the forum affects Presidency influence is as yet unanswered. Also on this point, two competing hypotheses can be formulated.
Most decisions in the Council are taken at the preparatory level (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace 2006). Only few issues, normally the most complex and sensitive ones, reach the Ministers' negotiation table. At this level, holding the Presidency would not add much to a Member States' influence; the Ministers are not expected to allow any party to use a temporary role for exerting disproportionate influence in such dossiers. This hypothesis is especially plausible for external policies, since the incumbent Member State no longer heads the Foreign Affairs Council while it continues to chair Coreper, some Working Parties preparing the Foreign Affairs Council (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2011), and most other Working Parties – including those discussing external aspects of internal EU policies. At international forums, e.g. in direct contacts with third countries' governments, the Presidency has little room for manoeuvre, since the EU is formally represented by the EEAS and the Commission. *HYP2-A* can be called the 'low level' hypothesis:

HYP2-A: the incumbent exerts most influence in the preparatory bodies of the Council, and least influence at the ministerial level or at international forums.

In turn, *HYP2-B* focuses on the higher levels. Complex issues under negotiation by Ministers require intensive mediation, which may place the representatives of the Presidency in a privileged position to leave their mark. In practice, this only concerns the forums where the Presidency chairs the meetings, i.e. all Council formations (including their external aspects) except the Foreign Affairs Council. With regard to third parties, it is known that the EU's partners do not always accept the new institutional architecture of the EU and may prefer to negotiate with the Presidency or with individual Member States rather than with the HR/VP or the Commission (see e.g. Drieskens *et al.* 2011). The *de facto* Presidency influence as an external representative may thus be considerable. The 'high level' hypothesis is as follows:

HYP2-B: the Presidency exerts most influence in the Council and at international forums, and least influence in the preparatory bodies.

Finally, we identify different types of external policies. The variety of external policies includes bilateral/multilateral cooperation in a broad range of policy areas (e.g. trade, transport, energy, visas), each with specific decision-making mechanisms. The Presidency may not be equally influential on all types of policies. For this article, the main distinction is made between bilateral and multilateral EaP policies, in parallel with the bilateral and multilateral tracks the EU develops for the

EaP (see *supra*). Under these main categories, we further differentiate between policy areas. Again, we develop two contradicting hypotheses on this issue. For one part, it can be argued that multilateral policies involve less formal commitments than bilateral policies, making the Member States and the institutions less eager to control the Presidency with regard to multilateral cooperation. Thus,

HYP3-A: *the Presidency exerts more influence on multilateral policies than on bilateral policies*.

Conversely, bilateral cooperation is the most 'legislative' type of external policy, whereas multilateral policies involve less binding commitments. It is for legislative issues – although for internal EU policies – that previous studies have observed substantial influence of the chair (e.g. Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Tallberg 2004 | Warntjen 2007). In such dossiers, mediation between the delegations and the institutions may be required, which can be employed by the chair to steer the outcome closer to its own preferences. Consequently;

HYP3-B: the Presidency exerts more influence on bilateral policies than on multilateral policies.

3. The Eastern Partnership during the Polish Presidency

In this section, the above-mentioned competing hypotheses are examined through an analysis of the policies, strategic choices, and institutional aspects of EU-EaP relations in the second half of 2011, with a focus on the influence of the Polish Presidency. Poland's activeness in EaP/external policies was not strictly limited to the six months of its Presidency period; Polish representatives started working towards their Presidency long before July 2011. However, there are no indications that this happened in the framework of the so-called 'trio' it formed with Denmark and Cyprus. The preparations for the Polish Presidency – which was the first in this trio – took place in consultation with other countries such as Hungary, and during the Danish and Cypriot Presidencies the EaP was much less prominent on the EU's agenda than in 2011. In addition, none of the interviewees described the trio cooperation as relevant for achieving Poland's goals with regard to the EaP.

The results of the study are summarized in Table 2; the policies are discussed in more detail in the following sections. The upper part of Table 2 includes an overview of the bilateral policies and the lower part summarizes the multilateral policies. The 'Issue' column refers to the policy issue that was (not) developed under the Polish Presidency. 'Political influence' sums up the indicators for influence and the overall level of influence for each issue, and mentions the type of influence (if any). Finally, the 'Forum' column indicates which forum(s) played a key role and thus where the Presidency exerted (no) influence.

A glance at the table reveals that, in some dossiers related to the EaP, outcomes would indeed have been different if Poland had not been in the chair. The Presidency exerted limited or substantial influence on some external policies, but we did not observe high influence. Thus, the Presidency can be a crucial agent in external policy-making although its influence is restricted in the post-Lisbon structure, where other agents such as the HR/VP and the Commission have become the main external representatives of the EU and play a key role in the development of external policies.

Table 2: Influence of the Polish Presidency on Eastern Partnership policies

	Issue	Political influence				Forum
		GA	**AS**	**PR**	**PI**	
Bilateral	**Armenia, visa**	High	Subst.	Lim.	**Substantial** (agenda)	Coreper
	Azerbaijan, visa	High	Subst.	Lim.	**Substantial** (agenda)	Coreper
	Ukraine, Association Agreement	Subst.	Lim.	Subst.	**Limited** (agenda)	International, Gymnich Council, Coreper
	Moldova, trade	High	Lim.	Lim.	**Limited** (agenda)	Trade Policy Committee
	Georgia, trade	High	Lim.	Lim.	**Limited** (agenda)	Trade Policy Committee
	Azerbaijan, energy	Subst.	Lim.	Lim.	**Limited** (agenda)	Coreper
	Azerbaijan, transport	Subst.	Lim.	Lim.	**Limited** (agenda)	Council
	Belarus	No	No	No	**No**	Coreper
	Caucasus, declarations/ visits, Cooperation Councils	High.	No	No/ Lim.	**No**	Council, European Parliament, International
Multilateral	**Transport**	High	Subst.	Lim.	**Substantial** (agenda)	Council, International
	EED	Subst.	High	Subst.	**Substantial** (agenda)	Minister, Coreper
	EaP summit	Lim.	Lim.	Lim.	**Limited** (agenda)	Coreper
	Energy	High	Lim.	Lim.	**Limited** (agenda)	Council
	CORLEAP	Lim.	No	Lim.	**No**	Committee of the Regions, International
	EaP Business Forum	High	No	No	**No**	International
	Civil Society Forum	Lim.	No	Lim.	**No**	International
	EU-EaP Science, Education Ministers' conference	Lim.	High	No	**No**	International
	EU-EaP Economy Ministers' conference	Lim.	High	No	**No**	International
	EU-EaP Agriculture Minister's conference	Lim.	High	No	**No**	International
	Police training, drugs combating	No	High	No	**No**	International

In the next three sections, we discuss the Presidency's influence for every issue, structured according to the degree of influence. Subsequently, we summarize the findings with regard to types of influence, forums, and types of policies.

3.1. Substantial Presidency influence

The Polish Presidency exerted substantial influence in four dossiers, both bilateral and multilateral. The first two were in bilateral visa policy towards Armenia and Azerbaijan. From the start of their Presidency, Polish members of the Permanent Representation pressurized the Commission to propose starting negotiations with both countries on visa facilitation and readmission agreements (Interview 29). Once the proposals were received (European Commission 2011, 19 September-a; 2011, 19 September-b), Tombiński, Poland's EU Ambassador, immediately initiated discussions at Coreper; the negotiation mandates were adopted by the Council in December (Council of the European Union 2011, 19 December-a). The Presidency's goal to increase mobility between the EU and EaP countries was achieved as much as was feasible at that moment. Ascription to the Presidency was substantial: although the negotiations were expected to be opened in the future, the mandates were adopted earlier than was planned, and Tombiński overcame considerable resistance from some Member States who are traditionally reluctant to facilitate visa requirements for citizens of unstable countries (Interview 3; 4; 5). The political relevance of negotiation mandates is limited, however: mandates can be of high political importance and changes can affect the agenda, but they have no political impact as such since they do not necessarily reflect the final result of the negotiations.

The third instance of substantial influence is in multilateral transport cooperation with the EaP, a relatively new topic in this framework. The most important event here was the EU-EaP Transport Ministers' conference in Kraków (European Commission 2011, 25 October). It succeeded a Commission Communication of July 2011 on transport cooperation with the EU's neighbours (European Commission 2011, 7 July), which proposed a series of initiatives to integrate the EU and EaP countries' markets, improved infrastructure connections, and establish a permanent body that monitors transport cooperation, the Eastern Partnership Transport Panel. In October, the Council, chaired by Grabarczyk, the Polish Minister of Infrastructure, endorsed the proposals and prepared the ministerial conference in Kraków (Council of the European Union 2011, 6 October). During the conference, the Azerbaijani delegation at some point threatened not to sign the joint declaration if no reference was made to its territorial integrity with respect to Nagorno-Karabakh. After bilateral negotiations between Grabarczyk and his Azerbaijani counterpart, the latter agreed to sign the declaration on the condition that reference was made to territorial integrity in the internal meeting report (Interview 9; 22; 25). The declaration (Council of the European Union 2011, 4 November) mentioned closer market integration, increased levels of security, safety, environmental and social standards in transport, improved interconnections, and the launch of the Eastern Partnership Transport Panel, which would report on the results of its work during the next ministerial meeting to be organized on the proposal of the Commission and the Presidency. Poland achieved its goal of putting transport cooperation with the EaP on the EU agenda. Both the Council conclusions and the Kraków conference resulted from Polish initiatives (Interview 2; 9), although they depended on the Commission Communication. The political relevance of these events is limited, however, since they have not produced tangible results thus far.

Finally, the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy, a fund to support democratic movements and political parties abroad, is noteworthy. In early 2011, before the start of the

Presidency, Poland's Foreign Minister Sikorski proposed to set up a flexible instrument for democracy promotion, primarily – but not exclusively – focused on the EU's neighbourhood. He pressurized Ashton to make reference to the Endowment in the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (Interview 26 | European Commission/HRVP 2011, 25 May). However, not all Member States were convinced of the Endowment's viability and desirability. The main concerns were related to funding, a possible loss of sovereignty for individual countries in defining their priorities for democracy promotion, and suspected overlap with existing instruments. Also, the intention to support political parties was controversial (Interview 4; 5). Despite this scepticism, Poland's Coreper Ambassador put the issue on the agenda as often as was needed to reach unanimity on the idea (Interview 1; 4; 5). A political agreement on the European Endowment for Democracy was achieved in Coreper in December (Polish Presidency website 2011c). Its administrative expenses will be covered by the Commission, while its activities should be funded by voluntary contributions from European national Governments (EurActiv 2013, 10 January). Although the Endowment's resources are very modest compared to other funds for EU democracy promotion (Youngs & Brudzinska 2012), it has substantial political relevance, since the possibility to support political parties abroad is new in the EU's approach. Putting the Endowment on the agenda and obtaining a political agreement was a substantial achievement of the Presidency's objectives, although Poland had to make serious concessions on its structure and financing in order to make a political agreement acceptable (Interview 4 | Nasieniak 2012, September). It can to a high degree be ascribed to the actions of the Presidency, considering the initial resistance from some Member States. The two main actors in this dossier were Sikorski, who launched the idea at the right moment – at the beginning of the Arab Spring and just before the start of the Polish Presidency – and Tombiński, who employed his position to put the idea repeatedly on the Coreper agenda (Interview 1; 4; 26; 28).

3.2. Limited Presidency influence

We observed limited influence of the Polish Presidency in seven dossiers, mostly in bilateral policies.
First, in EU-Ukraine relations, the future Association Agreement, including a DCFTA, was high on the agenda throughout 2011. At the start of the Polish Presidency, negotiations on the Association Agreement were nearing conclusion (EUObserver 2011, 6 July). However, the arrest and subsequent conviction of Ukraine's former Prime Minister Tymoshenko was widely criticized as being politically motivated and strained EU-Ukraine relations (EUObserver 2011, 11 October). It became increasingly unlikely that the agreement would be initialled as planned during the EU-Ukraine summit in December 2011. Polish officials, who strongly support Ukraine's integration in the EU, tried to unblock the situation in order to have concrete results on this issue during their Presidency. Poland's President Komorowski, former President Kwaśniewski, and Sikorski paid several visits to Ukraine to discuss the Association Agreement at the highest level, where they consistently emphasized the need for reforms in Ukraine (Polish MFA 2011 | President of Poland 2011a; 2011d; 2011c | EUObserver 2011, 27 September). In addition, Sikorski put the issue on the agenda during the Gymnich meeting in September (EUObserver 2011, 3 September). These efforts did not entail improved political relations, although technical negotiations on the DCFTA continued and were finalized in October (Centre for Eastern Studies 2011a). This process was led by the Commission, however; the Presidency was not involved. The Association Agreement was eventually not initialled during the EU-Ukraine summit, but the participants – Van Rompuy, Commission President Barroso, and Ukrainian President Yanukovych – announced that they had reached a common understanding on its contents and that it should be technically completed and initialled as soon as possible (Council of the European Union

2011, 19 December-b). The Polish Presidency thus reached its goals to a substantial degree: the dialogue between the EU and Ukraine continued, and the Association Agreement was kept on the agenda. The decision to agree on the contents without initialling the Agreement was relevant for not losing momentum. However, those developments can be ascribed to the Presidency only to a limited extent. During the technical negotiations and during the summit, Poland was not present. The Presidency could not do much more than try to mediate with Ukraine at a high level and give the Association Agreement a sense of urgency, which Tombiński did by repeatedly putting the issue on the Coreper agenda (Interview 4; 12; 23).

Bilateral trade relations advanced with two other EaP countries: Moldova and Georgia. Association Agreements with both countries have been under negotiation since 2010, but the launch of DCFTA talks was made conditional on the fulfilment of a set of key recommendations. After a positive assessment by the Commission, the Trade Policy Committee, chaired by Nogaj, the Director of Poland's Trade Policy Department in the Economy Ministry, approved mandates for the Commission on DCFTA negotiations (European Commission 2011, 5 December). Progress in trade relations with Moldova and Georgia was a priority of Poland and the mandate was an important step in this direction. However, this decision can be ascribed to the Presidency only to a limited extent: Nogaj did accelerate the adoption of negotiation mandates (Interview 4; 5), but the key recommendations had been adopted much earlier and the decision was dependent on the Commission's assessment (Interview 27). Like other negotiation mandates, this decision is of limited political relevance in the context of this article.

The fourth and fifth cases of limited Presidency influence were in bilateral relations of the EU with Azerbaijan. On the one hand, following a visit in January 2011 by Barroso and Energy Commissioner Oettinger to Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, discussions started in Coreper on a negotiation mandate for a binding treaty to build a trans-Caspian gas pipeline system. Unanimity on the mandate was reached in July (Polish Presidency website 2011e), and the mandate was formally approved by the Council in September (Council of the European Union 2011, 12 September). On the other hand, the Council (Council of the European Union 2011, 6 October) adopted a negotiation mandate for the Commission on an aviation agreement with Azerbaijan in October. Both in transport and energy policy, the Presidency's goals were achieved in that the basis for further cooperation with Azerbaijan was generally broadened (Interview 22) and concrete steps were taken in diversifying energy supplies to the EU. Yet, as for the other negotiation mandates discussed in this article, their political relevance is limited, and they can be ascribed to the Presidency only as far as the speed of adoption is concerned (Interview 8).

Sixth, the Presidency exerted limited influence on the results of the biennial multilateral EaP summit. This event was initially planned for May 2011, under the Hungarian Presidency. However, Hungary's Coreper Ambassador and his Polish counterpart informed the EEAS in February that the event was postponed until September (Interview 11), allegedly because the planned date clashed with G8/G20 and OECD meetings, as well as with Georgia's national holiday on 26 May (Interview 17). Many officials believe that there was more behind this decision than just incompatible dates, including pressure from Poland, which saw hosting this summit as a prestige project during its Presidency (Interview 11; 12; 13; 17), and the Arab Spring, which put other priorities on the EU agenda (Interview 5; 13 | Vida 2011). Although the Hungarian and Polish Prime Ministers agreed to jointly prepare and co-host the summit (Hungarian Presidency website 2011e), Poland managed to present it as a 'Polish' event, which was especially obvious during the press conference: Poland's Prime Minister spoke before Van Rompuy and Barroso (EU TV Newsroom 2011, 30 September-a). The

Presidency's goal achievement with regard to the summit was limited. On the one hand, the joint statement (Council of the European Union 2011, 30 September-b) adopted at the end of the summit was ambitious and gave political impetus to deeper cooperation in a broad range of policy areas, including trade, visas, energy, transport, agriculture, environment, communication technologies, education, and culture. On the other hand, however, not all goals of the Presidency were achieved. The joint statement 'acknowledge[d] the European aspirations and the European choice of some partners' (Council of the European Union 2011, 30 September-b, p. 1), which is a much more careful formulation than an explicit membership prospect and did not go as far as Poland and some EaP members would have liked (EUObserver 2011, 21 June). In addition, Belarus boycotted the summit; Poland had favoured the highest possible representation and tried to agree in Coreper II to invite Belarus' President Lukashenko despite the EU's travel ban against him (Interview 1; 5), but this was unacceptable for some Member States (Interview 4). The EU finally invited Belarus' Foreign Minister, who declined the invitation (EurActiv 2011, 30 September) and left Belarus' chair empty at the summit. In response to the deteriorating human rights, democracy, and rule of law situation and the worsening of media freedom in Belarus, the EU members adopted a separate declaration in which they expressed their concern about these developments (Council of the European Union 2011, 30 September-a). A third failure was that this document did not mention the human rights situation in other EaP countries, and it was not co-signed by them. The results of the summit can be ascribed to the Presidency to a limited extent, mainly due to legal-institutional restrictions: Poland hosted the event but Van Rompuy chaired the high-level meetings. Some preparations, inter alia, on the joint statement and the invitation to Belarus took place in Coreper under the chairmanship of Tombiński, but most preparatory work was done in the Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST) (Interview 18; 20), chaired by an EEAS official. The negotiations with the EaP countries on the declaration on human rights were formally led by Ashton (Interview 24; 28). The political relevance of the summit was also limited. Although it undeniably contributed to increased attention within the EU to the region, and laid the foundations for future cooperation (see e.g. Kucharczyk & Łada 2012), its results had limited political impact on EU-EaP relations.

Finally, the Presidency exerted (very) limited influence on the agenda for energy cooperation with third countries. Polish representatives worked hard to have Council conclusions adopted on the external aspect of energy security (Council of the European Union 2011, 24 November), which was an important priority for Poland. The Council conclusions were based on a Commission Communication of September (European Commission 2011, 7 September) and endorsed four priority areas, covering the whole world – thus only in part related to the EaP. The adoption of Council conclusions was considered the Presidency's most important success in energy policy (Interview 2), Poland's goals were fully achieved on this point. However, this can be ascribed to the Presidency only to a limited extent: while it is possible that the conclusions would have been adopted later if Poland had not been in the chair, they reflected a rather broad consensus among the Member States, which had been prepared in part by the Hungarian Presidency and the European Council of February 2011 (Interview 8). The political relevance of the Council conclusions was limited, since they had no direct political impact.

3.3. No Presidency influence

There were also various developments in EU-EaP relations, mostly multilateral but also bilateral, where we observed no Presidency influence.

In the case of Belarus, which does not participate in the bilateral track of the EaP, the Presidency did not achieve its goals: although Poland supports developing ties with Belarus, notably with civil society organizations (Interview 22; 23 | EUObserver 2011, 11 January), EU-Belarus relations did not improve throughout 2011, quite the contrary (see *supra*). Other events in bilateral relations with countries in the South Caucasus cannot be ascribed to Poland, and were not mentioned in any of the interviews as examples of Presidency influence. The Presidency played no role in Ashton's visit to the South Caucasus (European Commission 2011, 15 November) or in the European Parliament resolution calling for more assistance to Georgia and a recognition of Georgia as a European State and South Ossetia and Abkhazia as occupied territories (European Parliament 2011). Also, when the European Parliament's President and Ashton rejected the constitutional and legal framework in which the Presidential elections of Abkhazia (EurActiv 2011, 29 August) and South Ossetia (EurActiv 2011, 16 November) took place, the Presidency was not involved, although their statements corresponded to the Polish point of view.

The EU-Armenia and EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Councils, which Poland's State Secretary for the EU co-chaired on behalf of Ashton (Council of the European Union 2011, 25 November-a; 2011, 25 November-b), did not have political relevance: the participants merely took stock of the progress in bilateral relations and reiterated what had been discussed during the EaP summit.

Poland organized and hosted a high number of multilateral events related to the EaP that we do not consider as instances of Presidency influence. In three of these events, Poland did not play a special role other than being the host country, so these cannot be ascribed to the Presidency: the inaugural meeting of the Conference of Regional and Local authorities in the EaP (CORLEAP) in Poznań was organized at the initiative of the Committee of the Regions (Committee of the Regions 2011c), and the third Civil Society Forum in Poznań (European External Action Service 2011c) is an annual event. The idea to hold an EaP Business Forum, which was organized during the EaP summit in September (ENPI info centre 2011, 6 October), was launched long before 2011, although Poland was indeed the first Presidency to organize this event. Yet, the meeting did not yield any tangible results. The Polish Presidency also took a number of EaP-related initiatives in policy areas that it considered important, but these had no political relevance as defined in this article. Poland wished to set up an EU-EaP police training programme, for which it organized and hosted a preparatory meeting (Polish Presidency website 2011k). However, this was not pursued: the Commission Communication that was expected in October 2011 was published in December 2012 (European Commission 2012, 21 December). The Presidency also organized meetings of EU and EaP Education and Science Ministers (Polish Presidency website 2011d), of Economy Ministers (Economic Forum 2011) and of Agriculture Ministers (Polish Presidency website 2011f), as well as a conference on combating drug-related crime (Polish Presidency website 2011b) and a high-level seminar on customs cooperation with the EaP (European Commission 2011, 21 October), which prepared Council conclusions on this issue (Council of the European Union 2011, 6 December). Since these events were mainly aimed at exchanging experiences and did not have political impact thus far, they lack political relevance and do not reflect Presidency influence. In sum, although these multilateral events organized and/or hosted by the Polish Presidency did entail (temporarily) increased attention of the EU members and institutions to the EaP, they can as such not be regarded as examples of Presidency influence.

3.4. Types of influence, forums, types of policies

The analysis of EaP policies during the second semester of 2011 shows how the Presidency exerted limited and even substantial influence in some dossiers. It is striking to observe that Poland influenced only the agenda and not the contents of decisions. These findings support the hypothesis that the Presidency has more influence on the agenda than on the contents of decisions (HYP1-A), and thus disconfirm previously drawn conclusions in the literature, which studied internal EU decision-making (see supra), with regard to the chair's influence on the contents of decisions in external policies. Interestingly, Commission officials do not see the Presidency's agenda-setting capacities as problematic; on the contrary, they consider it an advantage that 'their' policy areas are regularly promoted at the political level, as long as this does not lead to radical changes in policy implementation (Interview 25; 26; 27; 28). Presidencies with a favourable attitude toward certain policy areas constitute a *window of opportunity* (Kingdon 1995) for Commission officials working on those areas. As a result, Presidency influence is, to a certain extent, facilitated by the Commission.

As for the second set of competing hypotheses, on the forums in which the incumbent exerts influence, we observed most instances of Presidency influence in the preparatory Council bodies that it chairs, notably in Coreper and to a lesser extent in the Trade Policy Committee. This confirms the 'low level' hypothesis that the Presidency's influence is the largest in the preparatory bodies (*HYP2-A*): civil servants and technical experts generally have more opportunities to influence the agenda than politicians. There were only a few dossiers where the Presidency exerted influence at the Ministers' level. However, most of these dossiers had been extensively discussed in the preparatory bodies. In sum, the degree of Presidency influence is inversely proportional to the level of decision-making. Only in one case, the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy, did we notice the opposite dynamic: in this dossier, Minister Sikorski made a difference and left his personal mark on the idea of the Endowment and its further development.

Finally, on the hypotheses regarding the type of external policy, four remarks should be made. Firstly, the Polish Presidency played a prominent role in a large number of multilateral initiatives, mainly by hosting and (co-)organizing numerous conferences and other meetings. However, although the whole of these developments gave a political boost to EU-EaP relations, the individual events should not be viewed as instances of Presidency influence on external policies, since they were mostly not followed up and/or have not produced tangible results thus far. The initiatives are potentially relevant for future EU-EaP relations and they can lead to new practices or intensified cooperation, but until now there have been no signs that such an impact may be observed in the foreseeable future. Secondly, the Polish Presidency exerted influence on many aspects of the bilateral agendas despite the fact that the Commission and the HR/VP are key actors in bilateral relations with third countries. It is important to note that the type of policies where the Presidency has most influence – bilateral policies – is the most 'legislative': it consists of (negotiations on) binding treaties. The political influence of the Presidency thus mostly plays in the legislative part of external policies, and less in non-legislative policies. Thirdly, nearly all bilateral policies in which the Presidency exerted influence were related to negotiation mandates for the Commission. This shows that although the incumbent can play an important role in setting the bilateral agenda, it cannot do so on its own. The Presidency does not have formal competences to negotiate or speak on behalf of the EU with the EaP countries, but it can facilitate and steer the work of the institutions. Within the scope of this article, it is impossible to make a detailed assessment of the inter-institutional dynamics between the Presidency and other actors such as the HR/VP, Commissioners, the Council Secretariat, and the European Parliament. Inter-institutional dynamics in external policies, which have been researched

mostly in the pre-Lisbon institutional setting (e.g. Dijkstra 2011; Vanhoonacker et al. 2010), could be the focus of future research. Fourthly and finally, there are no clear-cut differences between policy areas (e.g. trade, visas, energy, etc.), unlike the variation between bilateral and multilateral policies. Influence was observed both in technical dossiers, such as transport cooperation, and in politically sensitive issues, including visa facilitation. The room for manoeuvre of the Presidency thus depends on the Commission rather than on the policy area: Poland was 'lucky' that the Commission issued most planned Communications and proposals in time and thus 'allowed' the Presidency to exert some influence (Interview 21). When the Commission did not publish documents that were expected, as was the case for the police training programme, the Presidency could not push the issue forward. These findings generally support the hypothesis that the Presidency exerts more influence on bilateral EU-EaP policies than on multilateral policies (*HYP3-B*), although the large number of Presidency-driven multilateral initiatives also (temporarily) put the EaP higher on the EU's agenda.

4. Conclusion

This article showed that the Presidency can exert influence on external policies, but that this influence differs according to (i) the type of influence, (ii) the forums in which decisions are made, and (iii) the type of external policy. First, we illustrated that the Presidency seat allowed Polish officials to exert additional influence on the EaP *agenda* of various external policies, but not on the *contents* of the actual decisions made on these policies. The incumbent can act as a facilitator and to a limited extent as an initiator of external policies, but it is not a more influential decision-maker than when it is not in the chair. Second, we unpacked the Presidency as an agent by looking at the forums where it operates. The Presidency's agency does not work in the same way at all levels: generally speaking, the Presidency's civil servants in the preparatory bodies of the Council exert the most influence, while the influence of Presidency representatives decreases as dossiers move to higher (political/ministerial) levels. Third, although the incumbent has considerable room for manoeuvre in organizing multilateral events on different topics, we found that the Presidency was mostly influential in bilateral agendas.

Referring back to the debate on whether or not the Presidency exerts additional influence on EU (external) policies, we argue that no straightforward claims can be made, since 'the' influence of 'the' Presidency on 'the' external policies of the EU does not exist as such. Instead, Presidencies are managed by a large number of officials and politicians who intervene in various forums, exerting different types of influence on a broad range of policies in an institutional structure that constrains the abilities of chairpersons to be influential. This institutional structure has thoroughly changed with the Lisbon Treaty and decreased the abilities of the Presidency to exert influence on decision-making, especially in the area of external policies. Although on the basis of this article we cannot draw strong conclusions on the impact of the Lisbon Treaty, we did illustrate that the Presidency can still have some influence and that, at least in some instances, representatives of the incumbent country can play a crucial role in external policy-making. Furthermore, within the context of this article it was impossible to elaborate on the inter-institutional dynamics between the Presidency and the EU institutions. However, the results of this research show that while the Polish Presidency faced opposition in the Council in some dossiers, this was not the case with respect to the Commission. On the contrary, Commission officials consider it an advantage that the policy areas on which they work are regularly promoted at the political level.

Because of Poland's interest in the EaP, the Polish Presidency tried to advance the EaP in as many policy areas as possible. As Polish officials thus had no interest in impeding decision-making related to the EU's Eastern neighbours during the Presidency, we have – as expected – found no instances of the 'second face' of power, only instances of the 'first face' of power. If future studies were to systematically examine country, issue, and/or context-specific conditions under which the Presidency exerts influence, they may also observe cases in which non-decisions are brought about.

More generally, the present study could inspire further research in three ways. First, it underlines the importance of agency in the EU institutions and encourages further study and theorizing of the role of actors in other settings as well, including (comparative) analyses of other Presidencies with different country-specific characteristics or other types of policies, but also agency and decision-making mechanisms in other EU institutions. Second, the method applied for measuring Presidency influence – based on an assessment of goal achievement, ascription, and political relevance – could be used in future studies on the influence of the Presidency, but also of other types of agents in different settings in or outside the EU. Finally, following the article's main aim to provide a more nuanced picture of Presidency influence by unpacking the Presidency's influence along three dimensions (type of influence, forums, type of policy), further research could apply this analytical distinction when examining the influence of other Presidencies and in other policy areas. Also in internal EU policies, the Presidency may be found to exert different types of influence depending on the institutional environment and the policy area.

List of interviews

Interview 1. Permanent Representation of Latvia to the EU, Brussels, 20 January 2012.
Interview 2. Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU, Brussels, 27 January 2012.
Interview 3. Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU, Brussels, 31 January 2012.
Interview 4. Permanent Mission of the Netherlands, Brussels, 14 February 2012.
Interview 5. Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU, Brussels, 14 February 2012.
Interview 6. General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Brussels, 2 April 2012.
Interview 7. General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Brussels, 3 April 2012.
Interview 8. European External Action Service, Brussels, 18 April 2012.
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Interview 10. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest, 8 May 2012.
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Interview 15. Polish Ministry of Transport, Construction and Maritime Economy, Warsaw, 22 May 2012.
Interview 16. Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 23 May 2012.
Interview 17. European External Action Service, Brussels, 31 May 2012.
Interview 18. European Commission, Brussels, 16 October 2012.
Interview 19. European Commission, Brussels, 24 October 2012.
Interview 20. European Commission, Brussels, 7 November 2012.
Interview 21. European Commission, Brussels, 21 November 2012.
Interview 22. European Commission, Brussels, 23 November 2012.

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Third article –
'The Influence of the Council Presidency on External EU Policies: A Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies and EU Eastern Partnership Policies'

This article was submitted with Fabienne Bossuyt and Jan Orbie to *European Politics and Society* and is currently under review for this journal after being revised following a first review (revise and resubmit).

Reference style, layout, titles and interview numbers were modified to make it uniform with the other parts of the dissertation. References to the appendixes of the dissertation were added where applicable.

Abstract

This article analyses and compares the influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies of the Council of the European Union (taking place between 2011 and 2013) on the Union's policies towards the countries of the Eastern Partnership – Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The influence of the Presidencies is compared through Qualitative Comparative Analysis, which aims to identify necessary and sufficient conditions for influence to occur. The results show that there is only one necessary condition for the Presidency to exert influence, i.e. the issue should be highly salient to the incumbent Member State. The absence of any other condition for influence does as such not hamper Presidency influence. Moreover, the analysis reveals three sufficient combinations of conditions for Presidency influence, in which the individual conditions play different roles. The application of Qualitative Comparative Analysis to Presidency influence leads to novel insights and stimulates conceptual clarity on the level of and the conditions for influence.

1. Introduction

The question whether the Member States of the European Union (EU) can exert additional influence on EU decision-making when holding the rotating Council Presidency (hereinafter: Presidency) has inspired a lively academic debate in the past decades. While some have argued that the Member States do not use their Presidency position to increase their influence (e.g. Dewost 1984 | Ludlow 1993 | Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace 2006 | Vida 2010 | Culley, Neisse & Raik 2011), others have shown that Member States holding the Presidency do exert additional influence during their term at the helm (e.g. Arter 2000 | Bjurulf 2001 | Tallberg 2004 | Schalk, Torenvlied, Weesie & Stokman 2007 | Warntjen 2007 | Thomson 2008 | Bunse 2009). Several instruments for exerting influence have been identified, such as issue decoupling (subtraction) or coupling (package deals), compromise proposals, additional meetings (Warntjen 2013b), and different forms of agenda shaping (Tallberg 2003).

The evidence on Presidency influence is increasingly well-documented and theoretically informed, and a large number of conditions affecting Presidency influence have been identified (see *infra*). However, it is still unclear if and how these conditions can jointly strengthen or limit Presidency influence. This is the underlying research puzzle of this article: it addresses the question *which conditions are necessary and/or sufficient for a Presidency to exert influence* through a study of the Hungarian, Polish (both 2011) and Lithuanian (2013) Presidencies and their influence on the EU's Eastern Partnership[12] (EaP) policies. The main rationale behind this research question is that the three Presidencies exerted influence to varying degrees in different policy areas; the aim is to explain which conditions contributed to influence in terms of necessity and sufficiency.

The empirical focus of the article is based on three considerations. The first two are initial scope conditions: the article focuses on (i) external policies in which the Presidency *can* play a role, and on (ii) a geographical area in which the Presidencies are to a certain extent *interested* to play a role. Indeed, the EaP policies first of all constitute an area of EU external policies in which the Presidency is potentially influential: contrary to 'classic' foreign policy, in which the EU's High Representative and the European External Action Service (EEAS) play an important role, EaP policies cover a broad range of external policy areas where the Presidency has key responsibilities at different stages of policy-making, i.e. in certain working parties, in Coreper and during ministerial meetings. Secondly, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania are interested in further integration between the EU and (some of) its Eastern neighbouring countries. Earlier research suggests that Presidency periods are opportunities for Member States to promote their views on external policies and to steer political attention in the EU to specific regions (for Central and Eastern European EU members, see e.g. Tulmets 2011). It can thus be expected that these three Presidencies will at least try to influence some aspects of EaP policies. The third consideration for case selection is that the influence of the Presidency on external policies has received rather little attention in the academic literature compared to other policy domains, and existing research on this topic (e.g. Arter 2000 | Tallberg 2006b | Bunse 2009 | Dijkstra 2011) discusses cases pre-dating 2009, i.e. before the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force. Since this treaty changed the role of the Presidency (Charléty & Mangenot 2011 | Craig 2011 | Vanhoonacker, Pomorska & Maurer 2011 | Warntjen 2013a), especially in external policies, research on Presidency influence in this renewed institutional setting contributes to understanding current decision-making processes in the EU.

[12] The EaP, part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, is a framework for multilateral and bilateral cooperation between the EU and its Eastern neighbours Belarus (participating only in the multilateral track), Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Presidency influence is explored through fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), which allows us to make systematic analyses of sufficient and necessary conditions for influence. QCA is a set-theoretic method that works with membership scores of cases in sets (i.e. 'presence' or 'absence' of a condition or an outcome), perceives relations between social phenomena as set relations, and interprets these set relations in terms of sufficiency and necessity (for recent overviews on QCA, see Rihoux & Ragin | Schneider & Wagemann 2012). As explained in the research note at the end of this article, 'influence' is defined here as intentionally changing a policy from what it would have been in the absence of an action. The degree of political influence of an actor is expressed as a function of the actor's goal achievement, the extent to which this goal achievement can be ascribed to the actor, and the political relevance of the output.

The empirical data used in this article are drawn from extensive desk- and field research, including analyses of official documents from the EU institutions and the Member States, secondary sources such as academic and news articles, and 81 in-depth interviews with officials of EU Member States and institutions between January 2012 and August 2014. Due to space constraints, these data are not elaborated in the main body of the article; detailed descriptions of the data on influence of the Presidencies are available in three online country files (appendixes 1, 2 and 3 of this dissertation), and information on the operationalisation of concepts can be found in the research note at the end of the article.

With this article, we aim to make an empirical and a methodological contribution to the literature on Presidency influence. Empirically, the article summarizes and analyses a large amount of data on the role and influence of three Presidencies in shaping the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours (see country files). Methodologically, it is the first systematic comparison of Presidency influence with QCA, a method that – in distinguishing between necessary and sufficient conditions – enhances debates on the conditions for (Presidency) influence.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: the next section gives an overview of the conditions for influence. Subsequently, we briefly discuss the benefits and challenges of applying QCA in this article, and then provide a summary of the policy areas in which – and to what extent – the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies did and did not exert influence. This is followed by a summary of the empirical data for this article, including information on the extent to which the conditions for influence apply to the respective Presidencies. The last part of the article discusses and interprets the results of the comparison with QCA. The conclusion summarizes these results and makes a few suggestions of topics for future research.

2. Conditions for influence

A large number of conditions for Presidency influence have been identified in the literature (for an overview, see e.g. Vandecasteele & Bossuyt 2014), however without clear indications on possible conjunctural causality. With this article, we aim to provide a systematic analysis of the necessity and sufficiency of (combinations of) these conditions with the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies as an empirical basis. This section briefly summarizes the conditions for influence, including the abbreviations that will be used in the tables for fsQCA. Detailed information on operationalisation of these conditions is available in the research note.

The conditions for influence can be divided into three groups (see also Van Hecke & Bursens 2011, p. 25): country-specific conditions, conditions related to policy areas or specific issues, and conditions related to the external context.

Among the country-specific conditions, *adequate preparation* ('prep') is expected to contribute to Presidency influence (Arter 2000 | Bunse 2009). It involves efficient planning, staff training and careful formulation of priorities. Adequate preparation ensures that the Presidency is ready for expected and even unexpected developments in the EU, that the procedures and informal rules are applied routinely, and that dossiers can be identified where progress (or delay if so wished) are possible. The planning should consider the political calendar of the EU and of world politics, such as elections in key Member States, important summits and multilateral events.

Secondly, the *division of labour between the permanent representation (permrep) and the national capital* is discussed in the literature as affecting Presidency influence. Bunse (2009) argues that Presidencies allowing large autonomy to the permrep are more influential than strictly capital-based ones. The argument is that Brussels-based officials know best where the sensitivities lie and which compromises are feasible. The degree of 'Brussels-based Presidency' (in fsQCA: 'bru') can differ between policy areas, depending on issues such as the internal organisation of administrations, the importance of the topic or the availability of expertise.

A third country-specific condition is the *reputation* ('reput') of the incumbent Member State (Metcalfe 1998 | Bjurulf 2001 | Baun 2009 | Bunse 2009). Incumbent countries with a good reputation enjoy more trust among the other Member States and the EU institutions, which makes influence on decisions more likely. For this article, 'good reputation' is conceptualized along three dimensions (on reputation, see Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Bunse 2009 | Jakobsen 2009): (i) the incumbent country is considered to give the 'right example' in domestic policies, (ii) the political leadership of a country displays a positive attitude towards European integration, and (iii) the Presidency invests in soft knowledge of chairpersons. Giving the 'right example' at home means that domestic policies correspond to what is generally accepted by the other Member States and the EU institutions. A positive attitude towards European integration refers to the absence of hostility towards (one or several aspects of) European integration (Crespy & Verschueren 2009). Such hostility would lessen trust of the other Member States and EU institutions (Leconte 2012), thus reducing the Presidency's ability to exert influence. The third dimension, soft knowledge,[13] includes negotiation-, managerial- and organisational skills, experience in multicultural environments, rhetoric, teamwork, stress control, transparent planning, clear communication, effective use of the available rooms, and networking (see e.g. Bjurulf 2001 | Bunse 2009 | Kajnč 2009 | Vanhoonacker, Pomorska & Maurer 2010 | Karoliewski & Sus 2011).

Fourthly, the role of *size* of the incumbent country is to be tested: the literature is as yet inconclusive on how size contributes to influence. Several authors (e.g. Bjurulf 2001 | Bengtsson 2002 | Kajnč & Svetličič 2010) argue that a Member State's size does not affect its ability to manage practical issues. However, large countries (in fsQCA: 'large') are generally supposed to be more influential in the Council than smaller ones (Tallberg 2008) and, in external policies, large States function more autonomously than small states and thus have more room for manoeuvre (Dijkstra 2011). However, others (e.g. Baillie 1998 | Thorhallsson & Wivel 2006 | Björkdahl 2008) point out that small States can use the Presidency to increase their influence on decision-making in the EU, since they are usually not expected to (be able to) push their interests in the same way as large States do (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010). In any case, it is unclear whether small States have *more* or *less* influence than large States during their Presidency (Warntjen 2007).

[13] A detailed discussion soft vs. hard knowledge is provided in the research note at the end of the article.

A fifth country-specific condition to be considered is the effect of a *stable domestic political and administrative context* ('stab.dom'): effective intra- and inter-departmental coordination (Baun 2009 | Bunse 2009, p. 64) and a stable Government with a strong mandate (Copsey & Pomorska 2010) can be expected to increase the influence of a Member State, especially during a Presidency period. It is argued that, in a stable domestic situation, the incumbent country can concentrate on the Presidency's agenda and goals and does not have to direct resources to internal coordination.

In addition to these country-specific conditions, two conditions related to specific policy areas will be considered.[14] Firstly, *salience of a policy area to the Presidency* ('sal.pres') refers to the importance of the area and the willingness of the incumbent country to spend resources (time, staff, funds) in order to achieve its goals in this area . High salience generally motivates the development and mobilisation of hard knowledge among a country's civil servants and politicians, which results in a higher potential for influence. In turn, low salience entails little hard knowledge (Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007). This condition has been used in bargaining models for studying legislative decision-making in the EU (see also Thomson & Stokman 2006). In our view, the effect of this condition (i.e. more attention for the topic, more hard knowledge) can be equally important in decision-making on external policies. 'Salience' as a condition for influence should not be confused with 'political relevance' as an indicator for political influence (see research note). 'Salience' refers to the *importance of an issue for an actor* or the *intensity* of its preferences regarding a policy area. The salience of an issue to the Presidency is assessed from two types of sources: the Presidency programme on the one hand, and in-depth interviews and secondary sources on the other. The latter sources provide insight into the salience of unexpected events and of issues that were not included or under/over-emphasized in the Presidency programme.[15] In turn, 'political importance' is a measure for the relevance of an issue for the relations between the EU and EaP countries, including the *political importance of the issue (i.e. its political and symbolic value) for EU-EaP relations*, as well as the *novelty* and *tangibility* of the policy development. The sources for assessing political relevance are not drawn from Presidency-related data. Instead, the degree of political relevance is established through an assessment of the researcher, based official documents and secondary literature.

Secondly, a *favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors* (Member States, institutions) (in fsQCA: 'fav.pref/sal.oth') affects the extent to which the Presidency can influence EU policies. The effects of heterogeneity of preferences and salience to the other actors are two different things that partially interact with each other, and can therefore be formulated as one condition. The lower the salience of a policy area to the other actors, the more room for manoeuvre they may give to the chair and vice versa (Bjurulf 2001 | Bunse 2009). At the same time, some authors (Fernández Pasarín 2009 | Bursens & Van Hecke 2011) argue that the incumbent country can realize its national preferences only if there is a certain degree of homogeneity between the agendas of the Presidency and other actors in the EU. If there is too large a 'mismatch' between agendas, it is

[14] Two other conditions related to policy areas and specific issues will not be discussed: the voting method (Elgström 2006 | Tallberg 2006a | Warntjen 2007 | Bunse 2009), and the stage in the decision-making process (Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Tallberg 2006b | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Thomson 2008 | Warntjen 2008). These conditions have been studied in relation to EU legislation, but they are less applicable to – mostly non-legislative – EaP policies.

[15] It should be noted that some issues may be included for other reasons than salience (legal obligations, input from other Member States or the EU institutions, nearly-finalized dossiers that the Presidency wishes to close in order to claim credit), or under-emphasized in order not to be viewed as biased or because little progress on the issue is expected.

less likely that the Presidency will achieve its goals. This condition will not be considered separately in the online country files: the distribution of EaP-related preferences and salience among the actors in the EU was generally stable in 2011-2013. There was a consensus that the region 'matters', but points of view diverged on the intensity, scope, underlying principles and finality of EU-EaP cooperation. As explained in the next section, we have defined eight policy areas on which the Presidencies did or did not exert political influence. In some policy areas the distribution of preferences and salience among other actors is considered 'rather favourable' (0.67), while in other areas this is 'rather unfavourable' (0.33) (Interview 11; 43; 52; 83 | Vaïsse, Dennison & Kundnani 2013). The former group includes cooperation on education and research, youth, trade and economy, and transport. The latter group consists of politically sensitive issues, topics that directly affect national interests, and policies involving considerable funds: bilateral political relations, defence, energy, justice and home affairs (especially mobility of persons and human rights), and the multilateral institutional framework for cooperation.

Finally, two context-related conditions broadly shape the environment in which the Presidency operates. The *external political context* (Baun 2009), or *leadership environment* (Bunse 2009), is constituted by the political climate in the EU with regard to the topics of interest to the Presidency (e.g. the context of relations with candidate countries is different than for neighbouring countries of the EU), domestic politics in EU countries or global events (e.g. election campaigns in key Member States or on-going multilateral negotiations that could distract attention for the topics the Presidency wants to emphasize), and unexpected events or crises (e.g. natural or man-made disasters that can jeopardize the Presidency programme) (see e.g. Vos & Bailleul 2002 | Langdal & von Sydow 2009). A 'favourable external political context' is abbreviated as 'fav.ext'.

Also the European *economic context* (see e.g. Baun 2009) may affect the Presidency's influence, especially if the incumbent country has ambitions for new or enhanced policies. Economic decline can lead to less support within the EU for reforms or new commitments, while in periods of economic prosperity EU Member States are more open to new initiatives (Pintelon & Van Lancker 2011). At the same time, periods of economic crisis, if skilfully handled, can provide a window of opportunity to the Presidency to initiate reforms and steer policies in line with its preferences.

3. Applying QCA for analysing influence: benefits and challenges

In this article, we apply the fuzzy-set variant of QCA and its homonymous software package fsQCA, which allows us to analyse differences in kind and differences in degree: membership scores of the conditions and the outcome range between 0 and 1. We manually assign the membership scores to conditions and outcomes, based on theoretical arguments. Full details on operationalisation of influence and the conditions for influence are provided in the research note.

In systematically comparing the influence of different Presidencies, QCA provides three important benefits (see e.g. Berg-Schlosser, De Meur, Rihoux & Ragin 2009). Firstly, because QCA is able to deal with high causal complexity, it has the potential to identify combinations of conditions that jointly produce an outcome. Secondly, QCA is an ideal comparative method in a small- to medium-*N* research design. Thirdly, the assessment of necessity and sufficiency yields more fine-tuned results than most other comparative methods, and allows us to exclude causal conditions that are unnecessary or that are not part of sufficient causal paths.

QCA also poses two challenges. Firstly, the use of numbers and scores to describe set membership may create a false impression of precision, e.g. that 0.60 is exactly twice as much as 0.30. This is not

how the numbers should be interpreted: the scores represent verbal assessments on an ordinal, not on an interval scale. 0.30 means 'rather no member' of a set (below the threshold value for membership of 0.50), whereas 0.60 is 'rather a member' (above 0.50). These numbers translate verbal assessments and should also be interpreted as such.

The second challenge is related to the number of cases for each Presidency. It would be inadequate to treat all EaP-related outputs – i.e. all EaP-related policy developments, including issues that were placed on the agenda, decisions that were taken, or the absence of anticipated developments – as separate cases: the online country files show that there were more EaP-related outputs to be considered for the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies than for the Hungarian Presidency. Although Hungary exerted influence on less outputs than the other two Presidencies, it was influential in a *relatively* higher number of outputs when compared to the total number of EaP-related events during its Presidency. Due to the formula used for calculating sufficiency with QCA, this would lead to a disproportionate importance of the results concerning Hungary, even though Hungary was the least interested in the EaP region and it exerted the least influence among the three Presidencies in this study. For this reason, the cases for comparison are established in two steps: firstly, the degree of Presidency influence is calculated for each output per Presidency according to the principles outlined *infra*. Secondly, the outputs are grouped for each Presidency into equal numbers of 'policy areas'[16] on which the EU cooperates with the EaP countries. These policy areas will serve as the 'cases' for analysis: bilateral political relations, defence, education/research/youth, energy, justice and home affairs (including customs cooperation), multilateral political and institutional framework (including formats for multilateral cooperation and EaP Summits), trade/economic relations, and transport cooperation.

The membership score for influence in a policy area is represented by the maximum score of the outputs in this policy area. If, for example, the Presidency was influential on two outputs (e.g. with scores of 0.56 and 0.67) in the area of transport, and not influential on three other outputs in this area (say, with scores of 0.00, 0.33 and 0.44), the membership score for 'influential Presidency' is set at 0.67 in transport cooperation. The reasoning behind this way of calculating Presidency influence on a policy area is the following: when looking back to a Presidency and asking whether it exerted influence in a certain policy area, one will certainly answer 'yes' if there was at least one output on which the Presidency exerted influence, even if on ten other outputs it did not exert influence. We are aware of the fact that this reduces the possible variation on the outcome: lower degrees of influence in a policy area can be 'hidden' behind outputs where influence was higher. However, grouping the outputs in policy areas is necessary to make the data comparable with QCA. In addition, this approach best fits our definition of influence, i.e. changing a policy from what it would have been in the absence of an action. In other words, if an actor can change one part of a policy, it is safe to say that this actor changed the policy. Tables 1, 2 and 3 (below) provide information of the individual outputs for each policy area, so this information is not 'lost' for the reader.

[16] In the analysis, only the policy areas in which at least one of the Presidencies was influential will be considered. As a consequence, cooperation with the EaP on issues like agriculture support for civil society cooperation is not included in the analysis. None of the Presidencies exerted influence in these areas, despite some events taking place during the different semesters. Also outputs where Presidency influence is theoretically impossible will not be considered. Examples of such outputs are those where the incumbent country is not involved as a host, organizer or chair (e.g. activities of other EU institutions), or if political influence of any actor is impossible (e.g. Cooperation Council meetings, who take stock of bilateral relations but do not decide on policy).

4. Summary of influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies

As noted *supra*, a detailed description of the data on the three Presidencies would not be feasible within the scope of this article. An elaborate overview of the data for each Presidency is available in the online country files. A summary of the data is provided here in three tables. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the EaP-related outputs, grouped in policy areas (i.e. 'cases' in this article) for the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies. The left column shows the policy areas, including the number of instances where the Presidencies were influential and not influential. The two columns in the middle summarize the outputs where the Presidencies were and were not influential, including the degree of influence between brackets. The right column shows the general level of political influence for each policy area.

Table 1: Influence of the Hungarian Presidency

Policy area for cooperation with the EaP countries (number of instances influential; number of instances not influential)	**Outputs influential**	**Outputs not influential**	**Influence level for the policy area**
Bilateral political relations (1; 0)	- Belarus: sanctions (0.56)		0.56
Defence (0; 0)			0.00
Education/research/youth (0; 0)			0.00
Energy (1; 1)	- External energy priorities (partly EaP-related) (0.67)	- Trans-Caspian gas pipeline: discussions on negotiation mandate for European Commission (partly EaP-related) (0.44)	0.67 (partly EaP-related)
Justice and Home Affairs (1; 1)	- Belarus, visa facilitation and readmission agreements: negotiation mandate for European Commission (0.56)	- Customs cooperation: high-level seminar (0.00)	0.56
Multilateral political and institutional framework (2; 1)	- Establishment of EUSDR (partly EaP-related) (0.67) - Söderköping process: integration in platform 1 (0.56)	- EaP Summit (0.00)	0.67 (partly EaP-related)
Trade/economic relations (2; 1)	- Ukraine: negotiations on DCFTA (0.56) - Moldova: extension of trade preferences (0.56)	- EaP Business Forum (0.00)	0.56
Transport (1; 0)	- Moldova, Common Aviation Area Agreement: European Commission negotiation mandate (0.56)		0.56

Table 2: Influence of the Polish Presidency

Policy area for cooperation with the EaP countries (number of instances influential; not influential)	Outputs influential	Outputs not influential	Influence level for the policy area
Bilateral political relations (1; 0)	- Ukraine, Association Agreement: common understanding about contents (0.56)		0.56
Defence (0; 0)			0.00
Education/research/youth (0; 1)		- Education: ministerial conference (0.00)	0.00
Energy (2; 0)	- Trans-Caspian gas pipeline: negotiation mandate for European Commission (partly EaP-related) (0.56) - Council conclusions on external energy priorities (partly EaP-related) (0.56)		0.56 (partly EaP-related)
Justice and Home Affairs (3; 3)	- Armenia, visa facilitation and readmission agreements: negotiation mandate for European Commission (0.78) - Azerbaijan, visa facilitation and readmission agreements: negotiation mandate for European Commission (0.78) - JHA Council conclusions (0.56)	- Police training: Euro-East training programme (0.00) - Drug-related crime: expert meeting (0.00) - Customs cooperation: high-level seminar (0.00)	0.78
Multilateral political and institutional framework (1; 2)	- Establishment of European Endowment for Democracy (partly EaP-related) (0.89)	- CORLEAP inaugural meeting (0.00) - EaP Summit (0.44)	0.89 (partly EaP-related)
Trade/economic relations (2; 2)	- Moldova, DCFTA: negotiation mandate for European Commission (0.56) - Georgia, DCFTA: negotiation mandate for European Commission (0.56)	- EaP Business Forum (0.00) - Economy: ministerial conference (0.00)	0.56
Transport (2; 0)	- Ministerial conference of Transport Ministers (0.67) - Azerbaijan, Common Aviation Area Agreement: European Commission negotiation mandate (0.56)		0.67

Table 3: Influence of the Lithuanian Presidency

Policy area for cooperation with the EaP countries (number of instances influential; number of instances not influential)	Outputs influential	Outputs not influential	Influence level for the policy area
Bilateral political relations (0; 4)		- Armenia, Association Agreement: failure to initial (0.00) - Georgia, Association Agreement: initialling (0.00) - Moldova, Association Agreement: initialling (0.00) - Ukraine, Association Agreement: failure to sign (0.00)	0.00
Defence (1; 5)	- High-level seminar on EU-EaP defence cooperation (0.56)	- European Council Conclusions on defence (0.00) - ESDC training course with EaP representatives (0.00) - Informal EU Defence Ministers' meeting (0.00) - Informal EU Security Policy Directors' meeting (0.00) - Georgia, initialling of CSDP Framework Participation Agreement (0.00)	0.56
Education/research/youth (2; 1)	- Education, science and research conference (0.67) - EaP Youth Forum (0.67)	- Launch of Erasmus+ (0.00)	0.67
Energy (1; 1)	- Council report on external energy priorities (partly EaP-related) (0.56)	- Meeting of strategic group for international energy cooperation (0.00)	0.56 (partly EaP-related)
Justice and Home affairs (4; 3)	- JHA ministerial meeting (0.78) - CEPOL annual Presidency conference with EaP representatives (0.67) - Belarus, visa facilitation and readmission agreement: start of negotiations (0.56) - Moldova, visa liberalisation (0.56)	- Azerbaijan, visa facilitation agreement: signature (0.00) - Customs cooperation: high-level seminar (0.00) - European Judicial Network: plenary meeting (0.00)	0.78

Multilateral political and institutional framework (0; 4)		- EaP Summit: invitations to countries instead of specific people (0.00) - EaP Summit: results (0.00) - CORLEAP annual meeting (0.00) - EU-EaP Foreign Ministers' meeting (0.00)	0.00
Trade/economic relations (1; 2)	- Ukraine, DCFTA: provisional application (0.56)	- EaP Business Forum (0.00) - Moldova: opening of market for wines (0.00)	0.56
Transport (1; 1)	- Ministerial meeting of Transport Ministers(0.89)	- Ukraine: air services agreement (0.00)	0.89

Table 4 (below) summarizes all data for the three Presidencies per policy area, including the membership scores for the country-specific, issue-specific and context-related conditions for influence and the information on Presidency influence. The information in this table is the basis for the QCA on necessary and/or sufficient conditions for the Presidency to influence. The policy areas are ranked from high to low influence.

Table 4: Summary of data for the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies

Case	prep	bru	reput	large	stab. dom	fav. ext	econ. prosp	sal. pres	fav.pref/ sal.oth	influential Presidency
PL-Multilateral political and institutional framework	1.00	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.89
LT-Transport	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.67	0.89
PL-Justice and Home Affairs	1.00	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.78
LT-Justice and Home Affairs	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.78
H-Energy	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.33	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.67	0.33	0.67
H-Multilateral political and institutional framework	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.33	1.00	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.67
PL-Transport	1.00	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.67	0.67
LT-Education/research/youth	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.67	0.67
H-Bilateral political relations	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.33	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.67	0.33	0.56
H-Justice and Home Affairs	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.33	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.56
H-Trade/economic relations	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.33	1.00	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.67	0.56
H-Transport	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.33	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.56
PL-Bilateral political relations	1.00	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.56
PL-Energy	1.00	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.56
PL-Trade/economic relations	1.00	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.67	0.56
LT-Defence	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.56
LT-Energy	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.56
LT-Trade/economic relations	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.67	0.56
H-Defence	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.33	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00
H-Education/research/youth	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.33	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.00
PL-Defence	1.00	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00
PL-Education/research/youth	1.00	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.67	0.00
LT-Bilateral political relations	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.00
LT-Multilateral political and institutional framework	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.00

A first observation based on Table 4 is that there is a lack of variation on four conditions. Membership scores for prep and stab.dom are all above the threshold of 0.50, whereas scores for fav.ext and econ.prosp are below 0.50. In other words, the Presidencies were rather well-prepared (Hungary) or well-prepared (Poland, Lithuania) and the domestic political and administrative context was rather stable (Poland) or stable (Hungary, Lithuania). In addition, the external political context was rather unfavourable (Hungary, Poland) to unfavourable (Lithuania), and the membership score for economic prosperity was 0.00 for all Presidencies. These four conditions will be excluded from the analysis, since they could lead to paradoxical conclusions with QCA (e.g. an unfavourable economic context is necessary for the Presidency to be influential and to be not influential). The conditions are treated as further scope conditions for this article: the conclusions apply to Presidencies of domestically stable countries that are generally well-prepared. In addition, these data do not allow to make statements about the impact of context-related conditions: the results apply to Presidencies taking place in an unfavourable external political context and in a period of economic crisis.

5. QCA results and discussion[17]

5.1. Necessary condition: no influence without salience to the Presidency[18]

Using a threshold of 0.90, the analysis shows that one condition is necessary for a Presidency to exert influence: sal.pres (consistency= 0.903614), an issue-specific condition. This means that the incumbent country cannot use its role to increase its overall influence in the EU. The Presidency position does not automatically result in higher influence in the EU. Only in highly salient policy areas, where officials of the incumbent country are prepared to put specific efforts, can the Presidency increase its influence on EU decision-making.

The fact that salience to the Presidency is necessary for the Presidency to exert influence is not so surprising, especially because we view influence as the result of a deliberate intervention. What is more striking is that salience to the Presidency is the *only* necessary condition. All other conditions we investigated, including all country-specific ones, are individually not necessary. In other words, if, except salience to the Presidency, any of the conditions under consideration is absent, the Presidency can still exert influence if some other conditions are fulfilled. Small State Presidencies, countries with a bad reputation, or Member States who organise their Presidency in a capital-based way, can still exert influence if some other conditions are fulfilled. Presidency influence is also sometimes possible in policy areas where the distribution of preferences and salience among other actors is unfavourable.

[17] Detailed analyses of necessary and sufficient conditions are available in appendix 4 of this dissertation.

[18] A condition is necessary if it is a superset of the outcome, that is, if the condition must be present for the outcome to occur. For a necessary condition, its membership score is consistently higher than or equal to the membership score in the outcome. The formula for necessity of condition X for outcome Y is $\sum_{min}(X_i, Y_i)/\sum(Y_i)$. 'min' refers to the selection of the lower of the two values X_i or Y_i.

5.2. *Sufficient conditions: causal combinations enabling Presidency influence*[19]

The analysis of sufficient conditions is based on a truth table, summarising all causal paths leading and not leading to Presidency influence (see Table 5).

Table 5: Truth table for 'influential Presidency'

bru	reput	large	sal.pres	fav.pref/sal.ot	number of cases	influential pre	consistency
1	0	0	1	0	3		0.952991
1	0	0	1	1	1		0.933735
0	1	1	1	1	2		0.897912
0	1	1	1	0	4		0.889780
0	1	0	1	1	3		0.845381
0	1	0	1	0	5		0.724382
1	0	0	0	1	2		0.582707
1	0	0	0	0	2		0.582707
0	1	1	0	1	1		0.442953
0	1	1	0	0	1		0.442953

Based on the data in this truth table, we define a consistency threshold of 0.80: there is a clear gap between the fifth and sixth causal path (consistency= 0.845381 and 0.724382 respectively). In what follows, we summarize the results of the analysis with fsQCA. In the fsQCA software, membership in a set (condition) is expressed by the abbreviation of this condition (e.g. large country='large'), non-membership is expressed by the abbreviation preceded by '~' (e.g. small country='~large'). The logical AND is shown as '*', the logical OR as '+'.

The truth table analysis produces three solution terms that lead to 'influential Presidency' and indicates which cases correspond to these solution terms:

- sal.pres*bru*~reput*~large (consistency= 0.917910). Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in this solution term: H-Energy, H-Multilateral political and institutional framework, H-Bilateral political relations, H-Trade and economic relations.
- sal.pres*~bru*reput*large (consistency= 0.883598). Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in this solution term: PL-Justice and Home Affairs, PL-Multilateral political and institutional framework, PL-Transport, PL-Bilateral political relations, PL-Energy, PL-Trade and economic relations.
- sal.pres*~bru*reput*fav.pref/sal.ot (consistency= 0.848181). Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in this solution term: LT-Transport, LT-Education/research/youth, LT-Trade and economic relations, PL-Transport, PL-Trade and economic relations.

The first solution term (sal.pres*bru*~reput*~large), applying to outputs in EaP policies during the Hungarian Presidency, can be interpreted as follows: the incumbent country can be influential in areas that are highly salient to its Government, even if it does not have a good reputation. The fact

[19] Conditions are sufficient for the outcome if they are a subset of the outcome, i.e. if the outcome is present as soon as the conditions are present. A combination of conditions is considered sufficient if the membership scores in causal paths are consistently lower than or equal to the membership scores of these cases in the outcome. The formula for sufficiency of causal path X for outcome Y is $\sum_{min}(X_i, Y_i)/\sum(X_i)$.

that much of the Hungarian Presidency was Brussels-based may explain this: all interviewees agreed that the civil servants working for the Hungarian Presidency, especially those at the permrep, were highly competent and respected. Apparently, the country's rather small size did not prevent its officials from exerting influence in some dossiers. Hungarian interviewees noted that their country's size even had its advantages: bureaucratic chains were short, which allowed quick consultation and decision-making (Interview 6; 7; 13; 15). It is interesting to observe that the distribution of preferences and salience among the other actors does not seem to play an important role here. However, it must be noted that some crucial outputs in policy areas where this distribution was unfavourable – viz. external energy policy priorities and the establishment of a strategy for the Danube Region – were only partly related to the EaP (see country file on Hungary, appendix 1 of the dissertation).

The second solution term (sal.pres*~bru*reput*large) includes a number of EaP-related outputs during the Polish Presidency. It means that the Presidency can also be influential on highly salient issues that are mainly managed from the capital. Additional conditions are that the country should have a good reputation and be large. In other words, a large country with a good reputation can afford not to base its Presidency in Brussels, without decreasing its capacity to exert influence. Also for this group of cases, we can see that 'favourable distribution of preferences and salience among the other actors' is not part of the solution term; it covers cases where preferences and salience were distributed rather favourably (transport, trade and economic relations) as well cases where this was not the case (JHA, bilateral relations, the multilateral framework and energy – keeping in mind that the outputs in the latter policy areas were also only partly related to the EaP). In other words, it does not matter whether preferences and salience are favourably or unfavourably distributed in this solution term.

The third solution term (sal.pres*~bru*reput*fav.pref/sal.ot) includes several EaP-related policy developments during the Polish and the Lithuanian Presidencies. It shows that there is another sufficient combination of conditions under which Presidencies can influence highly salient policies that are mainly managed from the capital. Countries with a good reputation can exert influence in policy areas on which there is a (rather) favourable distribution of preferences and salience among the EU institutions and the other Member States. Indeed, this solution term covers only instances of Polish and Lithuanian influence in politically less sensitive policy areas: transport, education/research/youth, and trade and economic relations.

Given that the second and third solution terms are very similar, they can be merged into one solution term: sal.pres*~bru*reput*(large+fav.pref/sal.ot). Bluntly stated, 'large country' and 'favourable distribution of preferences and salience among the other actors' are replaceable conditions in this solution term.

6. Conclusion

The systematic comparison of the influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies on the EU's EaP policies allows us to draw a number of general conclusions on necessity and sufficiency: most conditions for influence that were identified in the literature do not always need to be present (necessity), and individually they do not lead to influence (sufficiency). With QCA we singled out the (combinations of) conditions that did and did not contribute to the influence of the respective Presidencies.

Only one individual condition is necessary, i.e. salience to the Presidency. Furthermore, Presidency influence is also possible if some of the other conditions are absent. Apparently, a Presidency can be influential if it has a rather bad reputation (cf. Hungary) or if the distribution of preferences and salience among the other actors is unfavourable (cf. some cases of Hungary and Poland). Being large or small as such is not necessary for exerting influence either, and an influential Presidency is not always Brussels-based (cf. some cases of Poland and Lithuania).

An important observation on sufficiency is that all conditions we investigated appear in one or more of the three solution terms, but they do never have to be *all* present or absent in order to enable Presidency influence. For the Hungarian Presidency, its Brussels-based organisation of EaP policies seems to be an important explanatory factor that compensated for the rather bad reputation of the country: EaP-related dossiers were mainly dealt with by Brussels-based officials that were largely praised for the way they organized the Presidency. Poland benefited in some policy areas from its good reputation and its capacities as a large State. In other, less sensitive policy areas, Poland and Lithuania took advantage of their good reputation and of the fact that the distribution of preferences and salience among other actors was rather favourable. In the second and third solution terms – which include 'high salience to the Presidency', 'not Brussels-based' and 'good reputation' – the conditions 'large country' and 'favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors' are mutually interchangeable. In other words, where the distribution of salience and preferences was rather unfavourable, Poland had an advantage (large State) that Lithuania did not have. We can conclude that the contribution of each of the conditions for influence depends on the presence of other conditions, and some conditions can become redundant in some causal paths.

The application of QCA is thus far unique to the study of influence of Council Presidency. It contributes to the opening up of the debate on the circumstances under which Presidencies can exert influence. The calibration of influence and the conditions for influence requires maximum transparency on the meaning of concepts, which also benefits the conceptual basis on which influence is researched.

It must be noted that, even though the analyses in this article are based on as many data as possible, the empirical basis is limited for two reasons. Firstly, we encountered several conditions – preparation, domestic political and administrative context, political context and economic context – on which there was not enough variation to draw meaningful conclusions. The applicability of the research results is thus limited to (relatively) well-prepared Presidencies of Member States that are characterized by a (relatively) stable political and administrative context, taking place in an unfavourable political and economic environment. Secondly, the role of certain combinations of conditions could not be analysed because they were not represented in the cases. For example, what would be the influence of non-Brussels-based Presidencies with a bad reputation, or Brussels-based Presidencies with a good reputation? Would a large and Brussels-based Presidency have more influence than a small and Brussels-based Presidency?

To sum up: with QCA we were able to single out (combinations of) conditions that did and did not play a role for the Presidencies in this study, allowing us to reflect on complex causal processes underlying Presidency influence. However, based on these results we cannot draw up a model that would be applicable to all Presidencies; the results from QCA only allow for modest generalisation (see e.g. Berg-Schlosser *et al*. 2009) i.e. they should be applicable to other cases if they share a reasonable number of scope conditions. Future research, focusing on Presidencies to which the conditions for influence apply in more diverse ways, could further develop and fine-tune the insights than can be drawn from this analysis.

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List of interviews

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Interview 7. Hungarian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 6 March 2012.
Interview 11. European External Action Service, Brussels, 18 April 2012.
Interview 13. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest, 8 May 2012.
Interview 15. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest, 10 May 2012.
Interview 25. European Commission, Brussels, 16 October 2012.
Interview 26. European Commission, Brussels, 24 October 2012.
Interview 27. European Commission, Brussels, 7 November 2012.
Interview 28. European Commission, Brussels, 21 November 2012.
Interview 39. Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, Vilnius, 12 March 2013.
Interview 43. Diplomat from EU country, Vilnius, 19 March 2013.
Interview 52. Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 19 June 2013.
Interview 83. Diplomat from EU country, Brussels, 7 July 2014.

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Research note with third article: defining and operationalising (conditions for) Presidency influence

The outcome: an influential Presidency

The definition of 'influential Presidency' – the outcome to be analysed across the cases – and the method for measuring influence are based on an approach that was used in other studies on Presidency influence (Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Orbie 2013 | Vandecasteele 2014). Exerting political influence is understood as *intentionally changing a policy from what it would have been in the absence of an action*. The degree of political influence (PI) is established for every EaP-related output during the respective Presidencies, according to a method that was initially developed by Arts and Verschuren (1999). PI is a function of three indicators: the degree of *goal achievement* (GA), the extent to which GA can be *ascribed* to the presidency (AS), and the *political relevance* (PR) of the output. Table 6 (next page) shows how GA, AS and PR are operationalized. PI is calculated in two steps. Firstly, a number between 0 and 3 is assigned to GA, AS and PR: 0=none, 1=limited, 2=substantial, 3=high. Secondly, the degree of PI is expressed as the average of GA, AS and PR: the scores of the three indicators are summed up and divided by 9, which results in a score between 0 and 1. Thus, the formula for calculating PI is (GA+AS+PR)/9, resulting in ten possible values: 0, 0.11, 0.22, 0.33, 0.44, 0.56, 0.67, 0.78, 0.89, and 1. The PI scores can be reformulated in verbal categories. All scores below 0.50 equate to 'no influence' since they are below the 0.5 threshold; 0.56 indicates 'limited influence'; 0.67 and 0.78 show 'substantial influence'; and 0.89 and 1 are expressions of 'high influence'. The formula for PI is further specified on two points. Firstly, a score of 0 for GA, AS or PR automatically results in PI=0: if an actor did not achieve its goals, the output cannot be ascribed to the actor, or the output was politically irrelevant, it would be unjustified to claim that this actor influenced a policy. Consequently, PI scores of 0.11 and 0.22 do not occur in practice. Secondly, AS is assigned particular weight in the formula, given that this represents a key element of our definition of influence. The level of PI cannot be higher than the level of AS: if AS is limited (a score of 1), PI cannot be higher than limited (0.56); if AS is substantial (a score of 2), PI cannot be higher than substantial (0.78).

The method for establishing the influence of the Presidency differs from the one that was used in other studies (e.g. Warntjen (2008) and Schalk *et al.* (2007) look at the distance between the Presidency's preferred outcome and the actual outcome, compared to what can be expected on the basis of the country characteristics). We believe that the method based on the work of Arts and Verschuren (1999) most accurately captures the different aspects of influence in a policy area, notably by including a measurement for political relevance.

Table 6: Operationalisation of Presidency influence

Indicator	Level	Description
Goal Achievement (GA)	0	The output entirely contradicts the Presidency's preferences.
	1	The output partly contradicts the Presidency's preferences.
	2	The output does not contradict the Presidency's preferences, but is not its most preferred result.
	3	The output reflects the Presidency's preferences as much as was legally and practically feasible.
Ascription of goal achievement (AS)	0	The Presidency was not involved as a chair (in this case the output is irrelevant for the analysis), or was involved as a chair but had no role in developing the output.
	1	The Presidency was involved as a chair to a limited extent, but the output was mainly developed by other actors.
	2	The Presidency was involved as a chair and steered the output, but other actors also played a major role in developing the output.
	3	The Presidency was involved as a chair and it is unlikely that the output would have been the same if another country held the Presidency.
Political Relevance (PR)	0	The output is of little or no political importance, is not novel among EU policies and is not tangible.
	1	The output is politically important or novel among EU policies, but is not tangible.
	2	The output is tangible, but of limited political importance and novelty among EU policies.
	3	The output is tangible and politically important or novel among EU policies.

The conditions for influence

In calibrating set membership for the conditions for influence, we define four possible scores: absent/non-member (0.00), rather absent/more out than in (0.33), rather present/more in than out (0.67), and present/full member (1.00). The operationalisation of these conditions for influence is provided in the following paragraphs and summarized in Table 7 below.

For 'adequate preparation', 0.00= none of the following: clear formulation of priorities, adequate staff training, efficient general planning; 0.33= one of the aforementioned; 0.67= two of the aforementioned; 1.00= all components of adequate preparation.

'Brussels-based Presidency' is operationalized as follows: 0.00= none of the following: priorities are developed jointly by the permrep and the capital, the permrep staff has relative autonomy *vis-à-vis* the capital in formulating compromise proposals, and most chairs of working parties that meet regularly reside in Brussels; 0.33= one of the aforementioned; 0.67= two of the aforementioned; 1.00= all components of a Brussels-based Presidency.

The reputation of a Member State's officials can of course differ between individual chairpersons. In this article we capture the reputation in one number. As discussed *supra*, reputation depends on whether the Member State is considered to give the 'right example' in domestic policies, whether the political leadership of a country has a positive attitude towards European integration, and whether it invests in the soft knowledge of its chairpersons. This third dimension, soft knowledge, is a type of 'expertise'. We follow the argument of Kajnč and Svetličič (2010) that 'expertise' refers to both hard and soft knowledge. Since these types of knowledge do not necessarily coincide, we avoid using the term 'expertise' in the article. Hard knowledge is knowledge on 'why' and 'what' questions: dossiers, procedures, facts, history. The level of hard knowledge among civil servants usually corresponds to the degree of interest of a country's leadership in a certain topic, and will therefore not be discussed as part of the reputation of a country, but in conjunction with salience of policy areas (see *infra*). Soft knowledge, by contrast, concerns 'how' and 'who' questions and stimulates a constructive atmosphere. It is effective in a negative rather than a positive way: smooth management of negotiations does as such not yield positive results, but poor management gives rise to irritation and mistrust (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010). The latter aspect of soft knowledge – networking (including formal and informal coordination with other Member States and the EU institutions) – has been discussed by some authors (Bjurulf 2001 | Bunse 2009 | Kajnč 2009 | Karoliewski & Sus 2011), without explicitly linking this to the reputation of the incumbent. In this research, however, we do consider networking as part of soft knowledge and thus of reputation, since the skills for alliance building are similar to the other soft skills. In sum, 'good reputation' is operationalized as follows: 0.00= none of the following: 'right example' at home, the Government has a positive attitude to European integration, the Presidency invests in soft knowledge of chairpersons; 0.33= one of the aforementioned; 0.67= two of the aforementioned; 1.00= all components of a good reputation.

There are many ways[20] of operationalizing the size of a country, which is also one of the conditions for Presidency influence. In this article, population is taken as the indicator of a Member State's

[20] Along with some 'traditional' ways of operationalizing size (see *infra*), other operationalisations have been proposed in the literature as well (e.g. Thorhallsson & Wivel 2006 | Drulák & Šabič 2010 | Buchet de Neuilly 2011). Since these overlap with other conditions for Presidency influence, these operationalisations are not applied in this article.

size.[21] 'Large country' is operationalized in relation to the average population of EU Member States (approx. 18/507 million): 0.00= less than half the average (less than 9 million), 0.33= more than 9 million and less than 18 million, 0.67= between the average and twice the average (from 18 million to 36 million), 1.00= more than twice the average (more than 36 million).

The operationalisation of 'stable domestic political and administrative context' is 0.00= none of the following: efficient coordination between and within State services, strong parliamentary support for the Government, no national or important regional elections during the Presidency period; 0.33= one of the aforementioned; 0.67= two of the aforementioned; 1.00= all components of a stable domestic political and administrative context.

As outlined *supra*, salience of a policy area to the Presidency is strongly related to hard knowledge. High salience generally motivates the development of a high level of hard knowledge of a country's civil servants and politicians, and vice versa (Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007). In this article, salience therefore includes hard knowledge. 'High salience to the Presidency' is operationalized as follows: 0.00= the issue is not explicitly mentioned in the Presidency programme, and interviewees and secondary sources reveal that the issue is not important to the Presidency; 0.33= the issue is explicitly mentioned in the Presidency programme, but interviewees and secondary sources reveal that the issue is not important to the Presidency; 0.67= the issue is not explicitly mentioned in the Presidency programme, but interviewees and secondary sources reveal that the issue is important to the Presidency; 1.00= the issue is explicitly mentioned in the priority programme (for unexpected events this criterion is dropped), and interviewees and secondary sources reveal that the issue is important to the Presidency. Salience to the Presidency is grouped per policy area in the same way as political influence per policy area: the maximum score of salience for all outputs in the policy area is taken as the membership score for the whole policy area. If, for example, one issue in the area of trade with the EaP countries is highly salient to the Presidency (1.00), salience of 'trade/economic relations' is scored as 1.00 too. Detailed information on operationalisation of salience is provided in the online country files (appendixes 1, 2 and 3 of the dissertation). Our operationalisation of salience to the Presidency differs from those that were put forward by other authors. In some studies (see e.g. Thomson & Stokman 2006 | Schalk *et al.* 2007) 'salience' is seen as the proportion of an actor's potential capabilities it is willing to mobilize in order to influence outcomes, or the extent to which actors experience utility loss from outcomes that differ from the one that it most favoured. The importance of an issue is measured here through expert judgements who provide a score on a scale of 0-100. Warntjen (2009), in turn, uses the election programmes of the parties in the Government as a proxy for salience, cross-validated with the Presidency programme as presented to the European Parliament. In our view, the operationalisation of salience to the Presidency as we present it, is the most suitable to make the scores applicable in a QCA research design. For a score between 0 and 100 it would be difficult to establish a threshold when an issue is or is not salient. In addition, for EaP policies, it would not be sufficient to base the membership score (only) on party/Presidency programmes or expert judgements. In order to take strategic prioritisation and salience of unexpected events into account, a combination of the two is necessary.

A 'favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors' is operationalized as follows: 0.00= the other actors (Member States, institutions) hold homogeneous positions, not corresponding to the Presidency's preferences; 0.33= the other actors hold heterogeneous positions

[21] The ranking of Member States according to size based on population, voting weight, the Shapley Shubik Index (Bolus 2010) or the Banzhaf Index (Bailer 2006) are nearly identical.

and the policy area is highly salient to them; 0.67= the other actors hold heterogeneous positions and the policy area is of low salience to them; 1.00= the other actors hold homogeneous positions, corresponding to the Presidency's preferences. As explained *supra*, the points of view on the intensity, scope, underlying principles and finality of EU-EaP cooperation greatly diverge among Member States and EU institutions. Some view the EaP initiative as a stepping stone for further enlargement of the EU, while others consider it an alternative. Hungary, Poland and Lithuania belong to the former group. The EU institutions were generally supportive of the activities of these three Presidencies with regard to the EaP (Interview 43; 52): especially European Commission officials signalled that they see it as an advantage when 'their' policy areas are promoted at the political level (Interview 25; 26; 27; 28).

For a 'favourable external political context', 0.00= none of the following: a positive political climate regarding the topics of interest to the Presidency, absence of domestic events in EU countries or global developments that divert attention from the topics of interest to the Presidency, and absence of unexpected events or crises; 0.33= one of the aforementioned; 0.67= two of the aforementioned; 1.00= all aforementioned components.

Economic prosperity can be hardly captured in one number. For reasons of simplicity and comparability, we use the growth rate and the general economic climate as proxies for 'economic prosperity' and thus operationalize this condition as follows: 0.00= economic stagnation or decline in at least one EU Member State and a general climate of economic crisis; 0.33= economic growth of up to 0.5 per cent in all EU Member States but a general climate of economic crisis; 0.67= economic growth of up to 0.5 per cent in all EU Member States and economic optimism; 1.00= economic growth of more than 0.5 per cent in all EU Member States.

Table 7: Operationalisation of conditions for influence

	Condition	Absent (0.00)	Rather absent (0.33)	Rather present (0.67)	Present (1.00)
Country-specific	**Adequate preparation**	none of the following: clear formulation of priorities, adequate staff training, efficient planning	one of the following: clear formulation of priorities, adequate staff training, efficient planning	two of the following: clear formulation of priorities, adequate staff training, efficient planning	clear formulation of priorities, adequate staff training, and efficient planning
	Brussels-based Presidency	none of the following: priorities are developed jointly by the permrep and the capital, the permrep staff has relative autonomy vis-à-vis the capital in formulating compromise proposals, and most chairs of working parties that meet regularly reside in Brussels	one of the following: priorities are developed jointly by the permrep and the capital, the permrep staff has relative autonomy vis-à-vis the capital in formulating compromise proposals, most chairs of working parties that meet regularly reside in Brussels	two of the following: priorities are developed jointly by the permrep and the capital, the permrep staff has relative autonomy vis-à-vis the capital in formulating compromise proposals, most chairs of working parties that meet regularly reside in Brussels	priorities are developed jointly by the permrep and the capital, the permrep staff has relative autonomy vis-à-vis the capital in formulating compromise proposals, and most chairs of working parties that meet regularly reside in Brussels
	Good reputation	none of the following: 'right example' at home, positive attitude to European integration, Presidency invests in soft knowledge of chairpersons	one of the following: 'right example' at home, positive attitude to European integration, Presidency invests in soft knowledge of chairpersons	two of the following: 'right example' at home, positive attitude to European integration, Presidency invests in soft knowledge of chairpersons	'right example' at home, positive attitude to European integration, and Presidency invests in soft knowledge of chairpersons
	Large country	less than half the average (less than 9 million)	between half the average and the average (more than 9, less than 18 million)	between the average and twice the average (from 18 to 36 million)	more than twice the average (more than 36 million)
	Stable domestic political and administrative context	none of the following: efficient coordination between and within State services, strong support for the Government, no national or important regional elections during Presidency period	one of the following: efficient coordination between and within State services, strong support for the Government, no national or important regional elections during Presidency period	two of the following: efficient coordination between and within State services, strong support for the Government, no national or important regional elections during Presidency period	efficient coordination between and within State services, strong support for the Government, no national or important regional elections during Presidency period

Issue-specific	**High salience to the Presidency**	the issue is not explicitly mentioned in the Presidency programme, and interviewees and secondary sources reveal that the issue is not important to the Presidency	the issue is explicitly mentioned in the Presidency programme, but interviewees and secondary sources reveal that the issue is not important to the Presidency	the issue is not explicitly mentioned in the Presidency programme, but interviewees and secondary sources reveal that the issue is important to the Presidency	the issue is explicitly mentioned in the Presidency programme (except for unexpected events), and interviewees and secondary sources reveal that the issue is important to the Presidency
	Favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors	the other actors hold homogeneous positions, not corresponding to the Presidency's preferences	the other actors hold heterogeneous positions and the policy area is highly salient to them	the other actors hold heterogeneous positions and the policy area is of low salience to them	the other actors hold homogeneous positions, corresponding to the Presidency's preferences
External	**Favourable external political context**	none of the following: a positive political climate regarding the topics of interest to the Presidency, absence of domestic events in EU countries or global developments that divert attention from the topics of interest to the Presidency, and absence of unexpected events or crises	one of the following: a positive political climate regarding the topics of interest to the Presidency, absence of domestic events in EU countries or global developments that divert attention from the topics of interest to the Presidency, or absence of unexpected events or crises	two of the following: a positive political climate regarding the topics of interest to the Presidency, absence of domestic events in EU countries or global developments that divert attention from the topics of interest to the Presidency, and/or absence of unexpected events or crises	a positive political climate regarding the topics of interest to the Presidency, absence of domestic events in EU countries or global developments that divert attention from the topics of interest to the Presidency, and absence of unexpected events or crises
	Economic prosperity	economic stagnation or decline in at least one EU Member State and a general climate of economic crisis	economic growth of up to 0.5 per cent in all EU Member States but a general climate of economic crisis	economic growth of up to 0.5 per cent in all EU Member States and economic optimism	economic growth of more than 0.5 per cent in all EU Member States

Fourth article –
'Preference formation of officials working for an EU Council Presidency: The Lithuanian Presidency of 2013 and the Eastern Partnership'

This article was submitted to *East European Politics & Societies* and is currently under review for this journal.

Reference style, layout, titles and interview numbers were modified to make it uniform with the other parts of the dissertation. References to the appendixes of the dissertation were added where applicable.

Abstract

The role of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU has received increased academic attention in the past fifteen years. Most of the literature on this topic focuses on the roles, success, and influence of the Presidency on EU decision-making. Less attention was directed towards the origin and the nature of the Presidency's priorities and preferences. This article explores different explanations for the strong emphasis put by Lithuania on closer relations with the Eastern Partnership countries during its 2013 Presidency. Through an online survey among Lithuanian officials, it explores (i) the underlying motivations of officials to support closer EU-Eastern Partnership integration, (ii) theoretical explanations for officials' perceptions of their country's priorities towards the Eastern Partnership region, and (iii) whether the Eastern Partnership-related preferences of officials who chaired meetings in the Council and/or were permanently based in Brussels during the Presidency differ from the points of view of those who did not chair meetings and did not reside in Brussels. The analysis shows that Lithuanian officials mainly promote norms and values they consider to have acquired themselves through EU membership. The opposing logics of action (consequentialism vs. appropriateness) appear to be most useful to structure the findings on these preferences, rather than to conclude which logic dominates under which circumstances. Finally, the study finds no impact of the chairmanship duties on officials' preferences, while the respondents' place of residence was only very loosely related to their visions on the general aims of the Eastern Partnership policies.

1. Introduction

Lithuania held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) (hereafter: Presidency) during the second half of 2013. Cooperation between the EU and the countries of the Eastern Partnership[22] (EaP) countries was among Lithuania's key priorities from the start of the Presidency preparations (Seimas 2011b | The Lithuania Tribune 2012, 6 June; 2012, 27 March) and occupied a prominent place in nearly all chapters of the Presidency programme (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013). During the Presidency period, Lithuanian officials made remarkable efforts to achieve their goals. The determination of the Presidency was especially obvious in four instances where Lithuanian officials actively countered resistance from EU Member States or institutions (for a detailed overview of Lithuanians' actions to promote the EaP, see e.g. Vandecasteele 2014 | Lithuanian Presidency website 2014, 8 January): Lithuanians struggled with the European Commission about the organisation and format of a multilateral EU-EaP meeting of Justice Ministers and Home Affairs Ministers (joint declaration available via Council of the European Union 2013, 8 October), and played a crucial role in the organisation of an EU-EaP Transport Ministers' meeting in October (joint declaration available via European Commission 2013, 9 October). Lithuanian officials also publicly (implicitly and sometimes explicitly) expressed their position that Ukraine's fulfilment of the conditions for signing an Association Agreement with the EU should not be interpreted too strictly (Financial Times 2013, 2 July | EurActiv 2013, 4 July | Interfax 2013, 5 November), even though the detention of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko was seen by many as the most symbolic case of selective justice (EurActiv 2013, 30 April). A fourth example of Lithuania's activism was the country's rush to reach a political agreement in the EU on visa liberalisation for Moldovan citizens, which was obtained during the last Coreper meeting of 2013 (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 20 December). Thus, next to prioritising the EaP region during its Presidency, Lithuania was also ready to actively defend its favoured positions, even on sensitive issues such as the application of conditions on the rule of law or visa liberalisation.

Closer relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbours have been promoted by all Lithuanian Governments since the country joined the EU in 2004 (Budrytė 2006 | Jonavičius 2008 | Janeliūnas, Kasčiūnas & Dambrauskaitė 2009 | Vilpišauskas 2011; 2013) and this became clearly more pronounced during the country's Presidency. This phenomenon of intensified national preferences during a Presidency period, resulting in (attempts to exert) additional influence, has been observed in several earlier studies (see e.g. Arter 2000 | Tallberg 2004 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007 | Thomson 2008 | Bunse 2009 | Buchet de Neuilly 2011). Bengtsson, Elgström and Tallberg (2004) call this the 'amplifier' effect of the Presidency position on the incumbent country's preferences, which is opposite to a possible 'silencer' effect that could lead officials of the Member States to downplay their national preferences when performing Presidency functions and instead focus on common European concerns.

The intensification of Lithuanian national preferences during its Presidency is not necessarily self-evident (Bengtsson *et al.* 2004). On the one hand, Lithuania is a small country that assumed the Presidency for the first time. Given that it is also a generally pro-European country and has one of the best implementation records of EU legislation (e.g. Vilpišauskas, Vandecasteele & Vaznonytė 2013), it would be plausible if Lithuania tried to establish itself as a 'good European' who just executes what the EU expects. In addition, the Presidency plays a less prominent role in EU external policies since

[22] The EaP is the EU's framework for bilateral and multilateral cooperation with its Eastern neighbours: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon; the Presidency period would then function as a silencer of Lithuania's preferences with regard to the EaP, with the incumbent country focusing on the EU's (internal) daily business. On the other hand, however, the amplifier effect is not so surprising: since the EaP is very important for Lithuania – the region is considered Lithuania's *niche* in EU external policies (Vilpišauskas 2011 | Vaïsse, Dennison & Kundnani 2013) – the Presidency period could be seen as an opportunity to put the region higher on the EU's agenda. This tension makes the Lithuanian Presidency a very interesting case for an analysis of preference formation.

In this article, I address three questions related to the broader puzzle of Lithuanians officials' perceptions of their country's preferences towards the EaP and their motivations to vehemently defend their points of view, even when they met resistance from others. I first of all analyse the *general aims* of the EaP policies according to Lithuanian officials. In addition, I discuss the reasons of these officials for prioritising and promoting closer EU-EaP relations *during their Presidency*. In doing so, I engage with the debate on the widely-discussed opposing logics of action (consequentialism vs. appropriateness) and assess how these logics played in officials' preference formation. Finally, I explore possible differences in preference formation between civil servants that did and did not assume chairmanship of a preparatory body of the Council, as well as between those that did and did not reside in Brussels during the Presidency period. This analysis will show whether the Presidency period has a distinct 'socialising' impact on those who live in Brussels or chair meetings.

The article consists of two main parts. The first part reviews the literature on preference formation in the EU – both in general and specifically for the Presidency – and formulates hypotheses on (i) the logics underlying short- and long term goals and preferences related to the promotion of closer EU-EaP relations and (ii) the impact of officials' duties and work place during the Presidency on their formation of preferences. The second part briefly discusses the method for data gathering, consisting mainly of an online survey among Lithuanian civil servants, and moves on to discussing the survey results, substantiated with quotes from in-depth interviews. The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the article.

2. Perspectives and hypotheses on preference formation

The theoretical framework and hypotheses of this article draw from a rich literature on national preference formation. Copsey and Haughton (2009) summarize this literature for EU-related policies and provide a synthetic framework to analyse preference formation. They mention unique historical experiences and the resulting (perceived) vulnerabilities and shortcomings, the size of the country, the net contributor/recipient status of a country, the 'visionary zeal' of the Government, the ideology of politicians and Governments, geography, and general attitudes towards deeper integration as determining preference formation. Specifically for Central and Eastern European countries, the authors argue that post-communist transition and EU accession experiences should also be taken into account. With regard to external policy, they point out that history and geography are especially important in the formation of preferences. Similar conclusions were reached in studies focusing on the Baltic States (Janeliūnas *et al.* 2009 | Vilpišauskas 2011).

Debates on agents' preferences and behaviour in international negotiations are often – covertly or overtly – inspired by a traditional rationalist/constructivist divide, which is often linked to the famous distinction between a logic of expected consequences and a logic of appropriateness[23] (see e.g. the

[23] However, note e.g. Barkin (2010) who argues that the logics should not be straightforwardly linked to rationalism vs. constructivism.

seminal work of March & Olsen 1998). In the former logic, actors are seen as rationally calculating how to satisfy their fixed and exogenously given interests, whereas in the latter logic preferences are viewed as endogenous to negotiations and thus subject to change according to interpretations and contexts (see also Fearon & Wendt 2002 | Hay 2002 | Pollack 2006). There is a broad consensus among scholars that these logics of action are not mutually exclusive and that, depending on scope conditions, either one or the other logic dominates (see e.g. March & Olsen 1998 | Risse, Engelmann-Martin, Knopf & Roscher 1999 | Börzel & Risse 2000 | Chong 2000 | Carter & New 2004, p. 5 | Bache, Bulmer & Gunay 2012, p. 74). The underlying assumption seems to be that both logics cannot 'prevail' simultaneously. Authors like Elgström and Tallberg (2003, p. 204), Goldmann (2005) and more recently Choi (2015) go further and state that extreme forms of either logic are rarely observed; actors' preferences and behaviour are mostly motivated by a mix of both. More fundamentally, it is difficult to link empirical data unequivocally to one of the two theoretical logics. For this reason, I do not aim to designate which logic of action (exclusively/dominantly) plays under which circumstances. Rather, I use the distinction between two logics to describe and explain preferences and to structure the findings.

Debates on preference formation, including discussions on the logics of action, have also been present in research on the Council Presidency. In this respect, the role of formal and informal norms guiding the chair's behaviour are important. The most prominent of these Presidency norms, and the only one that is formally mentioned in the Council Secretariat's Presidency handbook (Council of the European Union 2011), is the neutrality or impartiality norm (see e.g. Bengtsson *et al.* 2004 | Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Elgström 2006 | Niemann & Mak 2010 | Charléty 2011):[24] the chairperson is supposed to act in the common European interest and should not (ab)use his/her position to defend national interests. Verhoeff and Niemann (2011) discuss adherence to the neutrality norm in their study on the German 2007 Presidency and EU energy policy towards Russia: they conclude that holding the Presidency was a sufficiently strong incentive to make German officials refrain from expressing their genuine preferences and instead act as neutral mediators between different EU actors. The neutrality norm, rather than focusing on national preferences, was apparently a guiding principle. Verhoeff and Niemann explore the logics of consequences and of appropriateness as explanatory factors for this norm conformation. They argue that it is unlikely that actors be driven simultaneously by rational and normative concerns, and that the 'prevailing' logic is triggered depending on the context; the question of which logic plays when is left for future research.

As said, I do not attempt to establish which logic dominates under which circumstances, all the more because straightforward linkages between empirical data and the theoretical logics is inherently problematic. Instead, I assume that the underlying logic of preference formation and behaviour is mixed. References to the logics of action in this article only serve to structure the findings and to denominate the different elements of goals and preferences. Similarly, the first hypothesis of this article, dealing with appropriateness and consequentialism relative to the long- and short term aspects of preference formation of Presidency officials, is not formulated in order to give a definitive 'yes' or 'no' answer, but to provide an analytical anchor in interpreting the data. The hypothesis is based on the work of Elgström and Tallberg (2003), who suggest that both rivalling perspectives are partly complementary: a logic of appropriateness may be most prominent in long term and change-resistant trends such as self-images and role conceptions, whereas a consequentialist logic may explain short term strategic Presidency behaviour. Other authors made similar arguments: long term

[24] Other frequently discussed Presidency norms are those of effectiveness and consensus.

self-images are seen as shaping the interests and preferences that are described by rationalists as exogenously 'given' in specific bargaining situations (see e.g. Verhoeff & Niemann 2011, p. 1289). Or, to paraphrase Katzenstein *et al.* (1998, pp. 680-682), both rationalists and constructivists accept that human beings operate in a socially constructed environment. The former analyse how this environment affects decision-making, while the latter focus on how it is created. In other words:

> *H1: Officials' perceptions of their country's long term goals can be explained through self-images and role conceptions (logic of appropriateness), while short term decisions about priorities are more rationally calculated (logic of expected consequences).*

The second hypothesis investigates whether the assessments of the aims and benefits of the EaP policies, and of the reasons why Lithuania prioritized the EaP region, differ between officials depending on their role and work location during the Presidency period. This hypothesis builds on the work of Niemann and Mak (2010), who in turn draw from a broader literature on socialisation (see e.g. Checkel 2005). From this literature it can be derived that the motivations for adhering to (or neglecting) the norms depend on the duties performed by officials and on the location where they are based: if people have long and intense contacts with each other and work in a relatively insulated environment, there is a higher chance that they are more familiarized with the norms – in the case of the Presidency, the neutrality norm is the most compelling. If, however, officials have sporadic and less intensive contacts with each other, and/or if they work in a more politicized setting, less norm internalisation can be expected. This can be translated into the following hypothesis:

> *H2: Officials who performed the function of chair in the Council and/or were permanently based in Brussels during the Presidency will emphasize national preferences less than officials who did not chair Council bodies and did not reside in Brussels during the Presidency.*

The former group of officials had more intensive and sustained contacts with other EU representatives, and were more exposed to and immersed in the Presidency norms – most notably the neutrality norm – than the latter group. The Brussels-based officials and former chairs of Council bodies can thus be expected to emphasize their national preferences less when assessing the aims of the EaP policies and Lithuania's prioritisation of the region during its Presidency. The comparison between these different groups will advance insights in the debate on the socialising potential of a Presidency period for Member State officials.

3. Lithuanian officials' preferences: empirical analysis

3.1. Data gathering through an online survey

The main source of data for this article was an online survey among Lithuanian civil servants in different Ministries and Lithuanian representations to the EU and third countries. This survey was preceded by a series of semi-structured interviews with officials involved in the Lithuanian Presidency. The interviewees replied to open questions on why Lithuania supports closer relations between the EU and the EaP countries, why the EaP received so much attention during the Presidency, and how they assessed the preparations and achievements of the Presidency in EaP-related matters. The information obtained during these interviews was translated into survey

questions, which were presented to a large group of Lithuanian civil servants. 223 officials were contacted by e-mail, of which 105 started the survey (response rate= 47,1%) and 92 completed it until the last question (dropout rate= 12,4%).

The full survey is available as appendix 5 to this dissertation. The first part gathered background information of respondents, including their position (did they chair a Council body?) and work place (were they based in Brussels or elsewhere?) during the Presidency. Of those who filled in the questionnaire, 22% chaired meetings and 78% did not. 72% of the respondents were capital(Vilnius)-based, 26% Brussels-based, and 2% worked elsewhere during the Presidency.

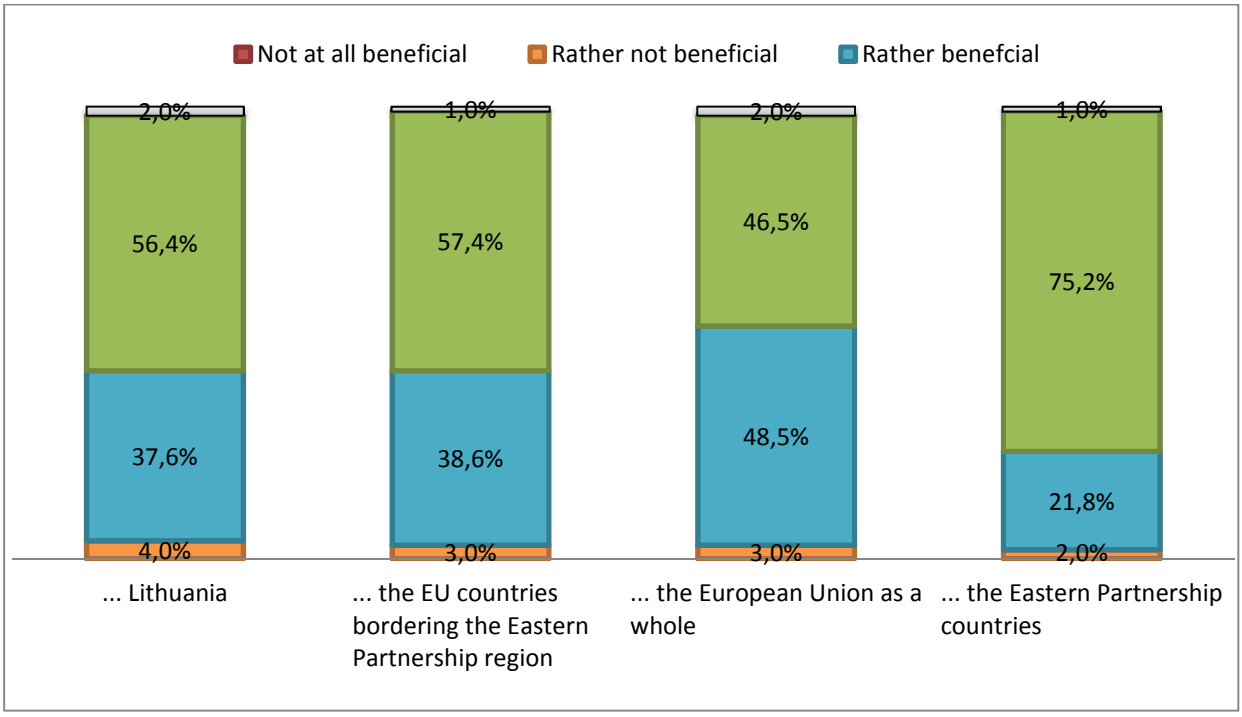
The second part of the survey explored the attitudes of Lithuanian officials with regard to their country's involvement in EaP policies (see *infra*). The first two questions polled about respondents' general views towards the benefits and long term aims of EaP policies, while the third question enquired about the motivations for Lithuania prioritizing the EaP during its Presidency.

The survey results provide three types of information that are important for answering the three research questions as outlined *supra*: firstly, they inform us about how Lithuanian officials view the benefits and aims of the EaP policies and how this matters for Lithuania; secondly, the results allow us to explore the presence of different logics of action in the prioritisation of the EaP region during the Lithuanian Presidency; and thirdly, they provide insight into whether and how preferences diverge between groups of respondents with different backgrounds.

3.2. Civil servants' views on the benefits and aims of Eastern Partnership policies

The first survey question was: 'In your opinion, to what extent do the following actors benefit from closer cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries?' As shown in the subscripts of the bars in Chart 1, respondents were asked to evaluate the benefits for four (groups of) actors.

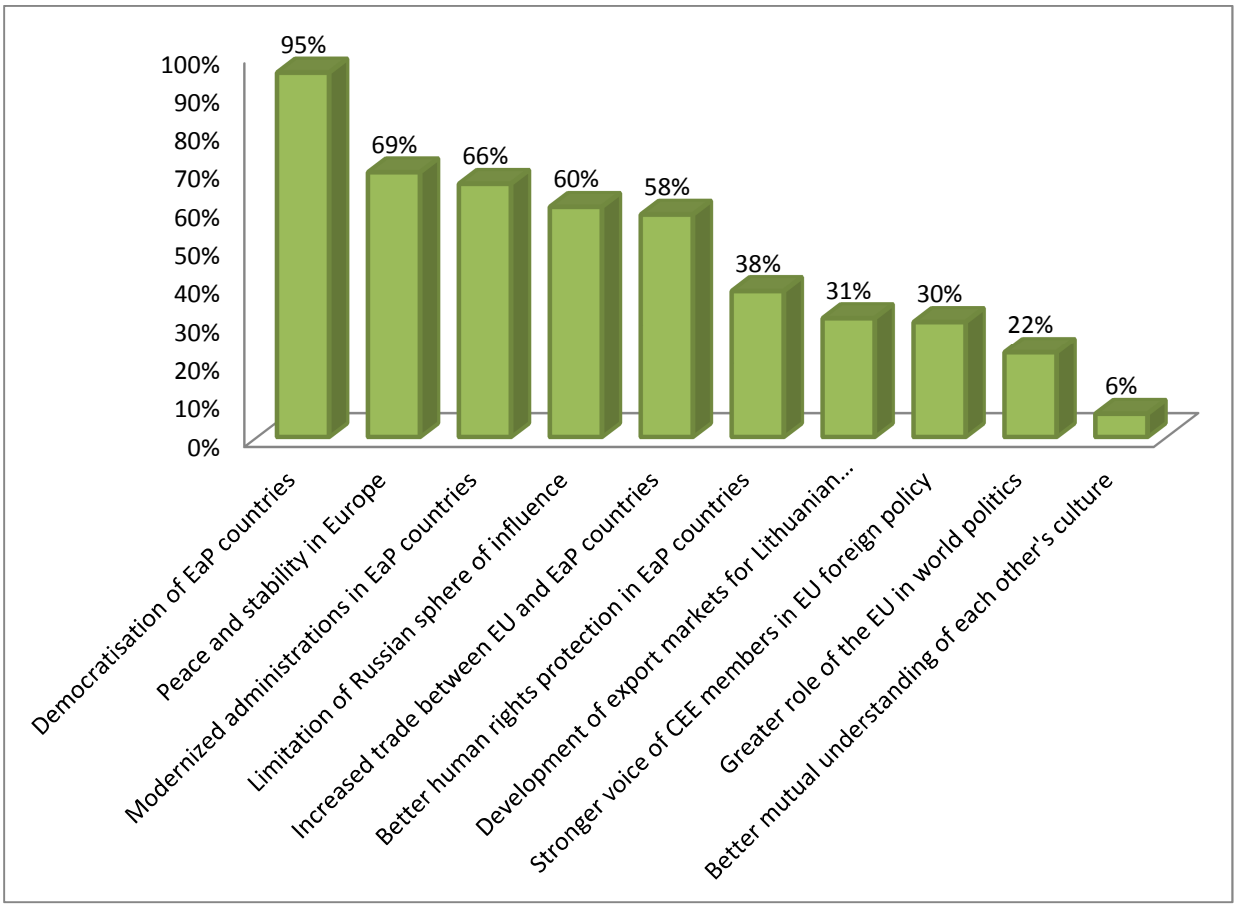
Chart 1: 'Closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation is (...) beneficial for...'



The replies to this question indicate that, while there is a generally very positive view towards EaP policies, the EaP countries are considered to benefit the most from them. This widespread view can be illustrated by a quote from one official: 'these countries need our support to carry out democratic reforms, to modernize their administrations which are still soviet-style' (Interview 56). 75,2% of respondents found the EaP policies 'very beneficial' for the EaP countries. The second largest beneficiaries of EaP policies are thought to be the countries bordering the region, followed by Lithuania ('very beneficial' according to, respectively, 57,4% and 56,4% of respondents). Also the EU as a whole is seen as benefitting from closer relations between the EU and the EaP countries; 46,5% qualified it as 'very beneficial'. These results show that the EaP initiative is viewed first and foremost as a regional project and by extension a project to the benefit of the EU as a whole. Most others selected 'rather beneficial' for the different actors, neutral or negative replies were very rare: only 1% to 2% selected 'do not know', between 2% and 4% of the respondents found closer EU-EaP cooperation 'rather not beneficial', and nobody selected 'not at all beneficial' for any of the actors.

The second survey question was: 'Below are listed 10 possible aims of the Eastern Partnership initiative. Please indicate up to 5 aims that are most important for Lithuania to pursue through Eastern Partnership policies'. The answer options are provided in Chart 2; the bars indicate which share of the respondents selected the answer options as one of the most important aims of the EaP policies. Some aims overlap, such as 'democratisation', 'peace and stability' and 'human rights'. However, since they do not mean the same, and were mentioned as separate aims during interviews, they were also presented separately to the survey respondents.

Chart 2: Most important aims of the Eastern Partnership policies



A first striking observation – which is not immediately visible in the chart – is that a very high number of aims were selected as 'important'. Given that 98 respondents answered this question and they could select up to five aims each, the maximum number of options to be selected was 490. The respondents to the survey selected a total of 466 answer options, only 24 less than the maximum. This shows that most respondents support the development of EaP policies for a variety of reasons,[25] and that many of them are considered highly important for Lithuania.

'Democratisation of the EaP countries' received the absolute top score: it was selected by 95% of the respondents as one of the most important aims of EaP policies. Four other aims were chosen by a majority of respondents: 'peace and stability in Europe' (69%), 'modernisation of public administrations in the EaP countries' (66%), 'limitation of Russia's sphere of influence' (60%) and 'increased trade between the EU and EaP countries' (58%). A minority of respondents selected 'human rights protection' (38%), 'export markets for Lithuania' (31%), 'a stronger voice of the CEE countries in the EU' (30%), 'a greater role of the EU in the world' (22%) and 'better mutual cultural understanding' (6%). The aims of EaP policies, according to most respondents, can thus be summarized as norm transfer (democratisation, modernisation) that should lead to the promotion and consolidation of pan-European peace and stability, increased trade between the EU and Eastern Europe, and a limitation of Russia's influence in the region. These findings largely correspond to the conclusions of earlier research on this topic: Lithuania's approach towards its Eastern neighbourhood is shaped by its own transition experiences, a common history with much of the region, and strong energy and transport interconnections (see e.g. Janeliūnas *et al.* 2009). The results also confirm the regional interpretation of the benefits of EaP policies as indicated for question 1 on the perceived beneficiaries of the EaP policies (see *supra*). There is a possibility that respondents tried to give socially desirable answers, based on the officially stated goals of the EaP initiative. In official communications of the EU (e.g. European External Action Service 2013b | European Commission 2014), the main stated objectives are political and economic reforms, mobility and strengthened sectoral cooperation. Cooperation is based on shared commitment to fundamental values including mainly democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and market economy. In this regard, it is interesting to note that human rights and cultural exchange were mentioned only by a minority of respondents and that other objectives, not mentioned in official communications, were mentioned by an important minority (e.g. development of national export markets, greater role for (some members of) the EU) or even by a majority of respondents (limitation of Russian influence). We can thus assume that respondents expressed their 'genuine' opinion and did not echo official EU communication.

The lower importance attached to national economic benefits is not surprising. Even though some interviewees (Interview 42; 46; 69) and official communications (e.g. ENPI info centre 2013, 3 July) cite strong economic links as a reason for Lithuania's interest in the region, its trade relations[26] with the EaP countries are much less important than with the EU or with Russia. When Russia restricted imports from Lithuania during summer and autumn 2013, which was widely viewed as a response to Lithuania's efforts in promoting closer EU-EaP cooperation (Lietuvos Rytas 2013, 3 October | Reuters 2013, 7 October | Delfi.lt 2013, 11 October | EUObserver 2013, 16 September), Lithuania's

[25] Most respondents selected five options; 13 respondents selected four options; four respondents singled out three options; and only one respondent indicated two options.

[26] In 2013, 9% of Lithuania's exports went to the EaP region, 19,8% to Russia, and 55,5% to the EU. Out of all imports, 3,9% originated from the EaP region, 28,1% from Russia and 60,3% from the EU (Lithuanian Official Statistics Portal 2014).

Government did not change its approach towards the EaP. Given that, at least on the short and medium term, the country has much to lose (income from trade with Russia) and little to win in economic terms (its share of trade with the EaP countries is relatively low), Lithuania cannot expect direct economic gain from EU-EaP cooperation. And it is not what its Government aims for either; an interviewee commented that 'there is a real danger of retaliations from Russia, but the geopolitical importance of the region is much more important than our trade ties with Russia' (Interview 77).

3.3. Linking preference formation to the logics of action

With the third survey question, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree with seven statements about the reasons why Lithuania prioritized the Eastern Partnership during its Presidency. Each statement can, to a certain extent, be linked to (i) a time frame (long- or short term) and (ii) elements of the logics of action. The time frame is quite straightforward: 'short term' relates to the Presidency period as such, whereas 'long term' refers to a time frame beyond this. However, as discussed *supra*, it is inherently problematic to establish which empirical information refers to which logic. I assign labels to the statements based on their correspondence the neutrality norm – which is the most formalized and compelling Presidency norm – and the extent to which they refer to instrumental use of the Presidency position. This being said, these linkages should not be interpreted too strictly: they mainly serve to provide some structure to the findings. Answer options referring to an instrumental use of the Presidency to achieve Lithuania's national goals in the EU are considered rather 'consequentialist', and answer options displaying conformity to (perceived) identities and/or expectations by other actors are evaluated as rather 'appropriate' (see Table 1 below).

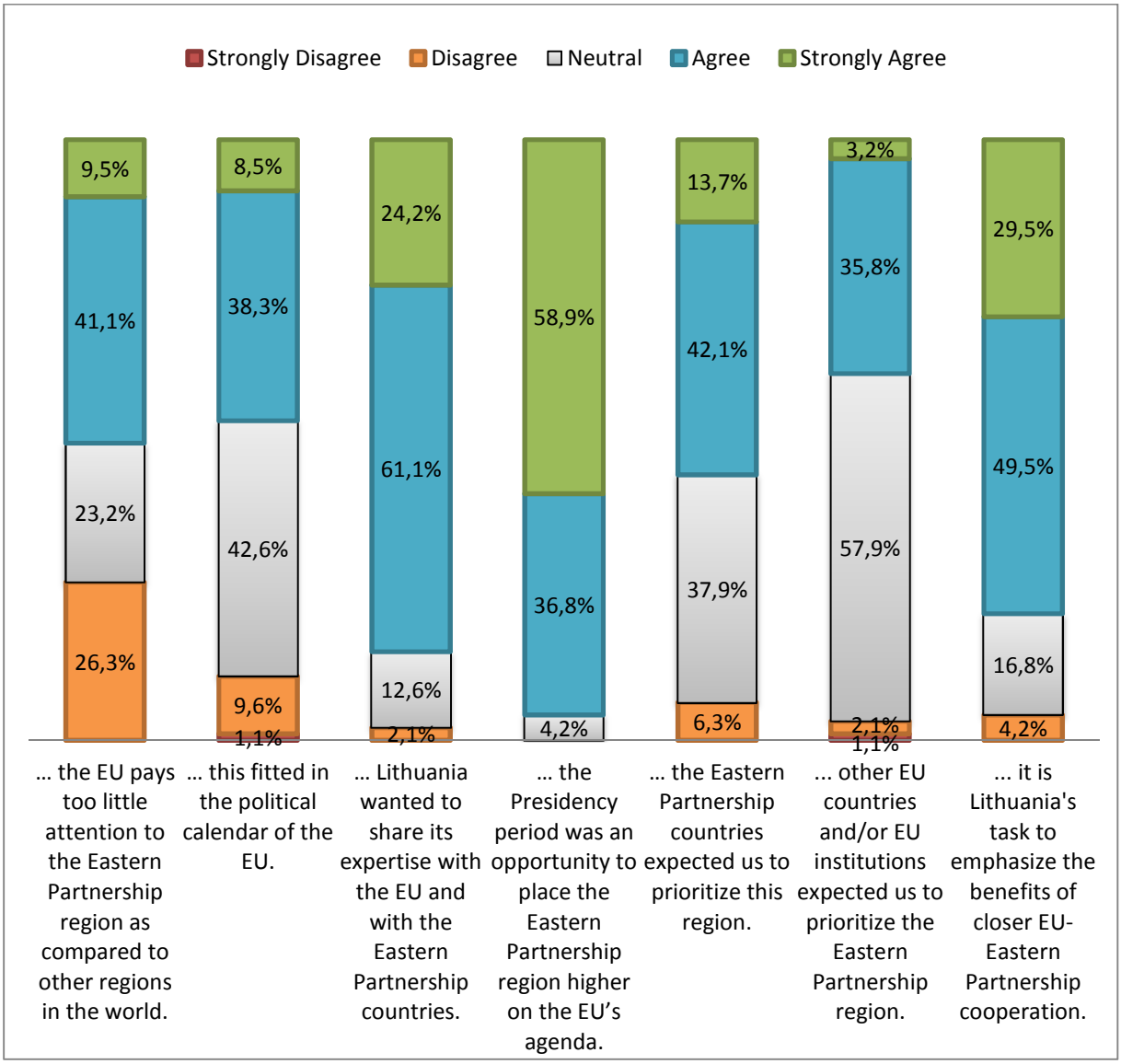
All answer options are summaries of insights from interviews that were held earlier. For this reason, there are no equal numbers of options reflecting the different time frames and logics of action: five out of seven statements refer to considerations on the short term, and five statements include elements of appropriateness.

Table 1: Reasons for prioritising EaP policies during the Lithuanian Presidency

Statement	Interpretation
a. The EU pays too little attention to the Eastern Partnership region as compared to other regions in the world.	Long term/rationalism
b. This fitted in the political calendar of the EU.	Short term/appropriateness
c. Lithuania wanted to share its expertise with the EU and with the Eastern Partnership.	Long term/appropriateness
d. The Presidency period was an opportunity to place the Eastern Partnership region higher on the EU's agenda.	Short term/rationalism
e. The Eastern Partnership countries expected us to prioritize this region.	Short term/appropriateness (EaP-oriented)
f. Other EU countries and/or EU institutions expected us to prioritize the Eastern Partnership region.	Short term/appropriateness (EU-oriented)
g. It is Lithuania's task to emphasize the benefits of closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation.	Long term/appropriateness

As we see in Chart 3 below, the statement with which most respondents agreed or strongly agreed (95,7% combined), and the only one nobody disagreed with, is labelled as short term/rationalism (see Table 1): 'The Presidency period was an opportunity to place the Eastern Partnership region higher on the EU's agenda.' Two other statements, both linked to long term/appropriateness, were also evaluated very positively: 85,3% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'Lithuania wanted to share its expertise with the EU and with the Eastern Partnership', and 79% were positive about 'it is Lithuania's task to emphasize the benefits of closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation.'
A small majority judged that 'the Eastern Partnership countries expected us to prioritize this region' (short term/EaP-oriented appropriateness: 55,8% agreed or strongly agreed) and that 'the EU pays too little attention to the Eastern Partnership region as compared to other regions in the world' (long term/rationalism: 50,6% positive). However, the latter option also received a record 26,3% 'disagree' responses, which points to an important lack of consensus among respondents on this.

Chart 3: 'The Lithuanian Council Presidency prioritized the Eastern Partnership because…'



Two answer options linked to short term/appropriateness were supported by a minority of respondents: 'this fitted in the political calendar of the EU' (46,8%) and 'other EU countries and/or EU institutions expected us to prioritize the Eastern Partnership region' (39%). These statements also received the highest percentages of neutral replies: 42,6% and 57,9% respectively. It is striking that the respondents agreed more with the statement that they prioritized the EaP region because of expectations from the EaP countries than because of expectations from other EU countries and/or institutions. Apparently, the (perceived) EaP countries' expectations were more important for developing and defending Lithuania's Presidency priorities towards the EaP region than expectations from within the EU.

The replies can be summarized as follows: Lithuanian civil servants clearly saw the Presidency position as instrumental in focusing on issues that are important for their country, but also to enhance the role they usually play in the EU. Indeed, the reasons for prioritising the EaP region were related to an identity of Lithuania as a bridge builder between the EU and the EaP countries: its officials aim to share their experience on the region with others, and view it as their duty to do so. Other considerations, such as a (perceived) lack of attention for the region on behalf of the EU, or adaptation to an EU agenda or to the expectations of other actors, were less prominent. The general motivation behind Lithuania's support for EU-EaP integration and for the prioritisation during its Presidency is well illustrated with a interviewee's quote: '[Europeanisation of the EaP region is the] natural follow-up of Lithuania's integration in the EU' (Interview 38). In other words, Lithuanians feel that promoting the EaP is *what Lithuania does*. Interestingly, the survey results also suggest that Lithuanians do not necessarily perceive their role in the EU as 'assigned' to them by other EU Member States or institutions: most respondents estimated that Lithuania should share its expertise in dealing with the EaP countries at the European level, but at the same time only a minority of them agreed that expectations from within the EU played a role in the definition of Presidency priorities.

These findings provide some support to the first hypothesis of this article – that the perceptions of officials on Lithuania's long term goals can be explained through self-images and role conceptions, while preference formation on the short term is more rationally calculated. Indeed, respondents' support for the statements linked to short term/rationalism and long term/appropriateness was the highest, and some statements referring to short term/appropriateness received little positive responses. However, there is a caveat: there is also evidence from a majority of respondents that appropriateness played a role for short term considerations (e.g. expectations from EaP countries), and some rational or instrumental motivations were identified in the long term view to the EU's EaP policies (i.e. a lack of attention that could be 'solved' through prioritisation during the Lithuanian Presidency).

3.4. What role of duties and environments in preference formation?

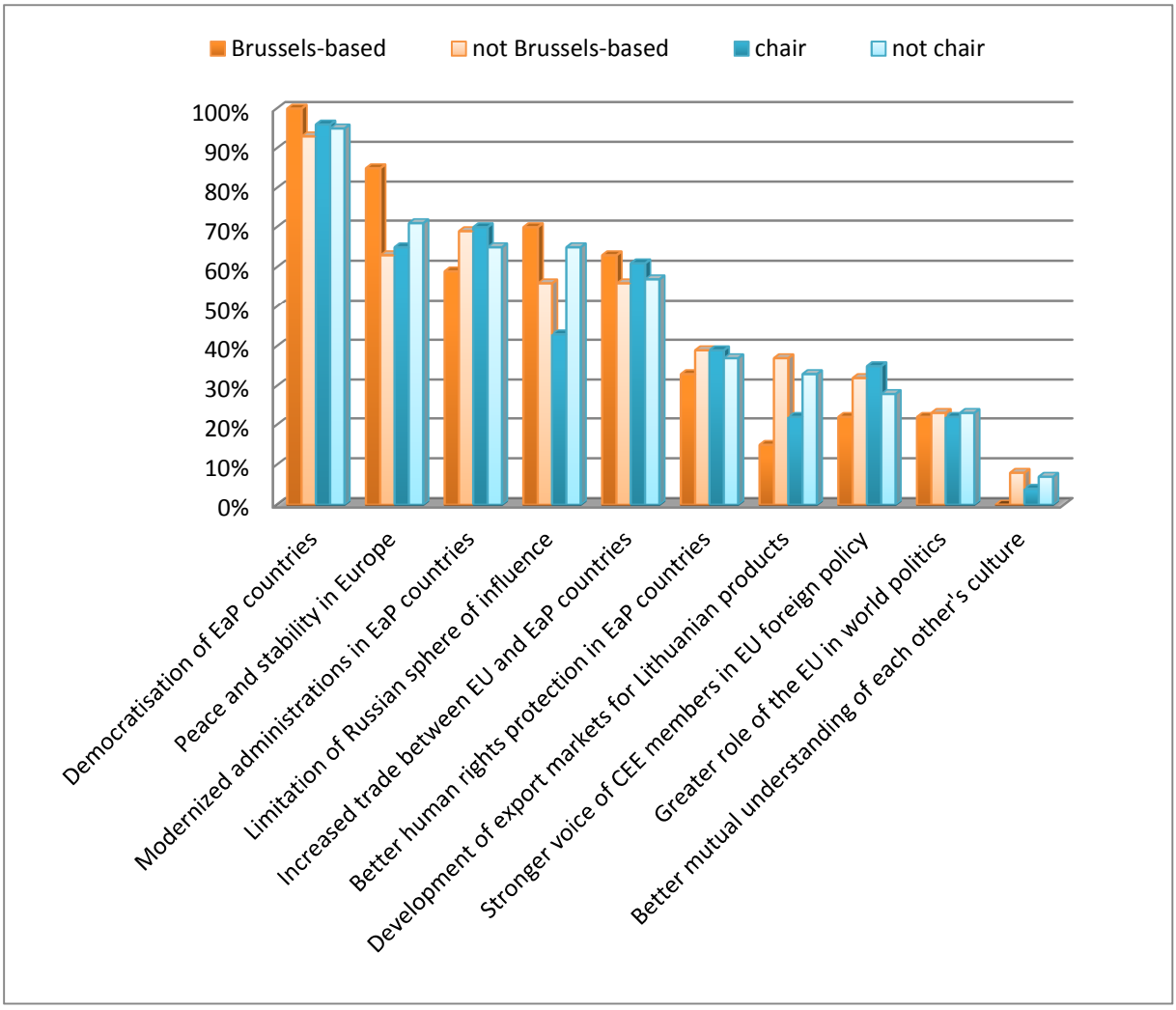
The replies to the survey questions were compared for officials who acted as chairs vs. those who did not, and for Brussels-based officials vs. not Brussels-based officials. Detailed analyses, including charts and statistical test results, are available in appendixes 6, 7 and 8 of this dissertation.

For the questions where respondents were asked to evaluate statements, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied with SPSS to discover differences in the degrees to which the groups of respondents agreed with the respective statements. This test checks whether the degree of agreement of one group tends to be higher or lower than those of another group. The relevant survey questions are the first (countries or regions benefitting from closer EU-EaP cooperation) and third one (reasons why Lithuania prioritized the EaP region during its Presidency). For both questions, the analysis showed

that there are no significant differences for any of the statements. Thus, the assessments of the groups of respondents neither tend to differ on the beneficiaries of closer EU-EaP relations, nor with regard to the reasons[27] why Lithuania prioritized the EaP region during its Presidency.

On the most important aims of the EaP policies (the second question of the survey), we first of all note that the five most selected answer options were the same for all groups of respondents (see Chart 4).

Chart 4: Comparison between groups of respondents on the aims of Eastern Partnership policies



Subsequently, we can look for statistically significant differences between these groups of respondents through the Pearson Chi-Square test or Fisher's Exact Test, both based on 2x2 contingency tables. These tests evaluate how likely it is that observed differences between the categories (e.g. Brussels-based officials select one aim more often than not Brussels-based officials)

[27] When (non-significant) differences were detected, they sometimes contradicted the hypothesis on the role of chairmanship or work place in preference formation: Brussels-based officials and chairs more strongly agreed that 'the Presidency period was an opportunity to place the Eastern Partnership region higher on the EU's agenda' than the other respondent groups, and the tendency of emphasizing expectations of the EaP countries more than those of the EU was most obvious among Brussels-based officials and chairs.

arose by chance. The Pearson Chi-Square was used for contingency tables where all cells contained at least five cases, and Fisher's Exact Test when this was not the case. The values of significant differences (p-value <0.05), are **underlined and bold**.

Table 2 reveals that there are no significant differences between officials who acted as chairs and officials who did not as to the frequency with which they did or did not select important aims of the EaP policies.

Table 2: Aims of EaP policies according to officials acting as chairs vs. officials not acting as chairs:

	Better human rights protection in the EaP countries	Better mutual understanding of each other's culture	Democratisation of the EaP countries	Development of export markets for Lithuanian products	Greater role of the EU in world politics	Increased trade between the EU and the EaP countries	Modernisation of public administrations in EaP countries	Limitation of the sphere of influence of Russia	Peace and stability in Europe	Stronger voice of CEE member states in EU foreign policy
Pearson Chi-Square	.196	.102	1.459	.674	.011	.514	.733	1.933	.003	.756
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.658	.749	.227	.412	.916	.473	.392	.164	.959	.385
Degrees of freedom	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)	.805	1.00	.457	.602	1.00	.636	.471	.234	1.00	.432

As we see in Table 3 below, there are significant differences for (only) two aims between Brussels-based and not Brussels-based officials. The former group selected 'democratisation of the Eastern Partnership countries' slightly more, and 'peace and stability in Europe' much more than the latter group.

To conclude this section, the second hypothesis – that Brussels-based officials and chairs emphasize national preferences less than the other officials – can for the most part not be maintained. The survey results do not show differences between the groups with regard to the beneficiaries of the EaP policies, nor on the reasons why Lithuania decided to prioritize the EaP region during its Presidency. Only two out of ten general aims of EaP policies – viz. the emphasis on democratisation of the neighbourhood and the dedication to promoting peace and stability in Europe – are emphasized more by Brussels-based officials than by their colleagues not based in Brussels. In other words, the duties performed by the respondents (chair or not chair) did not play a role in their views on the importance of the different EaP policies; their work place (Brussels or not Brussels) did so to a very limited extent.

Table 3: Aims of EaP policies according to Brussels-based vs. not Brussels-based officials:

	Better human rights protection in the EaP countries	Better mutual understanding of each other's culture	Democratisation of the EaP countries	Development of export markets for Lithuanian products	Greater role of the EU in world politics	Increased trade between the EU and the EaP countries	Modernisation of public administrations in EaP countries	Limitation of the sphere of influence of Russia	Peace and stability in Europe	Stronger voice of CEE member states in EU foreign policy
Pearson Chi-Square	.058	2.203	4.690	3.370	.035	1.103	.108	2.969	6.643	.530
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.810	.138	.030	.066	.851	.294	.743	.085	.010	.467
Degrees of freedom	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)	1.00	.335	**.034**	.085	1.00	.372	.819	.115	**.010**	.619

4. Conclusion

Lithuania strongly prioritized the EaP during its Presidency and defended its favoured positions with regard to the region, even on sensitive issues such as visa liberalisation or the application of conditions on the rule of law towards Ukraine. This phenomenon of intensified or 'amplified' (Bengtsson *et al.* 2004) preferences during a Presidency period is not unusual, but also not self-evident. In explaining the Lithuanian Presidency's strong prioritisation of the EaP region, I addressed three main questions: (i) which aims do Lithuanian officials generally pursue through EaP policies, (ii) how can the prioritisation of the EaP region during the Presidency be accounted for in terms of the opposing logics of appropriateness and of consequences, and (iii) is there a difference in preference formation between civil servants that did or did not assume the function of chair and did or did not reside in Brussels during the Presidency?

A preliminary conclusion emerging from the research is that EaP policies were prioritized by Lithuanian officials for very diverse reasons. 'The' reasons why 'the' Lithuanians put the EaP region high on the Presidency's agenda cannot be straightforwardly determined. However, some general conclusions can be drawn, based on a survey among Lithuanian civil servants. Firstly, the results show that the motivations for Lithuanians officials' support of closer relations between the EU and the EaP region are a mix of mainly norm-based but also rational geostrategic considerations. They see it as their duty to stimulate the EaP countries in going through a similar transition as their own country did, in order to establish a stable and peaceful region with limited influence from Russia.

Secondly, the survey reveal that respondents view it as natural to promote the EaP region in the EU, even more so during their Council Presidency: the Presidency position was deliberately used to place the EaP region higher on the EU's agenda. Insofar as the statements of the questionnaire can be linked to the logics of action, this finding to a large extent supports the hypothesis on this matter – long term goals and identities are conceived of in a logic of appropriateness, whereas short term

preference formation follows a more consequentialist logic – but there are important nuances: role conceptions also played a (somewhat smaller) role in the short term preferences of officials during the Lithuanian Presidency, and long term goals were also inspired by elements of a consequentialist logic. This result is not surprising: it was expected that the hypothesis on the opposing logics of action would be neither totally confirmed nor rejected. However, the hypothesis has been helpful in structuring and making theoretical sense of the empirical data.

The second hypothesis – that Brussels-based officials and chairs emphasize national preferences less than the others – is for the most part rejected. There are only minor differences between Brussels-based and not Brussels-based officials on some aspects of the general aims of EaP policies, but no differences could be discovered between the respondent groups regarding short term preference formation and the reasons for prioritising the EaP region during the Presidency. Apparently, the duties performed by civil servants during the Presidency did not affect their preferences, and the place where they were based played a very limited role. It is true that this research covers only a limited period of six months: the reason why the 'chair' criterion proves irrelevant may be connected to this, and civil servants may have spent several years in Brussels before the Presidency but resided in Vilnius during the Presidency; socialisation may thus have happened before the Presidency.

In any case, the survey results nuance earlier insights on preference formation of officials working for a Presidency. They show that preference formation is inspired by a mixed logic, simultaneously including some elements of the logics of expected consequences and of appropriateness. In addition, the impact of the duties performed and the environment in which Presidency officials work (in short: the socialising effect of the Presidency) on preference formation is (much) less strong and unequivocal than might be expected.

List of interviews

Interview 38. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 12 March 2013.
Interview 42. Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications, Vilnius, 18 March 2013.
Interview 46. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 5 April 2013.
Interview 56. Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, Vilnius, 20 February 2014.
Interview 69. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.
Interview 77. Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 9 April 2014.

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General conclusions

In this final part of the dissertation, I start with summarizing the findings for the different research questions related to Presidency influence on the EU's external policies, and elaborate on their broader implications. The thesis ends with some final remarks: I address some general issues related to the roles of the Presidency and the norms guiding their behaviour; in addition, I point to the limitations of the study, including the applicability of the different methods I used; I also suggest some areas for future research; finally, I reflect upon the relevance of my research and its usefulness for the academic community and beyond.

My doctoral research started from the assumption that, even though the Presidency plays a less prominent role in shaping the EU's external policies than before the entry into effect of the Treaty of Lisbon, it does still matter which Member State chairs the Council meetings and its preparatory bodies. The present study of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies broadly confirmed this assumption, but we cannot simply conclude that 'the Presidency is an influential actor in EU decision-making on external policies' – not least because the Presidency is not one 'actor' (see especially the second article and the replies to RQ 2 below). My research shows that influence of the Presidency highly depends on a broad range of conditions; some of these conditions can be controlled by the officials of the incumbent country, others cannot. Much depends also on specific dossiers and, of course, the preferences of Governments and their officials. The different aspects of Presidency influence, including the conditions to exert influence, will be discussed in sections 1.1. to 1.6. below.

In order to study influence thoroughly and systematically, it was first of all necessary to define 'influence'. As I argue in the first article of the dissertation, Presidency *influence* is not the same as Presidency *success*. I define influence as intentionally changing a policy from what it would have been in the absence of an action. Success, by contrast, is much broader. It concerns how 'well' the Presidency has performed: how many of its priorities were realized? Did the Presidency behave as was expected in the given situation? Did the incumbent perform the different roles well and did it avoid role conflicts? How many dossiers was the Presidency able to finalize? Was there smooth coordination between the different EU institutions? Precisely because of the broadness of the concept of success, I found it a less useful concept for comparing several Presidencies. The different conceptualisations of success can be contradictory (e.g. 'correct' role performance vs. legislative output), and it would be very difficult to operationalize the concept in such a way that it captures all its possible aspects. In addition, the concept is somewhat trivial: all Presidencies are 'successful' in one way or another, there will always be certain parties that are happy with the results of any given Presidency.

As explained in the general introduction, the aim has not been to find out if and when a Member State is more influential during a Presidency period than when it does not hold the Presidency. Rather, my research has focused on a number of questions related to Presidency influence and priorities. Table 1 provides an overview of the topics and research questions of the dissertation, and the articles in which they were discussed.

Table 1: Overview of the topics and research questions of the articles

Article	Topic / Research questions
First article – 'Assessing EU Council Presidencies: (conditions for) success and influence'	• Definition of Presidency 'influence', contrasting influence with Presidency 'success'. • Analytical framework: Overview of possible conditions for Presidency influence and success.
Second article – 'Unpacking the Influence of the Council Presidency on European Union External Policies: The Polish Council Presidency and the Eastern Partnership'	• Development of instrument for measuring influence. • RQ 1: What type(s) of influence does the Presidency exert? (agenda setting vs. contents of decisions) • RQ 2: In which forums for decision-making is the Presidency's influence most prominent? (preparatory bodies, ministerial level, international level) • RQ 3: (How) does Presidency influence differ with regard to bilateral and multilateral policies?
Third article – 'The Influence of the Council Presidency on External EU Policies: A Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies and EU Eastern Partnership Policies'	• Instrument for measuring influence and membership scores in conditions for influence adapted to QCA → expressed in scores between 0 and 1. • RQ 4: What are the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for a Presidency to exert influence on EU external policies? • Detailed information available in appendixes 1, 2, 3 (country files) and appendix 4 (standard analyses).
Fourth article – 'Preference formation of officials working for an EU Council Presidency: The Lithuanian Presidency of 2013 and the Eastern Partnership'	• RQ 5: How can the preferences and priorities of officials working for a Presidency be theoretically explained? • RQ 6: (How) does preference formation differ among officials according to the location where they work and the functions they perform? • Questionnaire and detailed analyses available in appendixes 5, 6, 7, 8.

1. Main findings

1.1. The Presidency facilitates and to a lesser extent initiates agendas, rather than influencing policy contents

With regard to the first research question, addressing the type of influence that was exerted by the Polish Presidency on EaP policies, I found for all instances that Poland influenced the *agenda* of EaP policies and not the *contents* of the decisions that were taken in this regard. In other words, the Polish Presidency was – to a certain extent – able to define *what the EU talked about*, but it could not dictate the *outcome* of these talks. The Presidency could facilitate discussions on topics on which it would like to see progress, and in some instances Poland could even initiate such discussions, but the incumbent country did not have a specific influence on the subsequent decisions. With this finding, I could not confirm earlier insights on EU internal legislative decisions, which indicate that the Presidency can also influence the contents of actual decisions (see e.g. Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Tallberg 2004 | Schalk, Torenvlied, Weesie & Stokman 2007 | Warntjen 2008).

Even though it has not been my ambition to make a substantive comparison between different Presidencies on this point, a quick glance at the country files of the Hungarian and Lithuanian Presidencies (appendixes 1 and 3) reveals that the same is generally true for these two countries. In some instances the Presidencies made sure that decisions were taken, but they were not able to have a decisive influence on the contents of those decisions. For example, the Hungarian Presidency had a stake in the continuation of DCFTA negotiations with Ukraine and in the adoption of a negotiation mandate for a Common Aviation Area Agreement with Moldova, but did not exert influence on the contents of these talks. Similarly, Lithuania played a role in the adoption of numerous decisions related to the EaP countries – such as an agreement on visa liberalisation for Moldovan citizens or the organisation of ministerial meetings on different topics – but did not influence the actual contents of these decisions or the outcome of events. The priorities for external energy policy – which are all only partly related to the EaP policies – constitute an exception for the three countries. The first important decisions on these priorities were taken during the Hungarian Presidency, and then further developed and updated in Council conclusions during the Polish Presidency and a Council report during the Lithuanian Presidency. It can be argued that there was a (very) limited influence of the Presidencies on the contents of these documents, especially in the case of Hungary that prepared the priorities together with its Belgian predecessor. However, for these three Presidencies the fact that the priorities were defined and updated was much more crucial than their precise contents.

This is not to say that the incumbent country has no influence at all on what is actually decided with regard to the EaP countries. Rather, my findings suggest that the Presidency position does give Member States an advantage in putting issues on the agenda (which confirms the insights of, most notably, Tallberg 2003a; 2003b), but does not provide (enough) authority to increase its relative influence on the contents of decisions too.

The fact that the Presidency can influence the EU's agenda towards the EaP countries does not mean that it sets the agenda on its own: in most instances, the Presidency prioritized and pushed issues forward that were proposed earlier by the European Commission. The Presidency is thus mostly a facilitator of political initiatives and developments, and to a lesser extent an initiator of external policies.

1.2. The Presidency is most influential in preparatory Council bodies

Another aspect of Presidency influence that should be specified is the forum in which influence is exerted: is the Presidency most influential at the preparatory level, where civil servants run the show, or rather at the highest level, where Ministers meet? This question was not explicitly addressed in earlier studies on Presidency influence. In the second article of the dissertation, I conclude that the Polish Presidency was most influential in the preparatory bodies of the Council. The Presidency was influential in a much higher number of instances at lower-level forums (such as Coreper and the Trade Policy Committee) than in high-level forums (e.g. the Council of Ministers). Also the dossiers where Ministers representing the Presidency exerted some influence, the decisions had been, as usually, thoroughly prepared in the preparatory forums. This is related to the previous conclusion that the Presidency can influence agendas but not the contents of decisions. It is uncommon that a Minister would substantially define or change the topics under discussion at such a high level. However, it does happen sometimes: Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski was the driving force behind the setting up of the European Endowment for Democracy.

Also here, when one takes a look at the country files for the Hungarian and Lithuanian Presidencies, a similar trend can be noted. Most instances where I found the Presidencies to be influential, were at the preparatory level. In one instance during the Hungarian Presidency, Foreign Minister Martonyi did play a role in the discussions on sanctions against Belarus. For the Lithuanian Presidency, the agenda management happened predominantly through the preparatory levels and not at ministerial level.

1.3. The Presidency's influence differs for bilateral and multilateral policies

The third specification of Presidency influence is less straightforward. In the article on the influence of the Polish Presidency, I compared the influence of the Presidency in bilateral vs. multilateral dossiers – a distinction that was also not explicitly made in earlier literature. I identify a large number of multilateral events – such as conferences, forums and seminars – where Poland played a prominent role as organizer or host. However, many of these events did not constitute Presidency influence: they often lacked follow-up, and declarations were mostly not made tangible through concrete actions. Hungary was less active in the multilateral track, probably due to its lower interest in the region, but for Lithuania a similar tendency could be observed: during their Presidency, Lithuanians were very active in the organisation of multilateral events related to areas such as defence, justice and customs, without these efforts leading to political influence.

For bilateral policies, the situation is a bit different: in the bilateral dossiers where the Polish Presidency did play a role, it was often also influential. From the other country files we can conclude that the same is true for the Hungarian Presidency, but for Lithuania there are also quite a lot of bilateral decisions where the Presidency did not exert influence.

It is thus impossible to draw clear-cut conclusions on the question whether the Presidency can more easily exert influence on bilateral or multilateral policies. There are clear differences between both types of policies: the bilateral track covers the most 'legislative' cooperation, including binding agreements on issues such as visa and trade. Presidencies are often less involved in such issues than in multilateral policies, because of their specific nature – the European Commission negotiates with partner countries on the basis of negotiation mandates from the Council. However, when the Presidency is involved, it is often possible to exert some influence on the agenda. In turn, the multilateral track covers processes that mostly serve as vehicles to give political impetus to further EU-EaP cooperation. It is an area where Presidencies have much leeway to be active if they have an interest in doing so, but such activeness often does not amount to influence on EaP policies.

In summary, the type of policy is not an important determining factor for Presidency influence. For both bilateral and multilateral policies Presidency influence is possible, albeit in a slightly different way.

1.4. One necessary condition, several combinations of sufficient conditions for Presidency influence

RQ 1, RQ 2 and RQ 3 were discussed in detail for the Polish Presidency in the second article of the dissertation, with some additional considerations in the general conclusions where these insights were linked to the Hungarian and the Lithuanian Presidencies as well. In the third article of the dissertation, I make a systematic comparison with QCA of the influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies on the EU's EaP policies (RQ 4). As extensively discussed in the introduction, QCA allows to identify necessary as well as (combinations of) sufficient conditions for producing the outcome, by linking multiple conditions to outcomes for different cases.

As will be outlined below, the evidence of the article shows that there is only one necessary condition for Presidency influence (salience to the Presidency), and that individual conditions are never sufficient for the Presidency to influence EaP policies. Furthermore, I identify three solution terms that lead to Presidency influence. Some of the conditions for influence – preparation, domestic political and administrative context, political context and economic context – were not included in the analysis because there was not enough variation between the three Presidencies that were compared. One of the solution terms is linked to some cases of the Hungarian Presidency, another term refers to some cases of the Polish Presidency, and the third solution term includes cases of both the Polish and the Lithuanian Presidency. All conditions that were investigated appear in one or more of the three solution terms, but they do never have to be all present (or absent) to enable Presidency influence. The contribution of each of the conditions for influence to the outcome thus depends on the presence of other conditions, and some conditions can become redundant.
In the following sections, I discuss the necessary condition and the three solution terms for sufficiency. Thereafter, I also address some 'recalcitrant' instances of influence, that is, instances that contradict the conclusions on necessity and on sufficiency.

1.4.1. (Only) one necessary condition for influence: salience to the Presidency

The only condition that is necessary for the Presidency to exert influence, is salience to the Presidency (consistency= 0.903614). An issue being highly salient means that it is considered important and that the incumbent country is prepared to devote a substantial amount of resources (time, staff, funds) to achieve its goals. It may sound somewhat superfluous to conclude that the Presidency can only exert influence in dossiers in which it is interested – even though this condition was explicitly tested in earlier research as well (Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2007). However, this implies that the Presidency does not 'automatically' exert influence on decision-making: (almost) only in specific dossiers where the Presidency wants to achieve concrete results, there is a possibility for the incumbent country to have some influence. Conversely, if the incumbent country is not interested, its officials will not mobilize hard knowledge or try to intervene, and thus not be influential. Another important consequence of this finding is that all other conditions are *not* necessary: the Presidency can also exert influence in cases where some of the other conditions are absent (see the next sections).
A good reputation (at least at the political level) is apparently not necessary to exert influence. This was obvious during the Hungarian Presidency: due to a series of controversial domestic reforms before and during the Presidency, the Hungarian Government was sharply criticized in the EU institutions, some Member States and the media. Prime Minister Orbán's public performances were more often aimed at explaining or defending these domestic decisions, rather than related to the Presidency itself. Conversely, the Polish and Lithuanian politicians appeared in the media mostly when hosting Presidency events or presenting the activities of the incumbent country. In summary, the incumbent country's political reputation is not necessarily linked to its ability to exert influence on EU decision-making.
The organisation of the Presidency in terms of autonomy for the permrep does, on its own, also not have a link to Presidency influence. Hungary (whose EaP policies were rather Brussels-based) as well as Poland and Lithuania (who organized their EaP policies rather from their respective capitals) were able to exert influence in some cases. The same goes for size: Presidency influence was not restricted to only small (Hungary, Lithuania) or large (Poland) countries. Finally, the findings show that

Presidencies can be influential in policy areas where the distribution of preferences and salience among the other actors is favourable (cf. some cases for the three Presidencies), but also where this is not the case (cf. some cases of Hungary and Poland).

1.4.2. Sufficient conditions: cases of the Hungarian Presidency

The solution term that covers some cases of the Hungarian Presidency is sal.pres*bru*~reput*~large (consistency= 0.917910): the Hungarian Presidency, as a non-large country with a rather bad reputation, which organized its management of EaP-related issues mostly Brussels-based, could exert influence in certain policy areas that were highly salient to Hungary. The Brussels-based organisation thus seems to have been important for compensating the rather bad political reputation of the country throughout 2011 (see also *supra*). Apparently, the distribution of preferences and salience among the other actors was not an INUS condition[28] here.

The policy areas covered by this solution term are 'energy', the 'multilateral political and institutional framework', 'bilateral political relations', and 'trade and economic relations'. It must be noted, however, that these policy areas did not contain many instances of influence. In addition, some of these instances were only in part related to the EaP. 'Energy' included only two cases (in one of which the Presidency exerted influence) where the EaP region was not the main focus. 'Multilateral political and institutional framework' included two cases (the integration of the Söderköping process into multilateral platform 1 and the establishment of EU Strategy for the Danube Region), of which the latter was also only partly EaP-related. 'Bilateral political relations' included one case (sanctions towards Belarus) and 'trade and economic relations' referred to the continuation of DCFTA negotiations with Ukraine and the extension of trade preferences for Moldova. Influence of the Hungarian Presidency in the EaP-related instances was always limited, and it will not be the cases for which this Presidency will be remembered.

1.4.3. Sufficient conditions: cases of the Polish Presidency

The second solution term exclusively covers cases of the Polish Presidency: sal.pres*~bru*reput*large (consistency= 0.883598): Poland, a large country with a good reputation and a rather capital-based organisation of its EaP-related policies, exerted influence in some policy areas that were highly salient to the Presidency. In these cases, especially the politically sensitive ones, Poland seems to have benefited from its good reputation and its capacities as a large State. For these cases, too, the distribution of preferences and salience among the other actors was not an INUS condition.

This solution term covers six policy areas in which the Polish Presidency exerted influence. As was the case for Hungary, the instances related to 'energy' (Council conclusions on external energy priorities and negotiation mandate for a trans-Caspian gas pipeline) were far from exclusively focused on the EaP region. Also the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy (under 'multilateral political and institutional framework') has a broader application than the EaP region, but Eastern Europe is a prominent focus of this fund. The other policy areas were related to the EaP: 'Justice and

[28] As explained in the introduction to this dissertation, an INUS condition is a condition that is in itself Insufficient for the outcome, however it is a Non-redundant part of an Unnecessary but Sufficient combination of conditions for occurrence of the outcome.

Home Affairs' (Council conclusions for EU-EaP JHA cooperation and negotiation mandates for visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan), 'transport' (ministerial conference and negotiation mandate for a Common Aviation Area with Azerbaijan), 'bilateral political relations' (common understanding of the text of an Association Agreement with Ukraine), and 'trade and economic relations' (negotiation mandates for DCFTA negotiations with Moldova and Georgia). The most prestigious instance of Polish Presidency influence is the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy, which will probably always be remembered as a 'Polish' thing.

1.4.4. Sufficient conditions: cases of the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies

In the third solution term, the condition 'large country' is replaced by 'favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors': sal.pres*~bru*reput*fav.pref/sal.ot (consistency= 0.848181): both Poland and Lithuania, who had a good reputation and were rather not Brussels-based with regard to their EaP-related policies, could exert influence on some policy areas that were of high salience to them *and* where this was not problematic for the other actors. It practice, this included only politically less sensitive topics.

The cases of Presidency influence corresponding to this solution term are, for the Lithuanian Presidency: 'transport' (ministerial meeting), 'education/research/youth' (education, science and research conference, EaP Youth Forum), and 'trade and economic relations' (provisional application of the DCFTA for Ukraine). Interestingly, the cases of the Polish Presidency to which this solution term applies – 'transport' and 'trade and economic relations' – were also discussed in the previous section. Apparently the size of the country was not important for Poland in these politically less sensitive cases. In other words, in the solution term including 'high salience to the Presidency', 'not Brussels-based' and 'good reputation', the conditions 'large country' and 'favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors' are interchangeable. Or, where the distribution of salience and preferences was rather unfavourable, Poland had an advantage (large State) that Lithuania did not have.

1.4.5. Recalcitrant instances: influence without the necessary condition being present

Even though the consistency of the finding that salience to the Presidency is necessary was quite high (0.903614), it was not 1. This means that there are some instances where the Presidency did exert influence, even though the membership score in the necessary condition (i.e. salience to the Presidency) was smaller than the membership score in the outcome (i.e. influential Presidency), which thus contradicts the statement of necessity. In this section I review these instances and propose possible explanations on how this was possible.

There are three recalcitrant individual instances of influence. Two of them occurred during the Hungarian Presidency: the negotiation mandate for a visa facilitation and readmission agreement with Belarus, and the negotiation mandate for a Common Aviation Area Agreement with Moldova. Both instances made the corresponding policy areas – 'Justice and Home Affairs' and 'transport' – score 0.56 on the outcome (influential Presidency), while salience to the Presidency was 0.00, which means that the topic was neither mentioned in the Presidency programme, nor indicated as important by interviewees or secondary sources. It is not surprising that two out of three recalcitrant instances occurred during the Hungarian Presidency, because we have seen earlier that the EaP policies are generally less important for Hungary. So why did the Hungarian Presidency exert

influence here? Both instances 'appeared' on the agenda during or just before the Presidency; Hungary supported both decisions and worked to have them adopted. However, they did not touch upon the core of incumbent's external priorities, which can explain why interviewees did not mention them as important for the Presidency.

The third recalcitrant instance was during the Lithuanian Presidency: the EaP Youth Forum (political influence was 0.56, salience was 0.33). For the comparison with QCA, this individual instance did not determine the outcome membership score of the policy area ('education/research/youth'), because another instance in this area – the conference on education, science and research – had a higher score. For this particular instance, a lower membership score was assigned to 'salience to the Presidency' because none of the interviewees indicated the Youth Forum as important for the Lithuanian Presidency, even though it was mentioned in the Presidency programme. Most efforts for this event were linked to the launch of Erasmus+, which took place at the same time in Kaunas (Interview 70).

To conclude, even though salience to the Presidency was identified as a necessary condition for exerting influence, there are some exceptions where this rule does not apply: in some cases the Presidencies in this study exerted limited influence even though the specific topic was (rather) not salient to them.

1.4.6. Other recalcitrant instances: no influence with all sufficient conditions present

In addition to some instances of influence without the necessary condition being present, there are also some instances where the Presidency did *not* exert influence even though the sufficient conditions for Presidency influence were fulfilled. In other words, these instances[29] were not consistent with the statement of sufficiency. The main reason for this is linked to the way in which I defined 'cases' (see *supra* in the introduction of this dissertation). The cases represent 'policy areas', including instances of Presidency influence and/or non-influence of the Presidency. As explained earlier, I defined the membership score in the set of 'influential Presidency' as the maximum score of all instances belonging to the policy area: if one would ask whether, say, the Lithuanian Presidency was influential with regard to transport cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries, the answer would be affirmative and the example to substantiate this would be the ministerial meeting on transport that took place in October 2013. The instance in which the Lithuanian Presidency was *not* influential, i.e. the initialling of an EU-Ukraine air services agreement, would not be mentioned. Similarly, the membership score of the policy area in the set 'high salience to the Presidency' is the maximum of all individual salience scores for the instances of influence and non-influence in this policy area. To take the same example: EU-EaP transport cooperation was highly salient to the Lithuanian Presidency, which is illustrated by its insistence on organising the EU-EaP Transport Ministers' meeting. The fact that the initialling of an EU-Ukraine air services agreement was not salient does not play a role here.

For these reasons, the cases (policy areas) where the Presidencies were found to be influential also include instances where the Presidencies did not exert influence, and/or instances that were not of high salience to the Presidency. The latter paradox – influence in (rather) non-salient instances – was addressed *supra*. The former 'anomaly' is also important to discuss: the policy areas in which the

[29] These inconsistent instances are listed in the columns 'Cases not influential' of Tables 1, 2 and 3 in the third article of this dissertation.

respective Presidencies exerted influence may also include various instances in which the Presidency's goals were not achieved, the output could not be ascribed to the incumbent country, or the output was not politically relevant. In other words, the solution terms discussed in sections 1.4.2, 1.4.3 and 1.4.4 should not be interpreted strictly in the sense that fulfilment of the causal conditions is sufficient to exert influence in all instances under a certain policy area. Rather, these causal conditions are to a certain extent sufficient to enable Presidency influence in these policy areas. Besides this, much depends on individual instances, not least on the salience of these instances to the Presidency.

To conclude this section, the high consistency levels for the three solution terms discussed above would not be as high if each individual instance of (non-)influence would have been considered a case. However, the individual instances had to be grouped in policy areas in order to make the three Presidencies comparable and to obtain some meaningful findings on causal paths that enable Presidency influence.

1.5. Mixed theoretical explanations for Presidency officials' formation of priorities and preferences

The fourth article of the dissertation addresses the two final research questions of the dissertation. One of them is how the preferences of officials working for a Presidency can be theoretically explained. I explored this topic through an online survey among Lithuanian officials, the questions being based on insights that were gathered during in-depth interviews.

This research question engages with the theoretical debate on the role of the opposing logics of consequences and of appropriateness in shaping and constraining actors' preferences and behaviour. In the fourth article, I assume that a mix of both logics underlies preference formation (e.g. Elgström & Tallberg 2003 | Goldmann 2005 | Choi 2015). Thus, rather than looking for the conditions under which one of the two logics dominates, I used these logics and the hypothesis on this matter – i.e. that officials' perceptions of their country's long term goals can be explained through self-images and role conceptions and that short term decisions about priorities are more rationally calculated – to structure the findings and to (try to) 'locate' them theoretically. As became clear throughout the article, it proved problematic to assign theoretical labels to the different statements that were evaluated by the respondents. Nevertheless, I did assign such labels and motivated the underlying reasoning: instrumental use of the Presidency position was seen as rational calculation, and behaviour in line with (perceived) expectations – from other EU countries or institutions, or from the EaP countries – on what the Presidency is supposed to do was interpreted as 'appropriateness'. This labelling, however, remains debatable. As expected, I found some evidence in support of the hypothesis but I also formulated important nuances. In other words, I did not 'solve' this theoretical debate – the contrary would have been surprising, given that it is on-going for decades. The article reaches the limits of this debate; the question can be raised whether it *should* actually be solved? How important is it to know whether the preferences of an actor are based on rational calculations or normative concerns, and if it is a mix (which it definitely seems to be), which of the two would be dominant or precede the other one? At least as significant is the fact that actors do have ideas and preferences – based on a broad range of interests and norms – and that they act upon them. The logics are most useful to denominate and understand the different dimensions of these preferences, not to come to conclusive findings or to predict how actors are going to behave.

The fourth article first of all provides substantive empirical evidence largely confirming some general conclusions that were drawn in earlier work on the preferences of Lithuania: the country and its

officials perceive it as a rather natural duty to support closer relations between the EU and the EaP countries. There are a variety of reasons behind this, the most important one being that some norms – seen as already acquired by Lithuania itself – are to be transferred to the region. This should lead to a widening of the region of stability and peace, but also to a limitation of the influence of Lithuania's big 'neighbour' in the East – Russia.

The article also explores the reasons why the EaP region was so strongly prioritized during the Lithuanian Presidency. The survey results show that respondents considered it normal that Lithuania played and even reinforced the usual role it plays as an advocate of EU-EaP cooperation and integration. The Presidency position was thus instrumental in pushing forward some issues that Lithuanians find important; these preferences are inspired by normative as well as rational concerns.

1.6. Preference formation is not linked to the functions performed by officials, only (very) loosely related to their place of residence during the Presidency

Finally, the fourth article drew some conclusions on the impact of the duties performed by Lithuanian officials, as well as their work location during the Presidency period. With a number of statistical tests, I analysed whether there was a difference between the preferences of officials that assumed the position of chairperson and those that did not, as well as between the officials that resided in Brussels and those that worked mainly elsewhere (in Vilnius or in Lithuanian Embassies) during the Presidency. In doing so, I aimed to explore a possible 'socialising' effect on national officials during the Presidency period. The hypothesis was that those are most intensively exposed to the 'culture' and common practices of the Council during the Presidency, i.e. Brussels-based officials and chairpersons would focus less on their own national preferences than their colleagues who did not chair meetings and did not reside in Brussels.

For each of the three survey questions that were analysed, some conclusions could be drawn. Firstly, there are no statistically significant differences between the respondent groups in their opinions about the beneficiaries of the EaP policies (first survey question). Secondly, the same is true for respondents' evaluations of the reasons why Lithuania defined the EaP region as the top priority during its Presidency (third survey question). Thus, the type of duties and the work location can apparently not be linked to officials' views on how Lithuania ran its Presidency. No 'socialising' effect of immersion to the Council's daily business, in particular the importance of the neutrality norm for the Presidency, could be established in this regard. The third conclusion, on the aims of the EaP policies that are most important to pursue for Lithuania according to the respondents (second survey question) is twofold. On the one hand, no significant differences between the chairs and non-chairs were discovered for this question. On the other hand, there were no statistically significant differences between Brussels-based and non-Brussels-based officials for eight out of ten aims, but for two aims a significant difference was found: Brussels-based officials selected the aims 'democratisation of the Eastern Partnership countries' a little more, and 'peace and stability in Europe' much more than their colleagues who did not reside in Brussels during the Presidency. Given that the evidence for a socialising effect of residing in Brussels during the Presidency is rather limited, no firm conclusion can be drawn in this regard. In addition, as mentioned in the article itself, the 'Brussels-based' criterion has its limits: the period of six months is rather short to have such a socialising effect and, conversely, officials may have resided in Brussels long before the Presidency or returned to the capital after a sustained period of time in Brussels before.

Table 2 gives a summary of the research questions and the findings for each question that was addressed in the dissertation.

Table 2: Overview of topics / research questions and findings

Topic / Research question	Findings
How do Presidency 'influence' and Presidency 'success' differ?	Influence = intentionally changing a policy from what it would have been in the absence of an action. Success = broad: how 'well' the Presidency has performed? (delivering on priorities, roles played, no° of decisions taken, etc.)
RQ 1: What type(s) of influence does the Presidency exert?	The Presidency can act as a facilitator of political initiatives and developments, and to a lesser extent as an initiator of external policies. The Presidency position gives Member States an advantage in deciding what will be on the *agenda*, but the incumbent cannot dictate the *contents* of the decisions taken.
RQ 2: In which forums for decision-making is Presidency influence most prominent?	If the Presidency exerts influence, this is mostly in the preparatory Council bodies. Presidency influence at higher levels (ministerial or international) is much less common.
RQ 3: (How) does Presidency influence differ with regard to bilateral and multilateral policies?	No clear conclusions. Influence was observed in both bilateral and multilateral dossiers. However, if the Presidency is involved in bilateral decisions, it often exerts influence on them. Even though the Presidency plays a role in many multilateral dossiers, this does not necessarily amount to political influence.
RQ 4: What are the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for a Presidency to exert influence on EU external policies?	One necessary condition: salience to the Presidency. Three combinations of sufficient conditions: • sal.pres*bru*~reput*~large (cases of the Hungarian Presidency). The Brussels-based organisation seems to have compensated the rather bad political reputation. • sal.pres*~bru*reput*large (cases of the Polish Presidency). In politically sensitive cases, Poland seems to have benefited from its good reputation and its capacities as a large State. • sal.pres*~bru*reput*fav.pref/sal.ot (cases of the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies). Good reputation seems to have compensated for not Brussels-based organisation in politically less sensitive dossiers.
RQ 5: How can the preferences and priorities of officials working for a Presidency be theoretically explained?	Lithuanians see it as their duty to promote EU-EaP relations, even more so during a Presidency period. Difficult to assign theoretical labels to statements in the survey. Based on these (debatable) labels: tentative but no straightforward conclusion that perceptions on long term goals can be explained through self-images and role conceptions ('appropriateness'), short term decisions on priorities are more instrumental ('consequentialism').
RQ 6: (How) does preference formation differ among officials according to the location where they work and the functions they perform?	No statistically significant differences between respondents who did / did not chair meetings for any of the statements. No statistically significant differences between Brussels-based / not Brussels-based respondents on beneficiaries of the EaP policies and on why Lithuanian Presidency prioritized the EaP. Brussels-based officials support 'democratisation of the Eastern Partnership countries' slightly more, and 'peace and stability in Europe' much more than their colleagues who did not reside in Brussels during the Presidency.

2. Concluding remarks

2.1. Influence, Presidency roles, and norms

As pointed out in the general introduction of this dissertation, discussions on the roles of the Presidency and the norms guiding its behaviour can be instructive when linking the findings for the different research questions into a bigger picture, notably on what the Presidency's role and position can be in the current institutional context. We must keep in mind that the Hungarian and the Polish Presidencies took place in a transitional period after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and thus might have had more freedom to define their role than Lithuania. I argue *supra* (see also the article in *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* in appendix 9) that the reforms introduced with this Treaty aimed at strengthening the Presidency roles of administrator and mediator, especially between the Council and the other EU institutions (see points 3.4.-3.5. of the introduction). The political roles of the Presidency – agenda setting, external representation and political leadership – were to move to the background. For external policies, these roles were largely taken over by the EEAS, the HR/VP and, to a lesser extent, by the Permanent President of the European Council. This would mean that, for the external policies of the EU, it does not make a big difference which country holds the Presidency.

As I highlighted *supra* in this conclusion, the articles in this dissertation show that the situation in practice is quite different for the Presidencies in this research. Even though a large share of the Presidencies' administrative capacity was indeed directed towards administration and guiding the different dossiers of the Council through the decision-making procedures, the incumbent countries had some freedom to emphasize other roles as well. They did not assume functions as formal representatives of the EU towards third countries or organisations, but Poland and Lithuania were agenda setters and political leaders, and at times they even defended their national positions on the EaP during their respective Presidencies. Hungary was less active in this regard; not because it was unable to formulate priorities or play a leading role in Council decisions, but rather due to its limited interest in the broader framework of the EaP and its focus on particular countries in this area. Most interestingly, the Presidencies playing other roles than the most 'recognized' ones were not substantially criticized for doing so. Apparently, it is accepted that the rotating Presidency does more than organising and chairing the Council meetings, and mediating between the different institutions involved in policy-making and legislation.

This brings us to the importance of the main Presidency norms – neutrality, effectiveness and consensus. None of the three Presidencies interpreted the neutrality norm very strictly. The Presidency had an 'amplifier' effect on Lithuania's preferences towards the EaP region, and arguably for Poland – which is a traditional advocate of closer EU-EaP relations – as well. The three Presidencies ensured process-neutrality (Niemann & Mak 2010); the outcome of negotiations, as well as the agendas for discussion, were *fair* rather than strictly *neutral* (Schout 1998 | Schout & Vanhoonacker 2006). The Presidencies were no passive executers of an inherited agenda, but actively (attempted to) shape(d) the way in which the EU deals with the EaP countries.

The consensus norm was the least important in the different Presidencies' – in particular Poland's and Lithuania's – prioritisation of the EaP region. None of the interviewees signalled that achieving consensus, when not formally required, was an important consideration when EaP-related issues were discussed. In addition, many instances cannot even be called 'Council decisions' (e.g. the organisation of meetings, conferences and workshops). Apart from the issues where unanimity was required (e.g. political association, CFSP-decisions), the consensus norm did play a role when Council

conclusions were adopted. Council conclusions are a popular tool for Presidencies to advance certain initiatives and unanimity is an unwritten rule here (see e.g. Van Kemseke & Dendievel 2010), even though the legal basis for the adoption of such conclusions is doubtful (Council of the European Union 2012, 17 September | European Voice 2012, 20 September). The Presidencies in this study did not emphasize this more, or less, than other Presidencies.

Finally, the effectiveness norm was perhaps as important as the neutrality (or fairness) norm for Hungary, Poland and Lithuania during their Presidency. Where the incumbent country was interested things had to 'move forward', decisions had to be taken; interviewees from the Member States and EU institutions noted that such arguments were very powerful when EaP-related topics were discussed (Interview 1; 7; 8; 18; 44). The possibility to make use of the (perceived) necessity to be effective to push through some ideas, has been described in the literature before (Bengtsson, Elgström & Tallberg 2004 | Elgström 2006). Presidencies particularly focus on this norm when they function as political leaders or agenda setters.

2.2. Limitations of this study

The research for this PhD dissertation has been limited in two ways. On the one hand, there were limitations related to empirical data and case selection, while on the other hand the methods used for analysing these data have some potential drawbacks.

Empirically, I have focused on only three incumbent countries (the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies), and only on (a particular part of) external policies of the EU. The theoretical and analytical reasons for this have been discussed in the introduction of the dissertation, but there were of course practical reasons as well. The limited empirical scope has consequences for possible generalisation of the findings, e.g. to other countries (longer in the EU, geographically more to the North, West or South) or other policy areas (e.g. internal EU policies). I mention three specific limitations here, all related to the empirical scope. These could be addressed in future research. Firstly, as pointed out in the third article of the dissertation, some conditions for influence – preparation, domestic political and administrative context, political context and economic context – were not included in the analysis due to a lack of variation between the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies. While the domestic political administrative context and the external political and economic context are potentially relevant for future analysis, 'preparation' is perhaps less useful. It is obvious that a Presidency has to prepare for its term in office, and it is so embedded in the EU's institutional structures (trio Presidencies, support from the Council Secretariat, consultations with the institutions, notably the European Commission) that it would be quite uncommon *not* to prepare. It is hard to find examples of Presidencies that manifestly did not prepare well. Secondly, not all possible combinations of conditions were empirically observed – which is the case for most QCA-based studies. The three solution terms (see point 1.4.2., 1.4.3. and 1.4.4. of the general conclusions) show which conditions did and did not play a role in enabling influence of the three Presidencies, but this does not mean that these solution terms are 'static'; in future systematic research on Presidency influence, it would be instructive to include cases with new combinations of conditions in the analysis, such as not Brussels-based and bad reputation, Brussels-based and good reputation, or large and Brussels-based. The third limitation is related to the second article (on the Polish Presidency), where I could not confirm conclusions from earlier research that the Presidency can sometimes exert influence on the *contents* of (internal) EU legislation (see e.g. Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Tallberg 2004 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Warntjen 2008). Since I only studied external policy-making and only Presidencies taking place after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, it is

difficult to explain why this is the case. Is it because the Presidency's position altered? Or because of the nature of external policies – or narrower: EaP policies? It is true that there are also legislative decisions related to EaP policies (such as Association Agreements, visa policies) but the decision-making procedures are quite different here than for internal EU legislation, with a much less prominent role for the Council.

The second type of possible limitations is related to the methods used in this dissertation, especially in the third and fourth article. In comparing the influence of three Presidencies (third article), it is not my ambition to make statements about 'the' influence of 'the' Presidency on 'the' external policies of the EU. Rather, I explore different causal paths that are related to Presidency influence, and identify (groups of) causal conditions that did and did not contribute to the influence of the different Presidencies. QCA is a very suitable method for doing so because it can deal very well with causal complexity. However, the method also has a number of (potential) drawbacks, which should be taken into account when interpreting results (see e.g. Spitzlinger 2006).

One of the weak spots of QCA-based research is, according to Spitzlinger, that its conclusions are highly sensitive to new cases: any new case may significantly change the conclusions. This is a typical 'problem' of *small- to medium-N* studies, but I do not fully agree with this criticism: as such, it is not problematic that new empirical information would reveal new causal relations and thus alter the conclusions. The same is true for different interpretations – that is, other membership scores – of the same empirical data. Such an impact on the conclusions would be only additional proof that knowledge is in constant evolution, based on currently available information and how researchers make sense of this. This does not mean that information can be randomly added or left out, or that membership scores can be randomly modified. All operationalisations and research designs should be based on sound definitions and good arguments, which can be subject to discussion or modification.

The second drawback of QCA is much more significant: the calibration of data means that many nuances in the cases are not represented, especially in csQCA research designs. The development of fsQCA has mitigated this problem, but the calibrated data remain a simplification, the complexity of the data is inevitably reduced. In my research, in which different instances are grouped in higher-order cases, the drawbacks of QCA become even a bit more pronounced. For the type of conditions in my research, this issue comes more to the surface than if, for example, pre-defined indicators such as the Human Development Index, GDP or the Freedom House index (which also merge different aspects into one number) would be used. I attempted to reduce the reduction of complexity to a minimum by making detailed descriptions of how conditions and outcomes are calibrated, and I extensively reflected on the different instances constituting the cases and why some instances diverge from the general conclusions on sufficiency and necessity. If the causal conditions would be further disentangled, other methods than QCA would be probably required: the more conditions, the more difficult it becomes to achieve meaningful conclusions. An example of such an 'extricated' condition would be 'stable domestic political and administrative context', which can be separated in 'stable political context' and 'stable administrative context'. Especially for Poland this was relevant, because there were elections (during the campaign leading to an unstable political context) that did not have an impact on the administrative stability. Another example is preparation: with QCA it would not be possible to account for different kinds of preparation, e.g. whether outsourcing training or the analysis of interests and priorities would have an impact on the Presidency's influence.

A third weakness of QCA,[30] which I encountered throughout the research and which is linked to the previous point, is that the method has some difficulties to deal with conditions that are 'hard-to-capture', or 'big' events that do not occur regularly. One of such 'hard-to-capture' conditions would be the level of ambition of the Presidency. In my comparative study I described this as 'salience', which I measured through the prominence of the topic in the Presidency programme and the extent to which interviewees mentioned it as important. However, the level of ambition is more subtle than that: it also involves the way in which topics are presented, and it typically evolves during the Presidency period. For all three Presidencies, one could witness a decreasing or more 'realistic' (formal) ambition – in terms of agreements and other developments to be achieved – as the Presidency period progressed. At first sight, and also based on the findings of the fourth article on Lithuanians' preference formation, a high level of ambition was not counterproductive, but did also not always result in more influence. Detailed assessments would be necessary to evaluate this, and QCA would probably not be the most suitable method for doing so.

An example of a 'big' event would the establishment of the EaP initiative itself. It is generally known and accepted that Poland and Sweden proposed the initiative in 2008 in response to France's push to develop a partnership between the EU and the Mediterranean countries. The Czech Presidency picked up on the idea and hosted the first EaP Summit in 2009. In QCA this could be either classified under 'external political context' (which would be an extreme simplification) or treated as a separate condition (but it would be difficult to compare with other countries, because such 'external shocks' occur very rarely). Also for the analysis of such cases, QCA would not be the most appropriate method; other approaches could provide much more interesting insights.

For the fourth article, the survey questions have been thought through and discussed with many different 'test persons'. Nevertheless, the design of the survey was not perfect: when analysing the results, I still discovered some drawbacks. For example, more questions on the background of officials (e.g. on periods in Brussels before the Presidency, the number of years of experience in the public service, etc.) could have provided some more insights in socialisation, and put the results on the socialising impact of a Presidency period into a wider perspective.

2.3. Paths for further research

This PhD project was limited in time, and there were strict space limitations for the articles. For this reason, a number of potentially relevant issues have not been analysed in my work – even though I elaborated on them, where possible, in the introduction and conclusion of the dissertation. In this section, I outline some topics that could be the focus of further research and for which the conclusions of my research are potentially instructive.

Firstly, as briefly touched upon above (point 2.2.), it could be checked whether some of the specifications of Presidency influence I discussed in the second article in this dissertation, notably the type of influence and the forums in which influence is exerted, are also valid for other policy areas. A comparative perspective could be useful here. My research was limited to external policies and external aspects of internal policies – all related to one specific region. Would the findings that the Presidency can only exert some influence on agendas (not on the contents of decisions) and that it is mostly influential in the preparatory bodies of the Council for *all* types of internal and external policies, also apply to other EU-related policies and legislation?

[30] The problems of dealing with 'big' events or 'hard-to-capture' conditions apply by extension to all methods for systematic comparison of data.

Secondly, we have seen that in some cases the Presidency can exert influence at a higher (ministerial) level as well. The establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy, at the insistence of Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski, is the most striking example of this. In this research, there were not enough cases to compare and to tentatively conclude under which conditions such influence at high level is possible. Possible conditions could be that the topic should be explicitly linked to current political developments in the EU and/or abroad, goal-oriented efforts should start before the actual Presidency, and ideally the topic is quickly picked up by other institutions to boost its legitimacy and not let it look like a 'national' initiative.

Thirdly, as briefly mentioned *supra*, the Presidencies in this study – the Hungarian and the Polish one in particular – took place during a transitional period. The Treaty of Lisbon entered formally into force in 2009, but not all institutions were established from the first day (the EEAS is a good example here), and the different actors and institutions were still looking for mutually acceptable ways of implementing the new rules. In this context, the Presidencies might have had more room manoeuvre than they are supposed to have, and continued to work according to 'old' practices. The Lithuanian Presidency took place in 2013, when the post-Lisbon framework was already much more familiar. Based on the brief discussion on the types of influence, forums for influence and types of policies on which influence was exerted during the Lithuanian Presidency, I do not have strong indications that the findings of the second article would be radically different from the situation today. However, if future research on a similar topic would compare several Presidencies, it would be interesting to include cases of soon after 2009 as well as cases many years later.

Fourthly, the analysis of necessary and sufficient conditions for exerting influence is based on a limited number of causal conditions. As explained in the introduction, I did not consider the voting method (QMV vs. unanimity) and the stage in the legislative process as conditions for influence in the third article. Both conditions are of limited relevance for the EaP policies; however, including these two conditions in future research where these conditions can be expected to play a role, e.g. in certain areas of (internal) EU policies, could yield interesting results.

Fifthly, future research could compare the influence of Presidencies that do differ on one or more conditions where I did not find variation. Comparisons between Presidencies of domestically stable vs. unstable countries (keeping in mind the above-mentioned possible disentanglement of this condition), or between Presidencies taking place in a favourable vs. unfavourable external political and/or economic contexts would be particularly interesting (see also *supra*, point 2.2.).

Sixthly, in this research I did not assess causal relations *between* the conditions. As explained in the introduction to this dissertation, Baumgartner (2012) views this as a problem, and I provided arguments why I do not agree with this criticism: in a comparative study with QCA it should not be the aim to assess mutual causal relations as well. This does not preclude that interesting mutual causal relations between the conditions can exist. It would be worthwhile to explore such relations – especially if the causal conditions would be disentangled – between, for example, domestic stability and the reputation of the incumbent country, between the political and the economic external context, or between the external context and salience (both for the Presidency and for the other actors).

Finally, there is a great potential for analysing the interplay of the priorities of preferences of the Presidency on the one hand and those of the EU institutions and agencies – especially the European Commission, but also others – on the other. As discussed in the second article of the dissertation, several interviewees from the institutions suggested that they are always happy when the dossiers on which they work receive political impetus through efforts of the Presidency (Interview 25; 26; 27;

28). In this regard, Tallberg (2006b, pp. 84-90; 2006a) already pointed out that the European Commission is more likely to table proposals that are likely to be picked up by the Presidency. It is perhaps also not a coincidence that the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly held its constituent meeting in April 2011 and its first plenary in September 2011, in the year of the central European Presidencies (see e.g. Kostanyan & Vandecasteele 2013 | EuroNest PA n.d.). The same goes for the inaugural meeting of the Conference of Regional and Local authorities in the EaP at the initiative of the Committee of the Regions, in Poznań in September 2011 (Committee of the Regions 2011). Which causal links between initiatives of the institutions on the one hand and of the preferences of the Presidency on the other hand can be discovered? When and why do the institutions' initiatives respond to the Presidency's preferences and, perhaps more interestingly, when and why do they not? A systematic and comparative study of different Presidencies could shed light on such questions.

2.4. Contribution of the research

My contribution to scholarly knowledge can be assessed along four dimensions, that is: an analytical, a methodological, an empirical and a theoretical dimension.

Analytically, as is obvious in the different articles of the dissertation, I developed an explicit and precise definition of 'influence' and formulated criteria to evaluate it. Through this definition and the criteria, the different aspects of influence – as I understand it – immediately come to the surface and can be debated. Influence can be expressed with verbal assessments but also with numbers – if handled with care. The same is true for the operationalisation of other concepts, most importantly the conditions for influence. Some of them may be disputable, but the advantage of the formulation of criteria is that it is clear and that, based on good arguments, some modifications can be made. As such, the concepts and criteria on (conditions for) influence can be applied to the study of any actor's influence in multilateral negotiations, of course taking into account the specific institutional context in which these negotiations take place.

Methodologically, the main added value for the study of the Council Presidency lies in the employment of QCA for this topic. Indeed, my study is the first one that applies this method for analysing Presidency influence and revealed several insights that are relevant in themselves but that can also be inspirational for future research. Even though QCA has several potential drawbacks, it allows to systematically compare different cases and to assess causal complexity – including necessity and sufficiency – in a transparent way.

Empirically, my PhD is the first comparative analysis of the influence of the Council Presidency in the post-Lisbon institutional framework, which can improve our understanding of EU decision-making in this institutional setting. It must be kept in mind, however, that the first two country studies took place in a period of transition, while the Lithuanian Presidency was already much more embedded in the post-Lisbon interinstitutional relations. In the fourth article of the dissertation, my research provides a broad empirical basis, including many nuances, for general assessments of the preferences of officials working for the administration a post-Soviet country in the EU.

The least 'progress' can be noted in terms of theory. This is not surprising because, as I point out in the general introduction (point 2.), it has not been my ambition to confirm one or several (meta-)theoretical claims, but instead I have been inspired by a pragmatist viewpoint. With my research, I was – as largely expected – not able to 'solve' theoretical debates on the logics of action that underlie preference formation and behaviour. While designing the study, as well as during the analysis of the results, I discovered the limits of approaching the world this way, and found the

opposing logics to be most useful to structure and organize the findings. My research thus further problematized the distinction between two logics rather than providing firm conclusions.

2.5. On usefulness beyond academia

As befits a true pragmatist (which does not mean that I am proud of the 'ist' at the end of the word), my research aims to develop *useful* knowledge. It is up to the reader to judge to what extent this work is indeed useful. In any case, apart from my intention to make an academically relevant contribution, I hope to add to wider societal debates as well.

My research has focused on three Member States of the EU that for the first time in their history had the opportunity, but also the duty, to chair the Council and its preparatory bodies. In doing so, I highlight the broad similarities of these countries with regard to their interest in the EaP region, but I also show that there are striking differences between them and how this impacts on their functioning in and influence on EU decision-making.

In addition, the conclusions drawn from the comparison with QCA led to several insights with potential policy relevance. The fact that there are no other necessary conditions for Presidency influence than salience to the Presidency was the most striking conclusion. Apparently, Member States can only use their Presidency position to influence decision-making on issues that they find very important – and conversely, the incumbent country does not or cannot exert influence on dossiers that are not so salient (and to which it pays less attention). The Presidency position does not enable the incumbent country to exert a generally high influence. All other conditions for influence were not found to be necessary, that is, the Presidency can 'do without' them on condition that certain other conditions are fulfilled. Regarding the sufficient conditions, it was interesting to see how reputation (at the political level), Brussels-based organisation of the Presidency, size of the incumbent country, and distributions of preferences and degrees of salience among Member States are related to each other. These findings can be useful for future Presidencies in making self-assessments when preparing for the Presidency, as well as for other Member States and EU institutions in anticipating to upcoming Presidencies.

Finally, I draw attention to a broad range of political processes and developments, including low-key technical issues but also high politics, in a region that is often rather neglected in the part of Europe where I live – except in case of events with high news value such as the Crimea crisis in 2014 and the continuing war in Ukraine, or the commemoration of the fall of the Berlin wall. With this work, I shed some light on how the EU deals with its Eastern neighbouring countries on a daily basis, and I show how a relatively small number of politicians and officials attempt to influence the EaP policies and to put their ideals and ambitions into practice.

List of interviews

Interview 1. Latvian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 20 January 2012.
Interview 7. Hungarian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 6 March 2012.
Interview 8. General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Brussels, 2 April 2012.
Interview 18. Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 14 May 2012.
Interview 25. European Commission, Brussels, 16 October 2012.
Interview 26. European Commission, Brussels, 24 October 2012.
Interview 27. European Commission, Brussels, 7 November 2012.
Interview 28. European Commission, Brussels, 21 November 2012.
Interview 44. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 28 March 2013.
Interview 70. Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, Vilnius, 18 March 2014.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Country file – The Hungarian Council Presidency (1st semester of 2011) and the Eastern Partnership

1. Hungary's size, preparations and practical organisation of the Presidency

Hungary is a middle-sized country with a population of nearly 10 million. Since this is below the average population per EU country, Hungary is a rather small country (membership score of 0.33 in the set of 'large country'). Its Presidency budget of 24 billion HUF (approximately 85 million EUR) between 2007 and 2011 (Hungarian Presidency website 2011k) also reflects this modest size.

Preparations for the Presidency started in early 2007 (Hungarian Presidency website 2011k) and were mainly coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (see e.g. Törő 2013). The first activities consisted of the selection of Presidency staff, language and procedural training, and monitoring of all dossiers that were expected to be on the table in 2011. Around 350 extra staff members were hired during the Presidency: 230 in the national Ministries, 80 in the Permanent Representation to the EU (permrep), and 40 in other delegations abroad (Hungarian Presidency website 2011k; 2011r). In total, the Presidency team consisted of around 800 officials, 160 of whom were based in Brussels and most others in Budapest (Vida 2011).

The first phase of the preparations was complicated and slowed down due to two main reasons. Firstly, it was still uncertain whether Hungary would have a 'full-fledged' or rather a 'new-style' Presidency. Only after the Czech President signed the Lisbon Treaty in late 2009, it became clear that Hungary had to prepare for a new type of Presidency. The second issue was that the social democrat party MSZP, which then led the Government, was very likely to be defeated in the 2010 legislative elections by the centre-right Fidesz; as a consequence, the MSZP-Government left many issues undecided until mid-2010 (Interview 16). These predictions proved true: in April 2010, a coalition of Fidesz and the Christian Democrats party won 52,73% of the votes, which was translated in 262 seats out of 386, a 2/3 majority which is sufficient to change the Constitution (Hungarian National Election Committee 2010 | Reuters 2010, 25 April). Fidesz leader Viktor Orbán became Prime Minister.

The new Government introduced several changes in the organisation of the Ministries and Hungary's representation in the EU, which had repercussions on the preparations of the Presidency (Interview 13; 15; 16 | Romsics 2011). Some key officials were replaced, including the EU Ambassador. In June 2010, the Government appointed Enikő Győri to the post of Minister of State for EU Affairs within the MFA. She headed the State Secretariat for EU Affairs, which is responsible for coordinating the Government's EU policies, supervision of the activities of the permrep, implementation of EU legislation, contacts with the EU institutions, and preparations for the European Council and General Affairs Council meetings. In addition, it was also charged with the preparation and implementation of the Presidency programme (Hungarian MFA 2012b; 2012a). Within the State Secretariat, three temporary departments were established, dealing respectively with the Presidency budget, the organisation of events and logistics, and communication (Hungarian Presidency website 2011r). Furthermore, the Government appointed two temporary Government Commissioners in 2010: Ferenc Robák, responsible for the operational management of the Hungarian Presidency, and Etelka Barsi-Pataky, who coordinated Hungary's activities and positions relating to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (Hungarian Presidency website 2011r). The newly appointed officials at crucial positions had little time to get accustomed to EU policies and practices, and critics complained that some State secretaries and Ministers who were to chair Council meetings did not speak other

languages than Hungarian (EUObserver 2010, 23 December | Balázs 2011). A final organisational intervention was the reduction of Ministries from twelve to nine, while at the same time the number of Ministers of State and State Secretaries was increased.
The new Government adopted the draft Presidency programme in November 2010, and finalized it after the European Council of December (Hungarian MFA 2010).
I assign a membership score of 0.67 in the set of 'adequate preparation': although the staff was adequately trained and the priority programme was comprehensive and timely prepared, the logistical and staff planning for the Presidency was more last-minute than for most other Presidencies, which was also criticized from inside.
The Hungarian interviewees called their Presidency 'Brussels-based', which is in theory the standard Presidency model for most EU members. Indeed, most working parties were chaired by Brussels-based officials, while there were teleconferences with the capital on an almost daily basis (Interview 6; 7; 13; 15). Hungary's Presidency Strategy was developed by the advisor to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Deputy Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the Coreper Ambassador. The permrep was responsible for most of the day-to-day management, on the basis of broad framework mandates. However, the Government selected 11 key dossiers – none of them related to the EaP – which were managed from Budapest (Interview 13). Since the permrep played an important role and had a certain level of autonomy, even though the Presidency programme was developed mainly in the capital, I assign a membership score of 0.67 in the set of 'Brussels-based Presidency'.

2. Hungary's reputation in the EU

The reputation of a Member State in the EU depends very much on the internal political situation, and this was not different for Hungary. The country had no particularly good or bad reputation in the EU before 2010. The two main political parties traditionally took a pro-EU stance, while the population is rather apathetic towards EU affairs (EurActiv 2010, 21 December | Romsics 2011). However, at the political level Hungary's reputation in the EU worsened soon after Orbán's Government came to power, due to four main reasons (EUObserver 2010, 23 December | Balázs 2011 | Kaczyński 2011a | Ágh 2012). Firstly, the new Government showed remarkable resistance to the way in which the EU works (EurActiv 2011, 5 January). Secondly, soon after the installation of the new Hungarian Parliament, a number of legislative changes and proposals raised concern in other Member States and the EU institutions. One of them was a law allowing to sack civil servants without explanation which, according to critics, caused feelings of insecurity, a risk of self-censorship, and would discourage professional initiative (EUObserver 2010, 23 December | Balázs 2011). Also a new law on the media, introducing supervision on all media and establishing a Media Council with far-reaching powers that in practice restricted media freedom, faced strong criticism from different international organisations and some political groups in the European Parliament (EurActiv 2010, 23 December). Thirdly, in order to meet its budget deficit targets for 2010 and 2011, the Government imposed special taxes on banks, retail, telecom and energy companies, which prompted several companies to lodge complaint before the European Commission (EurActiv 2011, 24 December). Finally, the nationalisation of pre-funded pension schemes was criticized by the European Commission for artificially reducing the deficit and the sovereign debt on the short term, but jeopardizing the budget on the long term (EurActiv 2010, 6 December). For these reasons, when Orbán presented the Presidency programme in the European Parliament in January 2011, the

discussions were dominated by internal Hungarian issues, while the Presidency itself received little attention (Vizi 2011 | EurActiv 2011, 20 January).

After the start of Hungary's Presidency, controversies continued. The installation of a 202m² carpet in the Justus Lipsius building, displaying *inter alia* a map of 1848 that showed parts of Slovakia, Romania and Serbia as part of the Habsburg Empire, sparked criticism among numerous politicians. Reactions were especially fierce in Hungary's neighbouring countries, since this event coincided with the entry into force on 1 January 2011 of a law allowing Hungarians outside their homeland to apply for Hungarian citizenship (Presseurop 2011, 1 April | EUObserver 2011, 12 January | Sobják 2012). Another controversy arose during the annual commemoration of the Hungarian uprising against the Habsburg Empire in 1848, where Orbán made comparisons between European integration, Habsburg rule and Soviet suppression (The Economist 2011, 1 April). In sum, Hungary's reputation at the political level before and during its Presidency deteriorated which, according to the critics, had an impact on its credibility in the EU but also the EU's credibility beyond its borders (Balázs 2011).

The controversial reputation of the Hungarian political elite stood in sharp contrast with Hungary's reputation at the level of the administration: Hungarians were generally praised for their effective management of EU affairs, even by the fiercest critics of Orbán's Government (e.g. MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit in Le Monde 2011, 5 July | EurActiv 2011, 6 July). The soft skills of the civil servants were assessed very positively (Interview 1; 2; 8; 43; 50 | EurActiv 2011, 6 July). One analyst called the Hungarian Presidency 'of a legislative nature not a political one' (Kaczyński 2011b).

Hungary also has rather well-developed networks with some Member States that could help realize its preferences with regard to the EaP, such as Germany and Visegrád Group countries Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic (Pogátsa 2009). The Visegrád countries indeed discuss cooperation with the EaP countries (e.g. Visegrád Group 2009), even though they do not always defend the same positions.[31] Following the obligation to draft a joint trio Presidency programme, Hungary also deepened cooperation with its trio partners Spain and Belgium (Ágh 2012), countries with which it usually does not maintain close contacts. However, although this cooperation was exceptionally intense (Jensen & Nedergaard 2014),[32] interviewees did not mention it as an important channel through which Hungary pursued to realize its EaP-related preferences. Among the relations with the EU institutions, the Council Secretariat was most discussed as fruitful, and interviewees from the Council Secretariat were pleased with the cooperative stance of the Hungarian administration (Interview 8; 9; 10). The EEAS, the European Commission and the European Parliament were mentioned much less during the interviews.

[31] Raik and Gromadzki (2006) have identified a 'Carpathian Mountains dividing line' in Central Europe: the Baltic States and Poland have only one neighbourhood (Eastern Europe: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine), whereas south of the Carpathian Mountains Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria have two neighbourhoods (Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans).

[32] The Spain-Belgium-Hungary cooperation was innovative in three ways (Interview 43 | Batory & Puetter 2011). Firstly, the trio programme was jointly developed by the three countries, contrary to previous trios where each member sent its own priorities to the Council Secretariat with the request to merge them into one programme. Secondly, the trio partners exchanged liaison officers – who worked in each other's MFAs and not in their national Embassies – before, during and after their Presidencies. Finally, the trio partners developed a joint communication strategy, including a common logo and website address www.eutrio.es/be/hu. Trio cooperation took place mostly between civil servants of the national capitals, where it was also most valued for getting the administration ready for the Presidency (Interview 13; 15; 16; 17).

Despite the positive comments on the performance of the Hungarian administration, the controversies at the political level did affect the daily work of civil servants in various policy areas, also those that were not connected to these controversies. As one official put it: 'when this [the law on the regulation of the media] is what people talk about when you take over the Presidency, that's a big diversion. It's not nice when you say something and people react that "in your country you can't even express your opinion." During meetings, it makes you think twice when you take away the microphone from a Commissioner or a Member State representative, because you might face jokes that you otherwise wouldn't be afraid of' (Interview 6). Another member of the administration commented on the political reputation of Hungary that 'the most important consequence was that we didn't have the benefits after the Presidency: a good network, more authority to speak, etc. I think that after our Presidency, the other Member States were quite confused about what we stand for. I had expected that Hungary would be an influential Member States after the Presidency, but I'm not sure if this is the case' (Interview 15).

Hungary has a membership of 0.33 in the set of 'good reputation'. Even though Hungarian officials built effective networks with some EU institutions and Member States, and their soft knowledge was positively valued, the Hungarian leadership resisted several aspects of European integration – thus decreasing trust of the other Member States in a broad range of topics – and many officials in the EU estimated that the Hungarian Government did not give the 'right example' at home.

3. The domestic political and administrative context

Orbán's Government was mainly concerned about internal reforms as soon as it took office: in the months preceding 2011, there was little or no communication about the preparations for the Presidency (see e.g. EurActiv 2011, 5 January).

The domestic political situation during the Hungarian Presidency was characterized by stability, enhanced by the strong parliamentary support for the Government and the absence of elections during the Presidency period (Vida 2011).

The reduction of the number of Ministers had only a limited impact on Hungary's EU policies. It is true that some of the Ministers had to chair several Councils, implying a heavy workload on top of their busy national agendas (Balázs 2011 | Kaczyński 2011a). Martonyi, Foreign Minister, participated in the Foreign Affairs Council, chaired this Council configuration when dealing with trade issues, and chaired the General Affairs Council. Fellegi, Minister of National Development, chaired the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy (TTE) Council as well as the Environment Council. He co-chaired the latter with Fazekas, Minister of Rural Development, who also headed the Agriculture and Fisheries Council. However, numerous Council meetings were (co-)chaired by Ministers of State, which limited the impact of the Presidency tasks on the Ministers' agendas. During interviews, no mention was made about better or worse coordination due to the reduced amount of Ministries.

Romsics (2011) noted that, prior to the Presidency, there had been a large influx of young, motivated and well-trained officials to the Ministries, which contributed to the professionalization of the Hungarian administration. However, there is a discrepancy between the attitudes of the MFA's staff working on EU affairs, who work in a separate building, and the officials of the other departments located in the main building complex. This was somewhat detrimental to the coordination between different services, but its impact was limited, since most of the Presidency's performance depended on these Europeanized departments.

The Hungarian Presidency is a full member (score=1.00) of the set of 'stable domestic political and administrative context': there was rather effective coordination between and within the Ministries, strong parliamentary support for the Government, and no elections took place during the Presidency period.

4. The external political and economic context

Hungary's Presidency took place in a rather unfavourable external political context to weigh on EU external policies (membership score=0.33). Even though there were no major constraining global processes or elections in key Member States,[33] several contextual factors made it difficult to exert influence. The Hungarian Presidency started soon after the full entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, so it still had to find a *modus vivendi* with the European Parliament, the EEAS and the permanent chairs of a number of working parties and committees. Further engagement of the EU with EaP countries, or new EaP-related initiatives, were not likely to be high on the EU's agenda, and the on-going economic and financial crisis in the EU also decreased the region's external attractiveness (see e.g. Kucharczyk & Łada 2012). Furthermore, a series of unexpected events determined the EU's agenda much more than planned: the uprisings in early 2011 in the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East, now referred to as the 'Arab spring', had far-reaching economic, political and security consequences for the EU and absorbed most attention and energy of EU policy-makers. 2011 was also the year of the E.coli crisis and of the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, posing challenges to the EU in guaranteeing the safety of European citizens.

There was also no 'economic prosperity' (membership score=0.00) during the Hungarian Presidency. The debt crisis in Greece aggravated and also Portugal requested a bail-out. Although economic growth recovered in most EU countries throughout 2011 (Eurostat n.d.), some Member States still experienced a recession and the Eurozone debt crisis entailed a pessimistic economic climate.

5. Hungary's preferences and priorities towards the EaP region

Before Hungary's accession to the EU, the country's Governments focused mostly on domestic issues, the economic crisis, the legitimacy of the Government – characterized by fierce competition between MSZP and Fidesz – and corruption scandals. External policy in general and the EU in particular received only little attention (Pogátsa 2009). Since 2004, after it joined the EU, Hungary gradually invested more in foreign relations. However, its Government did not plan to play an active role in external policies during the Presidency; supporting the HR/VP and the EEAS was defined as the main priority in foreign affairs (Hungarian Presidency website 2011g; 2011o, p. 53). Győri stated before the start of the Presidency that the 'rolling agenda', inherited from the trio agenda, would make up 95% of the work of the Presidency (EurActiv 2010, 21 December).

5.1. Preferences of Hungary in the Eastern neighbourhood

Hungary generally supports further enlargement of the EU (Pogátsa 2009 | Hungarian MFA 2011a, p. 25). The political elite considers European integration as the best way to eliminate the borders between Hungarians in the region and their homeland. Since most ethnic Hungarians outside the EU

[33] During the Hungarian Presidency, parliamentary elections took place in Estonia, Finland and Ireland. Although the Eurosceptic 'True Finns' party obtained good results, the election and subsequent Government formation did not significantly influence the EU agenda.

live in the Western Balkans, this region receives the highest priority (Romsics 2010 | Szent-Iványi 2012). Still, Hungary's official position towards enlargement is that the EU should keep its doors open to any country that is willing to join, endorses the EU's values, and meets the accession criteria (Vida 2010a | Hungarian Presidency website 2011s). Hungary, as other Central and Eastern European countries, considers itself an expert in democratic and economic transition (Hungarian Presidency website 2011p), and is ready to share this expertise with candidate countries.

Although Hungary does not impede closer EU-EaP integration, it is not the most active advocate of the initiative either (Póti 2006 | Pogátsa 2009 | Vida 2010a | Rácz 2011). Among the EaP countries, the geographically closest neighbours – Moldova and Ukraine – are considered the most important (Interview 17 | Rácz 2011 | Duleba, Rácz, Řiháčková & Sadowski 2013). This is in part due to historical and cultural issues; as one official put it: 'Hungarians generally have the feeling that they are surrounded by strangers. In a very far past, Hungarians originate from Asians, and now around our country there live Slavs, Germanic and Roman ethnicities. Hungarians are more focused on their direct neighbours, where many Hungarians live, than on far neighbours' (Interview 7). Hungary is especially active in Moldova and its diplomacy knows the country very well (Duleba *et al.* 2013). Since 2007, its Embassy to Chisinau hosts a common EU visa centre, where visas are provided for 12 Schengen zone members that do not have a representation to Moldova (Hungarian MFA 2011b).

The most important EaP-related policy area for Hungary is trade, again with a particular focus on Moldova and Ukraine (Interview 6; 17; 24). External energy policy also receives much attention, in which Hungary adopts a pragmatic stance. The country is heavily dependent on imports from Russia for its energy resources (Pogátsa 2009 | Energy Delta Institute 2012a | International Energy Agency 2012) but, contrary to most other Central and Eastern European EU members, it considers Russia a reliable partner in energy supply. Hungary has been in favour of a common EU external energy policy and supported the Nabucco pipeline project from the outset (see also EUbusiness 2011), although in April 2012 Orbán and the national energy company MOL announced that they could withdraw from it (EUbusiness 2012). At the same time, MOL has also signed an agreement with Gazprom to extend the Blue Stream pipeline until Western Hungary (Pogátsa 2009). In addition, in June 2011 the Government expressed its full support for the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector (AGRI) (Institute for Caspian Cooperation 2011), which left many in Brussels and elsewhere puzzled (Balázs 2011). AGRI is one of the possible ways of transporting natural gas from Azerbaijan to the EU and was therefore considered a possible competitor of Nabucco.

In sum, economic integration and energy policy towards the EaP are generally salient, especially with regard to Moldova and Ukraine, while other EaP countries and policy areas are considered less important. Table 3, at the end of this country file, provides an overview of the salience of the EaP-related developments that took place during the Hungarian Presidency. Table 1 (below) provides a summary of how all conditions for influence apply to Hungary.

Table 1: Hungary and the conditions for influence

Country specific	Adequate preparation	0.67
	Brussels-based Presidency	0.67
	Good reputation	0.33
	Large country	0.33
	Stable domestic political and administrative context	1.00
Issue- or policy area specific	High salience to the Presidency	See Table 3
	Favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors (education and research, youth, trade and economic relations, transport)	0.67
	Favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors (bilateral political relations, defence, energy, home affairs, justice, multilateral institutional framework)	0.33
Context	Favourable external political context	0.33
	Economic prosperity	0.00

5.2. Hungarian Presidency priorities on the EaP

The Hungarian Presidency priorities were grouped into four chapters: 1) economic growth by reinforcing economic governance and concentrating on job creation and social inclusion; 2) strengthening common policies by making them more efficient and competitive, while maintaining cohesion in the EU; 3) a Europe closer to its citizens – referring to security, management of migration flows and the citizens' initiative; and 4) moving forward with the enlargement process in a credible and responsible way, including the conclusion of accession negotiations with Croatia during the Presidency, further steps in the negotiations with Turkey and Iceland, and progress with Serbia and FYROM (Hungarian MFA 2010 | EurActiv 2010, 21 December | Hungarian Presidency website 2011o). The Balkan region was of particular importance: Hungary 'wanted to achieve one step ahead with every single [Balkan] country in the accession process' (Interview 15).

The most important topics on the agenda would be economic governance, the first European Semester, the start of negotiations on Common Agricultural Policy reform and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020, the launch of an EU Roma Strategy, and enlargement of the Schengen zone to Bulgaria and Romania (EurActiv 2010, 21 December | Vida 2011). The EaP was not a central priority: cooperation with (certain) EaP countries was mentioned mainly in the framework of other policy initiatives, such as the Strategy for the Danube Region (see *infra*).

The main event in EaP policies was expected to be the EaP Summit, scheduled for 26-27 May 2011 in Budapest. The summit should review the achievements of the EaP policies and discuss prospects for its further development, based on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) that was to take place in early 2011 (Hungarian Presidency website 2011g; 2011o). In parallel with the EaP Summit, the Presidency planned to organize a meeting of civil society organisations from the EU and the EaP (Hungarian Presidency website 2011l), as well as to hold the first EaP Business Forum,

bringing together business people and politicians from the EU and the EaP countries. The idea for such a forum had been formulated a few years before, but it was not organized until 2011 (Ćwiek-Karpowicz & Wojna 2010).

The Presidency website mentioned that the EU wished to make progress in political and economic relations with five EaP countries and, depending on the development of the bilateral relations, also with Belarus (Hungarian Presidency website 2011e). Ukraine was the only EaP country towards which Hungary formulated individual priorities: negotiations on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) were expected to advance substantially (Hungarian Presidency website 2011o).

In Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) matters, the programme foresaw progress in the visa facilitation dialogue with Ukraine and Moldova, and Hungary would 'support all initiatives that strengthen the stability and security of the EaP countries' (Hungarian Presidency website 2011o, p. 28).

The main external energy priority was to enhance energy security and to coordinate EU action (Romsics 2010 | Hungarian Presidency website 2011b). In this regard, the Presidency expected that sales agreements would be signed for Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz II gas field in April 2011 (EurActiv 2010, 21 December). This gas reserve is a major potential new source of natural gas supply from the Caspian region to the EU. A more general external energy priority was to implement the different principles of EU law in the EaP countries and to support their accession to the Energy Community[34] (Ćwiek-Karpowicz & Wojna 2010).

Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia were not mentioned individually in the Presidency programme. The programme emphasized the equal importance of the Southern and Eastern parts of the ENP, and one of the strategic goals was preventing antagonism between both dimensions (Szesztay & Cieszkowski 2010 | Hungarian Presidency website 2011h).

While paying little attention to EaP policies, the programme focused very much on the future EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) (see also: Balázs 2011 | Vizi 2011 | Ágh 2012). The initiative for an EUSDR dates back to June 2009, when the Council invited the European Commission to prepare a draft by the end of 2010. The EUSDR should be a macro-regional initiative, parallel to the Baltic Sea Region Strategy, dealing with transport and energy infrastructure, tourism, improving the quality of the environment, security and economic development (Hungarian Presidency website 2011d | EUObserver 2011, 13 April). The Commission submitted the draft to the Council in December 2010 (EurActiv 2010, 12 November). The strategy covers the whole Danube region, including nine EU Member States, EaP members Ukraine and Moldova, as well as Balkan countries Serbia, Bosnia-Hercegovina and Montenegro. As part of the working programme for the General Affairs Council, the Hungarian Government mentioned that it would 'make every effort to have [the EUSDR] endorsed by the June European Council' (Hungarian Presidency website 2011o, p. 20). The importance of the EUSDR was also illustrated by the fact that a Government Commissioner with quasi-ministerial competences – Barsi-Pataky – was appointed especially for the development of this strategy (see *supra*). The EUSDR was aimed not only at improving good neighbourly relations in the region, but 'should also consolidate the European integration process with the Western Balkan countries' (Hungarian Presidency website 2011o, p. 20). This sentence expressed Hungary's aim to give the EUSDR an 'external' dimension, however not in the EaP framework.

[34] Among the EaP countries, Moldova is a member of the Energy Community since May 2010. Ukraine ratified the treaty in December 2010 and thus also became member in February 2011. Georgia is an candidate since 2007 and Armenia is an observer since October 2011 (Energy Community 2011).

6. The EaP in the first semester of 2011 and the influence of the Hungarian Presidency

Hungary's already generally low ambitions with regard to the EaP were further limited due to the Arab Spring, in which it tried to play an active role in its position as Presidency (Hungarian Presidency website 2011t; 2011p). Although as a result the foreseen balance between the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood was somewhat disturbed, Orbán, when he handed over the Presidency to his Polish counterpart Tusk, stressed that the Southern neighbourhood should not overshadow the EaP or the Western Balkans, and added that it is the Presidency's task to direct the EU's attention to these regions. On the EaP and the Western Balkans, he commented that Poland and Hungary developed a kind of task-sharing: Hungary had focused mostly on the Western Balkans (see also Gostyńska 2011), and Poland would devote most of its attention to the EaP (Hungarian Presidency website 2011j). Indeed, Hungary used its Presidency position to be very active in dossiers such as the conclusion of accession negotiations with Croatia (Interview 12; 13; 15; 17), the organisation of the annual Western Balkans Forum (Interview 13; 15 | Hungarian Presidency website 2011a), and the extension of trade preferences for the Balkan countries (European Commission 2011, 30 December), for which Hungarian officials even engaged in a subtle turf battle with the EEAS over the chairmanship of the COWEB working party (Interview 6). On the EaP policies, Hungary was much less involved, contrary to its Polish successor.

In what follows, the developments in EaP policies are listed according to the level of influence exerted by the Hungarian Presidency. Notably, there were no instances of high influence.

6.1. Substantial Presidency influence

The Hungarian Presidency exerted substantial influence in two instances, although both were only indirectly related to EaP policies.

Firstly, Hungary was very active in the further development of the EU's external energy policy. In preparation of the European Council of February 2011, which focused on energy and innovation, the Presidency organised an informal ministerial meeting in January, which *inter alia* highlighted the importance of well-developed supply routes to the EU (Hungarian Presidency website 2011m). The European Council was in practice prepared by the Belgian (second half of 2010) and Hungarian Presidencies. After a discussion on energy policy in December 2010, the Belgian Energy Minister Magnette sent a letter to Van Rompuy with a number of ideas on (external) energy policy, after consultation with the incoming Hungarian Presidency (Interview 17 | Delreux & Criekemans 2011). The European Council agenda was further discussed in Coreper I and II, as well as during the General Affairs Council of January 2011 (Council of the European Union 2011, 31 January-a). During the actual European Council, little time was spent talking about energy: '99% of the questions had been discussed before in the General Affairs Council' (Interview 17). The European Council conclusions (European Council 2011, 4 February) very much corresponded to the content of Magnette's letter. One of the most debated issues was the question whether energy infrastructure could be financed with public funds (Interview 17). The European Council decided that most funds should be provided by the market, but that 'some projects that would be justified from a security of supply/solidarity perspective, but are unable to attract enough market-based finance, may require some limited public finance' (European Council 2011, 4 February, p. 2). The possibility of partial public funding for energy infrastructure projects corresponded very much to the position of Hungary (Hungarian Presidency website 2011f). With regard to external energy policy, the conclusions stated that individual external

energy policies should be more coherent, invited the European Commission to submit a communication on security of supply and international cooperation by June 2011, and invited the HR/VP to take the energy dimension fully into account in her work. The European Commission was also invited to continue its work on establishing a Southern energy corridor. Energy should be fully reflected in the ENP, and the Energy Community should be expanded and deepened with a view to integrating the markets of the EU and its neighbours. The conclusions provided for a long-term policy framework, and facilitated the adoption of Council conclusions on energy in later Council meetings (Interview 17). They fully reflected Hungary's preferences (GA=3) and can be ascribed to a large extent to the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies (AS=2). Indeed, Hungary prepared the ground for the Council conclusions on external energy policies in the second half of 2011 (Interview 8). However, the conclusions were of limited political relevance (PR=1): they set some broad lines for future energy policies but did not have tangible impact themselves (Interview 17). The Hungarian Presidency had a substantial influence on the European Council agenda on energy, which is in part related to the EaP.

Secondly, Hungary exerted substantial influence on the adoption of the EUSDR. This is as such not an EaP policy, but it covers two EaP countries, Moldova and Ukraine (see *supra*). The Presidency fully achieved its goals (GA=3): as planned, the Strategy was adopted by the Council in April (Council of the European Union 2011, 13 April) and endorsed by the European Council of June (European Council 2011, 24 June). One diplomat stated that 'if the Hungarian Presidency will be remembered, it will be probably because of the EUSDR' (Interview 43). Even the critics of the Presidency called the EUSDR a milestone and a success (Balázs 2011). In its self-evaluation of the Presidency's achievements, the Government listed the EUSDR under the heading of 'a stronger Europe, stronger common policies' (Hungarian Presidency website 2011q, p. 19), thus describing it as EU regional policy, not as a (partly) external policy, even though it includes several non-EU countries. This framing may have contributed to the smooth approval of the initiative. The adoption of the EUSDR was undoubtedly further facilitated by the three 'Yes' (better alignment of funding, better coordination of instruments, new ideas) and three 'No' (no new funds, no new institutions, no new EU instruments) of the strategy (Hungarian Presidency website 2011c). The absence of additional funds and the focus on streamlining of budgets made the EUSDR particularly attractive. Although Hungary had no influence on the contents of the initiative, which had been prepared long beforehand, the timing of the adoption was clearly due to Hungary's prioritisation. Other Presidencies would not have pushed as hard as Hungary to conclude the negotiations and launch the strategy (Interview 9; 15; 16). The fact that it was adopted in 2011 can for the most part be ascribed to Hungary (AS=2), although the EUSDR is of limited political relevance in the context of this article (PR=1).

6.2. Limited Presidency influence

The Hungarian Presidency exerted limited influence in six dossiers with some connection to the EaP. The first two are related to Belarus, the only EaP country that does not participate in the bilateral track.[35] EU-Belarus relations worsened throughout 2011, mainly due to the violent crackdown of mass protests following the presidential elections of December 2010, where Lukashenko was re-

[35] The EU and Belarus signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in 1995, but due to the worsening human rights situation after Lukashenka came to power, the EU did not ratify the agreement. Trade and economic relations are still covered by the 1989 Trade and Cooperation Agreement of the European Community with the former Soviet Union (European External Action Service 2011a; 2011c).

elected with 80% of the votes (The Economist 2010, 20 December). The EU's initial reaction was rather careful: Ashton did not question the official election results and, although she 'regretted' the violence, did not call for the release of political prisoners taken after the demonstrations (EUObserver 2010, 21 December). In early January 2011, the Hungarian Presidency hesitatingly tried to make a stronger point. In the absence of a fully operational EEAS representation to Belarus, the Hungarian Ambassador to Belarus declared on behalf of the Union that EU diplomats wanted to meet the detainees and check up on their physical well-being. Foreign Minister Martonyi also said that he would agree with sanctions targeting the Belarusian regime. A meeting of EU diplomats on 7 January however revealed that Italy was opposed to economic sanctions or a visa ban (EUObserver 2011, 7 January). A week later, Ashton asked for the immediate release of political prisoners (European External Action Service 2011b). The EU Members reached a compromise on their common position by the end of January: they used much stronger language and reinstated a visa ban and asset freeze against more than 150 members of the regime, including Lukashenko (Council of the European Union 2011, 31 January-b). Győri had earlier announced that Lukashenko was unlikely to be invited for the upcoming EaP Summit, at the same time emphasizing that the EU should not let down the Belarusian people (Hungarian Presidency website 2011n). During further Foreign Affairs Council meetings in the first semester of 2011, the EU increased the restrictive measures, ever in response to the imprisonment of key opposition members or journalists (Council of the European Union 2011, 20 June; 2011, 21 March; 2011, 24 May). The Foreign Affairs Council of June also decided to freeze the assets of three companies controlled by Peftiev, one of Lukashenko's main sponsors (Council of the European Union 2011, 21 June), a step which initially faced opposition from Italy and Latvia, who have strong business ties with Belarus (EUObserver 2011, 17 June). The role of the Presidency in the sanction policies is hard to assess, considering its limited institutional powers, the long time span, and the amount of actors involved. In any case, the sanctions were repeatedly discussed in Coreper and the Hungarian Presidency actively sought a consensus (Interview 8): 'We [Hungary] didn't push too hard, but we made it very clear that, if the EU would like to keep its credibility, we have to [impose sanctions]' (Interview 16). The sanctions corresponded to Hungary's preferences (GA=3) and were politically relevant (PR=3), but their adoption can be ascribed to the Hungary only to a limited extent (AS=1).

Parallel to the restrictive policies towards Belarusian officials, the EU took a cooperative stance towards civil society and tried to promote people-to-people contacts. To this end, the Council approved mandates for the European Commission on 28 February (Council of the European Union 2011, 28 February) to negotiate on visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Belarus.[36] This decision also corresponded to Hungary's position as expressed by Győri (GA=3), but is to be ascribed to the Presidency to a limited extent – only the timing may have been influenced by the Presidency (AS=1) – (see also Council of the European Union 2011, 18 February-b) and is as such of limited relevance (PR=1).

Thirdly, Hungary exerted limited influence in keeping the DCFTA negotiations with Ukraine on the EU's agenda. Martonyi paid a visit to his Ukrainian counterpart in February, where he called Ukraine the most important Eastern partner of the EU, and promised to use all possible means to support the

[36] Belarus has already signed local border traffic agreements with Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. When implemented, a simplified visa-free regime will apply for residents living 30-50km from the border on both sides (European External Action Service 2012). The negotiation mandates for broad visa facilitation and readmission agreements were discussed in several working parties (Council of the European Union 2011, 18 February-b; 2011, 18 February-a).

country in getting closer to the EU (Hungarian Presidency website 2011i). The latter proved necessary at some point. After numerous rounds of DCFTA negotiations, the European Commission wanted to suspend the whole process due to a lack of commitment from the Ukrainian side (Interview 27). 'They did not live up to the promises they made […] It was a very tough fight, some Member States were not even in favour of continuing the negotiations' (Interview 6). The Presidency reached consensus in the Trade Policy Committee on a number of principles the Ukrainian negotiations should agree on in order to resume the talks. 'As Presidency we explained this to the Ukrainians, we asked them to agree on these principles, which they finally did. […] We kept the negotiations alive, but it wouldn't have happened if the Ukrainians did not agree to the principles and, even more importantly, if Russia didn't decide to put extra pressure on the Ukrainians by asking them to join its customs union and to reintegrate with some former Soviet republics. Many delegations then thought "OK, we don't want Ukraine to turn towards the Russians"' (Interview 6). The Presidency played a role in the continuation of the DCFTA negotiations, not so much within the EU but rather towards Ukraine, which in turn facilitated the work of the European Commission (Interview 27). Hungary reached its objectives (GA=3) in a dossier with substantial political relevance (PR=2), but the decision to continue negotiations was mainly shaped by others, and finally taken by the European Commission (AS=1).

A fourth instance of limited Presidency influence was observed in trade relations with Moldova. Hungary brokered an agreement within the Council to extend the autonomous trade preferences for Moldova until 2015 and to increase the wine quota by 50% (Council of the European Union 2011, 27 May). It was as such not problematic to build a consensus in the Council, but the increase of the wine quota was only acceptable for France if it was combined with an agreement on the protection of geographical indications (Interview 6), which was concluded in April (European Commission 2011, 18 April). These decisions were conditional on other actors' positions and on negotiations by the European Commission. Although the decisions on trade relations reflected the Presidency's preferences (GA=3) and are substantially relevant (PR=2), they can be ascribed to the Presidency only to a limited extent (AS=1).

Fifthly, the Hungarian Presidency influenced EU-Moldova transport relations to a limited extent: the TTE Council of June 2011 adopted a negotiation mandate for the European Commission on a Common Aviation Area Agreement (Council of the European Union 2011, 16 June), which was proposed by the European Commission a few weeks earlier (European Commission 2011, 2 May). The Agreement was concluded and initialled in October of the same year and signed in June 2012 (European Commission 2012, 26 June). This was in line with Hungary's goal of strengthening EU-Moldovan cooperation (GA=3), but the decision for a mandate was of limited political relevance (PR=1) and could be ascribed to the Presidency to a limited extent (AS=1); only the timing of adoption of such negotiation mandates can be influenced by the Presidency (Interview 9).

Finally, Hungary exerted limited influence in multilateral JHA cooperation with the EaP, a policy area in which it had rather low ambitions (Interview 7; 10). The Presidency worked hard to integrate the Söderköping process – cross-border cooperation on asylum and migration – into the formal EaP structures (Interview 16). The Söderköping process was initiated in 2001, in response to the Eastern enlargement of the EU. By 2009 it consisted of 14 partners, including eight EU members and the six EaP countries. Ever since the launch of the EaP in 2009, its participants aimed to link it to the EaP policies, notably to multilateral platform 1 on democracy, good governance and stability (IOM 2011 | Swedish Migration Board 2012). The integration of the process was prepared throughout 2011, discussed at the EaP Summit of 2011 (Council of the European Union 2011, 30 September-b, p. 4),

and adopted by the JHA Council of December 2011 as a Panel on Migration and Asylum under platform 1 (Council of the European Union 2011, 14 December). Hungary achieved its goal (GA=3) of 'upgrading' this cross-border cooperation to the level of EU-EaP cooperation (Interview 16), but (the modified framework of) this forum for cooperation has very limited political relevance (PR=1), and it can be ascribed to the Presidency only to a limited extent (AS=1).

6.3. No Presidency influence

There were five EaP-related dossiers in which the Hungarian Presidency exerted no influence. One of them concerns the EU's energy relations with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan: the TTE Council meeting of June 2011 discussed a negotiation mandate for the European Commission on an agreement with both countries on the legal framework of a future trans-Caspian pipeline (Council of the European Union 2011, 10 June). The mandate was not yet adopted, although this would have been in the interest of Hungary, given its focus on diversification of supply routes (GA=2). It can be ascribed to the Presidency to a limited extent (AS=1) since it put the issue on the agenda soon after the European Commission recommendation (Council of the European Union 2011, 26 May), while, as other negotiation mandates, it has a low political relevance (PR=1).

Secondly, the Presidency organized a high-level seminar in April 2011 on customs cooperation and controls at the external border of the EU in relation to the wider Eastern neighbourhood: the customs services of all EaP countries except Belarus were represented, as well as Kazakhstan and Russia. It was the last conference in the series of 'Customs 2013', a programme to support customs authorities in exchanging information and expertise, that had been initiated in 1999. The participants recommended to direct funds from Taiex, ENPI and EUBAM to the development of fluid and safe trade lanes, risk management and fight against fraud, and customs modernisation. A follow-up seminar was foreseen for October 2011 in Kraków, where the implementation of the strategy was to be discussed (European Commission 2011, 15 April). The conference was part of a series which was not initiated or influenced by Hungary (AS=0), and it had no political relevance (PR=0) because it had no tangible impact or importance for EU-EaP relations.

The third and fourth instances where the Presidency did not exert influence were the biennial EaP Summit and the EaP Business Forum. In February, the Hungarian Coreper Ambassador informed the EEAS (Interview 11) that he and his Polish counterpart had decided to move the date of the summit from May to September, due to logistical reasons (Council of the European Union 2011, 17 February). The date of the summit clashed with those of the G8/G20 summits and the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the OECD (Vida 2011). Besides, 26 May is the national holiday of Georgia, which was not taken into account during the initial planning (Interview 17). When it became clear that the summit would be postponed, the preparations for the EaP Business Forum were suspended and handed over to Poland (Interview 6 | Hungarian Presidency website 2011q). Many observers believe that there was more behind the decision to postpone the summit than just a clash of dates (Romsics 2011). Possible reasons were that the summit was a prestige project for Poland, especially in the run-up to the elections, and that its Government lobbied Hungary to leave it for Poland (Interview 12; 13; 17; 43 | Policy Solutions 2011); that the Hungarian Prime Minister was disliked by other Member States because of his internal politics and they therefore did not want to attend the summit (Interview 5; 17; 20); that the EU's priorities were elsewhere due to the Arab Spring (Interview 5; 13; 20 | Vida 2011); or that Hungary was just not very interested in the event (Interview 43). A complex interplay of factors and events motivated the decision to postpone the summit: 'probably there are only three or four people who know what happened' (Interview 15). Even though the Hungarian and

Polish Prime Ministers agreed to jointly prepare and co-host the summit in Warsaw (Hungarian Presidency website 2011e), Poland and not Hungary stood in the spotlights. Since the summit and the EaP Business Forum did not take place (GA=0), Hungary had no influence on these events.

Finally, the Hungarian Presidency organized a series of three workshops in Budapest for civil society representatives from EU members, EaP countries, and the Western Balkans (DemNet 2011a; 2011b; 2011c). Belarus was unofficially represented by a member of the opposition movement 'Civic Belarus'. During these workshops, the participants discussed transition experiences of new EU members, the applicability of these transition models to the EaP, and how the new Member States could support democratic transition through civil society organisations (Interview 14). During the final meeting in May 2011, the participants adopted a Transition Manifesto, reflecting the results of the conferences (DemNet 2011c). The conference was planned as a side event of the EaP Summit, where the Manifesto should be shared with decision-makers. It was the only event, related to the summit, that was not postponed. In line with Hungary's aim to establish a long-term civil society dialogue with the Eastern neighbours, the participants agreed with Lithuania that a follow-up conference would be organized during the latter's Presidency in 2013 (Interview 14). Although Hungary reached its goals of encouraging civil society dialogue with neighbouring countries, *inter alia* the EaP, (GA=3) and these initiatives were organized at the initiative of the Hungarian Presidency (AS=3), the results were not politically relevant (PR=0) since they did not lead to tangible decisions or changes in EU policies.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 summarize the information provided *supra*. Table 2 shows the EaP-related outputs during the first half of 2011. As explained in the main article, in some instances the average of GA, AS and PR is higher than 0,56 but, due to a score of 1 for AS, the level of political influence is set at 0,56. This is because the level of influence cannot the higher than the extent to which the output is ascribed to the Presidency. In these instances, the '1' score for AS is underlined. Table 3 indicates the salience of these outputs to Hungary, based on the data provided in the sections on Hungary's preferences and priorities, as well as on the EaP-related developments during its Presidency. Table 4 shows the salience of these topics per policy area: the multilateral and political institutional framework and trade and economic relations were highly salient to the Hungarian Presidency. Bilateral political relations and energy were of rather high salience, and defence, education/research/youth, JHA and transport were of low salience.

Table 2: Influence of the Hungarian Presidency on EaP policies

Output	**Political influence: (GA+AS+PR)/9**
External energy priorities (partly EaP-related)	(3+2+1)/9=substantial (0.67)
EUSDR (partly EaP-related)	(3+2+1)/9=substantial (0.67)
Belarus, sanctions	(3+1+3)/9=limited (0.56)
Belarus, visa facilitation and readmission	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Ukraine, DCFTA	(3+1+2)/9=limited (0.56)
Moldova, trade preferences	(3+1+2)/9=limited (0.56)
Moldova, Common Aviation Agreement	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Söderköping process → platform 1	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Energy, Trans-Caspian gas pipeline	(2+1+1)/9=no (0.44)
Customs cooperation: high-level seminar	AS&PR=0.00 (no)
EaP Summit	GA=0.00 (no)
EaP Business Forum	GA=0.00 (no)
Multilateral civil society organisations' cooperation[37]	PR=0.00 (no)

Table 3: Salience of issues to the Hungarian Presidency

Output	**Mentioned in programme**	**Ego/Alter, secondary sources: priority**	**Salience**
External energy priorities (partly EaP-related)	no	yes	0.67
EUSDR (partly EaP-related)	yes	yes	1.00
Belarus, sanctions	no	yes	0.67
Belarus, visa facilitation and readmission	no	no	0.00
Ukraine, negotiations on DCFTA	yes	yes	1.00
Moldova, trade preferences	no	yes	0.67
Moldova, Common Aviation Area Agreement	no	no	0.00
Söderköping process → platform 1	no	yes	0.67
Energy, Trans-Caspian gas pipeline	no	yes	0.67
Customs cooperation: high-level seminar	no	no	0.00
EaP Summit	yes	no	0.33
EaP Business Forum	no	no	0.00

[37] Since neither the Hungarian, nor the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies exerted influence on EU policies towards EU-EaP civil society cooperation, this policy area will not be included in the comparative analysis.

Table 4: Salience of policy areas to the Hungarian Presidency

Policy area	Outputs (salience)	Salience (= MAX of all outputs in policy area)
Bilateral political relations	°Belarus, sanctions (0.67)	**0.67**
Defence	-	**0.00**
Education/research/youth	-	**0.00**
Energy	°External energy priorities (partly EaP-related) (0.67) °Trans-Caspian gas pipeline (0.67)	**0.67**
Justice and Home Affairs	°Belarus, visa facilitation and readmission (0.00) °Customs cooperation, high-level seminar (0.00)	**0.00**
Multilateral political and institutional framework	°EUSDR (partly EaP-related) (1.00) °Söderköping process → platform 1 (0.67) °EaP Summit (0.33)	**1.00**
Trade and economic relations	°Ukraine, negotiations on DCFTA (1.00) °Moldova, trade preferences (0.67) °EaP Business Forum (0.67)	**1.00**
Transport	°Moldova, Common Aviation Area Agreement (0.00)	**0.00**

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Interview 2. Polish Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 27 January 2012.
Interview 5. Polish Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 14 February 2012.
Interview 6. Hungarian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 29 February 2012.
Interview 7. Hungarian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 6 March 2012.
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Interview 16. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest, 10 May 2012.
Interview 17. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest, 11 May 2012.
Interview 20. Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 20 May 2012.
Interview 24. European External Action Service, Brussels, 31 May 2012.
Interview 27. European Commission, Brussels, 7 November 2012.
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Appendix 2: Country file – The Polish Council Presidency (2nd semester of 2011) and the Eastern Partnership

1. Poland's size, preparations and practical organisation of the Presidency

Poland has a population of more than 38 million and is thus a large EU country (membership in the set of 'large country'=1.00). Also its Presidency budget was among the highest in the EU: between 2010-2012, the total budget amounted to 430 million PLN (approximately 100 million EUR) (Polish Presidency website 2011a | Polish MFA 2012c, p. 55).

The preparatory work for the Polish Presidency started in October 2007, when the training needs were identified and other countries' experiences were analysed (Kaczyński 2011c | Polish Presidency website 2011i | Polish MFA 2012c). Practical preparations started in July 2008, after Mikołaj Dowgielewicz was appointed Government Plenipotentiary for the Preparation of the Presidency. The official preparation programme was adopted by the Government in January 2009, the Presidency website was launched soon after. Throughout 2009 the staff training started, the budget was approved and sponsors were sought. A special temporary unit of 60 officials was set up within the MFA, responsible for logistics, human resources, budget and promotion (Interview 20). The Government adopted the preliminary priority programme in July 2010, and the final programme on 31 May 2011. Around 1200 officials received training on institutional and procedural aspects of EU policies, languages and soft skills (Mierzwa 2011 | Polish MFA 2012c, pp. 61-63). In total, the Presidency was run by approximately 1500 officials, 250-300 of which in the permrep (Kaczyński 2011c | Karoliewski & Sus 2011).

Preparations for EaP policies were re-oriented due to the rescheduling of the EaP Summit (Interview 18; 20). Poland initially developed strategies to put the EaP on the agenda and cooperated with Hungary for the planned summit of May 2011. When in early 2011 the decision was taken to postpone the event, the Polish Government started preparations for the summit and the Ministries started to prepare for sectoral conferences. As was the case for Hungary, the preparations were somewhat complicated until the end of 2009, since it was not clear how the competences would be distributed between the chairs of the different EU institutions (Kaczyński 2009).

Poland's EU policy formulation was reorganized a few years before the start of its Presidency (see e.g. Kaminska 2010; 2013). Since 1996, the Office of the Committee for European Integration (Polish abbreviation: UKIE) had been charged with the coordination of Polish EU policies, implementation of EU law and representation of Poland before the European Court of Justice. UKIE also provided support to the Committee for European Integration (KIE) and the European Committee of the Council of Ministers (KERM), two standing committees of the Government, consisting of a number of Ministers responsible for EU-related policies. KIE was responsible for all strategic decisions concerning Poland's integration with the EU, while KERM manages day-to-day decision-making and the formulation of positions on EU affairs. In 2009, KIE was renamed 'Committee for European Affairs' (KSE), and UKIE was liquidated: its staff was transferred to the MFA, under the leadership of the Foreign Minister (Mierzwa 2011 | Polish MFA 2012c). The head of UKIE, Dowgielewicz, became State Secretary for European Affairs and Secretary of the KSE (Polish MFA 2012a; 2012b). This restructuring was aimed at ruling out misunderstandings and turf wars between the MFA and UKIE that had emerged in the past. In practice, some frictions between Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski and the other Ministries were still signalled. The fact that the EU Ambassador works for the MFA and

reports to the Foreign Minister also complicated the communication between the Prime Minister and the permrep (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010 | Kaczyński 2011c).
I assign a membership score of 1.00 in the set of 'adequate preparation': the staff was appointed and trained well in advance, the priorities were clearly formulated and communicated timely, and no substantial problems were found with regard to the Presidency planning.
With regard to the division of labour between the capital and the permrep, I assign a membership score of 0.33 in 'Brussels-based Presidency'. The interviewees confirmed that the permrep played an important role, but the priorities were developed in Warsaw and the Brussels-based officials had limited autonomy in taking decisions on the content of compromises (Interview 2; 8; 10; 21). A Polish representative explained that the permrep is less important for Poland than for small countries, since Poland had a relatively large budget and comfortable transport connections to travel back and forth between Brussels and Warsaw (Interview 3).

2. Poland's reputation in the EU

In 2004, when Poland joined the EU, there was a weak left-wing government in the country with no explicit EU positions. In the next elections, the right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS) won substantial popular support. Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz and later on Jarosław Kaczyński became Prime Minister, while the latter's twin brother Lech was elected President in 2005. The Kaczyński brothers regularly clashed with the other EU members and institutions, due to their unpredictable and sometimes extreme positions and their often Eurosceptic attitude. The PiS party was defeated in the early elections in 2007 by the liberal-conservative Civic Platform party (PO), and its leader, Donald Tusk, became Prime Minister. Under the new Government, Poland's reputation in the EU fundamentally changed. The country's politicians and officials presented their point of view in a more sophisticated and cooperative way and their EU policy became increasingly 'Europeanized' (Kaczyński 2009 | Kaminska 2010 | Wisniewski 2010b | Shapovalova & Kapuśniak 2011 | Kaminska 2013). In addition, Poland's economy performed well in comparison with other EU Member States, which further contributed to its increasingly positive reputation (Łada 2011a | Pomorska & Vanhoonacker 2012).
Still, as a large country with some strong interests, observers described the Presidency period as a challenge and a maturity test of Polish membership in the EU (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010 | Karoliewski & Sus 2011). For example in energy policy, Poland traditionally voices somewhat inconsistent positions. On the one hand, it advocates for a common European external energy policy, in order to reduce the country's (and the EU's) dependence on Russian energy supplies (EUObserver 2011, 7 June). Poland imports around 57% of its consumed natural gas (Energy Delta Institute 2012b) and 90% of its crude oil from Russia (International Energy Agency 2011). On the other hand, the controversial exploitation of shale gas in Poland motivated Poland to lobby against stricter EU regulation on this issue (EurActiv 2011, 5 October). In addition, due to its dependence on coal plants for electricity production, Poland often blocks common EU policies on climate change (Kaczyński 2009 | Wisniewski 2010b). When the country vetoed a more ambitious roadmap for the reduction of CO_2 emissions one week before the start of its Presidency (EUObserver 2011, 22 June), this raised concern over possible unpredictable behaviour (Pomorska & Vanhoonacker 2012). Also when the Polish Presidency logo appeared on posters for a coal lobbyists' conference in Brussels in December 2011, simultaneously with the Durban climate conference, Green MEPs and NGOs were furious (EurActiv 2011, 30 November). However, apart from these incidents, there were no noteworthy incidents that harmed Poland's reputation, especially with regard to external policies.

Over the past decade, especially in the run-up to the Presidency, Poland invested very much in networks with the Member States and EU institutions. As was the case for Hungary, the Visegrád group countries could to a certain extent be a forum for coordination of EaP-related positions (Visegrád Group 2008). In addition, Dowgielewicz held coordination meetings with representatives from nearly all EU Member States before the start of the Presidency (Polish MFA 2012c, p. 37). Relations with Germany are particularly good since Tusk assumed office in 2007. Poland is also active in cooperation and coordination within the Weimar triangle, consisting of France, Germany and Poland (Die Welt 2011, 7 February | Ochmann 2012). Poland and its trio partners, Denmark and Cyprus, had nine meetings at the level of Presidency coordinators between 2008 and 2011, but the Polish Government also set up intense cooperation with Hungary (Polish MFA 2012c, pp. 37-38). Contrary to the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian trio, the Poland-Denmark-Cyprus cooperation was rather symbolic (Jensen & Nedergaard 2014). Poland involved the other trio members only when strictly necessary (Kaczyński 2011c), and Polish interviewees did not estimate trio cooperation as significant, especially with regard to EaP policies.

The Polish relations with the EEAS were, officially, very good. Before the start of the Polish Presidency, Sikorski agreed with Ashton on a few dates on which he would replace her (Karoliewski & Sus 2011 | Kucharczyk & Łada 2011). Sikorski promised to be her 'loyal deputy' (EUObserver 2011, 2 July) and was glad to be active on the Eastern neighbourhood, thus maintaining the interest of the EU members in this region (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010 | Gostyńska 2011). However, the cooperation of Poland with Ashton was not always as smooth. To begin with, the HR/VP and the EEAS did not provide input regarding external affairs to the trio programme, contrary to the Council rules of procedure (Kaczyński 2011c | Council of the European Union 2011, 17 June). The HR/VP instead presented a work programme for the remaining period of her mandate (Interview 11 | Culley *et al.* 2011). Besides, Sikorski scheduled a Gymnich meeting in September 2011, neglecting Ashton's request not to do so just before a crucial UN meeting (EUObserver 2011, 2 July). He was also one of the 12 signatories of an informal letter in December 2011, which complained, *inter alia*, about the poor performance of the HR/VP and the EEAS, the turf battles between the EEAS and the European Commission, poor communication ahead of Foreign Affairs Council meetings, and a general lack of political leadership of Ashton (EUObserver 2012, 6 January).

Cooperation with the European Commission and the Council Secretariat was evaluated positively by the actors involved (confirmed during Interview 8; 9; 10; 21; 22; 23; 25; 26). The entire Polish Government met with the College of European Commissioners in Brussels one year before the start of the Presidency, and the European Commission paid a return visit to Warsaw in July 2011 (Polish MFA 2012c, p. 39).

The Presidency also established permanent cooperation with Herman Van Rompuy's office, and members of his cabinet visited Warsaw in January 2011 (Polish MFA 2012c, p. 39).

As to the European Parliament, the Polish MEPs have established a 'Klub Polski' several years ago, which serves as a platform for coordinating efforts to promote Polish interests in the assembly (Kaczyński 2009 | Furman 2010 | Wisniewski 2010b). However, this platform did not play a special role during the Polish Presidency (Interview 2; 3; 18; 20). One official from the Polish MFA (Interview 18) did not even know the club. During the interviews, the relations with the European Parliament were not mentioned as particularly good or bad. However, the evaluation of the Polish Presidency in the *JCMS* Annual Review (Pomorska & Vanhoonacker 2012) pointed out that Polish officials successfully interacted with the European Parliament and contributed to less strained relations between the two legislative institutions. The Presidency invested a lot in relations with the European

Parliament, through training of Ministers on Presidency-European Parliament cooperation, the appointment and training of liaison officers for the European Parliament within every Ministry, as well as numerous consultation meetings with MEPs, political groups, committees and members of the European Parliament Secretariat (Polish MFA 2012c, pp. 41-48).
Since Poland is – save a few exceptions on sustainability in energy policy – considered to give the 'right example' at home, has a pro-EU political leadership, and its civil servants have extensive soft knowledge and can count on broad networks, a membership score of 1.00 is assigned in the set 'good reputation'.

3. The domestic political and administrative context

The Polish Government and administration faced two important internal challenges before and during the Presidency (see e.g. Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010 | Kucharczyk & Łada 2012). Firstly, as discussed *supra*, the administration had not yet fully digested the incorporation of UKIE into the MFA. Secondly, the legislative elections for the Senate and Sejm of 9 October 2011, in the middle of the Presidency period, were expected to put additional pressure on the Presidency team. In theory, the elections could have been postponed until December but, to the surprise of some civil servants (Interview 19; 53), they were scheduled for October. It might have been part of the ruling coalition's strategy to get re-elected: if the Government could show good results during its Presidency and illustrate how it improved Poland's position in the EU, the voters would be more supportive. In addition, it has been argued that political instability can jeopardize a Presidency (Král, Bartovic & Řiháčková 2009 | Dierckx & Vermeersch 2011), an argument which could be used to convince the electorate that a change in Government would not be desirable.
While the Polish Government had taken measures to improve coordination of EU affairs, and there was quite some support for the ruling coalition, the planned elections resulted in a less stable domestic political environment – the membership score in this condition is 0.67.
In the elections, the ruling coalition of PO and the Peasant's Party won a majority: it was the first time since the collapse of communism that the same Prime Minister could rule for two successive terms (Reuters 2011, 9 October). The same two parties formed a new Government, but some reorganisation took place as from mid-November. Representatives from the Member States, the administration in Warsaw and EU institutions did not mention important repercussions of the election campaign and results on Poland's Presidency. The daily work continued as planned, even in those Ministries where the Minister was replaced (Interview 1; 2; 8; 18; 22). If there was an impact of the elections, this was more logistical than political: the exact date was known less than two months before the elections took place, and politicians tried to organize as many Presidency-related events as possible before October (Interview 19; 53).

4. The external political and economic context

Although the Member States had, to a certain extent, become used to the new institutional landscape during the Hungarian Presidency, the practices were still not fully established (Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010 | Kucharczyk & Łada 2011). As was the case during the Hungarian

Presidency, the external political context was rather[38] unfavourable (0.33) during the Polish Presidency. The Arab Spring continued also in the second half of 2011, and renewed authoritarian trends in Belarus and Ukraine did not render the political climate for deeper cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries more positive (see e.g. Karoliewski & Sus 2011 | Łada 2011b | EUObserver 2011, 7 June | Pomorska & Vanhoonacker 2012). Also the financial and economic crises in the EU continued to dominate the political agenda, justifying a membership score of 0.00 in 'economic prosperity'.
Table 1 summarizes how the conditions for influence apply to the Polish Presidency.

Table 1: Poland and the conditions for influence

Country specific	Adequate preparation	1.00
	Brussels-based Presidency	0.33
	Good reputation	1.00
	Large country	1.00
	Stable domestic political and administrative context	0.67
Issue- or policy area specific	High salience to the Presidency	See Table 3
	Favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors (education and research, youth, trade and economic relations, transport)	0.67
	Favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors (bilateral political relations, defence, energy, home affairs, justice, multilateral institutional framework)	0.33
Context	Favourable external political context	0.33
	Economic prosperity	0.00

5. Poland's preferences and priorities towards the EaP region

5.1. Preferences of Poland in the Eastern neighbourhood

Poland is one of the most active supporters of strengthening the EU's relations with the Eastern neighbourhood (Copsey & Pomorska 2010 | Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2010 | Knutelská 2011) and views the EU as a way of promoting its interests towards the East (Szczepanik 2011). Poland's interest in the EaP countries, most importantly Belarus and Ukraine, is mainly driven by historical links with these countries. Whereas in the early 20th century Poland's main aim was to regain lost Polish territories from Russia and the Soviet Union, throughout the 1970s the view of Kultura, a group of Polish dissidents in exile, became increasingly dominant. The members of Kultura advocated that

[38] There were no crucial elections in EU Member States: the Parliamentary elections in Denmark and Presidential elections in Ireland that took place during Poland's Presidency did not significantly affect the EU agenda.

Poland support the freedom and democratization of these countries and form a strategic alliance with them, which was considered the best way to ensure Polish independence and peaceful relations with Russia. In post-communist Poland, this view on the neighbouring countries remains predominant, and democracy promotion towards the East contributes to Poland's national affirmation in the EU. The best way to establish close and stable relations with the Eastern neighbouring countries, in the view of the contemporary Polish political elite, would be to include them in the Western structures (Snyder 2003 | Klatt 2011).

Since enlargement of the EU to the East is as yet not feasible, Poland tries to deepen the cooperation in the framework of the ENP as much as possible. As early as in 2003, before the ENP existed and prior to Poland's accession to the EU, the country's Foreign Minister called for the creation of an 'Eastern Dimension' of EU policies (Polish MFA 2003). This would, in analogy with the Northern Dimension Initiative, counterbalance the Russia-centred Eastern policy of the EU and offer a membership perspective to its Eastern neighbours. At that time, the idea was considered too ambitious and received only lukewarm reactions (Kaminska 2007 | Pisarska 2011). Poland was more successful in uploading domestic preferences to the EU level, when in 2008 it proposed jointly with Sweden to set up the EaP (Kaminska 2010). The policy framework is less ambitious and more technical than the proposed Eastern Dimension, and does not include an explicit membership prospect. Still, Poland mainly considers the ENP/EaP a stepping stone for further enlargement to the East (Kaczyński 2009 | Wisniewski 2010b). Regarding Belarus, Poland is in favour of 'cold war tactics', a combination of fundraising for pro-democracy forces and visa liberalisation for ordinary citizens (EUObserver 2011, 11 January). The Arab Spring provided an additional argument for Poland to get the EU involved in the East: Tusk argued that engagement of the EU in the East could prevent violent escalations like in North Africa (Frankfurter Allgemeine 2011, 30 June). The presence of a Polish Embassy in each EaP country also illustrates the importance the country attaches to the region.

Poland wishes to strengthen cooperation with the EaP in a broad range of policy areas. Most importantly, Poland favours increased mobility between the EU and the EaP countries, in terms of goods as well as people. This should be achieved through DCFTAs, visa facilitation and if possible visa liberalisation, increased people-to-people contacts (through tourism, business and student exchange), as well as transport and energy links (Wisniewski 2010b | EUObserver 2011, 11 January). Transport cooperation with the EaP countries is promoted especially with regard to those countries bordering Poland. The country's multiannual transport policy plan for 2005-2025 (Krystek 2005) pays considerable attention to Poland's Eastern neighbouring countries. As discussed *supra*, Poland plays a double role in EU energy policy. On the one hand, its leadership advocates for a common external EU approach, while in other (mostly internal) aspects of energy policy the country resists further EU regulation. The salience to Poland of concrete EaP-related developments is summarized in Table 3 at the end of this document.

5.2. Polish Presidency priorities on the EaP

The Polish Government formulated six national priorities in 2010 (Kaczyński 2011c | Polish MFA 2012c, p. 125): 1) starting discussions on the multi-annual financial framework for 2014-2020, 2) deepening the EU's relations with Eastern Europe, 3) strengthening the internal market, 4) deepening the external energy policy, 5) increasing the EU's capacities in CSDP, and 6) enhancing the European intellectual capital. These national priorities were later integrated in the Presidency programme, which focused on three main priorities: 1) European integration as a source of growth, 2) a secure Europe, and 3) Europe benefitting from openness (Polish Presidency website 2011j).

According to the programme, Poland planned to 'support all actions undertaken by the High Representative and the EEAS, in particular in matters relating to the stability, democratisation and development of the EU neighbourhood' (Polish Presidency website 2011j, p. 14). As to the EaP in general, Poland expected progress in the negotiations on Association Agreements and DCFTAs, and wished to improve and expand sectoral cooperation (Polish Presidency website 2011j, p. 10). The most optimistic target was to sign an Association Agreement with Ukraine by the end of 2011 (Szesztay & Cieszkowski 2010).

The EaP was also prioritised in specific policy areas. Poland wished to strengthen trade and economic cooperation with the EaP region, notably through concluding DCFTA negotiations with Ukraine by the end of 2011, starting negotiations on DCFTAs with Georgia and Moldova during its term in office, and other activities to strengthen economic cooperation with the Eastern neighbourhood (Polish Presidency website 2011j, pp. 15-17).

In JHA, the Presidency wished to renew cooperation with the EaP countries on combating drug-related crime and achieve progress in, *inter alia*, the establishment of the Euro-East police training programme for EaP countries. Furthermore, special attention would be paid to visa facilitation for citizens of EaP countries and Russia. The external dimension of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice was to be enhanced, and efforts in this area would be coordinated with other policy areas such as trade, development and defence. Again, particular attention was given to cooperation with EaP countries in border protection, management of migration, and police cooperation (Polish Presidency website 2011j, pp. 23-25).

Energy policy occupied an important part of the programme, both in its internal and external dimensions. As to the latter, the Presidency's main priority was to strengthen the EU's position towards 'major producers […] and transit States' (Polish Presidency website 2011j, p. 8). Poland wanted to hold a debate on the ways to give the EU a stronger voice externally in the global energy dialogue, and adopt conclusions on concrete actions to be taken during the TTE Council of November (Polish Presidency website 2011j, p. 22). Poland also planned to support membership of EaP countries in the Energy Community, in order to harmonize national regulatory systems and to implement the principles of EU law in this region (Ćwiek-Karpowicz & Wojna 2010).

In transport policy, the Polish Presidency wished to adopt Council conclusions on cooperation with the EU's neighbouring countries, in particular at the Eastern border. Cooperation with neighbouring countries was to be adapted to the new conditions under the revised TEN-T guidelines. The priority programme emphasized that transport links with third countries would improve economic development and social mobility in the whole EU (Polish Presidency website 2011j, p. 21). According to a key official from the Polish Transport Ministry, the Government is usually not as interested in transport cooperation with the EaP as it was during its Presidency: 'the engagement of Poland in transport cooperation with the EaP is like a sinusoid. Before the Presidency it was very low, during the Presidency very high, and now again it is very low' (Interview 22). Apparently, having the Presidency constituted a reason for Poland to step up its involvement in transport cooperation with the EaP countries.

6. The EaP in the second semester of 2011 and the influence of the Polish Presidency

6.1. High Presidency influence

The Polish Presidency exerted high influence in one instance: the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED),[39] a fund to support democratic movements and political parties abroad. In early 2011, before the start of the Presidency, Sikorski proposed to set up a flexible instrument for democracy promotion, primarily focused on the EU's neighbourhood. He asked Ashton to make reference to the EED in the ENP review of May (Interview 26 | European Commission/HRVP 2011, 25 May). However, not all Member States were convinced about the EED's viability and desirability. The main concerns were related to funding, a possible loss of sovereignty for individual countries in defining their priorities for democracy promotion, and suspected overlap with existing instruments. Also the intention to support political parties was controversial (Interview 4; 5). Despite this scepticism, Sikorski discussed the issue during the Gymnich meeting in September (Polish Presidency website 2011g), and the Polish Coreper Ambassador put the issue on the agenda as often as was needed to reach unanimity on the idea (Interview 1; 4; 5). A political agreement on the EED was achieved in Coreper in December, while the technical details were developed by the EEAS throughout 2012 (Polish Presidency website 2011c | EurActiv 2013, 10 January). The political agreement on the EED is a rare example of a proposal that was launched by the incoming Presidency and (partially) finalized under pressure of the same Presidency (AS=3). Putting the EED on the agenda and brokering political agreement was a substantial achievement of the Presidency's objectives, although Poland had to make serious concessions on its structure and financing in order to make the EED acceptable (GA=2) (Interview 4 | Nasieniak 2012, September). The establishment of the EED is highly politically relevant (PR=3). The possibility to support political parties abroad is novel in the EU's approach to democracy assistance. The initiative also has produced tangible results in the first years of its existence (see https://www.democracyendowment.eu/we-support/), even though its resources are very modest compared to other funds for EU democracy promotion (Youngs & Brudzinska 2012).

6.2. Substantial Presidency influence

The Polish Presidency exerted substantial influence in three dossiers.

The first two were in bilateral visa policy towards Armenia and Azerbaijan. From the start of their Presidency, members of the Polish permrep pressurized the European Commission to propose starting negotiations with both countries on visa facilitation and readmission agreements (Interview 29). Once the proposals (European Commission 2011, 19 September-a; 2011, 19 September-b) were received, the Polish EU Ambassador immediately initiated discussions at Coreper; the negotiation mandates were adopted by the Council three months later (Council of the European Union 2011, 19 December-a). Prior to the decision to start the negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission, the EU and Armenia had signed a Mobility Partnership – a non-binding framework for cooperation on the management of migration – during a meeting of Home Affairs Commissioner Malmström and the

[39] In an earlier analysis of the influence of the Polish Presidency on EaP policies (Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Orbie 2013), Polish influence was classified as substantial rather than high. In the meanwhile, the EED has gained political importance and increased its tangible impact, which results with hindsight in a higher PR score for this output.

Polish Internal Minister Miller with the Armenian Foreign Minister (European Commission 2011, 27 October). The Presidency's goal to increase mobility between the EU and EaP countries was achieved as much as was feasible at this moment (GA=3), given the considerable resistance from some Member States who are traditionally reluctant to facilitating visa requirements (Interview 3; 4; 5). Ascription to the Presidency was substantial (AS=2): the Presidency was particularly active in promoting European integration and increased mobility of the South Caucasus, and the mandates were adopted earlier than planned (Interview 4; 5; 29 | see also President of Poland 2011b). The political relevance of negotiation mandates is limited (PR=1), however: they can be of high political importance, but they do as such not necessarily reflect the final result of the negotiations.

The third example of substantial influence is in multilateral transport cooperation with the EaP, a relatively new topic in this framework.[40] The most important event in transport cooperation was the ministerial conference in Kraków (European Commission 2011, 25 October). It succeeded a European Commission Communication on transport cooperation with the EU's neighbours (European Commission 2011, 7 July), which proposed a series of initiatives to integrate the EU and EaP countries' markets and improve infrastructure connections. It furthermore envisaged the establishment of an Eastern Partnership Transport Panel (EPTP), a permanent body consisting of officials from the European Commission, the EaP countries, the EU Member States and international financial institutions. The EPTP monitors EU-EaP transport cooperation and replaces the transport dialogue in the multilateral platform on economic cooperation. The TTE Council of October endorsed the proposals and prepared the ministerial conference (Council of the European Union 2011, 6 October). During the conference, the Azerbaijani delegation at some point threatened not to sign the joint declaration if no reference was made to its territorial integrity with respect to Nagorno-Karabakh. After bilateral negotiations of Poland's Transport Minister with his Azerbaijani counterpart, the latter agreed to sign the declaration, on condition that reference was made to territorial integrity in the internal meeting report (Interview 9; 22; 25). The declaration (Council of the European Union 2011, 4 November) endorsed efforts to achieve closer market integration, increased levels of security, safety, environmental and social standards in transport, improved interconnections, and the launch of the EPTP – which would report on the results of its work during the next ministerial meeting, to be organized on proposal of the European Commission and the Presidency. Poland achieved its goal of putting transport cooperation with the EaP on the EU's agenda (GA=3). Both the Council conclusions and the Kraków conference resulted from Polish initiatives (Interview 2; 9), although their contents were based on the European Commission Communication (AS=2). The political relevance of these events is limited (PR=1): no binding decisions were taken, and the EPTP has produced no tangible results thus far.

6.3. Limited Presidency influence

Limited influence of the Polish Presidency was observed in seven dossiers, mostly in bilateral policies. Firstly, in EU-Ukraine relations the future Association Agreement, including a DCFTA, was high on the agenda throughout 2011. At the start of the Polish Presidency, negotiations on the Association Agreement were nearing conclusion. Ukraine's Ambassador to the EU hinted that his Government

[40] All EaP members except Belarus participate in the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), a technical assistance programme for 13 countries to develop transport corridors between Europe and Asia through the Black Sea region. It was the aim of the Polish Presidency to enhance transport cooperation with the EaP countries, including with Belarus.

was ready to sign the Association Agreement, without additional concessions on trade liberalisation or wording that explicitly envisaged future accession of Ukraine to the EU – a request that was frequently voiced from the Ukrainian side in the past (EUObserver 2011, 6 July). However, the arrest and subsequent conviction of Ukraine's former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, a political rival of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, was widely criticized as being politically motivated and strained the EU-Ukraine relations (EUObserver 2011, 5 August; 2011, 11 October). It became increasingly unlikely that the Association Agreement would be initialled as planned during the EU-Ukraine summit in December (EUObserver 2011, 7 November). Polish officials tried to unblock the situation in order to have concrete results on this issue during their Presidency. The Polish President and Sikorski paid several visits to Ukraine to discuss the Association Agreement at the highest level, where they consistently emphasized the need for reforms in Ukraine (Polish MFA 2011 | President of Poland 2011a; 2011d; 2011c). After a three-hour long meeting of former Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski with Yanukovych in early September, the trial was put on hold. However, it restarted days before the EaP Summit (EUObserver 2011, 27 September). Sikorski also put the issue on the agenda during the Gymnich meeting in September (EUObserver 2011, 3 September). These efforts did not lead to an improvement of political relations: a visit of Yanukovych to Brussels in October was cancelled by Van Rompuy due to discord about the Tymoshenko trial (Kyiv Post 2011, 18 October). At the same time, however, technical negotiations on the DCFTA continued and were finalized in October (Centre for Eastern Studies 2011a). This process was led by the European Commission, without involvement of the Presidency. The Association Agreement was finally not initialled during the EU-Ukraine summit, but the participants – Van Rompuy, José Manuel Barroso and Yanukovych – announced that they reached a common understanding on its contents and that it should be technically completed and initialled as soon as possible (Council of the European Union 2011, 19 December-b). The Polish Presidency thus reached its goals to a substantial degree (GA=2): the dialogue between the EU and Ukraine continued and the Association Agreement was kept on the agenda. The decision to agree on the contents without initialling the Association Agreement was relevant for not losing momentum. It was an original way of continuing dialogue without making written commitments (PR=3). However, those developments can be ascribed to the Presidency only to a limited extent (AS=1). Poland was not present during the technical negotiations and during the summit. The Presidency could not do much more than trying to mediate with Ukraine at high level and giving the Association Agreement a sense of urgency: high-level politicians were personally involved, and the Coreper Ambassador put the issue on the agenda of several meetings (Interview 4; 12; 23).

The second and third instances of limited influence were observed in bilateral trade relations with Moldova and Georgia. Negotiations on Association Agreements with both countries started in 2010, but the launch of DCFTA talks was made conditional upon the fulfilment of a set of recommendations. After a positive assessment by the European Commission, the Trade Policy Committee approved a negotiation mandate for DCFTA negotiations (European Commission 2011, 5 December). Progress in trade relations with Moldova and Georgia was a priority of Poland and the mandate was the largest possible progress in 2011 (GA=3). This decision can be ascribed to the Presidency to a limited extent (AS=1): the Polish chair of the Trade Policy Committee did accelerate the adoption of a mandate (Interview 4; 5), but the mandate had been discussed during the Hungarian Presidency, the key recommendations had been adopted much earlier, and the decision was dependent on the Commission's assessment (Interview 6; 27). Like other negotiation mandates, this decision was of limited political relevance in the context of this article (PR=1).

The fourth and fifth observations of limited Presidency influence are related to the EU's relations with Azerbaijan and, in one instance, with Turkmenistan. On the one hand, following the visit in January 2011 of European Commission President Barroso and Energy Commissioner Oettinger to Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan (see country file on Hungary), discussions had started in Coreper on a negotiation mandate for a binding treaty to build a trans-Caspian gas pipeline system. Unanimity on the mandate was reached in July (Polish Presidency website 2011e), and the General Affairs Council of September formally approved it (Council of the European Union 2011, 12 September). On the other hand, the Council adopted in October a negotiation mandate for the European Commission on a Common Aviation Area Agreement with Azerbaijan, aimed at market opening in parallel with regulatory harmonisation in the fields of safety, security, competition and environmental standards, in replacement of bilateral agreements between 21 Member States and Azerbaijan (Council of the European Union 2011, 6 October). Both in transport and energy relations, the Presidency's goals were achieved (GA=3) in that the basis for further cooperation with Azerbaijan was generally broadened (Interview 22) and that concrete steps were taken in diversifying energy supplies to the EU. However, as for most other negotiation mandates, their political relevance is limited (PR=1), and their adoption can be ascribed to the Presidency only as far as the speed of adoption is concerned (AS=1) (Interview 8).

Sixthly, the Presidency exerted (very) limited influence on the agenda for energy cooperation with third countries. Polish officials made many efforts to have Council conclusions adopted on the external aspect of energy security (Council of the European Union 2011, 24 November), which was an important priority for Poland (Interview 8). The Council conclusions were based on a European Commission Communication (European Commission 2011, 7 September) and endorsed four priority areas. The Ministers agreed that the external dimension of energy policy should be strengthened and coordinated between the Member States, between the Council and the EEAS, and between the different policy areas. In addition, cooperation with third countries should be enhanced through multilateral instruments (the Energy Community and the Energy Charter Treaty), strengthening of infrastructure and diversification of supply routes, market integration, and promotion of increased safety and security. The Council also wished to deepen partnerships with key global suppliers. Finally, the Council envisaged to support developing economies in increasing security of the supply chain, promotion of renewable energy, and the implementation of regulatory reforms for the energy market. The conclusions covered the whole world and not only the EaP countries, but those countries were – implicitly and sometimes explicitly – mentioned as important. The adoption of Council conclusions was considered the Presidency's most important achievement in energy policy (Interview 2), Poland's goals were fully achieved on this point (GA=3). However, this can be ascribed to the Presidency only to a limited extent (AS=1): most points of common interest and of discussion had been identified during the first semester of 2011 (Interview 8, see also supra). Even though it was the first time that such detailed Council conclusions were agreed on external energy policy, their political relevance was limited, since they had no clear tangible impact (PR=1).

Finally, the Presidency took the initiative to adopt Council conclusions on multilateral JHA cooperation with the EaP (Council of the European Union 2011, 14 December), based on a European Commission communication (European Commission 2011, 26 September). The Presidency achieved its goals (GA=3) in that the conclusions envisaged strengthened cooperation with the EaP in the field of migration, security and justice. Ascription and political relevance were limited (AS, PR=1), because the conclusions followed a Commission Communication, did not differ from the contents of this Communication, and did not have tangible implications on EU-EaP relations.

6.4. No Presidency influence

During the second half of 2011 various developments in EU-EaP relations took place, on which the Polish Presidency did not exert influence. As was the case for Hungary, these can be divided in two groups. On the one hand, there are a number of outputs that were the result of Polish initiatives, but that do not qualify as examples of Presidency influence on EU policies. On the other hand, there were five instances in which Presidency influence was theoretically impossible; they are irrelevant for this research and will not be further considered.

Among the relevant developments, the biennial multilateral EaP Summit is the most remarkable. It was the 'cherry on the cake' (Interview 20) of the Polish Presidency and of EaP policies in 2011; nevertheless, I score Poland's influence at 0.44, just below the 0.50 threshold for being considered an instance of Presidency influence. As discussed *supra*, the event was initially planned for May 2011, under the Hungarian Presidency, but it was postponed due to logistical and allegedly other, more political reasons. Despite the agreement between Orbán and Tusk to jointly prepare and co-host the summit (Hungarian Presidency website 2011e), Poland managed to present it as a Polish event. In the official press release announcing the summit, Hungary was not mentioned as a co-host (European Commission 2011, 28 September), and Orbán barely appeared in the media (on his comments, see: EUObserver 2011, 30 September). At the press conference at the end of the summit, Orbán spoke fourth, after Tusk, Van Rompuy and Barroso. Still, although Poland raised its own profile during the summit, its outcome was not the Presidency's most preferred (GA=2). It is true that the summit's joint statement (Council of the European Union 2011, 30 September-b), was ambitious and gave political impetus to deeper cooperation in a broad range of policy areas, including trade, visa facilitation (at a later stage liberalization), energy, transport, agriculture, environment, communication technologies, education and culture. However, the joint statement also 'acknowledge[d] the European aspirations and the European choice of some partners' (Council of the European Union 2011, 30 September-b, p. 1), which is a much more careful formulation than an explicit membership prospect and did not go as far as Poland and some EaP countries would have liked (EUObserver 2011, 21 June). In addition, Belarus boycotted the summit; Poland had favoured the highest possible representation and tried to agree in Coreper to invite Lukashenko despite the EU's travel ban against him (Interview 1; 5), but this was unacceptable for some Member States (Interview 4). The EU finally invited Belarus' Foreign Minister Martynau, who declined the invitation (EurActiv 2011, 30 September), prompting the Polish Presidency to set up an empty chair to symbolize Belarus' absence (EUObserver 2011, 30 September). The Belarusian Ambassador attended the start of the summit, but left on the first day in reaction to Tusk's and Van Rompuy's meetings with representatives of the Belarusian opposition (Polish Presidency website 2011g | EurActiv 2011, 30 September). In response to the deteriorating human rights, democracy and rule of law situation and the worsening of media freedom in Belarus, the EU members adopted a separate declaration in which they expressed concern about these developments (Council of the European Union 2011, 30 September-a). A third failure of the summit was that this document did not mention the human rights situation in other EaP countries and that it was not co-signed by them. Tusk did not answer questions about the reasons for this (EU TV Newsroom 2011, 30 September-b), while analysts and officials put forward several explanations for the attitude of the five EaP countries: Ukraine and Moldova wanted to avoid trade problems with their neighbours, Georgia feared retaliation in the form of Belarus' recognition of its two breakaway regions Abkhazia and South-Ossetia, and Armenia did not want to offend its fellow member of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (Interview 5 | EUObserver 2011, 30 September); in addition, if the other EaP countries would align themselves with

the declaration, its contents could be used against them at a later stage, particularly against Ukraine (Interview 5; 12; 16). The results of the summit can be ascribed to the Presidency to a limited extent (AS=1), mainly due to legal-institutional restrictions: Poland hosted the event, but Van Rompuy chaired the high-level meetings. Some preparations, *inter alia* on the joint statement and the invitation to Belarus, took place in Coreper under the chairmanship of the Polish Ambassador, but most preparatory work was done in the COEST working party (Interview 18; 20) which is chaired by an EEAS official. The negotiations with the EaP countries on the declaration on human rights were led by Ashton (Interview 24; 28). Also the political relevance of the summit was limited (PR=1): it was a politically important meeting at high level, which undeniably contributed to the continuation of EU involvement with the region and confirmed the foundations for future cooperation (see e.g. Kucharczyk & Łada 2012), but the summit as such had no tangible impact on EU policies towards the region.

Poland was also very active in organizing and hosting other multilateral events and conferences. In three instances, Poland did not play a special role other than being the host country, so these cannot be ascribed to the Presidency (AS=0). Firstly, the Wielkopolska Region hosted the inaugural meeting of the Conference of Regional and Local authorities in the EaP (CORLEAP) in Poznań in September (Committee of the Regions 2011c). The recommendations to the participants of the EaP Summit stressed that cooperation between local and regional authorities would contribute to bringing the EaP countries closer to the EU (Committee of the Regions 2011b). CORLEAP was organized at the initiative of the Committee of the Regions and co-chaired by its President Bresso and Neighbourhood Commissioner Füle. The idea of establishing CORLEAP was formulated long before the start of the Polish Presidency: the European Commission invited the Committee of the Regions in December 2008 to establish a platform of regular dialogue and cooperation with local and regional authorities from the EaP countries (Committee of the Regions 2011a). Secondly, Poznań hosted the annual Civil Society Forum (CSF) in November, bringing together representatives from 260 NGOs from the EU and the EaP countries (European External Action Service 2011c). The previous editions had been held in Brussels (2009) and Berlin (2010), while the 2012 edition took place in Sweden. It was thus rather unique that the country holding the Presidency hosted the CSF, which illustrates Poland's commitment to the region. However, since the CSF is an annual event, its organisation cannot be ascribed to the Presidency. Thirdly, Poland hosted the first EaP Business Forum in Sopot, simultaneously with the EaP Summit, where politicians, representatives of business associations and entrepreneurs from the EU and the EaP discussed the consequences of advances in trade liberalisation (ENPI info centre 2011, 6 October). The event had no political relevance (PR=0), since it did not yield tangible results and did not significantly change the framework of EU cooperation with the EaP.

In multilateral cooperation on police training, Poland did not achieve its goals (GA=0). The Presidency wished to make progress in the establishment of the Euro-East police training programme. It organized and hosted a preparatory meeting in August (Polish Presidency website 2011k) which was, however, not followed-up:; several officials from EU institutions and Member States, including Poland, did not know exactly what the programme was about (Interview 5; 10; 16; 23). The European Commission Communication that was expected in October 2011 was published more than a year later (European Commission 2012, 21 December), so the project was delayed.

The Polish Presidency also took a number of multilateral EaP-related initiatives, which had no political relevance as defined in this research (PR=0). Poland organized and hosted conferences for EU and EaP Education and Science Ministers (Polish Presidency website 2011d; 2011h), Economy

Ministers (Economic Forum 2011) and Agriculture Ministers (Polish Presidency website 2011f),[41] as well as an expert meeting on EU-EaP cooperation in combating drug-related crime (Polish Presidency website 2011b). These meetings reviewed EU-EaP cooperation in the respective policy areas and discussed ways to strengthen this in the future, but did as such not have considerable importance or tangible political implications. Furthermore, the Civil Society Conference (Polish Institute for International Relations 2011), which was organized in parallel with the EaP Summit, did not yield tangible results nor did it introduce new ways of cooperation between the EU and the EaP countries. Also the high-level seminar on customs cooperation with the EaP, which followed-up on the seminar of April 2011 in Budapest (European Commission 2011, 21 October) and prepared Council conclusions (Council of the European Union 2011, 6 December), has not resulted in concrete decision-making yet. Finally, Poland established the Eastern Partnership Academy of Public Administration in Warsaw during its Presidency and organized two training sessions in the same year (Centre for Eastern Studies 2011b | National School of Public Administration 2011). It is part of the National School of Public Administration and is financed by the Polish Government from development assistance funds. Since the institute is a national instrument for cooperation with the EaP countries, it does not constitute an EU policy and is not further considered in this study.

In sum, although these multilateral events did entail (temporarily) increased attention of the EU members and institutions to the EaP, they can as such not be referred to as examples of Presidency influence on the EU's EaP policies.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 present the findings on the influence of the Polish Presidency on EaP policies. Table 2 summarizes the EaP-related outputs during the second half of 2011, structured according to the level influence of the Polish Presidency. As was the case for the Hungarian Presidency, for some instances the level of political influence was defined at 0,56 (= limited) because the degree of AS was limited – even though the average of GA, AS and PR would be higher than 0,56. For these instances, the '1' of AS is underlined.

[41] As explained in the article comparing the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies, cooperation on agriculture with the EaP countries will not be considered in the analysis. This is because Poland did not exert influence, and during the other two Presidencies there were no noteworthy policy developments on agriculture cooperation. It would make no sense to include policy areas in which neither of the three Presidencies exerted influence.

Table 2: Influence of the Polish Presidency on EaP policies

Output	**Political influence: (GA+AS+PR)/3**
EED	(2+3+3)/9=high (0.89)
Armenia, visa facilitation and readmission	(3+3+1)/9=substantial (0.78)
Azerbaijan, visa facilitation and readmission	(3+3+1)/9=substantial (0.78)
Transport, ministerial conference	(3+2+1)/9=substantial (0.67)
Ukraine, Association Agreement	(2+1+3)/9=limited (0.56)
Moldova, DCFTA	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Georgia, DCFTA	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Energy, Trans-Caspian gas pipeline	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Azerbaijan, aviation agreement	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Energy, Council conclusions	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
JHA, Council conclusions	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
EaP Summit	(2+1+1)/9=no (0.44)
CORLEAP, inaugural meeting	AS=0.00 (no)
EaP Civil Society Forum[42]	AS=0.00 (no)
EaP Business Forum	PR=0.00 (no)
Police training	GA=0.00 (no)
Education, ministerial conference	PR=0.00 (no)
Economy, ministerial conference	PR=0.00 (no)
Drug-related crime, expert meeting	PR=0.00 (no)
Customs cooperation, high-level seminar	PR=0.00 (no)
EaP Civil Society Conference[43]	PR=0.00 (no)

[42] Since neither the Polish, nor the Hungarian and Lithuanian Presidencies exerted influence on EU policies towards EU-EaP civil society cooperation, this policy area will not be included in the comparative analysis.

[43] See previous footnote.

Table 3 shows the salience to the Polish Presidency of these outputs. It is a summary of the sections *supra*, dealing with Poland's preferences and priorities and on the EaP-related developments during the Polish Presidency. Some concrete issues were not literally mentioned as priorities, but the Presidency programme indicated that Poland wished to achieve progress in these areas. I treat such issues as if they were mentioned in the programme and put (yes) between brackets.
Table 4 (below) summarizes the salience of the individual outputs per policy area. It shows that six out of eight EaP-related policy areas were highly salient to the Polish Presidency, while defence was not salient and education/research/youth rather not salient.

Table 3: Salience of issues to the Polish Presidency

Output	**Mentioned in programme**	**Ego/Alter, secondary sources: priority**	**Salience**
EED	(yes)	yes	1.00
Armenia, visa facilitation and readmission	yes	yes	1.00
Azerbaijan, visa facilitation and readmission	yes	yes	1.00
Transport, ministerial conference	(yes)	yes	1.00
Ukraine, Association Agreement	yes	yes	1.00
Moldova, DCFTA	yes	yes	1.00
Georgia, DCFTA	yes	yes	1.00
Energy, Trans-Caspian pipeline	no	yes	0.67
Azerbaijan, aviation agreement	(yes)	yes	1.00
Energy, Council conclusions	yes	yes	1.00
JHA, Council conclusions	yes	yes	1.00
EaP Summit	yes	yes	1.00
CORLEAP, inaugural meeting	no	no	0.00
EaP Business Forum	(yes)	no	0.33
Police training	yes	no	0.33
Education, ministerial conference	(yes)	no	0.33
Economy, ministerial conference	(yes)	no	0.33
Drug-related crime, expert meeting	yes	no	0.33
Customs cooperation, high-level seminar	no	no	0.00

Table 4: Salience of policy areas to the Polish Presidency

Policy area	Outputs (salience)	Salience (= MAX of all outputs in policy area)
Bilateral political relations	°Ukraine, Association Agreement (1.00)	1.00
Defence	-	0.00
Education/research/youth	°Education, ministerial conference (0.33)	0.33
Energy	°Trans-Caspian gas pipeline (0.67) °Council conclusions (partly EaP-related) (1.00)	1.00
Justice and Home Affairs	°Armenia, visa facilitation and readmission (1.00) °Azerbaijan, visa facilitation and readmission (1.00) °JHA Council conclusions (1.00) °Police training (0.33) °Drug-related crime, conference (0.33) °Customs cooperation, high-level seminar (0.00)	1.00
Multilateral political and institutional framework	°EED (1.00) °EaP Summit (1.00) °CORLEAP inaugural meeting (0.00)	1.00
Trade and economic relations	°Moldova, DCFTA (1.00) °Georgia, DCFTA (1.00) °EaP Business Forum (0.33) °Economy, ministerial conference (0.33)	1.00
Transport	°Ministerial conference (1.00) °Azerbaijan, aviation agreement (1.00)	1.00

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Interview 2. Polish Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 27 January 2012.
Interview 3. Polish Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 31 January 2012.
Interview 4. Dutch Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 14 February 2012.
Interview 5. Polish Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 14 February 2012.
Interview 6. Hungarian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 29 February 2012.
Interview 8. General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Brussels, 2 April 2012.
Interview 9. General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Brussels, 3 April 2012.
Interview 10. General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Brussels, 4 April 2012.
Interview 11. European External Action Service, Brussels, 18 April 2012.
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Interview 20. Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 20 May 2012.
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Interview 22. Polish Ministry of Transport, Construction and Maritime Economy, Warsaw, 22 May 2012.
Interview 23. Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 23 May 2012.
Interview 24. European External Action Service, Brussels, 31 May 2012.
Interview 25. European Commission, Brussels, 16 October 2012.
Interview 26. European Commission, Brussels, 24 October 2012.
Interview 27. European Commission, Brussels, 7 November 2012.
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Interview 29. European Commission, Brussels, 23 November 2012.
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Appendix 3: Country file – The Lithuanian Council Presidency (2nd semester of 2013) and the Eastern Partnership

1. Lithuania's size, preparations and practical organisation of the Presidency

Lithuania is a small State with about 3 million inhabitants, clearly not a member of the set of large countries (membership score=0.00). The country's Presidency budget was in proportion with its size: between 2012 and 2014, Lithuania spent around 214 million LTL or 60 million EUR (Lucenko 2011 | Seimas 2011b). However, interviewees did not consider the size of their country as a disadvantage, quite the contrary: they believed that the small size of Lithuania would be an asset in pursuing its goals, due to shorter bureaucratic chains, a flexible administration, and an honest broker reputation (Interview 31; 32; 34; 36; 37; 38; 40; 44; 47; 49 | Baltic Course 2011, 30 June).

Vytautas Leškevičius, one of the Lithuanian Vice-Ministers of Foreign Affairs, was the general coordinator of all Presidency preparations. The Governmental Commission on EU Affairs (Lithuanian abbreviation: VESK), chaired by the Foreign Minister, plays a key role in formulating and coordinating Lithuania's positions in EU affairs. It is made up of all Vice-Ministers, officials of the Prime Minister's office and the EU Ambassador. The VESK, which was established in 2009 (Seimas 2009), meets every Tuesday and prepares the EU-related issues to be discussed by the Government on Wednesday. The Department of EU Affairs in the MFA, provides input to the weekly VESK meetings (Interview 40; 44). Before and during the Presidency this Department was responsible for 'content'-related matters. Next to this Department, the Lithuanian Government created the EU Council Presidency Department under the MFA (Lithuanian abbreviation: PESTD) (Lucenko 2011). The PESTD, a temporary department that was dissolved in 2014, was responsible for the organisation of staff training, planning, communication, logistics and coordination of Presidency activities.

There were thus clear mechanisms for coordination between Ministries, both regarding content (Department of EU Affairs and VESK) and logistics/planning (PESTD). However, before the start of the Presidency, it was still not entirely clear who was going to do what; one official stated that the PESTD also wished to have a say on substantial policy matters (Interview 40). Lithuania's lack of experience with Council Presidencies was mentioned as the main reason for this institutional uncertainty. After the Presidency, interviewees however indicated that the division of labour worked well in practice (Interview 59; 63; 71). Next to the aforementioned actors and institutions, Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius and President Dalia Grybauskaitė claimed an important role in managing the Lithuanian Presidency and presenting the country's point of view (see e.g. Delfi.lt 2013, 5 April | EurActiv 2013, 10 May; 2013, 14 May | Vilpišauskas & Vandecasteele 2014).

The preparations for Lithuania's Presidency started three years in advance. The VESK presented a preparations schedule to the European Affairs Committee of the Seimas in September 2010, which initially prioritized investments in human resources and institutional cooperation. Throughout 2011-2013, approximately 1500 Lithuanian officials received training from different Lithuanian and foreign institutions on decision-making in the EU, negotiation skills and languages (see e.g. IIRPS 2011, 30 December | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 1 July | CENAD n.d.).

The PESTD was created in December 2010 (Lucenko 2011). The next important preparatory step was taken in October 2011: all political parties represented in the Seimas signed an agreement in which they committed themselves not to use the Presidency as a ground for competition during the October 2012 parliamentary electoral campaign. They agreed to ensure continuity in the

preparations for the Presidency, regardless of the Government's composition following these elections (Seimas 2011a).

After the 2012 legislative elections, the ruling centre-right coalition lost seats and lost its majority; at the end of the year, a new coalition took office, formed by two left-wing parties (Social Democrats and the Labour Party (Darbo Partija)[44]) as well as Order and Justice and the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (LLRA)[45] (Centre for Eastern Studies 2012). The upcoming Presidency period played an important role in the formation of the new Government. President Grybauskaitė left her mark on the composition of the Government when she requested that, with a view to the Presidency, future Ministers should have sufficient foreign language skills. She made this requirement tangible when she refused to appoint several candidates due to an alleged lack of language skills (Lietuvos Rytas 2012, 6 December | Delfi.lt 2012, 27 November | European Voice 2013, 13 June). With all Ministers and most Vice-Ministers being replaced, there was a risk of discontinuity in the Presidency preparations. However, the interviewees assessed that the political parties adhered to their agreement of 2011, and noted considerable political continuity (Interview 30; 31; 32; 34; 35; 36; 37; 38; 39; 40; 69). Officials in key positions were not replaced, and only 6 per cent of the planned working party chairs changed in the year preceding the Presidency, a rate which does not exceed normal diplomatic rotation (Lithuanian Presidency website 2012). Some interviewees mentioned minor disadvantages of the new Government, notably a lack of international experience and poor foreign language skills of some Ministers – despite the 'language examination' they had to pass prior to their appointment (Interview 33; 34; 45).

In summary, the Lithuanian administration was well-prepared for the Presidency (membership score in 'adequate preparation' = 1.00). One interviewee commented that 'it would be good if the Presidency would be one year later' (Interview 33), because this would give the new Government more time to prepare. In practice, the administration was trained well in advance and the change of Government did not result in disruptions of the preparatory process.

Lithuania opted for a Brussels-based Presidency model: although most of the working party chairs did not reside permanently in Brussels, the majority of working party meetings was chaired by a Brussels-based chair (Lithuanian Presidency website 2012; 2013, 1 July). The staff at the permrep was more than doubled, up to 180 officials (Lucenko 2011), which absorbed around one quarter of the Presidency budget (Lithuanian MFA 2011). The chairs of working parties that meet regularly were posted to the permrep, while those chairing working parties that meet only a few times per semester travelled from Vilnius (Interview 30). One interviewee described the Presidency model as 'chair-based' (Interview 37): the chairs had more room for manoeuvring than other delegates. Another official explained: 'usually there are weekly instructions from Vilnius to the permrep. But during the Presidency all chairs know their margin of negotiation and they will get only one very big instruction at the start of the Presidency: execute the work programme' (Interview 36). However, it is important to note that the Lithuanian Presidency was only Brussels-based for legislative issues. For the EaP, the MFA was the main actor: 'the priorities have been developed there, the follow-up will be done from there, the planning of the EaP Summit will take place in Vilnius […]. The most important decisions on

[44] While Darbo Partija has a rather left-wing profile, in the European Parliament it is a member of the ALDE group.

[45] LLRA left the Lithuanian Government in September 2014 following a dispute on the nomination of Vice-Minister for Energy (Lietuvos žinios 2014, 1 September).

the Lithuanian position are taken in Vilnius' (Interview 52). For these reasons, the most appropriate membership score in 'Brussels-based Presidency' for EaP-related issues is 0.33.

2. The domestic political and administrative context

The relations between the different Governmental bodies responsible for Lithuania's EU policies and the Presidency (the Coordinators' Network, the MFA Department of EU Affairs, VESK and PESTD) have been discussed *supra*. There were clear coordination mechanisms within and between Governmental (and Parliamentary) structures. The Government also requested that the Ministries use the Presidency website, www.eu2013.lt, as the prime communication channel: information should first be published on this website, only at a later stage it could be added to the individual Ministries' websites (Interview 45).

The Government enjoyed a comfortable majority of 84 out of 141 seats in the Seimas, and no national legislative or presidential elections were planned in 2013. However, although the Government could count on strong parliamentary support on paper, it could be destabilized from several angles (European Voice 2013, 13 June, p. 14). In general there was a large ideological distance between the coalition parties. In addition, a number of Darbo Partija members were prosecuted for embezzlement of party funds and illegal party funding, which prompted the Seimas to waive the immunity of three of its members, among which former party leader Viktoras Uspaskichas and his successor Vytautas Gapšys (Lietuvos Rytas 2012, 21 December). The suspects were convicted by the Vilnius Regional Court a few months later (Lietuvos Rytas 2013, 12 July). Moreover, in June 2013, Economy Minister Birutė Vėsaitė was forced to dismiss after accusations of conflicts of interest (President of Lithuania 2013, 29 May). These developments entailed fierce discussions in Lithuania about the legitimacy of the Government and its coalition parties.

Still, the coalition members had strong incentives to keep the Government together: they were committed to the agreement they signed in 2011 with regard to the Lithuanian Presidency, and nobody would want to be held responsible for spoiling Lithuania's reputation in the midst of its Presidency period (European Voice 2013, 13 June). Despite some destabilizing factors, Lithuania has a membership score of 1.00 in the set of 'stable domestic political and administrative context': there were no elections, the work of the different State services was coordinated efficiently, and the troubles with certain members of the ruling coalition did not impact on the stability of the Government throughout the Presidency period.

3. Lithuania's reputation in the EU

Similar to Poland, Lithuania was considered a troublemaker in the EU during the first years of its membership (Interview 35; 37) and even a quarrelsome 'new cold warrior' (Leonard & Popescu 2007) regarding EU external relations. The country is generally little-known in the EU, and its reputation largely depends on the Government in office. Lithuania has strong national interests in a small number of topics in EU policy, notably those topics that were emphasized in the country's national Presidency priorities (see *infra*). After the parliamentary elections of 2008 and especially after Grybauskaitė was elected President in 2009, the country's leadership has gradually pursued more pragmatic and Europeanized foreign policies (see e.g. Vilpišauskas 2013), which led to a considerable improvement of its reputation in the EU.

Currently, Lithuania has a generally positive reputation with regard to its domestic policies, although there is some external (and internal) criticism on concrete files. The population generally holds a

positive attitude towards the EU, and EU policies are rarely the object of domestic debate: both the population and the political elite are largely in favour of European integration (European Voice 2013, 13 June | Lietuvos Respublikos Televizija 2013, 26 February). Lithuanian representatives always vote with the majority in the Council since 2009, and the country has one of the best implementation records of EU legislation (EurActiv 2012, 19 July | VoteWatch n.d.). The Charlemagne Prize, which was awarded in 2013 to President Grybauskaitė, symbolizes this positive reputation of Lithuania (EurActiv 2013, 10 May).

The soft knowledge and networking skills of Lithuanian politicians and officials were positively evaluated (Interview 82 | Vilpišauskas *et al.* 2013). Lithuanian interviewees (Interview 30; 31; 38; 39; 40; 45; 60) mostly mentioned the cooperation with trio partner Ireland as very smooth and productive; Lithuania sent three officials from different Ministries to work within the Irish corresponding Governmental bodies in 2012-2013, in order to get experience from inside. By contrast, cooperation with Lithuania's successor (Greece) was almost non-existent. The main reason why Lithuania cooperated so much with Ireland was not that they were in the same trio, but rather that Ireland came before Lithuania and the latter was interested in learning from the former (Interview 69; 71).

Lithuania also participates in an informal group of like-minded countries on EaP-related issues, which occasionally meets at the level of political directors or Vice-Ministers; this group consists of a number of Central and Eastern European as well as Nordic countries, and convenes in the margins of other EU meetings (Interview 38; 41; 46). However, this group did not meet during the Lithuanian Presidency (Interview 59). The countries participating in these meetings are largely the same as those with which Lithuanian representatives maintain informal contacts most frequently (see also Vitkus & Novagrockienė 2007): the members of the Nordic-Baltic Group of Six (NB-6: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Throughout 2013, Lithuania intensified its cooperation with Romania, notably on EaP and energy issues (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 24 September). The annual meeting of the Baltic and Benelux Foreign Ministers (the 3+3 format) is less significant for the coordination of positions on EaP policies (Latvian MFA 2013, 10 October).

In addition to regular close cooperation with neighbouring and like-minded countries, Lithuania invested in good relations with the EU institutions as well. Officials held consultations in February and June 2013 with the EEAS on what could be expected during the second semester of 2013 (Interview 38). Prior to the start of the Presidency, the Lithuanian Government and administration were also in close cooperation with the European Commission (Interview 37; 38). In March 2013, the Vice-Ministers and Ministers made work visits to the Commission, and the entire College of Commissioners visited Vilnius in July (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 8 July). Lithuania also seconded several national experts to the EEAS and the European Commission as from mid-2012 (Interview 68; 70). Coordination meetings took place with Van Rompuy's cabinet, *inter alia* with regard to the EaP Summit planned for November (Interview 35; 36; 37; 41). The relations between the Lithuanian Government and Füle, who had served as the Czech Ambassador to Lithuania in 1998-2001, were outstanding, which was further enhanced by Füle's personal rapport with Linkevičius (Interview 38; 41). As was the case for the other Presidencies, interviewees in the capital had less knowledge about network building with representatives of the European Parliament (Interview 47). Prior to the start of the Presidency, there were four officials in the permrep working on contacts with the European Parliament. During the actual Presidency, four officials were appointed in the MFA as

well; they functioned as coordinators between the different Ministries and the European Parliament (Interview 67).

Despite Lithuania's general positive reputation, a scandal emerged in summer 2013 after phone conversations taking place in April were leaked. The conversations allegedly involved Zenonas Kumetaitis, deputy director of the MFA's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy Department, Renatas Juška, Lithuania's Ambassador to Hungary, Artūras Žurauskas, Lithuania's Ambassador to Azerbaijan, and Gediminas Kasputis, an MFA official (15min.lt 2013, 8 July). Some parts of the talks, made public on YouTube, were removed soon after (Delfi.lt 2013, 5 August). Others were still available in August (YouTube 2013a; 2013b). Juška and Kumetaitis discussed Nagorno-Karabakh and contemplated Lithuania's position and politicians on rather familiar terms. Following the publication of the records, Žurauskas offered his resignation to the Government (Delfi.lt 2013, 2 August), while Juška denied that the contents of the conversations were authentic (Delfi.lt 2013, 22 August). Both Ambassadors were recalled to Vilnius for consultations, and were relieved of their duties, a move that was criticized by the opposition since the MFA had not submitted its conclusions about the affair yet (Lietuvos Rytas 2013, 29 August). Although the scandal raised questions in Lithuania about the professionalism of the country's diplomats as well as the security of its information channels, foreign media did not report on it and the issue remained mostly a matter of internal politics. Foreign diplomats did not consider the issue as damaging Lithuania's reputation (Interview 66).

In summary, I assign a membership score of 1.00 in the set of 'good reputation': Lithuania is generally considered to give the 'right example' at home, there is a strong pro-EU climate in the country, and the soft skills of the country's representatives were highly valued.

4. The external political and economic context

It was clear from the start that Lithuania would face a number of challenges in achieving its goals with regard to the EaP (see e.g. Vilpišauskas *et al.* 2013 | European Voice 2013, 13 June | EurActiv 2013, 25 April | Vilpišauskas & Vandecasteele 2014). The negotiations on the legislative implementation of the multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020 were expected to absorb a lot of administrative capacity, and the end of the European Commission and the European Parliament legislature in 2014 entailed high pressure on the Council to finalize as many dossiers as possible by summer. These two issues, which happened to coincide in 2013/2014, left little room for Lithuania to focus on own priorities such as the EaP. In addition, the financial and economic crises continued to dominate the EU agenda, which again limited the possibilities to consider other topics. Also the federal elections in Germany in September 2013 were expected to constrain ambitious external policies; Germany often has a decisive voice in external policies, and it was unclear which steps could be taken during and soon after the German election campaign (see e.g. EurActiv 2013, 26 July).

Throughout the summer of 2013, the external political context became further complicated: Russia stepped up efforts to deter the Governments of notably Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine from signing Association Agreements and DCFTAs with the EU (for an overview, see e.g. Emerson & Kostanyan 2013). As a consequence, Lithuania would not only have to convince other EU Member States to move forward with integration between the EU and the EaP countries, but it was also not sure whether the EaP countries themselves would see association with the EU as the best option.

With regard to Armenia, Russia seemed to reconsider its role of the country's security guarantor on Nagorno-Karabakh (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013a | EUObserver 2013, 3 September), and analysts estimated that Russia was prepared to use its leverage as Armenia's largest trading partner (EurActiv

2013, 4 September) and its dominant position in strategic sectors of the country's economy (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013a) to dissuade its Government to initial or sign an Association Agreement with the EU.

Towards Moldova, Russian officials overtly announced that an Association Agreement with the EU could jeopardize the future of Transnistria, could have implications for the free movement of Moldovan workers, and lead to restrictions on the import of Moldovan goods as well as revisions of gas price agreements (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013c | EUObserver 2013, 11 September). Indeed, Russia on 10 September banned the import of Moldovan wines – citing quality and safety concerns – while Transnistria was exempted from the measure (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013c | EUObserver 2013, 11 September). In early October, a spokeswoman of the Russian Federal Immigration Service stated that around 190.000 Moldovan workers were staying in Russia in violation of the immigration laws and could be denied access to Russia in the future. The issue of the Moldovan migrant workers is especially sensitive, since remittances amount to up to 15% of the country's GDP (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013c).

Pressure was exerted on Ukraine as well. In August, the Russian consumer rights watchdog banned imports of confectionary products from Roshen, a company owned by pro-EU businessman and current Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. In the same period, the Ukrainian news website Zerkalo Nedeli published an allegedly leaked Kremlin strategy on how to keep Ukraine in the Russian sphere of influence. The paper stated that Russia would deploy all efforts to prevent Ukraine from signing an Association Agreement with the EU, and that the Kremlin would back pro-Russian candidate Viktor Medvedchuk in the 2015 presidential elections. Between 14 and 20 August, the Russian customs administration imposed time-consuming checks on imports from Ukraine. Sergei Glazyev, an advisor to Russian President Vladimir Putin, explained that the customs authorities were preparing for changes in the procedures in case the DCFTA would be signed (EurActiv 2013, 19 August). The Russian Government saw itself forced to take protective measures in this event (EurActiv 2013, 24 September). At the same time, Russia offered financial and economic assistance to the Ukrainian Government. In September, Russia provided a $750 million loan to Ukraine, and Glazyev was quoted saying that the natural gas bill for Ukraine could be reduced with $8 billion per year (EurActiv 2013, 4 September). In October, Gazprom announced that it would sell natural gas at a significantly reduced rate to the Ukrainian company Ostchem, which would result in a price reduction of about $700 million in 2013[46] (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013d).

In addition to exerting pressure on the EaP countries, Russia also targeted Lithuania, allegedly due to the country's ambition to have Association Agreements signed and initialled at the EaP Summit (Lietuvos Rytas 2013, 3 October | Delfi.lt 2013, 11 October | EUObserver 2013, 16 September). On 30 August, the Russian authorities introduced thorough security checks for all Lithuanian-registered passenger cars entering Russia. Between 12 September and 11 October, the customs administration tightened controls for Lithuanian trucks (RIA Novosti 2013, 9 October). The Russian authorities did not provide official information to the Lithuanian Government or the European Commission on the reasons for these stricter procedures (Lietuvos Rytas 2013, 3 October | Reuters 2013, 17 September). In October, Russia banned the import of Lithuanian dairy products, citing problems with the quality

[46] Analysts criticized the move, claiming that the price reduction also benefited Gazprom and was thus not to be considered as 'assistance'. Indeed, the gas imported at reduced rates was aimed at increasing the reserves in the underground gas storage reservoirs in Ukraine, which would guarantee the stability of its contracts with consumers in the EU, and would avoid the high costs of underground storage Gazprom would have to pay if it stored the gas itself (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013d).

and compliance with sanitary requirements (Lietuvos Rytas 2013, 2 October | Reuters 2013, 7 October). Also in Autumn, rumours circulated that Russia was storing gas in the Kaliningrad region, since one of the region's power plants stopped working for two weeks. This region is dependent on transit through Lithuania for its gas and goods supplies. The rumour fuelled concern that Russia could stop or reduce gas supplies to Lithuania as an extra means of pressure ahead of the EaP Summit (EurActiv 2013, 6 November).

Next to external pressure on Lithuania and on the EaP countries, developments in several EaP- and other neighbouring countries of the EU made the context for further developing EaP policies more difficult (see *infra* for more details). Although not many obstacles were foreseen to deepen integration with Armenia (Interview 35; 38; 46), the country's President announced shortly before the EaP Summit that he would not sign a DCFTA with the EU and instead opted for membership in a customs union with Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. Azerbaijan's EU ambassador declared already in November 2012 that he would like the EU-Azerbaijan relations to develop into a 'strategic partnership' – a status that is enjoyed by big powers such as Russia and China – thus downplaying the relevance of the EaP framework (Interview 46 | EUObserver 2012, 14 November). The stability and orientation of the Moldovan Government, and power sharing between the Georgian President and Prime Minister were of great concern for EU officials (Interview 35; 38; 46). Throughout 2013, disagreements with Ukraine continued about the conditions for signing an Association Agreement, and culminated in November when President Yanukovych decided not to sign the document. Also the worsening situation and the attack with chemical weapons in Syria in late August severely challenged the coherence of EU external action, with France being the only EU Member State to clearly support the US-planned military action against Assad's regime. In sum, the external political context was unfavourable (membership score = 0.00) for developing closer relations between the EU and the EaP countries.

As was the case for both the Hungarian and the Polish Presidencies, the condition 'economic prosperity' is assigned a membership score of 0.00. There was generally less pessimism on the economic situation in the EU than in previous years, but the recession nevertheless continued in several EU Member States (Eurostat n.d.).

Table 1 summarizes how the conditions for influence apply to the Lithuanian Presidency.

Table 1: Lithuania and the conditions for influence

Country specific	Adequate preparation	1.00
	Brussels-based Presidency (EaP-related issues)	0.33
	Good reputation	1.00
	Large country	0.00
	Stable domestic political and administrative context	1.00
Issue- or policy area specific	High salience to the Presidency	See Table 3
	Favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors (education and research, youth, trade and economic relations, transport)	0.67
	Favourable distribution of preferences and salience among other actors (bilateral political relations, defence, energy, home affairs, justice, multilateral institutional framework)	0.33
Context	Favourable external political context	0.00
	Economic prosperity	0.00

5. Lithuania's preferences and priorities towards the EaP region

5.1. Preferences of Lithuania in the Eastern neighbourhood

As discussed *supra*, there is a broad pro-European consensus among the Lithuanian political elite, including on the need of European integration beyond the current borders of the EU (Interview 31; 32; 33; 35; 40; 50; 69). Approximation between the EU and its Eastern neighbouring countries has been a crucial priority of Lithuania ever since it joined the EU (Budrytė 2006 | Jonavičius 2008 | Janeliūnas *et al.* 2009 | Vilpišauskas 2012; 2013). One interviewee pointed out that Lithuanians consider the Europeanisation of the EaP region as the 'natural follow-up of our integration in the EU' (Interview 38). When asked about Lithuania's position on giving an explicit membership perspective to the EaP countries, another official replied: '[giving a membership perspective] would be good for the EU if it wants to continue to mean something in the world. It is in the DNA of the EU to grow: the larger the more successful. Like Google' (Interview 35).

Eastern Europe has become the country's *niche* in external policy and it is one of the few topics in which Lithuania is a policy-maker rather than a policy-taker (Vilpišauskas 2011 | Vaïsse *et al.* 2013). Vilnius was behind the initiative to hold informal meetings of EU Member States interested in the Eastern neighbours before the former General Affairs and External Relations Councils (Raik & Gromadzki 2006, p. 21), and plays an active role in the group of like-minded countries (see *supra*). Lithuania has an Embassy in each of the six EaP countries, and its politicians and civil society representatives participate in various initiatives aimed at bringing the EaP countries closer to the EU (Kesa 2011). The Lithuanian development policy also reflects its Governments' foreign policy objectives: European integration assistance is a priority sector, and Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova,

Georgia and Azerbaijan figure among the priority countries for bilateral assistance (Andrespok & Kasekamp 2012).

Lithuania wishes to deepen EU-EaP integration in a broad range of policy areas with all six EaP countries (Interview 52). Energy cooperation occupies a somewhat special place here: the EaP is usually not treated as a separate 'entity' in external energy relations, except in the framework of the Energy Community. Lithuania is most interested in legal approximation that leads to a common energy market, rather than in 'hard' issues such as alternative supply routes through the EaP region (Interview 72; 79). Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia are considered the most important countries in the EaP region, Azerbaijan and Armenia receive slightly less attention (see e.g. Wisniewski 2010a | Vilpišauskas 2011 | Centre for Eastern Studies 2012). Although Lithuania sticks to the EU approach of avoiding official high-level bilateral contacts with Belarus, the country's President and Government hold a pragmatic attitude towards the regime in Minsk (EUObserver 2012, 12 March | Dudzińska & Dyner 2013). Lithuanians 'are more tempted to cooperate with Belarus than some other EU countries' (Interview 55) due to strong interdependence in areas of environmental policy, energy and trade. In April 2013, Belarus' Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich – the highest-ranking Belarusian official not subject to the EU visa ban – visited Klaipėda for a business meeting. Butkevičius was present as well: 'our Prime Minister said something, his Belarusian colleague said something. They did not have an official meeting, but informally they talked of course' (Interview 55). An overview of the salience of specific EaP-related policy developments in the second semester of 2013 is provided in Table 3 at the end of this country file.

5.2. Lithuanian Presidency priorities on the EaP

The general Presidency priorities of Lithuania were formulated in a Seimas Resolution in November 2011 (Lucenko 2011 | Seimas 2011b). The overall aim was to work on restoring permanent economic growth and increasing competitiveness of the EU. This should be ensured by higher employment, budgetary consolidation and energy security. In addition, the resolution stipulated that Lithuania should focus on four priority areas: (i) increasing energy security within the EU by completing the single energy market and improving the energy infrastructure, (ii) enhancing regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea region through the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, (iii) deepening the relations of the EU with the EaP countries through encouraging reforms and signing agreements, and (iv) guaranteeing the effective control of the EU's external borders and taking effective measures against fraud and smuggling. These priorities were summarized into three main objectives: 1) a credible Europe with a stable financial sector and public finance, as well as growth-oriented economic governance with a strong social dimension, 2) a growing Europe through investments in innovation, strengthening of the internal market, better employment opportunities and sustainable social security systems, and 3) an open Europe, able to tackle global challenges, promoting democratic values, contributing to a safe neighbourhood, and protecting the rights of EU citizens (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013).

The EaP figured among the key priorities of Lithuania from the beginning of the Presidency preparations (see also The Lithuania Tribune 2012, 6 June | The Lithuania Tribune 2012, 27 March) and it continued to be one of the main topics: 'they want to do something with the EaP in nearly every policy area' (Interview 43). The EaP was also mentioned in general terms in the Irish-Lithuanian-Greek Presidencies' trio programme (Council of the European Union 2012, 7 December), but it was clear that Lithuania devoted most attention to this region. Apart from the specific goals it wanted to achieve, the Lithuanian administration also wished to launch a reflection on 'what next' during the EaP Summit in November 2013 (Interview 46; 52 | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p.

17). Up until 2013, the signature of Association Agreements seemed to be the terminus of EU-EaP approximation; Lithuania wished to have a debate on what was to happen afterwards, how much the EU is prepared to contribute – both financially and politically – to the implementation of these agreements. Although Lithuania would be in favour of giving an explicit EU membership perspective to all EaP countries during the EaP Summit – similar to the EU's promise to the Western Balkan countries during a Summit in 2003 in Thessaloniki (EUObserver 2013, 20 February) – interviewees did not expect such a decision on the table in 2013; the Member States' positions still diverged too much (Interview 35; 37; 41; 43; 52).

The main EaP-related political goals of the Lithuanian Presidency were twofold. On the one hand, the Presidency envisaged the signature of an Association Agreement with Ukraine, the conclusion of negotiations on Association Agreements with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, and tangible progress with Azerbaijan (Interview 36; 37; 46; 52 | EUObserver 2012, 26 November | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 17). On the other hand, Lithuania wished to 'upgrade' the process of EaP cooperation by organising EU-EaP ministerial meetings on JHA and Transport, as well as by broadening EU-EaP cooperation to more policy areas (see *infra*). Its Government hoped that this would start an irreversible process of permanent high-level cooperation, to be taken up by future Presidencies (Interview 41).

Neighbourhood Policy Commissioner Füle declared already in February 2013 that signing and initialling the above-mentioned Association Agreements would be feasible (ENPI info centre 2013, 14 February). With regard to Ukraine, however, he repeated that the signature of the Association Agreement was conditional upon Ukraine's fulfilment of the three conditions that were agreed earlier: progress and tangible achievements in tackling selective justice, addressing the shortcomings of the October 2012 elections, and implementation of the reforms defined in the jointly agreed Association Agenda. As decided at the end of 2012, these conditions were to be met by May 2013 (see also EurActiv 2013, 26 February). In May 2013, Linkevičius confirmed the conditions set for Ukraine, but he also gave the country's Government some extra time to meet the EU's demands: he stated that the EU would keep the pressure up to the last moment and 'if [Ukraine] will be ready, we will be ready' (EurActiv 2013, 14 May). Lithuania thus tried to avoid a 'Belarus scenario' in which Ukraine would become isolated from the EU (EurActiv 2013, 11 July). Officials feared that this would result in a deadlock in bilateral relations and possibly undermine the whole EaP initiative (Interview 35; 38; 46). Although the imprisonment of Tymoshenko was considered the ultimate proof of selective justice, Lithuania's position on this has always been softer: the country did not want the geopolitical choices of the EU and Ukraine to depend on the fate of one person (Interview 52; 58; 65), which was also explicitly stated by President Grybauskaitė during an interview with the Financial Times (2013, 2 July).

The EaP Summit was expected to be the most important EaP-related policy event and even the main Presidency event (Vilpišauskas *et al.* 2013). One diplomat commented that Lithuania's understanding of the Summit's success was rather traditional: they saw it as 'a lot of men in grey suits that put a lot of signatures under a lot of documents' (Interview 83). A number of issues related to the EaP Summit were expected to be contentious. Firstly, the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's Parliament, did not pass laws on the reform of the judiciary and the election system before the summer holidays, thus reducing chances that the EU could note tangible progress until the start of the summit (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013b | see also EurActiv 2013, 6 June). Secondly, increasing tensions between Moldova and Transnistria were expected to render the conclusion of an EU-Moldova Association Agreement more difficult (Centre for Eastern Studies 2013e). Thirdly, the question of Belarus'

representation to the summit would be delicate. Lithuanian officials, interviewed in March-April 2013, stressed that they would like to see Belarus represented at high level, and some hinted that the Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makey would be a suitable person to attend the summit (Interview 38; 46; 52). At the same time, they recognized that it is impossible to invite persons against whom a visa ban is in force: 'either we will have to invite someone else, or change the rules so that he can be invited' (Interview 46). On 24 June 2013, the Foreign Affairs Council decided to temporarily suspend the visa ban against Makey 'in order to facilitate diplomatic contacts between the EU and Belarus', at the same time reiterating that this did 'not reflect any change in the EU's policy towards Belarus' (Council of the European Union 2013, 24 June).

In addition to the overall goals of political and economic integration and a successful EaP Summit, Lithuania wished to enhance EU-EaP cooperation in specific policy areas such as defence, JHA, transport, youth and education, as well as multilateral forums such as CORLEAP and the EaP Business Forum.

On defence policy, the Presidency stressed that 2013 would be a crucial year for the further development of the EU's CSDP, since the European Council of December 2013 was to be dedicated to this topic (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 16). Lithuania wished to engage the EaP countries in the CSDP by strengthening dialogue and operational cooperation. The Presidency planned a number of events and actions to this end (Lithuanian MFA 2013): holding a high-level seminar on EU-EaP defence cooperation on 2-3 July; a visit of the Politico-Military Group (PMG) to Moldova; including the EaP in the agenda of the informal meeting of Defence Ministers and the meeting of Security Policy Directors in Vilnius; encouraging the EaP countries to take part in EU operations and EU Battlegroups; trying to devote attention to the EaP during the December European Council; and organising a European Security and Defence College (ESDC) orientation course with EaP participants.

With regard to trade, Lithuania aimed to confirm the conclusion of DCFTAs with Georgia, Moldova and Armenia during the EaP Summit, and to complete the work for provisionally applying the DCFTA with Ukraine (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 18). This was also foreseen by the European Commission (Interview 27).

The Presidency hoped to strengthen cooperation with the EaP in JHA matters (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, pp. 23-27), mainly by organising the first formal EU-EaP JHA ministerial meeting. The participants of this meeting were expected to take stock of JHA cooperation to date and to reach a common understanding of how this could be improved in the fields of migration, mobility, security and justice (Interview 31; 39; 47; 51). Furthermore, Lithuanian officials hoped that progress could be made on specific issues that were largely 'inherited' from the Council conclusions on JHA adopted during the Polish Presidency (Council of the European Union 2011, 14 December). In spring 2013, Lithuania jointly drafted a concept paper with Poland, Germany and Sweden on these issues. The paper was discussed in the JAI-RELEX (JAIEX) working party (Council of the European Union 2013, 5 March) and proposed to focus on five priorities (Interview 39; 51 | see also Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 26): invite the EaP countries to contribute to the EU policy cycle on serious organized crime, strengthen cooperation in the fight against cybercrime through the Europol cybercrime centre, improve cooperation against drugs and new psychotropic substances, cooperate in training on dealing with trafficking in human beings, and enhance collaboration in the fight against smuggling. The latter topic was to be prepared by a meeting of the heads of the respective customs administrations (see also Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 34). It promised to be a contentious topic, since stricter customs control is mostly in the interest of the EU: 'smuggling goes from East to West and not vice versa' (Interview 31).

In addition to the priorities outlined in the concept paper, Lithuania wished to obtain commitments during the ministerial meeting on strengthening the rule of law in the EaP countries, agree to improve judicial cooperation in civil as well as criminal matters, and take steps in better protection of personal data (Interview 47; 51).

Also in matters of law enforcement and police, the Presidency hoped to strengthen EU-EaP cooperation (Interview 39). The most important event to take place in 2013 was the CEPOL Presidency conference in September, to which the 28 EU Member States, the relevant EU agencies and the six EaP countries were to be invited.

Next to judicial and police cooperation with the EaP, mobility of people was high on the agenda in the second half of 2013. Lithuania wished to continue the process of visa facilitation and liberalisation with third countries (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 27). Already in early 2012, Lithuania's former Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis announced that visa free travel for Ukrainian citizens would be a priority the Lithuanian Presidency. Two problems persisted at that time: both the introduction of biometric passports and the establishment of a Ukrainian anti-corruption agency were delayed due to internal power struggles (EurActiv 2012, 28 February). Officials interviewed in spring 2013 were more cautious than Ažubalis (Interview 32; 41): they hoped that, during the Lithuanian Presidency, Ukraine and Georgia would make progress in or finalize Phase I of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP)[47], and that Phase II of the VLAP[48] with Moldova would be finalized. For Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia, no large breakthroughs were expected in this field.

In the area of transport cooperation, Lithuania planned to hold a ministerial meeting with the EaP countries (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 35) on the same day as the October TTE Council. The agenda was prepared by the EaP Transport Panel and Lithuania hoped to adopt a joint declaration on a number of topics: further legal approximation of the EaP countries towards the EU *acquis*, infrastructure interconnections and, if possible, on concrete projects (Interview 42).

Energy policy figured among the four 'national' priorities of Lithuania for its Presidency (see *supra*). However, the energy priorities were mostly focused on intra-EU cooperation and coordination, and less on external energy policy (Interview 30; 48). The Presidency programme touched only briefly upon the external dimension of energy policy, mentioning that the 2011 Council conclusions on this topic were to be updated (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 37). The primary aim of Lithuania in energy policy was to complete the internal energy market (Interview 48). At that moment, Lithuania did not see much added value in focusing on the external dimension of energy policy and alternative energy supply routes, and expected no large breakthroughs on this issue: 'we want to pick the low-hanging fruit first [i.e. the completion of the internal energy market]. As a next step, we can think about looking for new energy suppliers. If we do this before the completion of the internal market, it makes no sense to have more suppliers' (Interview 48).

[47] A VLAP may be drafted by the European Commission after the successful implementation of visa facilitation and readmission agreements. It includes benchmarks for the partner country to be eligible for full visa liberalisation. Phase I of the VLAP consists of the implementation by the partner country of required legislation on document security, illegal migration, public order and security, and fundamental rights and external relations.

[48] During Phase II of the VLAP, the European Commission and the EU Member States evaluate if the necessary steps have been taken by the partner country. If so, the European Commission proposes to modify regulation 539/2001 so that the partner country is deleted from the list of countries whose citizens need a visa to enter the EU.

Finally, on youth and education, the Presidency planned to organize the first EaP Youth Forum (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 17) and to invite representatives from the EaP countries to EU discussions on the internationalisation of higher education, both events to be hosted by Lithuania (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, pp. 44-45).

6. The EaP in the second semester of 2013 and the influence of the Lithuanian Presidency

As expected, the Lithuanian Presidency focused strongly on the EU's Eastern neighbourhood throughout many of its activities.[49] The subsequent sections outline the developments in the EU's EaP policies during the second semester of 2013, as well as the influence of the Lithuanian Presidency on these policies (for an overview per policy area, see Vandecasteele 2014).

6.1. High Presidency influence

The Lithuanian Presidency was highly influential in one output: the organisation of a multilateral meeting of EU and EaP Transport Ministers[50] in Luxembourg on 9 October, prior to the EU's regular TTE Council. When the Presidency announced that it planned to organize such a meeting, this was not welcomed with much enthusiasm in the Member States and EU institutions. The Council Secretariat even refused to provide space at its premises for the meeting, citing a lack of staff. The Lithuanian Presidency found an alternative venue – just three weeks before the meeting took place – in the buildings of the EIB (Interview 74; 78). During the meeting itself, bilateral disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia risked to undermine the results: both countries proposed amendments explicitly or implicitly referring to the conflict on Nagorno-Karabakh, and Azerbaijan threatened not to support the joint declaration if its amendments were not inserted. The Presidency convinced the Azeri delegation to endorse the declaration without the amendments, the country's remarks being included in the minutes of the meeting. Armenia and Azerbaijan also added individual statements to the minutes (Interview 74; 78). In the joint declaration (European Commission 2013, 9 October), the participants took stock of the progress made in transport cooperation over the last two years, committed to strengthen their cooperation leading to gradual legislative approximation, and agreed to speed up the implementation of agreements for all main modes of transport. They also aimed at involving EU and other international financial institutions more closely in the realisation of transport projects. In addition, the delegates approved a map of an EaP Transport Network (Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications 2013), which had been endorsed at the technical level in the EaP Transport Panel in July, as well as a list of priority projects on this transport network. They recommended to the European Commission to include the EaP Transport Network in the TEN-T guidelines, and to promote coordination between the EU's core network and the key transport corridors in the EaP. This would imply a *de facto* extension of the TEN-T to the EaP countries.

[49] (see examples on Seimas 2013 | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 5 December; 2013, 7 September; 2013, 14 October | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 24 July | European Commission 2013, 26 September | EurActiv 2013, 27 August).

[50] Four EaP countries were represented at ministerial level in the meeting. Belarus sent its Director of the relevant department in the Transport Ministry; its Minister was unavailable because of the annual 'Transport Days' in Belarus. Also the fact that the EIB and the EBRD just decided not to provide loans to Belarus for transport projects may have played a role. Azerbaijan delegated a Ministry chancellor; the Minister was not available due to the parliamentary elections (Interview 74).

Lithuania achieved most of its goals (GA=2) with this meeting, although it would have liked stronger political backing from the side of the EU, and more assurance that high-level EU-EaP transport cooperation is to become permanent (Interview 74). Even though the European Commission played a role in negotiating the EaP Transport Network and financing the event, the meeting would not have taken place without the presidency's efforts (AS=3). The meeting led to novel and tangible results and was therefore of high political relevance (PR=3).

6.2. Substantial Presidency influence

Lithuania exerted substantial influence in four instances of multilateral EU-EaP relations during its Presidency. Firstly, the main event in JHA cooperation with the EaP countries was the meeting of EU and EaP countries' Justice Ministers and Home Affairs Ministers on 7-8 October, in parallel with the EU's regular JHA Council in Luxembourg. Similar to the Transport Ministers' meeting, not everyone in the EU was enthusiastic about this event. There were discussions, mainly with the European Commission, on the necessity of the meeting, its format, the status of the outcome, and the division of labour between the Presidency and the Commission. Lithuania aimed at broad participation of all EU and EaP countries and the EU institutions, and hoped that the participants would adopt a joint declaration. The European Commission proposed to hold a meeting in a 'Western Balkans format' – to be attended by the EU institutions, the Presidency and the EaP countries – and to conclude with Presidency conclusions (Interview 54; 56; 62; 73). On the issue of division of labour, the Presidency and the Commission finally agreed to co-chair the event. Lithuania fully achieved its goals in terms of contents, participation[51] and formal aspects (GA=3): the participants to the meeting endorsed a joint declaration in which they welcomed the progress made in the respective policy areas and emphasized that all judicial systems should meet European standards. They also stressed the importance of continuing and strengthening EU-EaP judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, as well as cooperation on issues related to organised and transnational crime, corruption, drug crimes, data protection, cybercrime, migration and mobility. The participants also undertook to meet regularly in the future in order to monitor progress and further shape their cooperation (Council of the European Union 2013, 8 October). The joint declaration largely included the issues that were mentioned by interviewees and in the concept paper drafted by Lithuania and other EU countries. The meeting would not have been organized, at least not at this level, if the Presidency would not have pushed it (AS=3). The results of the meeting were novel and politically important, but did not lead to tangible results thus far (PR=1).

The second instance of substantial Presidency influence was the invitation of EaP countries' delegates to the annual Presidency conference of the European Police College (CEPOL), which took place in Vilnius on 17-19 September. Inviting EaP countries to these meetings is not a usual practice, and it is not clear whether these countries will be invited in the future (Interview 62). Participants to the meeting discussed several aspects of existing and future police cooperation in the fight against organized crime, drugs, cybercrime and smuggling (CEPOL 2013). The Presidency organized two preparatory events for the conference, where EaP countries also participated: one of those was held at the Lithuanian Embassy in Kiev on 3 July with Polish, German and Czech liaison officers and Ukrainian law-enforcement officials (Council of the European Union 2013, 3 July), and one on 16 July

[51] All EU and EaP countries were represented at the meeting, of which four EaP countries at ministerial level. Azerbaijan sent its Ambassador to Belgium to both parts of the meeting due to an internal reshuffling of the cabinet, and Belarus delegated its Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Minister of Home Affairs.

at the EU's Horizontal Working Party on Drugs (Council of the European Union 2013, 9 September). Although the involvement of EaP countries in the September CEPOL conference was of limited political relevance as such (PR=1), Lithuania achieved its goal of enhancing police cooperation with the EaP countries (GA=3). This could to a large extent be ascribed to the Presidency's efforts (AS=2).

Thirdly, in order to advance EU-EaP cooperation in higher education, research and innovation, Lithuania's Ministry of Education and Science and Vilnius University organised and hosted a conference on this topic on 30 September and 1 October. The event was attended by policy-makers from the EU and EaP countries, as well as other stakeholders such as research institutions and the European Commission (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 30 September). The participants to the meeting adopted a declaration (European Commission 2013, 1 October) and agreed to launch a panel on Research and Innovation under multilateral platform 4 (contacts between people), which will discuss, *inter alia*, the possible association of the EaP countries to the EU's Horizon 2020. The Presidency also organized a roundtable discussion with political representatives from the EaP and some EU Member States, to give the conference some political backing and to secure the inclusion of a reference to research cooperation in the EaP Summit joint declaration (Interview 61). Lithuania fully achieved its goals in this respect (GA=3) and the organisation of the conference can be largely ascribed to the Lithuanian Presidency (AS=2). The event was of limited political relevance (PR=1).

Finally, the Lithuanian Presidency organized the first EaP Youth Forum on 22-25 October in Kaunas, which brought together over 200 representatives from the EaP and the EU Member States and institutions (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 25 October). The participants of the forum adopted joint conclusions on, *inter alia*, the importance of non-formal and formal education, links of youth organisations with other sectors of civil society and the labour market, professionalization of youth work, maximising the visibility and impact of youth work, and youth work financing (EaP Youth Forum 2013b; 2013a). Youth policy and the establishment of the Youth Forum were also mentioned in the joint declaration of the EaP Summit (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a). The event was organized at the initiative of Lithuania, in cooperation with the European Commission and several pan-European youth organisations. Its occurrence could to a substantial extent be ascribed to the Presidency's efforts (AS=2). Lithuania fully achieved its goal of expanding EU-EaP cooperation to youth policy (GA=3) – a follow-up Youth Forum was held in Riga during the Latvian Presidency in February 2015 (EaP Youth Forum 2015). The outcome of the forum was of limited political relevance (PR=1).

6.3. Limited Presidency influence

A (sometimes very) limited influence of the Lithuanian Presidency can be noted in five instances, both in bilateral and multilateral dossiers. Firstly, a rather surprising development in EU-Belarus relations was that, during the annual EaP Summit in Vilnius (see *infra*), the Belarusian delegation indicated that the country was ready to start negotiations on a visa facilitation and readmission agreement with the EU (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a | Lithuanian Presidency website 2014, 8 January). The EU had offered to start such negotiations in 2011 after the Council adopted a negotiation mandate for the European Commission (see country file on Hungary). The announcement, a 'pleasant surprise', was preceded by several meetings between Lithuanian and Belarusian Vice-Ministers of Foreign Affairs during which visa facilitation was one of the key topics (Interview 55). It can thus be ascribed to Lithuania to a limited extent (AS=1). Lithuania's goals were achieved in that there as a concrete step forward in EU-Belarus bilateral relations (GA=3). It should be noted, however, that Lithuania did not exactly influence *EU policies*, but rather the Belarusian

government's *receptiveness* to these policies. The declaration of intent to start negotiations was of limited political relevance (PR=1); negotiations were initiated in February 2014 (ENPI info centre 2014, 6 February), but an agreement is not expected anytime soon (Interview 57).

Secondly, the Presidency organized a high-level seminar on EU-EaP defence cooperation on 2-3 July in Vilnius. It was attended by over 100 representatives from the Member States and EaP countries, the EEAS, the EU Military Committee, and NGOs. The topics of the meeting were common security threats as well as contributions of the EaP countries to the EU's CSDP missions (Interview 64; 68 | ENPI info centre 2013, 3 July). EU-EaP dialogue on defence had been held before, but the special focus on CSDP can to a limited extent be ascribed to Lithuania's prioritisation of this issue (AS=1). The Presidency achieved its goals in this respect (GA=3). The meeting did not produce tangible decisions – which is normal because concrete cooperation takes place only at the bilateral level – but it was important for exploring EU-EaP CSDP cooperation (Interview 68) (PR=1).

Thirdly, Lithuania exerted (very) limited influence on the EU's external energy relations, which is indirectly related to EaP policies. Lithuania's two main priorities in the field of energy – completion of the internal energy market and review of the external dimension of energy policy – were discussed during the informal Energy Council of 19-20 September in Vilnius (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 20 September) and at the December TTE Council (Council of the European Union 2013, 12 December). The latter meeting endorsed two Council reports on each of the topics respectively, outlining the results achieved to date and the further steps to be taken. There had been some discussions about the status of these documents – some delegations preferred Presidency conclusions instead – but finally the Council agreed on the reports (Interview 72). The reports were also referred to in the December European Council conclusions (2013, 20 December). The Presidency achieved its goals (GA=3) with regard to the review of the external dimension of EU energy policy. The EaP was not treated as a separate region, but discussed among external energy relations in general. The document was of limited political relevance (PR=1) and could be ascribed to the Presidency to a limited extent (AS=1).

Fourthly, I noted a limited influence of the Presidency in one of the most important dossiers for Lithuania: visa liberalisation. The country's goals with regard to Moldova were fully achieved (GA=3). In its November report, the European Commission (2013, 15 November) judged that Moldova fulfilled all the benchmarks of the second phase of the VLAP, and that the visa requirement could thus be lifted. With a *tour de force*, the Presidency rushed the file through the Council's preparatory bodies and obtained formal backing from the Member States during the last Coreper meeting of 2013 to amend the famous Regulation 539/2001 (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 20 December). This agreement was highly politically relevant (PR=3). Several Member States had formulated reservations against this quick decision, mainly due to technical discussions on the type of biometric passports to be issued by the Moldovan authorities. After negotiations between the European Commission and these Member States, objections were dropped and the EU undertook to support Moldova in a quick transition to the newest generation of passports. Lithuania influenced the decision-making process mainly through agenda-setting (Interview 57; 82; 83). For Lithuania it was important to finalize this dossier before the end of the year: it would be a tangible result of the Lithuanian Presidency, but it also awarded a 'prize' to Moldova for the reforms it implemented, and Lithuania wanted this arrangement to be implemented before the Moldovan legislative elections of autumn 2014, to show the benefits of cooperation with the EU to the Moldovan population and thus to support pro-EU political parties (Interview 57). The agreement can be partly ascribed to the Lithuanian Presidency, especially the speed with which it was adopted (AS=1).

The fifth instance of limited Presidency influence was the decision of the Trade Policy Committee on 26 July on the provisional application of the DCFTA with Ukraine (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 22 October). This meant that the DCFTA would be applied upon signature, before it was fully ratified. It was in line with Lithuania's preferences (GA=3) and of high political relevance (PR=3). The decision can be ascribed to Lithuania to a limited extent (AS=1): some Member States objected to this arrangement, not because of its contents but rather due to concerns about the distribution of competences between the European Commission and the Member States. The Commission played a key role in negotiating with these Member States, but Lithuania also played a part in finding formulations that would accommodate these concerns (Interview 65; 77; 80).

6.4. No Presidency influence

In the second semester of 2013, a high number of EU-EaP policy developments took place that did not amount to influence of the Lithuanian Presidency.

The most notable of these instances was the EaP Summit in Vilnius on 28-29 November. Most actions and priorities of the Presidency were directed towards confirming and formalizing the achievements of the EaP initiative during this event. The invitations to the Summit were not addressed to specific persons, but to States, in order to avoid a scenario as in 2011 where Belarus boycotted the summit: the EU wanted to give the impression that the EaP countries, Belarus in particular, could 'choose' who to send to the summit – although it was clear that Lukashenko would not be allowed to attend (Interview 55; 58; 65). This *modus operandi* was undisputed in the EU, so there are no reasons to ascribe this to the Presidency (AS=0). The strategy proved successful: contrary to the 2011 summit, all EaP countries were represented. The Belarusian delegation was led by Foreign Minister Makey, while the other EaP countries were represented by their Presidents or Prime Ministers (European Commission 2013, 26 November). The EaP Summit took stock of EU-EaP relations since the summit in 2011; the first part of the joint declaration (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a) discussed the progress made in the different policy areas and welcomed the results that were achieved,[52] such as the initialling of EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia Association Agreements, the initialling of an EU-Ukraine Air Services Agreement, the signature of an EU-Azerbaijan visa facilitation agreement, the signature of Framework Participation Agreements on CSDP missions with Moldova and Georgia, and commitments of Ukraine to contribute to EU missions and Battlegroups. The second part of the joint declaration outlined the steps to be taken for deepening EU-EaP relations until 2015 (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a, pp. 4-5,), including further reforms of the judiciary and strengthening law enforcement, signature by Autumn 2014 of Association Agreements or establishing an Association agenda where applicable, and progress in cooperation on a number of policy areas such as visa liberalisation, business, knowledge and innovation, agriculture, environment, transport, defence and energy. The declaration also foresaw a strengthening of the multilateral dimension through a continuation of the multilateral thematic platforms and other multilateral forms of cooperation, as well as regular ministerial meetings in several policy areas. The participants agreed that the EU and international financial institutions would continue supporting reforms and projects, taking into account the provisional application and implementation of the Association Agreements.

[52] (for an overview, see Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 28 November-a | Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a | ENPI info centre 2013, 29 November | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 29 November; 2014, 8 January).

Even though there were some tangible results of the summit, media and politicians had most attention for what was *not* achieved. The joint declaration only stated that the participants 'reaffirm their acknowledgement of the European aspirations and the European choice of some partners and their commitment to build deep and sustainable democracy' (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a, p. 3), which was a weaker statement than what Lithuania and other pro-enlargement countries would have liked (see also RFERL 2013, 31 October).[53] The main failure of the summit was the refusal of Yanukovych to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. It was a major disappointment for the EU in general and for Lithuania in particular (Interview 82; 83). Also the EU-Armenian relations had cooled down after Sargsyan announced that his country would join a Russia-led customs union with Russia. By and large, Lithuania's goals set for the EaP Summit were achieved to a limited extent (GA=1).[54] However, the successes and failures of the summit cannot be ascribed to the Lithuanian Presidency (AS=0). On the one hand, much of the outcome was prepared under the auspices of the EEAS and the European Commission. On the other hand, decisions of partner countries' authorities could not be controlled by Lithuania.

There were eleven other outputs where Lithuania was not considered influential because they cannot be ascribed to the Presidency (AS=0). In bilateral relations, for example, Lithuania achieved its goals with the initialling of Association Agreements with Georgia and Moldova, but all negotiations were conducted by the European Commission on behalf of the EU (ENPI info centre 2013, 25 July | Council of the European Union 2013, 25 June). Also the initialling of an EU-Georgia Framework Participation Agreement for CSDP missions (European External Action Service 2013, 29 November) was politically relevant and strongly supported by Lithuania, but cannot be ascribed to the Presidency because its contents were agreed much earlier between the EEAS and the Georgian Government (Interview 68; 76; 81). Furthermore, Vilnius hosted the signing ceremony of the EU-Azerbaijan visa facilitation agreement on 29 November (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-b). With the initialling of an EU-Ukrainian Air Services Agreement, both parties paved the way towards establishing an EU-Ukrainian Common Aviation Area. In all these instances, Lithuania was not involved in the negotiations on the agreements; the Presidency's role was limited to hosting the initialling or signing ceremonies. Also the EU's reaction to the Russian embargo on Moldovan wines cannot be ascribed to the Lithuanian Presidency. Following a European Commission proposal in September to revoke the autonomous trade preferences scheme with quotas and fully open the EU's market for Moldovan wines (European Commission 2013, 25 September), the issue was discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council fo October (Council of the European Union 2013, 18 October) and approved by the European Parliament in December (European Parliament 2013, 10 December). The opening up of the market for Moldovan wines reflected a broad consensus in the EU and was not the result of specific interventions by the Lithuanian Presidency (Interview 77; 80).

Also the EU-EaP Foreign Ministers' meeting in Brussels in July, where the preparations for the EaP Summit were discussed (Council of the European Union 2013, 23 July), is a regular event and cannot be ascribed to the Presidency. Lithuania hosted three other multilateral events whose occurrence or outcome cannot be ascribed to the incumbent Presidency. The third annual meeting of CORLEAP, 3

[53] One interviewee (Interview 58) noted some trend towards a membership perspective: contrary to the joint declarations of 2009 and 2011, the EaP countries were no longer referred to as 'Eastern European partners' or 'partner countries', but as '… Eastern European countries, States participating in the EaP…'. The EaP countries were thus still not called 'European States', which would resemble art. 49 TEU, but the word 'State' was mentioned immediately after the 'Eastern European countries'.

[54] The goal achievement, political relevance and ascription of individual files are discussed *infra*.

September in Vilnius (Committee of the Regions 2013a; 2013b), was a regular event that was organized by the Committee of the Regions. The EaP Business Forum, taking place in Vilnius in parallel with the EaP Summit (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 28 November-b), was not the result of the Presidency's efforts but rather an established practice since 2011. Finally, the launch of Erasmus+ in 2014, which foresees increased funding for mobility and academic partnerships with EaP countries (European Commission 2013, 24 October-b), is not ascribable to Lithuania. The new programme was promoted during the Erasmus+ information days on 24-25 October in Kaunas – which took place in parallel with the Youth Forum – but it was prepared by the European Commission and its contents were agreed in the first half of 2013 (Interview 70).

The Lithuanian Presidency did not achieve its goals (GA=0) in four instances. The two most notable were the failure to initial an Association Agreement with Armenia and to sign such an agreement with Ukraine at the EaP Summit. Despite the negotiations with Armenia being finalized in July (ENPI info centre 2013, 26 July), the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan took everyone in the EU by surprise when he announced in early September that his country would join a customs union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, which made accession to a DCFTA with the EU – an integral part of the Association Agreement – *de facto* impossible (ENPI info centre 2013, 5 September).

The refusal of Ukraine's former President Yanukovych to sign an Association Agreement had much more dramatic results, both in terms of the country's relations with the EU and with Russia, as well as for the internal stability and territorial integrity of Ukraine.[55] Discussions on (the conditions for) signing the agreement in Vilnius dominated the EU-Ukraine agenda throughout 2013. Intensive diplomatic contacts took place on several fronts, aimed at convincing Yanukovych to implement the agreed reforms on selective justice, the electoral system and the broader association agenda. The informal mission of former Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski and former European Parliament President Pat Cox (European Parliament 2013; 2013, 13 November), individual leaders of EU countries (e.g. Interfax 2013, 8 October | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 10 July-b | EurActiv 2013, 23 October), and EU officials (EUObserver 2013, 19 November) played their part. Ukraine's Government and Parliament took several steps to meet the conditions for signing an Association Agreement,[56] but other crucial reforms did not pass. On 21 November, Ukraine's Government issued a resolution suspending the preparations for signing the Association Agreement (Ukrainian Government 2013, 21 November). Lithuanian officials, who publicly expressed their disappointment (e.g. Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 22 November | EUObserver 2013, 29 November), hoped that the Ukrainian President would change his mind at the last minute. During the EaP Summit, representatives of the EU even offered to sign the Association Agreement without Tymoshenko being released, but this could not make Yanukovich change his mind (Interview 58; 65; 80; 84 | EurActiv 2013, 29 November). According to one interviewee, Yanukovich 'did not come to Vilnius to negotiate, but to perform a little show' (Interview 84). In summary, despite the efforts of Lithuanians and many others, the Presidency's goal – signing an Association Agreement with Ukraine – was not achieved.

[55] (on the initial demonstrations in Kiev and the EU's reaction, see e.g. EUObserver 2013, 1 December | Council of the European Union 2013, 16 December | EUObserver 2013, 20 December | European Council 2013, 20 December, p. 24).

[56] (on these steps, see e.g. Centre for Eastern Studies 2013f | EurActiv 2013, 10 September | European Voice 2013, 18 April | EurActiv 2013, 18 October | Ukrainian Government 2013, 18 September | EUObserver 2013, 21 November).

Lithuania did also not achieve its goals in certain aspects of multilateral cooperation on CSDP with the EaP countries. It hoped to hold a separate session on the EaP during the informal Defence Ministers' meeting on 5-6 September in Vilnius (Lithuanian MFA 2013), and adopt strong conclusions on the EaP at the European Council (2013, 20 December), but was unsuccessful in both cases. Apparently, the EEAS opposed this agenda, because the EU already paid much attention to the EaP in other forums (Interview 64; 68).

In seven other instances, the Lithuanian Presidency did play a role and achieved its goals, but these were not politically relevant as understood in this article (PR=0). The Civil Society Conference in Vilnius on 27-29 November, a smaller version of the annual Civil Society Forum meeting (ENPI info centre 2013, 27 November), had no political relevance, as was the case in 2011 when this was organized for the first time. Also the high-level meeting on customs cooperation at the EU's Eastern border, which Lithuania hosted in Druskininkai on 24-25 October (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 23 October | European Commission 2013, 24 October-a), was part of a series of seminars that started in 2011. Its main function was to reflect on past achievements and to discuss areas for future cooperation. With regard to CFSP, Lithuania put collaboration with the EaP countries in this field on the agenda of the informal meeting of EU Security Policy Directors on 17-18 September in Vilnius. Areas of cooperation included participation in training and crisis management, and EU support for security sector reform in the region (Interview 64; 75 | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 19 September). On 4-8 November, Lithuania co-hosted an orientation course of the ESDC on CSDP in Brussels (European External Action Service 2013a), to which the EaP countries were invited. It is rather common practice that third countries participate in such training sessions (Interview 64; 68). Both events did not lead to novel or tangible results. In order to encourage the actual participation of EaP countries in EU missions, Lithuania also promoted the establishment of a Trust Fund to provide financial support to EaP countries for training and organisational expenses of mission personnel. This fund was established by the end of 2013 and is supported by France, the UK, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania (Interview 75). Since it involves only a few EU members, it cannot be considered an EU policy and will thus be excluded from the analysis. On energy, Lithuania drafted a non-paper that was discussed at the November meeting of the Strategic Group for International Energy Cooperation (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 10 July-a), however without political relevance. The group, at Vice-Ministers level, was established following a European Commission proposal of 2011 on external energy policy (European Commission 2011, 7 September). Finally, Vilnius hosted the 41st plenary meeting of the European Judicial Network on 19-21 November, where delegations from the EaP countries participated as well (European Judicial Network 2013 | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 18 November). These meetings in the field of energy and justice were aimed at exchanging ideas and did not produce novel or tangible results (Interview 54; 72).

The information outlined in the previous sections is summarized in Tables 2, 3 and 4. Table 2 shows an overview of outputs in EaP policies and Lithuania's influence thereupon. As was the case for the Hungarian and the Polish Presidency, the score of AS is underlined in the instances where political influence was limited (only) due to limited ascription. Table 3 indicates the salience of these outputs and Table 4 shows the salience of these individual outputs per policy area. This table reveals that all eight EaP-related policy areas can be considered of high salience to the Lithuanian Presidency.

Table 2: Influence of the Lithuanian Presidency on EaP policies

Output	Political influence: (GA+AS+PR)/9
Transport, ministerial meeting	(2+3+3)/9=high (0.89)
JHA, ministerial meeting	(3+3+1)/9=substantial (0.78)
CEPOL annual Presidency conference	(3+2+1)/9=substantial (0.67)
EaP Youth Forum	(3+2+1)/9= substantial (0.67)
Education, science, research conference	(3+2+1)/9=substantial (0.67)
Belarus, visa facilitation and readmission	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Defence, high-level seminar on EU-EaP cooperation	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Energy, Council report (partly EaP-related)	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Moldova, visa liberalisation	(3+1+3)/9=limited (0.56)
Ukraine, DCFTA provisional application	(3+1+3)/9=limited (0.56)
Armenia, Association Agreement	GA=0.00 (no)
Azerbaijan, visa facilitation agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
CORLEAP, annual meeting	AS=0.00 (no)
Customs cooperation, high-level seminar	PR=0.00 (no)
Defence, European Council conclusions	GA=0.00 (no)
Defence, informal Ministers' meeting	GA=0.00 (no)
Defence, informal Security Policy Directors' meeting	PR=0.00 (no)
Defence, ESDC training course with EaP representatives	PR=0.00 (no)
EaP Business Forum	AS=0.00 (no)
EaP Summit, format of invitations	AS=0.00 (no)
EaP Summit, results	AS=0.00 (no)
Education, launch of Erasmus+	AS=0.00 (no)
European Judicial Network plenary meeting	PR=0.00 (no)
EU-EaP Foreign Ministers' meeting	AS=0.00 (no)
Georgia, Association Agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
Georgia, CSDP Framework Participation Agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
Moldova, Association Agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
Moldova, opening up of EU market for wines	AS=0.00 (no)
Strategic Group for International Energy Cooperation	PR=0.00 (no)
Ukraine, Air Services Agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
Ukraine, Association Agreement	GA=0.00 (no)
EaP Civil Society Conference[57]	PR=0.00 (no)

[57] Since neither the Lithuanian, nor the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies exerted influence on EU policies towards EU-EaP civil society cooperation, this policy area will not be included in the comparative analysis.

Table 3: Salience of issues to the Lithuanian Presidency

Output	Mentioned in programme	Ego/Alter, secondary sources: priority	Salience
Transport, ministerial meeting	yes	yes	1.00
JHA, ministerial meeting	yes	yes	1.00
Education, science, research conference	(yes)	yes	1.00
Police, CEPOL annual Presidency conference	no	yes	0.67
Belarus, visa facilitation and readmission	no	yes	0.67
Defence, high-level seminar on EU-EaP cooperation	(yes)	yes	1.00
EaP Youth Forum	yes	no	0.33
Energy, Council report	yes	yes	1.00
Moldova, visa liberalisation	(yes)	yes	1.00
Ukraine, DCFTA provisional application	yes	yes	1.00
Armenia, Association Agreement	yes	yes	1.00
Azerbaijan, visa facilitation agreement	(yes)	yes	1.00
CORLEAP, annual meeting	yes	no	0.33
Customs cooperation, high-level seminar	no	yes	0.33
Defence, European Council conclusions	(yes)	no	0.33
Defence, ESDC training course with EaP representatives	no	no	0.00
Defence, informal Ministers' meeting	no	no	0.00
Defence, informal security Policy Directors' meeting	no	yes	0.67
EaP Business Forum	yes	no	0.33
EaP Summit, format of invitations	no	yes	0.67
EaP Summit, results	yes	yes	1.00
Education, launch of Erasmus+	yes	no	0.33
European Judicial Network Plenary meeting	no	no	0.00
EU-EaP Foreign Ministers' meeting	no	no	0.00
Georgia, Association Agreement	yes	yes	1.00
Georgia, CSDP Framework Participation Agreement	no	yes	0.67
Moldova, Association Agreement	yes	yes	1.00
Moldova, opening up of market for wines	no	yes	0.67
Strategic Group for International Energy Cooperation	no	no	0.00
Ukraine, Air Services Agreement	no	no	0.00
Ukraine, Association Agreement	yes	yes	1.00

Table 4: Salience of policy areas to the Lithuanian Presidency

Policy area	Outputs (salience)	Salience (= MAX of all outputs in policy area)
Bilateral political relations	°Armenia, Association Agreement (1.00) °Georgia, Association Agreement (1.00) °Moldova, Association Agreement (1.00) °Ukraine, Association Agreement (1.00)	1.00
Defence	°High-level seminar on EU-EaP defence cooperation (1.00) °European Council conclusions (0.33) °ESDC training course with EaP representatives (0.00) °Informal Defence Ministers' meeting (0.00) °Informal Security Policy Directors' meeting (0.33) °Georgia, CSDP Framework Participation Agreement (0.67)	1.00
Education/research/youth	°Education, science and research conference (1.00) °EaP Youth Forum (0.33) °Launch of Erasmus+ (0.33)	1.00
Energy	°Council report (partly EaP-related) (1.00) °Strategic group for international energy cooperation (0.00)	1.00
Justice and Home Affairs	°JHA ministerial meeting (1.00) °CEPOL annual Presidency conference (0.67) °Belarus, visa facilitation and readmission (0.67) °Moldova, visa liberalisation (1.00) °Azerbaijan, visa facilitation agreement (1.00) °Customs cooperation, high-level seminar (0.33) °European Judicial Network Plenary meeting (0.00;)	1.00
Multilateral political and institutional framework	°CORLEAP annual meeting (0.33) °Foreign Ministers' meeting (0.00) °EaP Summit: format of invitations (0.67) °EaP Summit: results (1.00)	1.00
Trade and economic relations	°Ukraine, DCFTA provisional application (1.00) °EaP Business Forum (0.33) °Moldova, opening up of market for wines (0.67)	1.00
Transport	°Ministerial meeting (1.00) °Ukraine, air services agreement (0.00)	1.00

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Interview 33. Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius, 4 March 2013.
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Appendix 4: Analysis of necessary conditions and standard analyses (QCA) of conditions for influence of the Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies

Analysis of necessity

'influential Presidency'	**Consistency**	**Coverage**
bru	0.648881	0.708647
~bru	0.805508	0.700599
reput	0.862306	0.537554
~reput	0.308089	0.667910
large	0.516351	0.563910
~large	0.654045	0.568862
sal.pres	0.903614	0.594228
~sal.pres	0.153184	0.281201
fav.pref/sal.ot	0.678141	0.717668
~fav.pref/sal.ot	0.776248	0.692780

'~influential Presidency'	**Consistency**	**Coverage**
bru	0.676898	0.787594
~bru	0.749596	0.694611
reput	0.856220	0.568670
~reput	0.303716	0.701493
large	0.534733	0.622180
~large	0.625202	0.579341
sal.pres	0.632472	0.443124
~sal.pres	0.420840	0.823065
fav.pref/sal.ot	0.676898	0.763206
~fav.pref/sal.ot	0.749596	0.712750

Analysis of sufficiency

--- COMPLEX SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1.000000
consistency cutoff: 0.841415

	raw coverage	unique coverage	consistency
sal.pres*bru*~reput*~large	0.211704	0.098107	0.917910
sal.pres*~bru*reput*large	0.431153	0.098107	0.883598
sal.pres*~bru*reput* fav.pref/sal.ot	0.581755	0.248709	0.848181

solution coverage: 0.777969
solution consistency: 0.845650

Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in term bru*~reput*~large*sal.pres: H - Energy (0.67,0.67), H - Multilateral political and institutional framework (0.67,0.67), H - Bilateral political relations (0.67,0.56), H - Trade and economic relations (0.67,0.56).
Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in term sal.pres*~bru*reput*large: PL - Justice and Home Affairs (0.67,0.78), PL - Multilateral political and institutional framework (0.67,0.89), PL - Transport (0.67,0.67), PL - Bilateral political relations (0.67,0.56), PL - Energy (0.67,0.56), PL - Trade and economic relations (0.67,0.56).
Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in term ~bru*reput*sal.pres*fav.pref/sal.ot: LT - Transport (0.67,0.89), LT - Education/research/youth (0.67,0.67), LT - Trade and economic relations (0.67,0.56), PL - Transport (0.67,0.67), PL - Trade and economic relations (0.67,0.56).

--- PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1.000000
consistency cutoff: 0.845381

	raw coverage	unique coverage	consistency
large*sal.pres	0.459552	0.126506	0.698039
bru*sal.pres	0.552496	0.098107	0.841416
~bru*~large*fav.pref/sal.ot	0.419105	0.135112	0.773016

solution coverage: 0.863167
solution consistency: 0.716941

Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in term large*sal.pres: PL - Multilateral political and institutional framework (1,0.89), PL - Justice and Home Affairs (1,0.78), PL - Transport (1,0.67), PL - Bilateral political relations (1,0.56), PL - Energy (1,0.56), PL - Trade and economic relations (1,0.56).
Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in term bru*sal.pres: H - Energy (0.67,0.67), H - Multilateral political and institutional framework (0.67,0.67), H - Bilateral political relations (0.67,0.56), H - Trade and economic relations (0.67,0.56).
Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in term ~bru*~large*fav.pref/sal.ot: LT - Transport (0.67,0.89), LT - Education/research/youth (0.67,0.67), LT - Trade and economic relations (0.67,0.56)

--- INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1.000000
consistency cutoff: 0.845381
Assumptions:
sal.pres (present)
reput (present)
bru (present)

	raw coverage	**unique coverage**	**consistency**
sal.pres*~large*bru	0.382100	0.268503	0.834586
sal.pres*large*reput	0.459552	0.126506	0.698039

solution coverage: 0.728055
solution consistency: 0.726180

Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in term sal.pres*~large*bru: H - Energy (0.67,0.67), H - Multilateral political and institutional framework (0.67,0.67), H - Bilateral political relations (0.67,0.56), H - Trade and economic relations (0.67,0.56).
Cases with greater than 0.5 membership in term sal.pres*large*reput: PL - Multilateral political and institutional framework (1,0.89), PL - Justice and Home Affairs (1,0.78), PL - Transport (1,0.67), PL - Bilateral political relations (1,0.56), PL - Energy (1,0.56), PL - Trade and economic relations (1,0.56).

Appendix 5: Survey on the Lithuanian Council Presidency and Eastern Partnership policies. Questions and answer options

In which policy area(s) did you work during the Lithuanian Council Presidency? (multiple answers possible)

- ❑ Agriculture
- ❑ Culture
- ❑ Defence
- ❑ Development cooperation
- ❑ Economy
- ❑ Education and Science
- ❑ Energy
- ❑ Environment and Climate
- ❑ Finance
- ❑ Foreign Affairs
- ❑ Home Affairs
- ❑ Justice
- ❑ Social Affairs
- ❑ Trade
- ❑ Transport
- ❑ Other (please specify)

Have you chaired one or more preparatory bodies of the Council of the EU during the Lithuanian Presidency? (working party, Coreper, …)

- ❍ Yes (please specify in which policy area(s)) _____
- ❍ No

Where was your usual work place (= 80% of the time) during the Lithuanian Council Presidency?

- ❍ Vilnius
- ❍ Brussels
- ❍ Other (please specify) _____

In your opinion, to what extent do the following actors benefit from closer cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries?
'Closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation is (...) beneficial for...'

	Not at all beneficial	Rather not beneficial	Rather benefcial	Very beneficial	Do not know
... the Eastern Partnership countries	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
... Lithuania	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
... the EU countries bordering the Eastern Partnership region	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
... the European Union as a whole	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Below are listed 10 possible aims of the Eastern Partnership initiative. Please indicate up to 5 aims that are most important for Lithuania to pursue through Eastern Partnership policies (you can tick maximum 5 boxes).

- ❑ Better human rights protection in the Eastern Partnership countries
- ❑ Better mutual understanding of each other's culture
- ❑ Democratisation of the Eastern Partnership countries
- ❑ Development of export markets for Lithuanian products
- ❑ Greater role of the EU in world politics
- ❑ Increased trade between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries
- ❑ Modernisation of public administrations in the Eastern Partnership countries
- ❑ Limitation of the sphere of influence of Russia
- ❑ Peace and stability in Europe
- ❑ Stronger voice of Central and Eastern European member states in EU foreign policy

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about the reasons why Lithuania prioritized the Eastern Partnership during its Presidency.
'The Lithuanian Council Presidency prioritized the Eastern Partnership because…'

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
… the EU pays too little attention to the Eastern Partnership region as compared to other regions in the world.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
… this fitted in the political calendar of the EU.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
… Lithuania wanted to share its expertise with the EU and with the Eastern Partnership countries.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
… the Presidency period was an opportunity to place the Eastern Partnership region higher on the EU's agenda.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
… the Eastern Partnership countries expected us to prioritize this region.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
... other EU countries and/or EU institutions expected us to prioritize the Eastern Partnership region.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
... it is Lithuania's task to emphasize the benefits of closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

To what extent has Lithuanian been influential during its Council Presidency in the following aspects of Eastern Partnership policies?

	Not at all influential	Rather not influential	Rather influential	Very influential	Do not know
Agenda setting on the Eastern Partnership	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Decisions related to the Eastern Partnership	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Implementation of Eastern Partnership policies	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Long-term relations between the EU and the Eastern Partnership	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

If applicable, please indicate where and how Lithuania has influenced Eastern Partnership policies during its Council Presidency (please indicate concrete files, dossiers, broad policy areas where the Lithuanian Presidency made a difference).

Thank you for your time and for your valuable contribution to this research.
If you have any additional remarks about this survey, about the role of the Lithuanian Presidency in the Eastern Partnership policies, or if you wish to clarify one of your answers in the survey, please use the text box below.

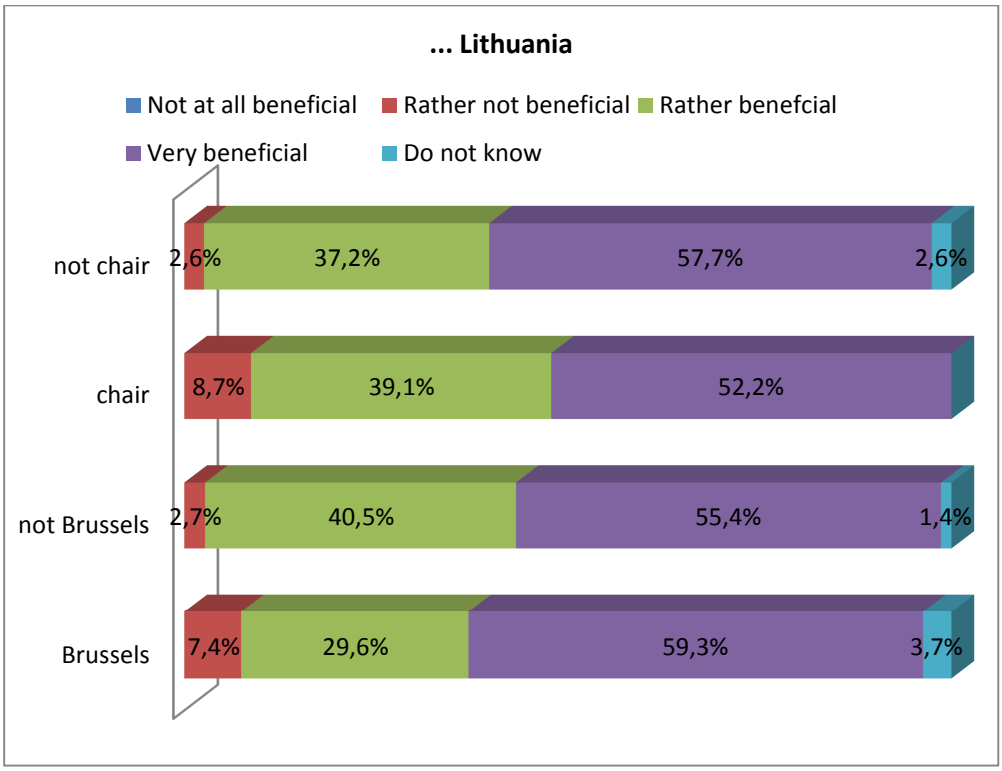
Appendix 6: Survey – Comparison between groups of respondents on benefits of closer EU-Eastern Partnership relations

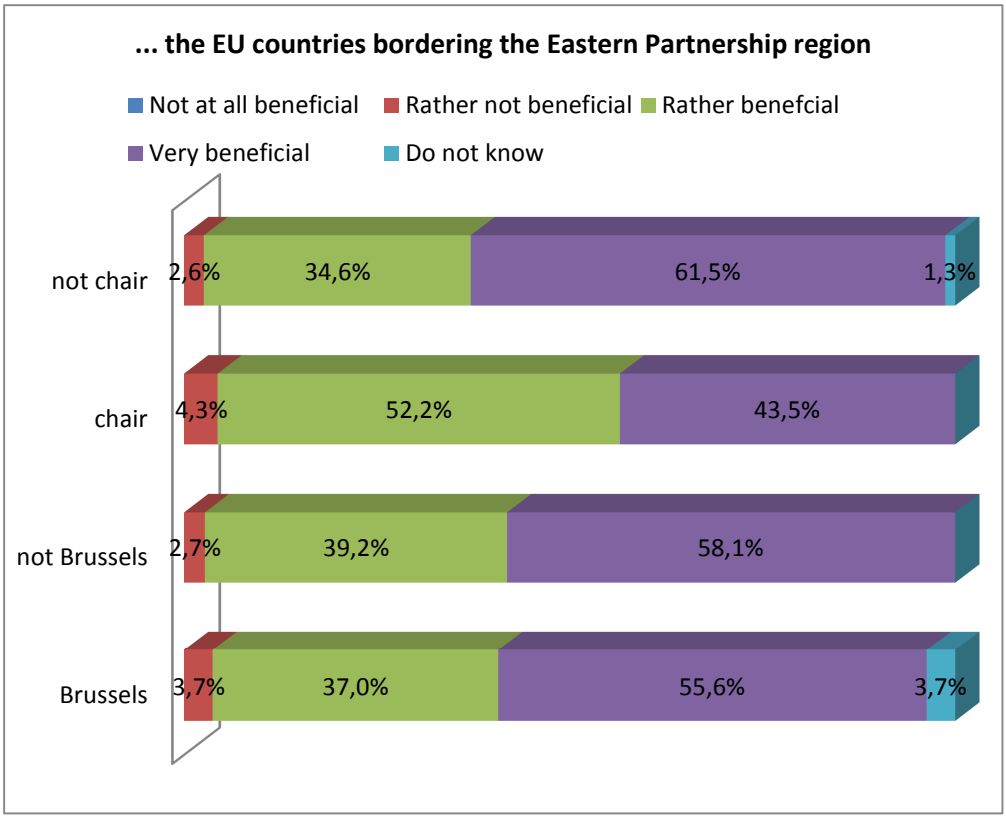
The four charts below summarize the answers given by the different groups of respondents to the question **'In your opinion, to what extent do the following actors benefit from closer cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries**?' The charts should be read as follows: the title of the chart is the sentence 'Closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation is (...) beneficial for...' as completed by the respondents. The horizontal bars after 'not chair', 'chair', 'not Brussels' and 'Brussels' show the answers of the respective group of respondents.

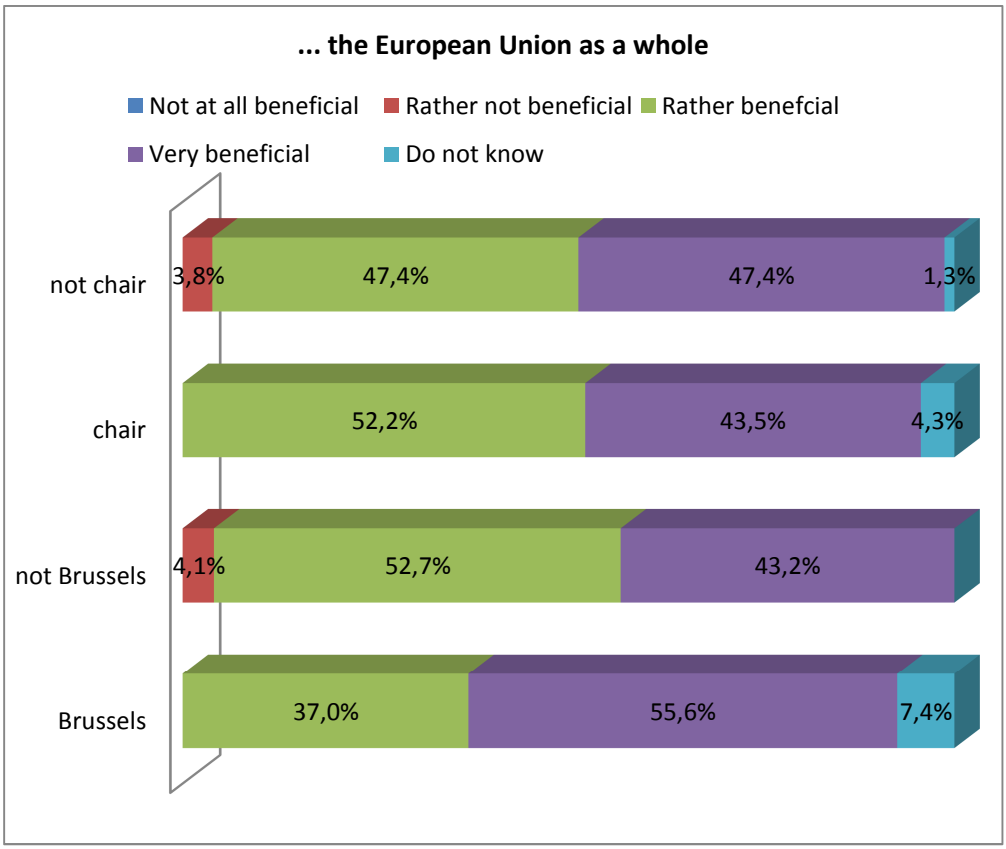
The charts show that, overall, the results for the four respondent groups are very similar. There are two small differences between the groups. Firstly, the *chairs* and *Brussels-based* officials are slightly less positive than the *not chairs* and their *not Brussels-based* colleagues about the benefits of EaP policies for Lithuania and for the EU countries bordering the EaP region. Secondly, this difference is the opposite regarding the EU as a whole and the EaP countries: here none of the *chairs* and *Brussels-based* respondents gave a negative answer. Thus, the *Brussels-based* respondents and the *chairs* seem to support the EaP policies slightly more because of their benefits for the EU and the EaP countries, and less because of national or regional benefits. However, these differences are statistically insignificant (cf. the results of the Mann-Whitney U test below).

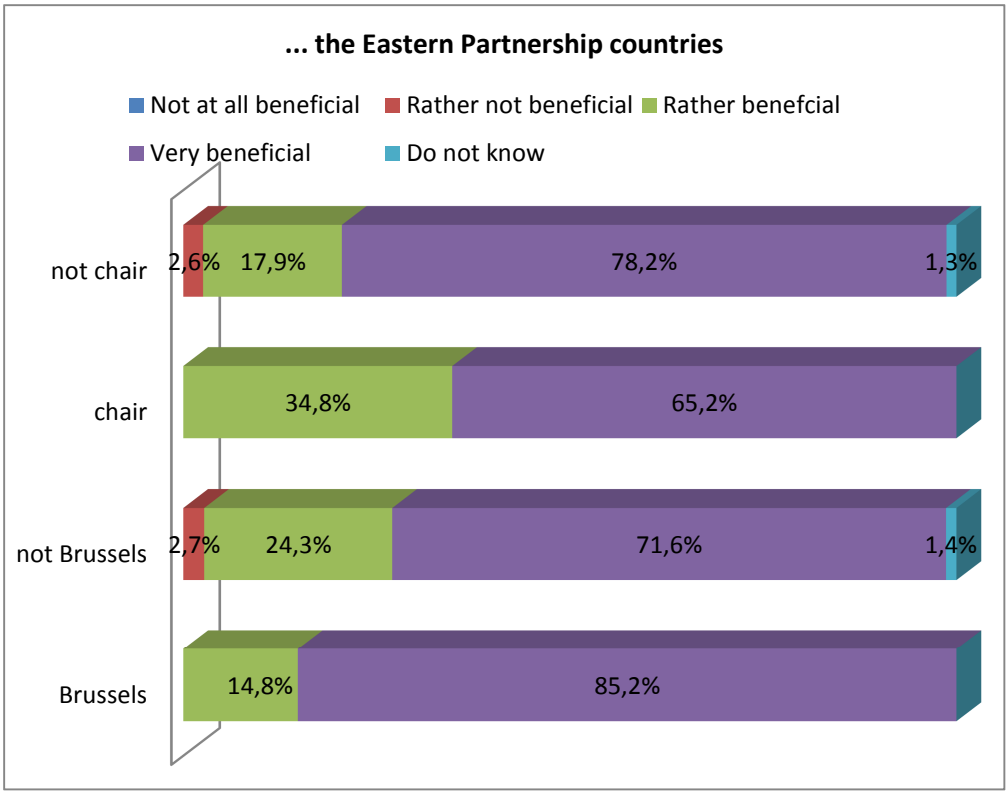
It is interesting to note that the *chairs* and *Brussels-based* officials do not always provide similar answers to the survey questions.

Charts: 'Closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation is (...) beneficial for...'




... the EU countries bordering the Eastern Partnership region
Not at all beneficial
Rather not beneficial
Rather benefcial
Very beneficial
Do not know
not chair
2,6%
34,6%
61,5%
1,3%
chair
4,3%
52,2%
43,5%
not Brussels
2,7%
39,2%
58,1%
Brussels
3,7%
37,0%
55,6%
3,7%


... the European Union as a whole
Not at all beneficial
Rather not beneficial
Rather benefcial
Very beneficial
Do not know
not chair
3,8%
47,4%
47,4%
1,3%
chair
52,2%
43,5%
4,3%
not Brussels
4,1%
52,7%
43,2%
Brussels
37,0%
55,6%
7,4%


... the Eastern Partnership countries
Not at all beneficial
Rather not beneficial
Rather benefcial
Very beneficial
Do not know
not chair
2,6%
17,9%
78,2%
1,3%
chair
34,8%
65,2%
not Brussels
2,7%
24,3%
71,6%
1,4%
Brussels
14,8%
85,2%

Statistical test: Mann-Whitney U

The Mann-Whitney U test was performed to find out whether there are significant differences between groups of respondents in their evaluations about the benefits of EaP policies.
The variables were abbreviated in SPSS as follows:

- Benefits for Lithuania = benefits_LT
- Benefits for the EU countries bordering the Eastern Partnership region = benefits_CEEC
- Benefits for the EU as a whole = benefits_EU
- Benefits for the Eastern Partnership countries = benefits_EaP

For chairs vs. not chairs:

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of benefits_LT is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,436	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of benefits_CEEC is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,110	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of benefits_EU is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,969	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of benefits_EaP is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,200	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

Conclusion: no significant difference between *chairs* and *not chairs* on the evaluation of the benefits of closer EU-EaP relations.

For Brussels-based vs. not Brussels-based:

Hypothesis Test Summary

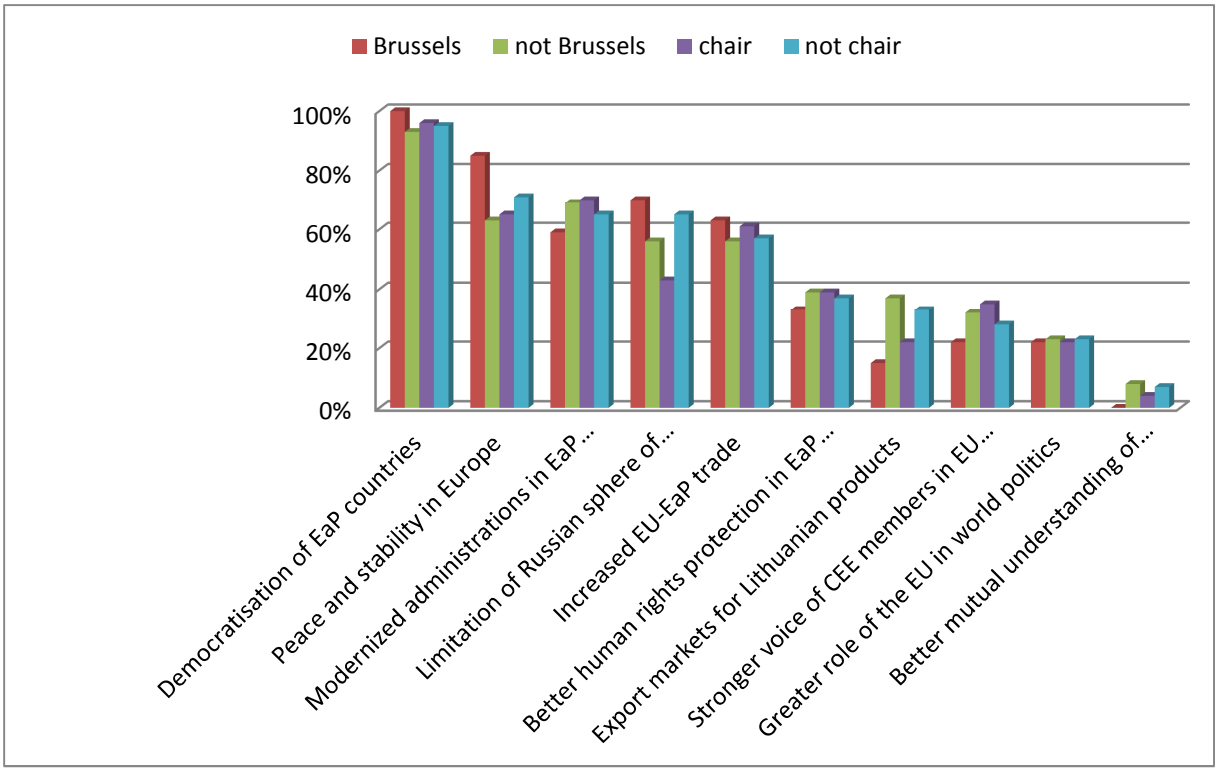
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of benefits_LT is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,790	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of benefits_CEEC is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,938	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of benefits_EU is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,119	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of benefits_EaP is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,180	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

Conclusion: no significant difference between *Brussels-based* officials and *not Brussels-based* officials on the evaluation of the benefits of closer EU-EaP relations.

Appendix 7: Survey – Comparison between groups of respondents on most important aims of the Eastern Partnership policies

Chart: 'Please indicate up to 5 aims that are most important for Lithuania to pursue through Eastern Partnership policies'



The variables were abbreviated in SPSS as follows:

- Better human rights protection in the Eastern Partnership countries = aims_human_rights
- Better mutual understanding of each other's culture = aims_culture
- Democratisation of the Eastern Partnership countries = aims_democratisation
- Development of export markets for Lithuanian products = aims_LT_exports
- Greater role of the EU in world politics = aims_EU_role_world
- Increased trade between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries = aims_tradeEUEaP
- Modernisation of public administrations in the Eastern Partnership countries = aims_modernisation_publadm_EaP
- Limitation of the sphere of influence of Russia = aims_limitation_RUS
- Peace and stability in Europe = aims_peacestability_Europe
- Stronger voice of Central and Eastern European member states in EU foreign policy = aims_voice_CEEC

Crosstabs: chairs (1) vs. not chairs (2)

			aims_human_rights		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	14	9	23
		Expected Count	14,9	8,1	23,0
	2	Count	54	28	82
		Expected Count	53,1	28,9	82,0
Total		Count	68	37	105
		Expected Count	68,0	37,0	105,0

			aims_culture		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	22	1	23
		Expected Count	21,7	1,3	23,0
	2	Count	77	5	82
		Expected Count	77,3	4,7	82,0
Total		Count	99	6	105
		Expected Count	99,0	6,0	105,0

			aims_democratisation		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	1	22	23
		Expected Count	2,6	20,4	23,0
	2	Count	11	71	82
		Expected Count	9,4	72,6	82,0
Total		Count	12	93	105
		Expected Count	12,0	93,0	105,0

			aims_LT_exports		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	18	5	23
		Expected Count	16,4	6,6	23,0
	2	Count	57	25	82
		Expected Count	58,6	23,4	82,0
Total		Count	75	30	105
		Expected Count	75,0	30,0	105,0

			aims_EU_role_world		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	18	5	23
		Expected Count	18,2	4,8	23,0
	2	Count	65	17	82
		Expected Count	64,8	17,2	82,0
Total		Count	83	22	105
		Expected Count	83,0	22,0	105,0

			aims_tradeEUEaP		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	9	14	23
		Expected Count	10,5	12,5	23,0
	2	Count	39	43	82
		Expected Count	37,5	44,5	82,0
Total		Count	48	57	105
		Expected Count	48,0	57,0	105,0

			aims_modernisation_publadm_EaP		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	7	16	23
		Expected Count	8,8	14,2	23,0
	2	Count	33	49	82
		Expected Count	31,2	50,8	82,0
Total		Count	40	65	105
		Expected Count	40,0	65,0	105,0

			aims_limitation_RUS		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	13	10	23
		Expected Count	10,1	12,9	23,0
	2	Count	33	49	82
		Expected Count	35,9	46,1	82,0
Total		Count	46	59	105
		Expected Count	46,0	59,0	105,0

			aims_peacestability_Europe		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	8	15	23
		Expected Count	8,1	14,9	23,0
	2	Count	29	53	82
		Expected Count	28,9	53,1	82,0
Total		Count	37	68	105
		Expected Count	37,0	68,0	105,0

			aims_voice_CEEC		
			0	1	Total
chair	1	Count	15	8	23
		Expected Count	16,6	6,4	23,0
	2	Count	61	21	82
		Expected Count	59,4	22,6	82,0
Total		Count	76	29	105
		Expected Count	76,0	29,0	105,0

Crosstabs: not Brussels-based (1) vs. Brussels-based (2)

			aims_human_rights		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	50	28	78
		Expected Count	50,5	27,5	78,0
	2	Count	18	9	27
		Expected Count	17,5	9,5	27,0
Total		Count	68	37	105
		Expected Count	68,0	37,0	105,0

			aims_culture		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	72	6	78
		Expected Count	73,5	4,5	78,0
	2	Count	27	0	27
		Expected Count	25,5	1,5	27,0
Total		Count	99	6	105
		Expected Count	99,0	6,0	105,0

			aims_democratisation		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	12	66	78
		Expected Count	8,9	69,1	78,0
	2	Count	0	27	27
		Expected Count	3,1	23,9	27,0
Total		Count	12	93	105
		Expected Count	12,0	93,0	105,0

			aims_LT_exports		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	52	26	78
		Expected Count	55,7	22,3	78,0
	2	Count	23	4	27
		Expected Count	19,3	7,7	27,0
Total		Count	75	30	105
		Expected Count	75,0	30,0	105,0

			aims_EU_role_world		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	62	16	78
		Expected Count	61,7	16,3	78,0
	2	Count	21	6	27
		Expected Count	21,3	5,7	27,0
Total		Count	83	22	105
		Expected Count	83,0	22,0	105,0

			aims_tradeEUEaP		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	38	40	78
		Expected Count	35,7	42,3	78,0
	2	Count	10	17	27
		Expected Count	12,3	14,7	27,0
Total		Count	48	57	105
		Expected Count	48,0	57,0	105,0

			aims_modernisation_publadm_EaP		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	29	49	78
		Expected Count	29,7	48,3	78,0
	2	Count	11	16	27
		Expected Count	10,3	16,7	27,0
Total		Count	40	65	105
		Expected Count	40,0	65,0	105,0

			aims_limitation_RUS		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	38	40	78
		Expected Count	34,2	43,8	78,0
	2	Count	8	19	27
		Expected Count	11,8	15,2	27,0
Total		Count	46	59	105
		Expected Count	46,0	59,0	105,0

			aims_peacestability_Europe		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	33	45	78
		Expected Count	27,5	50,5	78,0
	2	Count	4	23	27
		Expected Count	9,5	17,5	27,0
Total		Count	37	68	105
		Expected Count	37,0	68,0	105,0

			aims_voice_CEEC		
			0	1	Total
Brussels	1	Count	55	23	78
		Expected Count	56,5	21,5	78,0
	2	Count	21	6	27
		Expected Count	19,5	7,5	27,0
Total		Count	76	29	105
		Expected Count	76,0	29,0	105,0

Statistical tests: Pearson Chi-Square test or Fisher's Exact test

The Pearson Chi-Square test was applied if all cells of the crosstabs include at least five cases. If one or more cell(s) contain(s) less than five cases, I applied Fisher's Exact Test. Significant differences (p-value <0.05), are written in **bold and underlined**.

The variables were abbreviated for SPSS as follows:

- the EU pays too little attention to the Eastern Partnership region as compared to other regions in the world = reasons_too_little_attention
- this fitted in the political calendar of the EU = reasons_political_calendar
- Lithuania wanted to share its expertise with the EU and with the Eastern Partnership countries = reasons_share_expertise
- the Presidency period was an opportunity to place the Eastern Partnership region higher on the EU's agenda = reasons_EaP_higher_agenda
- the Eastern Partnership countries expected us to prioritize this region = reasons_EaP_expected
- other EU countries and/or EU institutions expected us to prioritize the Eastern Partnership region = reasons_EU_expected
- it is Lithuania's task to emphasize the benefits of closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation = reasons_LTs_task

For chairs vs. not chairs:

	aims_human_rights	aims_culture	aims_democratisation	aims_LT_exports	Aims_EU-role_world	aims_tradeEUEaP	aims_modernisation_publadm_EaP	aims_limitation_RUS	aims_peacestability_Europe	aims_voice_CEEC
Pearson Chi-Square	.196	.102	1.459	.674	.011	.514	.733	1.933	.003	.756
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.658	.749	.227	.412	.916	.473	.392	.164	.959	.385
df	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)	.805	1.00	.457	.602	1.00	.636	.471	.234	1.00	.432

Conclusion: no significant difference between *chairs* and *not chairs* on any of the aims of EaP policies.

For Brussels-based vs. not Brussels-based:

	aims_human_rights	aims_culture	aims_democratisation	aims_LT_exports	Aims_EU-role_world	aims_tradeEUEaP	aims_modernisation_publadm_EaP	aims_limitation_RUS	aims_peacestability_Europe	aims_voice_CEEC
Pearson Chi-Square	.058	2.203	4.690	3.370	.035	1.103	.108	2.969	6.643	.530
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.810	.138	.030	.066	.851	.294	.743	.085	.010	.467
df	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided)	1.00	.335	**.034**	.085	1.00	.372	.819	.115	**.010**	.619

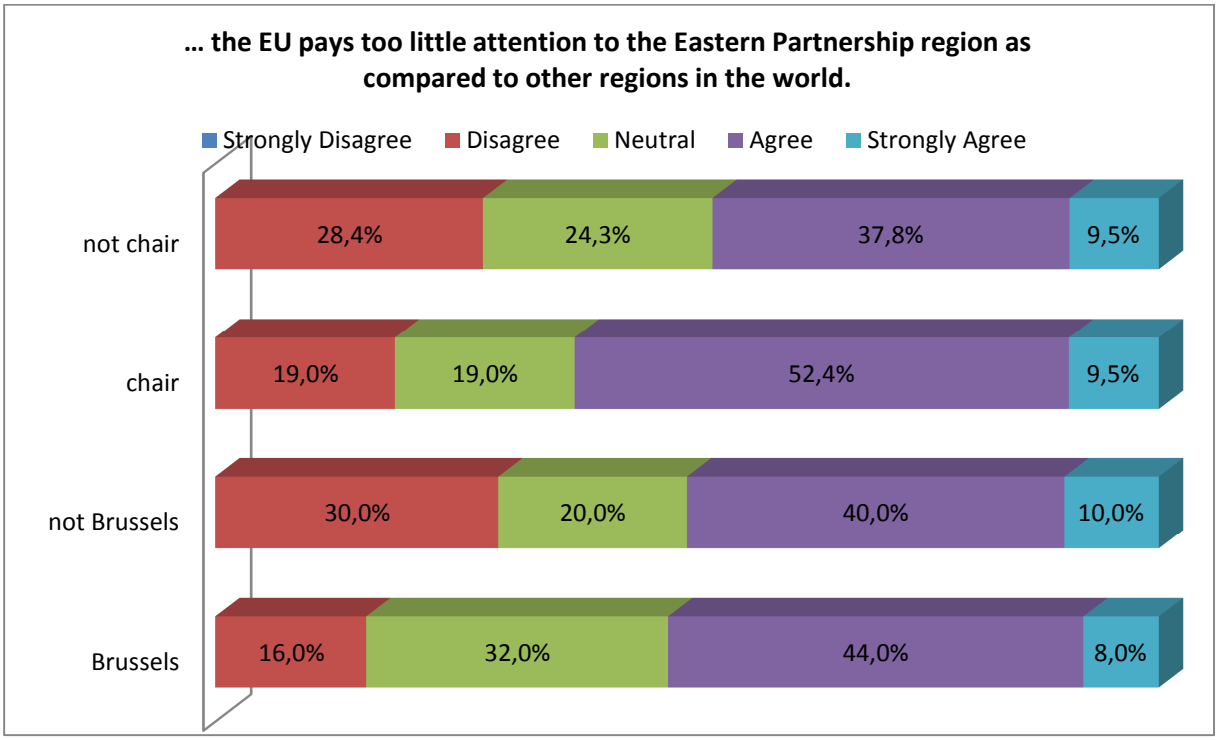
Conclusion: no significant difference between *Brussels-based* officials and *not Brussels-based* officials on most aims of the EaP. However, Brussels-based officials were more inclined to select two aims than their not Brussels-based colleagues:

- 'democratisation of the Eastern Partnership countries' (small difference) and
- 'peace and stability in Europe' (considerable difference)

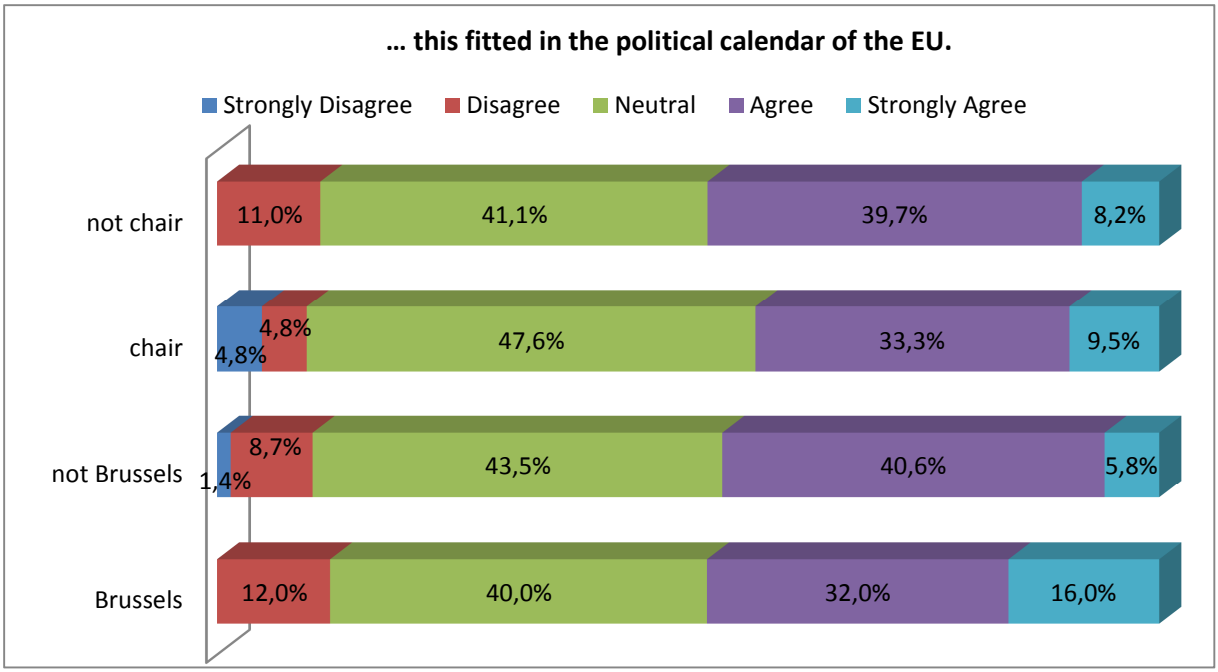
Appendix 8: Survey – Comparison between groups of respondents on reasons for prioritising the Eastern Partnership

The seven charts below compare the responses of the four groups of respondents to the question 'Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about the reasons why Lithuania prioritized the Eastern Partnership during its Presidency'. The responses of the four categories of respondents are shown each in a separate chart. The title of the chart completes the sentence 'The Lithuanian Council Presidency prioritized the Eastern Partnership because…' The horizontal bars next to the grouping variables – 'not chair', 'chair', 'not Brussels' and 'Brussels' – show the answers to the statement. For each chart I describe some differences and similarities, but these were not statistically significant for any of the answer options (cf. Mann-Whitney U test below).

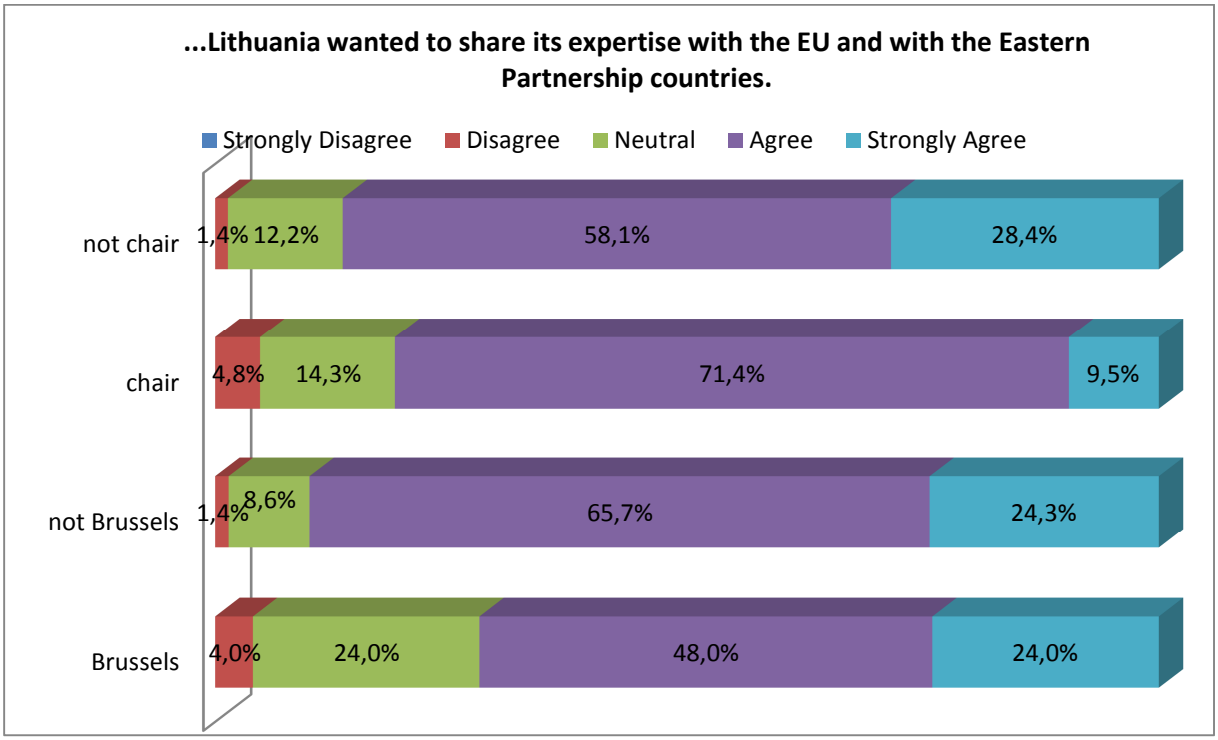
Charts: 'The Lithuanian Council Presidency prioritized the Eastern Partnership because…'



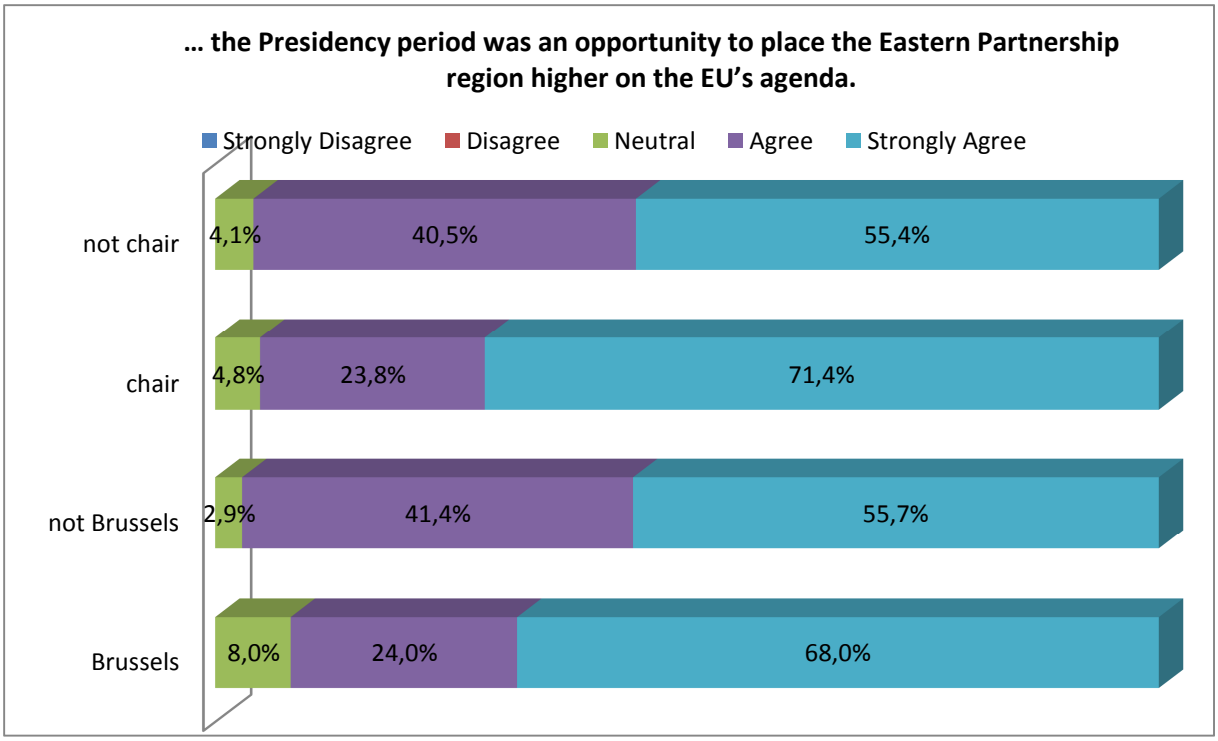
The amount of positive answers (agree and strongly agree) to 'the EU pays too little attention to the Eastern Partnership region as compared to other regions in the world' is rather similar among the different groups of respondents. The percentage of *chairs* and *Brussels-based* officials who answered positively (agree or strongly agree) was slightly higher and the percentage of 'disagrees' was lower than for the *not chairs* and the *not Brussels-based* officials. In other words, residing in Brussels or chairing Council bodies did not make respondents discard a lack of attention on behalf of the EU as one of the reasons for prioritizing the EaP region during the Lithuanian Presidency.



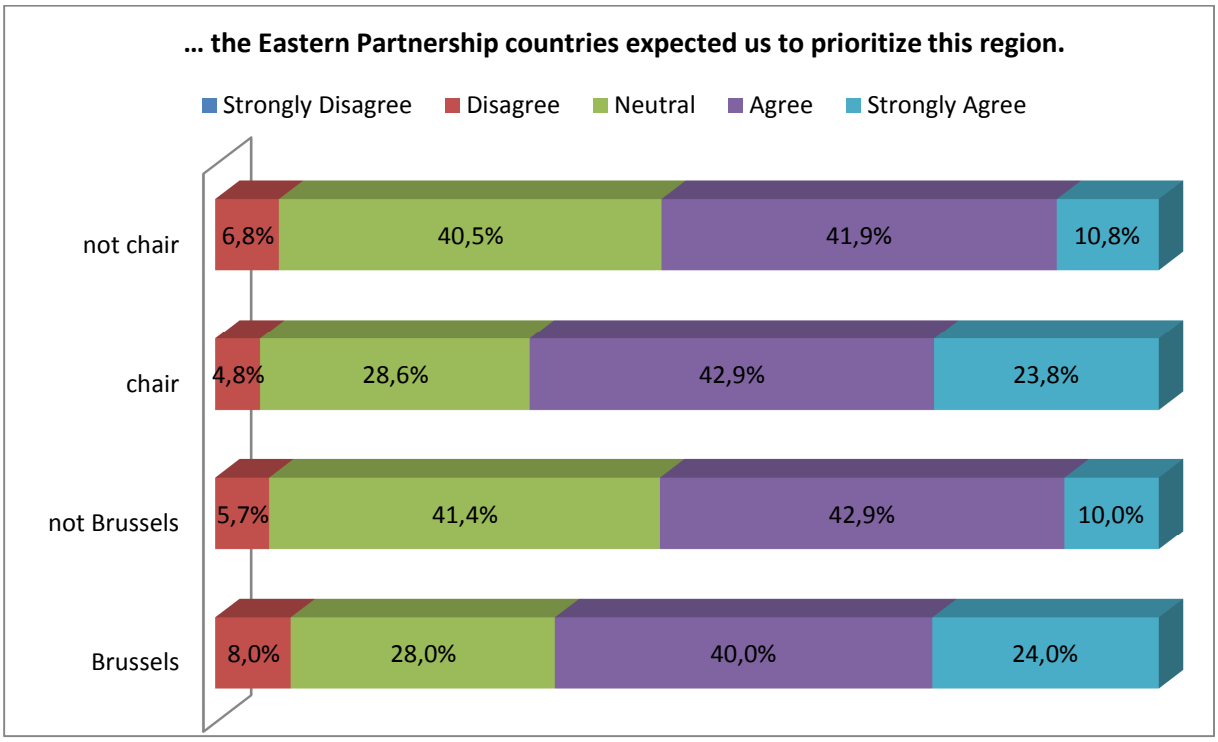
Opinions about this statement were quasi the same for all respondent groups, with only different distributions inside negative (strongly disagree and disagree) and positive (agree and strongly agree) answer categories. The highest number of all respondent groups was neutral about the statement (between 40,0% and 47,6%).



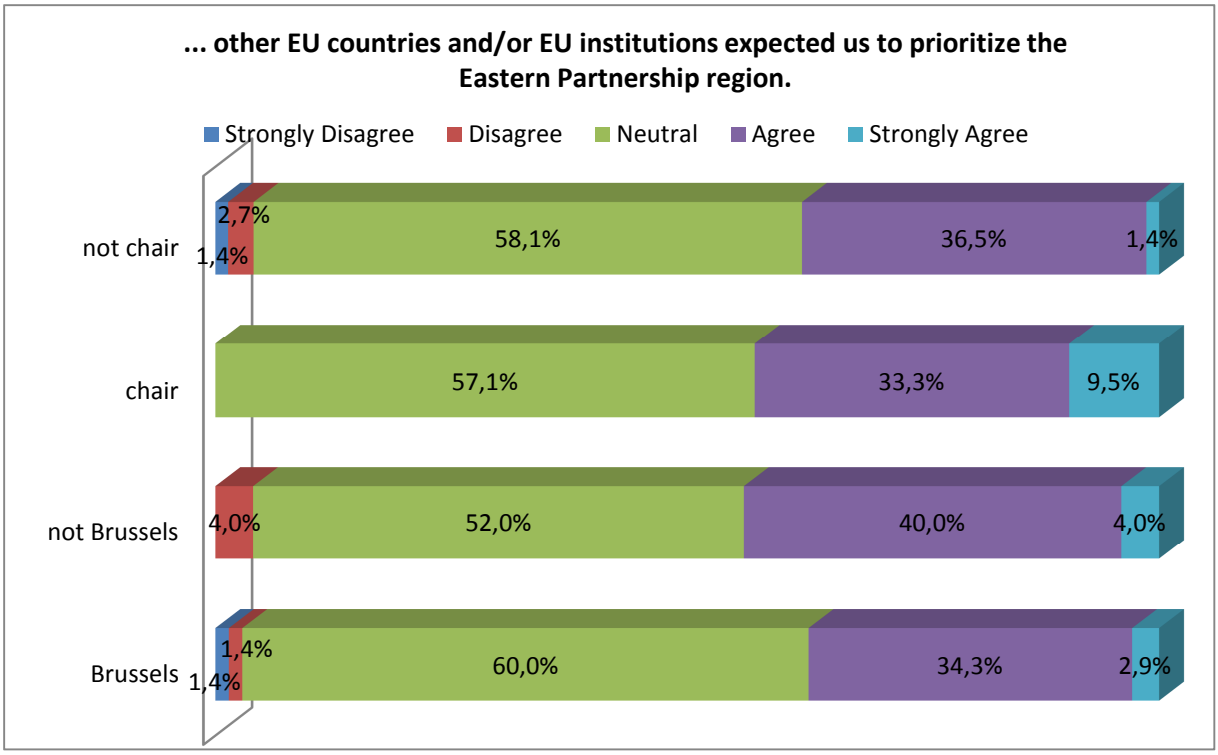
On the statement 'Lithuania wanted to share its expertise with the EU and with the Eastern Partnership countries', it is first of all striking that very little respondents disagreed. Secondly, we see that the feeling of having a 'mission' in the EU is slightly more present among *not Brussels-based* officials and *not chairs*. Nevertheless, also a large majority of the *chairs* and *Brussels-based* officials were positive about the statement: 80,9% and 72% of the respective respondent groups agreed or strongly agreed.



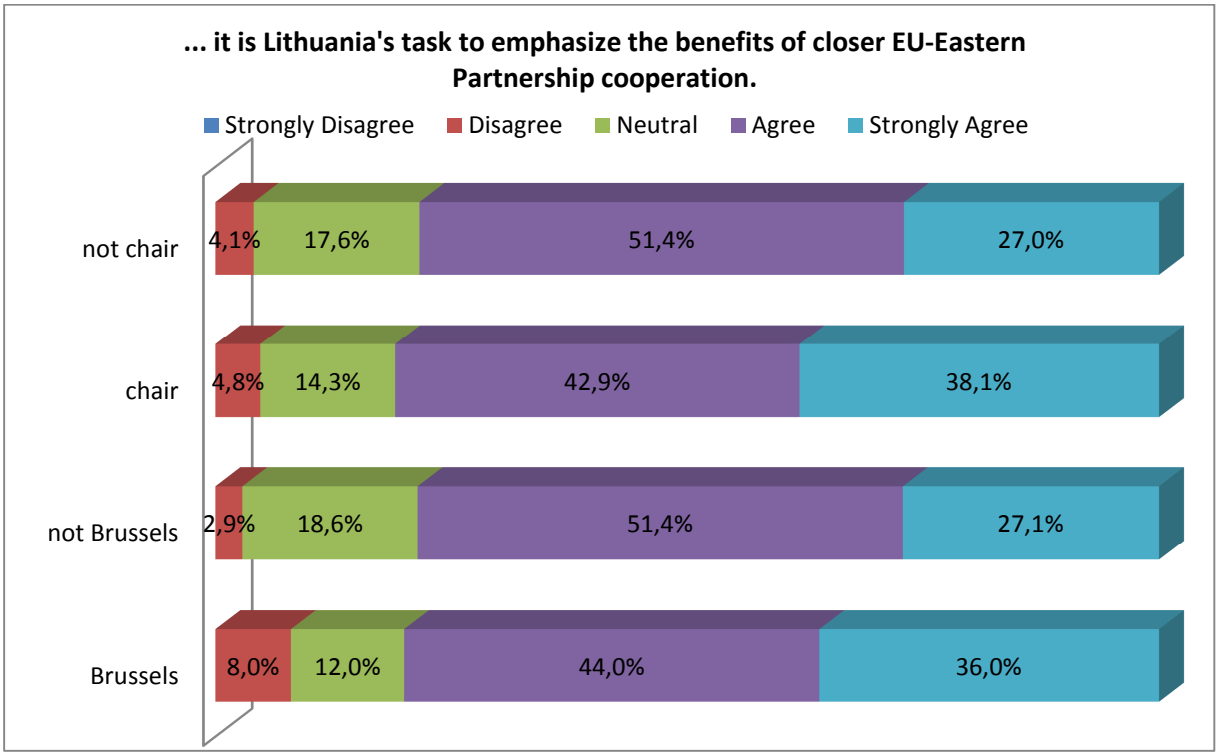
Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about 'the Presidency period was an opportunity to place the Eastern Partnership region higher on the EU's agenda'. A majority of all respondent groups strongly agreed with the statement, and this was most visible among the *chairs* and *Brussels-based* officials.



Evaluations of 'the Eastern Partnership countries expected us to prioritize this region' were rather similar among respondent groups, especially the 'agree' and 'disagree' answers. *Chairs* and *Brussels-based* officials selected a bit more 'strongly agree' and less 'neutral' than the others.



The number of negative assessments (strongly disagree or disagree) of 'other EU countries and/or EU institutions expected us to prioritize the Eastern Partnership region' was very low, while a majority among all respondent groups was neutral about the statement.



Finally, also the opinions about 'it is Lithuania's task to emphasize the benefits of closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation' were very similar among all respondent groups.

Statistical test: Mann-Whitney U

The above charts show that the assessments are very similar among the different respondent groups of the statements on the reasons for prioritising the EaP region. If there are differences, they do not always point into the expected direction. With the Mann-Whitney U test, I checked whether these (small) differences are statistically significant.

The variables were abbreviated for SPSS as follows:

- the EU pays too little attention to the Eastern Partnership region as compared to other regions in the world = reasons_too_little_attention
- this fitted in the political calendar of the EU = reasons_political_calendar
- Lithuania wanted to share its expertise with the EU and with the Eastern Partnership countries = reasons_share_expertise
- the Presidency period was an opportunity to place the Eastern Partnership region higher on the EU's agenda = reasons_EaP_higher_agenda
- the Eastern Partnership countries expected us to prioritize this region = reasons_EaP_expected
- other EU countries and/or EU institutions expected us to prioritize the Eastern Partnership region = reasons_EU_expected
- it is Lithuania's task to emphasize the benefits of closer EU-Eastern Partnership cooperation = reasons_LTs_task

For chairs vs. not chairs:

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of reasons_too_little_attention is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,303	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of reasons_political_calendar is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,807	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of reasons_share_expertise is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,098	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of reasons_EaP_higher_agenda is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,224	Retain the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of reasons_EaP_expected is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,149	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of reasons_EU_expected is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,408	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of reasons_LTs_task is the same across categories of chair.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,436	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

Conclusion: no significant difference between *chairs* and *not chairs* on any of the reasons for prioritising the EaP region during the Lithuanian Presidency.

For Brussels-based vs. not Brussels-based officials:

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of reasons_too_little_attention is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,575	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of reasons_political_calendar is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,676	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of reasons_share_expertise is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,238	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of reasons_EaP_higher_agenda is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,408	Retain the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of reasons_EaP_expected is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,212	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of reasons_EU_expected is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,597	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of reasons_LTs_task is the same across categories of Brussels.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,582	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is ,05.

Conclusion: no significant difference between *Brussels-based* officials and *not Brussels-based* officials on any of the reasons for prioritising the EaP region during the Lithuanian Presidency.

Appendix 9: Article – The Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Advancing energy policy and Eastern Partnership goals: conditions for exerting influence

This article was published with the following reference:
Vilpišauskas, R., Vandecasteele, B. & Vaznonytė, A. (2013). 'The Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Advancing energy policy and Eastern Partnership goals: conditions for exerting influence'. *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* (29), pp. 11-37.

References style, titles and interview numbers were modified to make it uniform with the other parts of the dissertation.

Abstract

This article assesses Lithuania's potential to exercise added influence in EU decision-making during its upcoming EU Council Presidency in two priority areas: the energy policy and relations between members of the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries. This article presents a comprehensive empirical *ex ante* analysis of the potential influence of the Presidency, based on official documents, academic literature, and interviews with officials from Lithuania and other EU member states. We first reflect on the roles and functions of the Presidency, how these roles changed with the Lisbon Treaty, and how the incumbent can take advantage of its position to increase its influence. We then discuss the different national, issue- and context-related conditions for influence, and how they apply to Lithuania's upcoming Presidency. We conclude that Lithuania fulfils most national conditions for influence, but that energy and Eastern Partnership policies present specific constraints for individual Presidencies to exert influence, and that the policy context is not favourable for advancing ambitious goals in these areas.

1. Introduction

Lithuania starts its first-ever Presidency of the Council of the EU (hereafter – Presidency) on 1 July 2013. Over the course of six months, Lithuania will organise and chair approximately 3,000 events – Councils, working group meetings, conferences, forums, etc. – of which 190 will take place in Lithuania (Lucenko 2011). In terms of budget, staff, logistics, and expertise, this constitutes one of the largest undertakings the Lithuanian government has faced since the country joined the EU in 2004. The Presidency also has an important political element, especially for a member state assuming it for the first time. Some have argued that a Presidency period can be seen as the ultimate test of whether new member states are capable of fulfilling their obligations in the EU (Drulák 2010). Although the government holding the Presidency formally cannot and should not use its position for national purposes (Dewost 1984 | Ludlow 1993 | Vida 2010 | Culley, Neisse & Raik 2011), there is a growing body of literature showing that the incumbent does exert additional influence on decision-making (Arter 2000 | Bjurulf 2001 | Tallberg 2004 | Schalk, Torenvlied, Weesie & Stokman 2007 | Warntjen 2007 | Thomson 2008). Indeed, fulfilling its obligations is not the only objective of the holder of the Presidency: the Presidency period constitutes a unique opportunity for governments, interest groups, and NGOs of EU member states to promote their own views and projects (Tulmets 2011). Indeed, the Lithuanian administration has set increasing Lithuania's influence in the EU decision-making process as one of its goals during the Presidency, along with ensuring smooth management of the myriad meetings and other Presidency activities, and strengthening European values in the country (Lithuanian Presidency website 2010 | Seimas 2010). The former speaker of the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) stated that "the Lithuanian Presidency […] is not only an opportunity to reinforce our membership in the European Union, but also a chance to achieve national goals", while the former foreign minister surmised that "the Presidency will be a chance for Lithuania to consolidate its position in the EU and take off its 'rookie's hat'. Lithuania will have the opportunity to present and protect national interests" (Lithuanian Presidency website 2012b).

Although there is evidence that the holder of the Presidency can exert some influence on EU decision-making and that Lithuania will also aim to do so, the impact of the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, should be addressed. This treaty significantly curtails the opportunities the holder of the rotating presidency has for shaping policy outcomes, leaving the incumbent member state more of a coordinating role. Furthermore, a trend can be detected among policy makers in Lithuania of the initial emphasis on focusing on national priorities during the Presidency, as illustrated by the quotes cited above, shifting towards an emphasis on broader European affairs and issues of European interest, which are being discussed more frequently as the Presidency period approaches. Nevertheless, finding a balance between advancing national priorities and managing the decision-making process while holding the Presidency in order to broker deals for bringing the European agenda forward remains an important issue.

This article discusses the extent to which Lithuania can be expected to exert increased influence in advancing national priorities during its Presidency in the current institutional context, based on a systematic analysis of the conditions for influence. In addition to the general priority of restoring economic growth and stability in the EU, Lithuania has identified four specific areas in which the EU should make progress during its Presidency: (i) increasing energy security within the EU, (ii) strengthening EU relations with Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, (iii) strengthening the Baltic Sea Strategy, and (iv) effectively managing external borders (Seimas 2011b). These four "national" Presidency priorities are of importance primarily to Lithuania and the other countries of the

Baltic/Nordic region. However these issues were formulated in consultation with the European Commission and taking its Work Programme (Interview 37) into account, and are thus considered crucial for the EU as a whole. In this article, we focus on the first two "national" priorities, i.e. energy security and the EaP, for several reasons. First, both topics touch upon the core interests of Lithuania in the EU, constituting an extension of the country's key European policy priorities as formulated since 2004, which are less important to (many) other member states (Vilpišauskas 2013). Furthermore, these priorities were emphasised in the work programmes of both the 15th and the 16th Governments of Lithuania, which were responsible for the preparation period for the Presidency (Seimas 2010). In addition, energy security policy, though it does touch on some external aspects, is largely related to internal EU policies, while EaP policies are part of the EU's external policies: this allows for the assessment of how the conditions for influence differ/converge in these two areas. Finally, energy security is particularly illustrative as an example of a national priority with no major decisions expected on the EU level during the Presidency term.

In what follows, we first sketch the (formal and informal) roles of the Presidency, how they changed with the Lisbon Treaty, and how these roles may increase or limit Presidency influence. Subsequently, we present an overview of the conditions for influence that have been identified in academic literature, and how they apply to Lithuania. This part also includes a description of the key priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency in the fields of energy policy and EU-EaP relations. In the third and final part, we analyse the main opportunities and challenges for Lithuania to steer EU decision-making in energy and EaP policies. We conclude that Lithuania fulfils most national conditions for exerting influence, but that the EU and international contexts, including the domestic situation in the EaP countries, are not favourable for advancing ambitious projects in the aforementioned policy areas. Each area also has its specific challenges and constraints for exerting influence.

This article's contribution to academic literature is mostly empirical and consists of two main aspects. First, it engages in an *ex ante* assessment of Presidency influence, contrary to most literature on Presidency performance, which usually makes *ex post* evaluations. The advantage of this approach is that it can act as a basis for later assessment in light of actual events. Second, the article provides the first systematic overview of the conditions for Presidency influence under the Lisbon Treaty rules applied to Lithuania, and is based on official documents, secondary sources, and interviews with officials from Lithuania and other EU member states.

2. Roles and influence of the Presidency in internal and external EU policies

2.1. Presidency roles

Formally, the Presidency only has one main responsibility: convening and chairing the meetings of the Council and its preparatory bodies, including a number of other organisational and administrative tasks (Langdal & von Sydow 2009 | Chenevière 2011). However, over the past few decades, the Presidency has become an increasingly important actor in EU decision-making (Westlake & Galloway 2004). In addition to the role of *organiser/administrator*, five other political roles of the Presidency have been discerned in academic literature, of which agenda setting/shaping, mediation/brokerage, and representation are most often cited (Bjurulf 2001 | Elgström 2003a | Tallberg 2003a). First, the incumbent is also an *agenda setter* or *shaper*: resources, time, rooms, interpretation services, etc. are limited, so there is a need to define priorities, which is done by the Presidency together with the European Commission. The Presidency programme puts certain issues in the foreground, indicates

where results are expected, and sometimes excludes issues from the agenda. Second, the Presidency fulfils the role of *mediator* or *broker*: it builds consensus between the member states, as well as between the Council, the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission. Third, the Presidency acts as a *representative* and *contact point*: it speaks and negotiates on behalf of the Council with the other EU institutions and represents the EU in contact with the media or third states and international organisations, although the latter role has diminished since 2009 (see *infra*). Fourth, some authors (Elgström 2006 | Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006 | Schout & Vanhoonacker 2006) have also described *political leadership* as a role of the Presidency: the chair promotes initiatives and priorities that further the process of European integration or that contribute to a better functioning of the EU. Finally, Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006) have discussed the Presidency's role as a *representative of national interests*, which is the most controversial one. The fact that all EU members hold the Presidency at a certain point has resulted in a tacit agreement in the Council that the incumbent can, to a certain extent, promote national preferences (Tallberg 2003b). Indeed, member states cannot and do not ignore their own interests during their Presidency; the question is not whether or not the chair has preferences, but how it deals with them. In other words, being fair is more important than being neutral (Schout 1998).

2.2. Reform of the roles of the Presidency

During the Convention on the Future of Europe (2001-2003), a number of shortcomings of the rotating Presidency system related to continuity, leadership, coherence, excessive workload and costs were discussed (Schout 2008 | Bunse 2009 | Vanhoonacker, Pomorska & Maurer 2011). The period of six months is too short to introduce and finalise projects, resulting in a discontinuous stop-and-go process and a lack of follow-up of initiatives, often due to overambitious agendas. Discontinuity existed not only between successive Presidencies, but also between two Presidencies of the same member state, due to the long interval between its two semesters at the helm. In addition, the system entailed a lack of strategic direction and leadership, especially in external affairs. Moreover, EU policies were not always coherent because different actors (the Presidency, the European Commission and/or the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) were competent in different aspects of the same policy area. Furthermore, the growing agenda and successive enlargements of the EU had led to increased workload and high costs for the Presidency. Finally, some feared that the new and mostly small members would not be able to run a Presidency properly, or would represent the EU externally in a biased manner.

Proponents of the rotation system defended it as the most pure form of equality between member states. Other advantages of the rotating Presidency are the extension of policy makers' networks during their period at the helm, more awareness about EU affairs in the incumbent country, extra incentive to implement EU legislation during the period at the helm, and the modernisation of national administrations that the Presidency often entails (Bunse 2009 | Vanhoonacker *et al.* 2011).

The Lisbon Treaty preserved the system of rotation, but made substantial changes with regard to the roles of the Presidency. The most drastic modifications were made in external policy (Bunse, Rittelmeyer & Van Hecke 2011 | Charléty & Mangenot 2011). The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) is now chaired by Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), and the European Council is headed by Herman Van Rompuy, its first full-time president. Ashton represents the EU externally at foreign minister level, while Van Rompuy is the EU's representative at the level of heads of state. The newly established European External Action Service (EEAS) assists the HR/VP in ensuring coherence and

consistency of external policies, and chairs most working parties related to external relations. The Presidency's role in external policies has thus changed, but it has not become entirely irrelevant (Drieskens, Debaere, De Ridder & Nasra 2011 | Gostyńska 2011). The Presidency still chairs a number of crucial preparatory bodies related to external policy, including COREPER I and II, as well as all the other Council configurations, even if the topics discussed have external implications. The Presidency also chairs the FAC when trade issues are on the agenda. Moreover, although the HR/VP is the official external representative of the EU, in practice some third countries still prefer to negotiate either with individual member states or with the Presidency. Furthermore, the agenda of the HR/VP is overburdened with meetings, which has resulted in Ashton asking the Presidency to replace her on certain occasions. Finally, the Presidency plays an increasingly important role as mediator between the different EU institutions: the competencies of the EP in external relations have expanded considerably, and the Presidency can play a role in leading the files through the procedural steps in the Council, thus contributing to consistency between the different aspects of both external and internal EU policies.

The institutions of the EU have generally become more powerful since the Lisbon Treaty. The EP's areas of competence have expanded and the former co-decision procedure is now the ordinary legislative procedure. The European Commission's right of initiative is extended to former third pillar issues. The European Council is formally recognised as an EU institution. Since this body formulates long-term EU policies, the Council configurations will increasingly have to follow the guidelines set by the European Council, which will affect the agenda-setting powers of the Presidency (Van Hecke & Bursens 2011).

The practice of team Presidencies, established unofficially in 2002, was formalised (Schout 2008 | Fernández Pasarín 2011). From 2014 onwards, a new system of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) will be in force, which will alter coalition building. QMV was also expanded to more policy areas.

In sum, the creation of the positions of HR/VP and permanent president of the European Council, the formalisation of Presidency trios, and the fact that an increasing number of working parties are headed by permanent chairs, point to growing "denationalisation" and "supranationalisation" of the Presidency (Fernández Pasarín 2011). The role of the rotating Presidency may become more important for procedural matters and less for content matters: its roles as agenda setter, political leader and representative of the EU are weakened, while its tasks related to administration and mediation have become more prominent. It is still unclear to what extent the role of national representative can (still) be played by the Presidency.

2.3. The Presidency as an influential actor?

The political roles of the incumbent can be approached from two competing perspectives: the Presidency seat can function either as a "silencer" or an "amplifier" of national preferences (Bengtsson, Elgström & Tallberg 2004). In the former case, the chair plays down ("silences") its national interests during the period of its Presidency. The dominant theoretical explanations for this effect are based on sociological institutionalism, pointing to expectations as well as formal and informal norms that shape the Presidency's behaviour (Elgström 2003b). The neutrality norm is the most important in this respect: the Presidency is expected to act as an honest broker. In the latter case, the country at the helm uses its formal power position to promote ("amplify") its preferences and ideas: the incumbent country temporarily becomes more influential in the EU. The underlying theoretical assumptions of this approach are based on rational choice institutionalism (Tallberg 2006a; 2010).

The dichotomy of the Presidency period as an "amplifier" or a "silencer" is very pertinent to the key question addressed in this article, i.e. to what extent will Lithuania be able to exert influence during its Presidency, notably on energy issues and EaP policies. Influence is understood as "changing an outcome from what it would have been in the absence of an action" (quoted in Bunse 2009, p. 5). In the next part, we discuss the conditions for Presidency influence as identified in academic literature and apply them to Lithuania.

3. Conditions for Presidency influence

Conditions for Presidency influence (Vandecasteele & Bossuyt 2014) can be divided into three categories: national conditions, which are related to the characteristics of the incumbent, the way it organises the Presidency, and its position in the EU; issue-specific conditions, which refer to decision-making rules as well as preferences and other aspects of policy areas or concrete issues; and external context – including both foreseeable and unexpected events – which impact the ability of the Presidency to be influential.

3.1. National conditions

National conditions include the incumbent country's size, government service coordination, preparation, reputation, and networks, as well as the division of labour between the national capital and the Permanent Representation (Perm Rep).

Size of the incumbent country has been discussed in relation to Presidency influence by several authors (Baillie 1998 | Thorhallsson & Wivel 2006 | Björkdahl 2008). The Presidency period seems to be an opportunity for small member states to increase their leadership potential and ability to influence decision-making, which was one of the reasons why small EU member states were generally opposed to abolishing the rotating Presidency during the negotiations on the Lisbon Treaty (Bunse 2009). Small states are rarely accused of having a national agenda that is too ambitious, since they are not expected to (be able to) promote their national interests in the same way as large states do; they "naturally" have a better reputation as honest brokers. However, there is no agreement in academic literature on the abilities of small states to manage the tasks required while holding the Presidency. Bjurulf (2001) has claimed that small Presidency holders can manage practical issues as effectively as large ones, since they are usually very motivated and have good contacts with EU institutions. Maurer(Maurer 2008), by contrast, argues that large Presidency holders are better managers, as they have more resources to employ labour-intensive methods, and they can function independently from the Council Secretariat.

Lithuania is a small state in terms of population, economy, military capacity and voting weight in the EU. Furthermore, its Presidency budget for 2012-2014, at 214 million LTL (approximately 60 million EUR) (Lucenko 2011), is rather small compared to larger Presidency holders such as Poland, which had a budget of 100 million EUR (Kaczyński 2011). On the one hand, it can be hypothesised that Lithuania, as a small state, will temporarily become more influential during its Presidency and steer EU decision-making in line with its preferences. On the other hand, however, Lithuania may have to focus all of its resources on the effective management of its administrative and organisational responsibilities, which would leave little or no room for discussing issues of national importance. One

of the challenges for Lithuania will thus be to turn its small size into leadership capacities, while at the same time effectively performing its tasks.[58]

A second condition for exerting influence is effective inter-ministerial coordination and involvement of officials at all relevant domestic policy levels (Bunse 2009). Negotiators should formulate clear and consistent positions if they wish to exert influence on decision-making. According to Bjurulf (2001), small-state administrations typically ensure an efficient flow of communication. Smaller administrations also have more informal working relations, which can help in coordinating positions and reaching quick decisions under time pressure. A study of the 2008 Slovenian Presidency revealed, however, that the flow of information is not necessarily good in small administrations (Kajnč & Svetličič 2010).

In Lithuania, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Vytautas Leškevičius is responsible for EU affairs and preparations for the Presidency. Within the formal structure of preparation for the Lithuanian Presidency, he is the head of the Coordinator Network, although some of his duties are performed by other Lithuanian officials. The Governmental Commission on EU Affairs (Vyriausybės Europos Sąjungos komisija, VESK), which consists of all the vice-ministers and is chaired by the foreign minister, plays a key role in formulating and coordinating positions on EU affairs. The commission, which was established in 2009, meets every Tuesday and prepares the EU-related issues to be discussed by the government on Wednesday. Input for the VESK meetings is provided on the one hand by the Department of EU Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and on the other hand by the Coordinator Network, consisting of representatives of the Seimas, the president, the prime minister and the ministries (Interview 40; 41 | Seimas 2009). Alongside the Department of EU Affairs, the EU Council Presidency Department (Pirmininkavimo ES Tarybai Departamentas, PESTD) was created within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Lucenko 2011). The PESTD, a temporary department that will be dissolved in 2014, is responsible for the organisation of staff training, planning, communication, logistics and coordination of Presidency activities (Interview 37). There are thus clear mechanisms for coordination between ministries, both regarding content (Department of EU Affairs and VESK) and logistics/planning (PESTD). However, it is still not entirely clear who will do what, and the PESTD also wishes to have a say in substantial policy content matters. The fact that Lithuania has no experience with EU Presidencies is cited as the main reason for this uncertainty (Interview 40). Finally, it should be noted that President Dalia Grybauskaitė will provide significant leadership during the Lithuanian Presidency, especially in relations with other EU member states. Routine discussions of the upcoming Presidency in meetings with leaders of other countries, as well as her public comments on the need for the government and certain ministers to be prepared for the Presidency, illustrate her intentions to play an active role in promoting the Presidency agenda. She also criticised the government for being inconsistent in its communications on the construction of a new nuclear power plant, and claimed that such inconsistency would harm Lithuania's international reputation (Delfi.lt 2013, 5 April).

A third condition is timely and thorough preparation (Arter 2000 | Bunse 2009), which allows for the formulation of clear priorities as well as the development of skills and expertise necessary for performing chairmanship; they are the preconditions for influencing the agenda or the compromises that are reached. Preparations for Lithuania's Presidency started approximately three years in

[58] Most interviewees expect that Lithuania's small size will not hamper its performance. If there will be some impact, it will be a rather positive one, due to short bureaucratic chains and a stronger honest broker reputation (Interview 31; 32; 33; 34; 36; 37; 38).

advance. The VESK presented a preparations schedule to the European Affairs Committee of the Parliament (Seimas) in September 2010. Investing in human resources and institutional cooperation was named as the initial priority. The PESTD was created in December 2010 (Lucenko 2011). Another important step was taken in the preparations in October 2011: all political parties represented in the Seimas signed an agreement by which they committed themselves not to use the Presidency as a ground for competition during the October 2012 general parliamentary election campaign. They agreed to ensure continuity in preparing for the Presidency, regardless the composition of the government after these elections (Seimas 2011a).

In the 2012 elections, the ruling centre-right coalition lost seats and became a minority; at the end of the year, a new coalition formed by centre-left groupings (Social Democrats, the Labour Party, Order and Justice, and the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania) was sworn in with a constitutional majority. The formation of the Cabinet of Ministers was strongly influenced by the factor of the upcoming Presidency, as President Grybauskaitė was explicit that good language skills would be a key precondition for her approval of prospective ministers (Lietuvos Rytas 2012, 6 December | European Voice 2013, 13 June). With all of the ministers and most of the vice-ministers being replaced, there was a danger of discontinuity in preparations for the Presidency. However, all interviewees assessed that the political parties did adhere to their agreement of 2011 and that there is considerable political continuity (Interview 30; 31; 32; 34; 35; 36; 37; 38; 39; 40). Officials in key positions were not replaced; approximately 6 per cent of the planned working party chairs has changed in the past year, a rate which does not exceed normal diplomatic rotation (Interview 44 | Lithuanian Presidency website 2012a). Some interviewees touched upon minor disadvantages of the new government, notably the lack of international experience and poor foreign language skills of some of the ministers (Interview 33; 34; 35; 45). In sum, the Lithuanian administration is well-prepared for the Presidency. At the political level, the change in government did not create disruptions in terms of priorities or organisation, although “it would be good if the Presidency would be one year later”(Interview 33), as this would give the new ministers more time to prepare. Furthermore, although there is much agreement on general EU policies, disagreements might appear once the Presidency agenda touches directly upon domestic interests such as the energy policy, where interest groups and political elites have often clashed over major projects. During the preparations for the Presidency, most work is performed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which is also the main coordinator of the Presidency), while other politicians are mostly concerned about domestic issues, and have no significant interest in Lithuania’s EU policies (Interview 33). However, with the Presidency approaching, additional measures have been taken to prepare the ministers, including special training and a visit to Brussels in April 2013 to meet key EU officials. Members of the Seimas have also begun to show increased interest in the Presidency.

The fourth condition – a reputation as being impartial, effective and knowledgeable (Tallberg 2003b | Bunse 2009 | Kajnč & Svetličič 2010 | Karoliewski & Sus 2011) – is crucial for being influential during the Presidency. The reputation of the Presidency is related to the incumbent country in general, but can also differ among individual chairpersons or heads of state. Familiarity of other EU member states with the geographical and historical context and the main priorities of the chair, as well as a positive attitude on behalf of the Presidency towards European integration (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006), are factors that can improve the incumbent’s reputation.

On the one hand, reputation as a condition for influence can be considered a challenge for Lithuania. The countries that know Lithuania best are for the most part its neighbours, such as Latvia, Estonia, Poland and the Nordic countries, with whom Lithuania (together with the other Baltic States)

maintains good relations in various policy areas (Interview B; C). For the rest of Europe, Lithuania is perceived as a small country in the Eastern periphery with a Soviet background, yet also an old European country that is part of the West, with a rich history of statehood but a short history of recent independence; one that maintains vague relations with some of its neighbours, and has strong national interests in a few specific areas relating to security issues (Interview 33; A). These areas correspond to the four main priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency specified above. As non-Lithuanian interviewees noted, Lithuania usually tends to emphasise these national priorities in a narrow way during discussions at the Council or at informal meetings, and has no interest in tackling a broader range of issues such as development cooperation with the poorest African countries (Interview A; C). Looking at the forthcoming role of the Presidency, this could be seen as a disadvantage. To be an effective leader and an honest broker, the chair is expected not to emphasise its national interests and to try to reach an agreement with a broad perspective and a clear opinion on all the issues that compose the current EU agenda (Interview B).

On the other hand, Lithuania has a relatively positive reputation as a "good European". The Charlemagne Prize awarded to President Grybauskaitė in 2013 acknowledges Lithuania as a committed EU member with a positive attitude towards European integration. As a former European Commissioner, Grybauskaitė contributed to the reform of the EU budget structure and later, as Lithuanian president, she strongly supported the fiscal austerity measures that have been implemented during the financial crisis in the EU (President of Lithuania 2013, 6 March). At this point, Grybauskaitė is the leading figure shaping a positive reputation for Lithuania in terms of a stable, growing economy and restrictive budget spending (Interview A; B). This economic approach, an excellent record for implementing EU legislation, and a responsible attitude towards preparations for the Presidency, are the foundation for Lithuania's current reputation. Preparations started early on; approximately 1,500 Lithuanian diplomats and officials underwent intense training throughout 2011-2013 (Lithuanian Presidency website 2012a), and their skills and knowledge about the EU are highly valued by representatives from other countries (Interview 43; A; B; C). In sum, Lithuania is relatively unknown, but nevertheless has, in general, a positive reputation in the EU.

Finally, well-developed networks in the EU can aid the Presidency in moving issues forward. Networks include alliances with other member states, regional networks, personal ties, and inter-institutional relations (Bjurulf 2001 | Bunse 2009 | Karoliewski & Sus 2011). They allow the Presidency to obtain first-hand information, formulate acceptable compromises, and build coalitions around certain topics.

Although coalitions depend on specific issues and policy areas, Lithuania's most frequently cited partners are the other members of the Nordic-Baltic group of six (NB6) countries (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia), as well as Poland, Romania and Slovakia (Interview 33; 35; 37; 38).[59] There is also a group of like-minded countries on EaP-related issues, which occasionally meets at the level of political directors or vice-ministers; this group consists of the above-mentioned countries plus Germany, but minus Finland (Interview 38; 41; 46). Lithuania is also a member of an informal group of countries – roughly consisting of the Baltic States, the Nordic EU members, and other "Northern" countries such as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany – which support further extension of internal market principles to areas like services and energy. To summarise,

[59] This confirms the conclusions of earlier studies of coalition building patterns which have been done in Lithuania and which noted that Poland as well as Latvia, Estonia and the Nordic EU States are most often preferred coalition partners of Lithuania (Vitkus & Novagrockienė 2007).

Lithuanian officials tend to focus on a relatively narrow set of issues which are seen as important for the country, and cooperate more intensely in informal settings with their closest neighbours.
In preparing for the Presidency, Lithuania held consultations in February 2013 with the EEAS on what can be expected in the second semester of the year; a second round is planned in June (Interview 38). There has also been intensive contact with the Commission (Interview 37; 38), and working agreements have been made with Van Rompuy's cabinet, especially with regard to the November 2013 EaP Summit (Interview 35; 36; 37). Relations with Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle, who served as the Czech Ambassador to Lithuania in 1998-2001, are very good; this is further enhanced by Füle's rapport with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius (Interview 38; 41). Cooperation with the EP seems to be less developed. With regard to Lithuania's coordination with Ireland and Greece, its Presidency Trio partners, many interviewees indicated that they had insufficient information. The level of communication with the preceding Irish Presidency is evaluated satisfactorily, and Lithuania even sent three officials from different ministries to work within the Irish corresponding services in 2012-2013. By contrast, according to Lithuanian officials, cooperation with Lithuania's successor is almost non-existent, mainly due to a lack of interest on behalf of the Greeks (Interview 30; 31; 38; 39; 40; 45).
Finally, academic literature argues that Brussels-based Presidencies, with their centre of gravity at the Perm Rep, are more influential than those where the national capital keeps strict control (Bunse 2009). Lithuania clearly opted for the Brussels-based model: although most of the working party chairs will not reside permanently in the Perm Rep, the majority of working party meetings will be chaired by a Brussels-based chair (Lithuanian Presidency website 2012a). The chairs of working parties that meet regularly are posted to the Perm Rep, while those chairing working parties that meet only a few times per semester will travel from Vilnius (Interview 30; 37). One interviewee described the Presidency model as rather "chair-based" (Interview 37): the chairs have more room for manoeuvring than other delegates. Furthermore, the staff at the Perm Rep has more than doubled, up to 180 officials (Lucenko 2011), and approximately one quarter of the Presidency budget is allocated to the expansion of the Perm Rep (Lithuanian Presidency website 2012a). As one official put it: "usually there are weekly instructions from Vilnius to the Perm Rep. But during the Presidency, all chairs will know their margin of negotiation and they will only get one very big instruction at the start of the Presidency: execute the work programme" (Interview 36).

3.2. Issue-specific conditions

Issue-specific conditions include the heterogeneity and intensity of preferences, voting rules, and the stage of the issue within the EU legislative process.
The heterogeneity (distribution) of preferences between the parties, as well as the intensity (salience) of these preferences, has an impact on the chair's ability to exert influence. Thomson (2008) concludes that Presidencies with extreme positions have relatively more influence than other member states, and Bjurulf and Elgström (Bjurulf & Elgström 2004) have found that if the positions of different institutions diverge, a skilful chair can benefit from this situation and bring compromises closer to its own preferences. Schalk *et al.* (2007) and Warntjen (2007) have observed increased Presidency influence in areas that are highly salient to the chair. Bunse (2009) has formulated a more general observation: diverging but weak preferences in the Council allow the Presidency to build consensus around a compromise that is close to its own position, as long as a coalition of large member states against the chair's proposal does not exist.

In energy policy, the Trio programme focuses on the "three S's": "Security of supply, Safety, and Sustainability of energy production and use, while bearing in mind the decisive contribution of the EU's energy policy to competitiveness, growth and employment" (Council of the European Union 2012, 7 December). Lithuania has a track record of a consistent focus on advancing the principles of the internal market in the field of energy, in particular electricity and natural gas, which should also integrate the Baltic States into the northern and central European markets. Being an "energy island", Lithuania has been an outspoken advocate of including the provision on energy security into the Lisbon Treaty, and supported the adoption of the Council conclusions to complete the internal market where electricity and natural gas "flow freely" by 2014 (European Council 2011, 4 February). Lithuania also supported the adoption of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP) in 2009 as a way to coordinate and advance regional energy projects among the eight member states located along the Baltic Sea; this plan has since been presented by the European Commission to other EU regions as an example of good practice in coordinating large infrastructure projects among groups of EU member states. Several projects are being developed to create a single energy market, including Lithuanian-Polish (LitPol Link) and Lithuanian-Swedish (NordBalt) electricity interconnections. The construction of an LNG terminal, another strategic project, has been halted due to obscurity related to public procurement, but is expected to be completed by 2015 (Černiauskas 2013, 14 March).

BEMIP is an example of a coalition of countries with a common interest in the development of joint infrastructure projects that might not be of interest to others. However, heterogeneity of national interests remains even after the adoption of the Third Energy Package, due to the existence of different regulatory regimes in different EU member states. Although Germany and France usually form an avant-garde motor of integration, their drive for the creation of a common market has been visibly lacking in the case of the energy policy. Furthermore, different EU members attach different importance to the multiple objectives of competitiveness, sustainability, and security of supply. Finally, the recent history of Lithuania revising the instruments of implementing its strategic energy projects after each Parliamentary election, which resulted in numerous postponements of completion deadlines and controversial delays of dismantling the closed Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, are likely to reduce the credibility of Lithuania's Presidency as a mediator of debates on energy matters (Delfi.lt 2013, 11 January). Mere months before the commencement of the Presidency, the newly formed government was still deliberating the National Energy Strategy. The main question to be resolved is whether or not to implement the Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant project, which was prepared by the previous government (BNS 2013, 14 February). The current ruling coalition also started a discussion on the extraction of shale gas, which is a controversial topic in the EU; different member states are developing diverging policies towards this unconventional gas resource, amidst debates about its possible impact on environment (European Parliament 2011).

Lithuania might face the dilemma of mediating as an impartial broker or advancing its national interests on issues such as the selection of projects to be financed by the Connecting Europe Facility. If selection of the projects to be financed during the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) takes place in the second half of 2013, the Presidency will have to balance between lobbying for allocation of EU funding for infrastructure projects which are relevant to the immediate region and mediating for competing projects. Furthermore, Lithuanian energy priorities scarcely focus on the main policy directions in the EU – energy efficiency and the "Europe 20-20-20" goals. If Lithuania does not hold a more flexible and extensive position in the Council, this could harm its reputation as an honest broker (Interview 30; 43; A; B; C). Conversely, if the government manages to show

considerable progress in implementing measures for improving energy efficiency in Lithuania (something the ruling coalition parties focused on during the election campaign and the first days of formation of the government), this might improve the credibility of the Presidency when further EU-wide energy efficiency measures are discussed.

With regard to the EaP, Lithuania strongly favours further integration of these countries into the EU (Raik & Gromadzki 2006 | Janeliūnas, Kasčiūnas & Dambrauskaitė 2009 | Vilpišauskas 2011; 2012). It has an embassy in each of the six EaP countries, and Eastern Europe has become its niche in external policy; EaP policy is one of the areas where Lithuania is an EU policy-maker rather than a policy-taker. The country can share its experience with the region in "de-Sovietisation" and Europeanization. Lithuanian politicians and civil society representatives participate in various initiatives aimed at bringing the EaP countries closer to the EU, such as the Baltic Sea–Black Sea Axis, the Community for Democratic Choice, and the Baltic to Black Sea Alliance (Kesa 2011). Lithuania has defined a set of ambitious goals for the EU's relations with EaP countries in general (Centre for Eastern Studies 2012 | Ditrych 2013), as well as for a number of specific policies: ministerial meetings in Transport and Justice and Home Affairs are foreseen in parallel to the EU's Council meetings, with an aim to upgrade sectoral dialogue with the EaP to a permanent high-level cooperation. The November EaP Summit will be the main EaP policy event in 2013, and even the main Presidency event. Lithuania anticipates signature of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) and the start of its ratification, the conclusion of AAs and deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DCFTA) with Georgia and Moldova, the implementation of visa liberalisation plans with Ukraine and Moldova, significant progress in negotiating AAs with Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the conclusion of visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan (Interview 31; 32; 36; 37). Lithuania also plans to initiate a reflection in the EU and the EaP on the further development of their relations after the conclusion of AAs (Interview 46). While EU-EaP relations are highly salient for the incoming Presidency, ambitions in other EU countries are expected to be lower. Reforms in the EaP countries are advancing rather slowly, leading to declined interest of many EU members in the region (EUObserver 2011, 5 October). Whether or not Lithuania will be "allowed" to put EaP policies higher on the agenda will depend on developments in the EaP countries and the assessment of these developments in the EU capitals. The situation in Ukraine since the end of 2011 clearly illustrates how the domestic political situation can slow down or even stop the process of closer integration of an EaP country with the EU. Advances in the establishment of a Eurasian Customs Union and its offer of membership to Ukraine and other EaP countries further complicates the geopolitical environment in the EU's eastern neighbourhood.

A second issue-related condition for Presidency influence is the method of voting. Several studies (Tallberg 2006b | Warntjen 2007) have concluded that Presidencies have more influence on decisions taken by QMV than when unanimity is required. The voting method as a condition for the influence of Lithuania's Presidency will probably not be crucial. Since the inception of the Lisbon Treaty, most policy areas are decided by QMV. However, for certain EaP-related decisions (including some aspects of common commercial policy and especially the signature of AAs), unanimity will be required, which could limit the influence of the Presidency.

Thirdly and finally, the stage of the issue within the EU legislative process shapes the Presidency's ability to exert influence. A number of studies (Bjurulf & Elgström 2004 | Schalk *et al.* 2007 | Thomson 2008 | Warntjen 2008) have shown that the Presidency is more influential in legislative issues if a final decision is taken during its term in office. The chair thus has more influence at the end of a legislative process than at other stages, but it usually has little influence on the timing of

decision-making (Bjurulf 2001). The progress in legislation on the energy policy will depend on the preceding (Irish) Presidency. Moreover, there are no major decisions foreseen during the Lithuanian Presidency regarding the EU energy policy; work will continue on the action plan to advance the internal market, as well as on energy efficiency and renewable energy. This will significantly limit the possibilities for Lithuania to advance its priorities on energy security, both in terms of completing the internal energy market and facilitating the convergence of the positions of member states on issues related to external energy supply. For EaP policies, this condition is less relevant, since most of the EU's external action is non-legislative. In the areas that do have a legislative character, such as AAs or DCFTAs, the negotiation process is led by the Commission, on the basis of negotiation mandates from the Council, and, as will be discussed below, progress in these dossiers highly depends on the EaP countries themselves. The contents of such decisions cannot be influenced by individual member states or by the Presidency, although the Presidency can work on trying to forge an internal consensus in the EU on the state of affairs in the EaP countries and the reforms required for major decisions like the conclusion of AAs.

3.3. External context

Presidencies are most likely to be influential when there is a favourable external political and economic environment (Bunse 2009). External crises do not necessarily constitute an unfavourable external environment: if well-handled, unexpected events and crises can create opportunities for providing leadership, thus allowing the incumbent to steer EU policies (Bunse 2009 | Langdal & von Sydow 2009). However, in the case of external (energy) policy, unexpected events or crises might only provide minimal opportunities for the Presidency to exert influence: Ashton and Van Rompuy are responsible for foreign policy in the strict sense, and the European Commission has extensive powers in external energy policy. In the event of an external crisis, these actors are likely to react first. Although it is difficult to describe the policy context in advance, four main challenges can already be identified, each of which limit the potential influence of the Lithuanian Presidency on energy and EaP policies (see also European Voice 2013, 13 June).

First, the MFF for 2014-2020 will have to be finalised by the end of 2013. Since the EP rejected the MFF as proposed by the European Council, and there are approximately 70 legislative acts to be adopted (Interview 36; 37); Ireland will not manage to broker agreement on all of them, so a significant part of the work will be left for the Lithuanian Presidency and leave less room for other issues.

Second, the legislative cycle of the European Commission and the EP ends in May 2014, which will increase the pressure on the Council to finalise as many dossiers as possible. At the end of the five-year term, the legislative workload in the Council can increase as much as tenfold (Interview 36). The new MFF and the end of the legislative cycle, which happen to coincide this year, will absorb most of the energy and administrative capacity of the Council, and thereby of the Lithuanian Presidency in managing these processes. The "inherited" EU agenda always constitutes approximately 90 per cent of a Presidency programme, but for Lithuania this share will be even higher, thus additionally limiting its ability to focus on "national" issues.

Third, continuing uncertainty regarding economic reforms required to maintain the euro, difficulties in some euro area countries, and the stagnating EU economy will create an important constraint limiting the possibilities to devote attention to other issues. The forthcoming German federal election in autumn 2013 might also affect discussions of certain issues on the EU agenda, for example, the creation of a banking union. Although the context is always difficult to a certain extent,

the above-mentioned context factors will be especially constraining in 2013, also taking into account the fact that Lithuania has no former experience in holding the Council Presidency (EurActiv 2013, 25 April).

The final challenge is related to the EaP in particular: much depends on the domestic political situation in the partner countries (Dudzińska & Kaca 2012). The signing of Association and other agreements has been made conditional upon reforms within the EaP countries. For example, the EU has formulated 19 guidelines related to selective justice, electoral reform, and overall reform that must be in place before EU-Ukraine relations can move forward (EurActiv 2013, 26 February). Another example is Azerbaijan, whose ambassador to the EU recently stated that he would like EU-Azerbaijan relations to develop into a strategic partnership, a status that is enjoyed by big powers such as Russia and China, thus downplaying the relevance of the EaP framework (EUObserver 2012, 14 November). The success of the EaP depends very much on how the partner countries react to EU policies, as well on the stability of their governments.

4. In lieu of conclusions: opportunities and challenges in advancing energy and EaP priorities

As is the case for all countries holding the Presidency for the first time, Lithuania is faced with two chief opportunities related to its incumbency. The first is external: Lithuanian policy-makers can establish their country as an "old EU member", awareness elsewhere in the EU about Lithuania's culture and preferences may increase, and formal and informal contacts with other member states and the EU institutions will intensify (Lithuanian Government 2012, 12 October). The second opportunity is internal: the Presidency period can have a positive effect on the country's political capital and the further professionalization of its administration, since a high number of Lithuanian officials will get intensive, first-hand experience with EU affairs, which can later be brought into Lithuanian domestic and foreign policies.

With regard to the Presidency's roles, we assume that Lithuania will be a passive organiser for issues that it considers relatively insignificant. In more important issues that do not interfere with domestic interests, Lithuania might focus more on its role as mediator. The administrator/organiser and mediator/broker roles are mentioned by most interviewees as the main duties of the Presidency, and are the most obvious tasks of the incumbent since the Lisbon Treaty. This is the most feasible model, especially for small states. However, considering its ambitions in energy and in EaP policies, it is clear that Lithuania also aims to act as an agenda setter and political leader, and will try to bring these policies closer to its national preferences, as much as its position as holder of the Presidency allows to do so. On external representation, Lithuania is less ambitious and will concentrate on investing in good working relations with Van Rompuy and Ashton.

Returning to the central focus of this article, i.e. the extent to which the Lithuanian Presidency can be expected to exert additional influence on energy and EaP policies, we note substantial differences between the national, issue-related, and contextual conditions for influence.

Lithuania meets most national conditions for exerting influence: efforts have been made to ensure effective inter-ministerial coordination, training and preparations are being executed in a timely and responsible manner, the country's reputation in the EU is generally positive – although Lithuania is known for its narrow focus in European policies, the Presidency will be Brussels-based in practice – and the already existing formal and informal networks are being further expanded. Country-specific conditions seem to be less of a challenge compared to issue-specific conditions. The main country-

specific challenges for Lithuania may be to turn its small size into a source of influence, and some officials indicated that a number of ministers lack international experience and language skills. The administration should also watch out for possible turf battles between the PESTD and other EU-related bodies. In general, it will be a challenge to mobilise interests and expertise on the full range of issues on the European agenda, contrary to Lithuania's usual EU policy of focusing on a few specific topics.

The external context in the second half of 2013, however, will not leave much room for Lithuania to manoeuvre. The adoption of the MFF for 2014-2020 and the end of the EP legislative term will both signify a heavy workload for the Lithuanian Presidency. The financial situation in the EU as well as the German federal election in September 2013 might also have an impact on the Council agenda. In addition to these contextual conditions that will limit the Presidency's ability to exert influence, there are some specific issue-related constraining factors for energy policy and EU-EaP relations respectively.

With regard to energy policy, there are two main challenges: first, the country's internal political struggles and indecisiveness on strategic energy projects might harm Lithuania's reputation and its position in negotiating EU-wide agreements. Second, the Presidency's honest broker role can be challenged by Lithuania's usual focus on national and regional projects for energy security and relative lack of interest in other energy issues that are of importance to many other EU members.

The challenges in EaP policies are of a different nature. The main challenge for the Presidency will be to play a significant role along with the other actors and institutions that engage in EU external action, i.e. the European Commission, the EEAS and the HR/VP, and the president of the European Council. The Presidency's formal capacities in this field are limited. Furthermore, the dependence that the success of EaP policies has on domestic developments in the partner countries will limit Lithuania's ability to shape those policies.

In summary, Lithuania has set ambitious goals in energy and EaP policies, two topics that are close to the country's national interests. This shows that the Lithuanian government and administration expect the Presidency period to "amplify" the country's preferences and influence to some extent. The degree to which Lithuania will be able to exert influence on EU policies depends on national, issue-related, and context-related conditions. While the national conditions for influence are, for the most part, in place, the general context in the EU is not the most fruitful for advancing projects that do not seem to constitute everyone's crucial interest, and there are also specific constraints for energy and EaP policies. This article has outlined the conditions for influence before the start of the Presidency; the actual influence of the Lithuanian Presidency can later be assessed based on this analysis.

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Appendix 10: Article – Influence of the Lithuanian presidency of the EU Council on EU relations with countries of the Eastern Partnership

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Abstract

The Eastern Partnership initiative has run a bumpy course during its first five years of existence. It has not yet reached its goal of stabilising the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, and drawbacks in relation to each of the Eastern Partnership countries might even lead to the conclusion that the partnership no longer exists. The results are far short of what was expected, with many EU member states having lost their interest in the Eastern Neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the Lithuanian presidency of the Council in the second half of 2013 identified the Eastern Partnership as one of its key priorities, aiming to reinvigorate the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours. This article discusses the efforts of the Lithuanian presidency to maintain and strengthen EU-Eastern Partnership relations and analyses the extent to which Lithuania has been influential in this regard. In doing so, it assesses three interlinked indicators: (i) Lithuania's achievement of goals; (ii) the extent to which the achievement of goals can be ascribed to the presidency; and (iii) the political relevance of Eastern Partnership-related developments in 2013. The article concludes that the presidency is not usually influential in existing frameworks for cooperation, but does exert influence in establishing and consolidating cooperation between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries in specific policy areas, as well as in providing political backing to push certain measures forward.

1. Introduction

The Eastern Partnership (EaP), the framework for the EU's multilateral and bilateral relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, has not been overwhelmingly successful up until 2014. One might even argue that the EaP no longer exists. Azerbaijan prefers a strategic partnership with the EU over the multilateral path; Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan decided to cancel his country's participation in a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), one of the EaP's most important pillars; the Ukrainian government has in the last two decades navigated between a Russia-oriented and EU-oriented foreign-policy vector, and the refusal of former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych to sign an Association Agreement triggered a series of events that are difficult to control; Belarus simply does not participate in most of the programme; only Georgia and Moldova seem more or less 'on track' in terms of moving in the direction foreseen by the EaP, even though the EU feels a constant need to support pro-EU forces in both countries. Although the scope of the EaP expanded to different policy areas between 2009 and 2013, the results were far short of what was expected, and many EU member states lost their interest in the region. In this context, Lithuania identified the EaP as one of its priorities during its presidency of the Council of the EU (hereinafter the presidency) in the second half of 2013 (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013 | Vilpišauskas, Vandecasteele & Vaznonytė 2013).

It is not surprising that Lithuania prioritised this region and that the EaP Summit of November in Vilnius was expected to be the presidency's main event: the country's support for closer relations between the EU and EaP countries is widely documented (Janeliūnas, Kasčiūnas & Dambrauskaitė 2009 | Kesa 2011 | Vilpišauskas 2011 | Vaïsse, Dennison & Kundnani 2013 | Vilpišauskas 2013). The EaP received special attention throughout the preparatory documents for the presidency, from the 2011 Seimas resolution on presidency priorities up to the final programme (Seimas 2011 | The Lithuania Tribune 2012, 27 March | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013). Lithuania's EaP-related political goals were twofold. On the one hand, the country envisaged the signing of an Association Agreement with Ukraine, the conclusion of negotiations and initialling of Association Agreements with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, and progress in the association process with Azerbaijan (Interview 36; 37; 46; 52 | EUObserver 2012, 26 November). On the other hand, Lithuania wanted to 'upgrade' EaP cooperation by broadening and consolidating EU-EaP collaboration in a broad array of policy areas.

The main research question to be addressed in this article is the extent to which Lithuania has influenced EaP policies during its Presidency. To answer this question, I apply an analytical framework that was first proposed by Arts and Verschuren (1999) and later applied to the influence of the Polish presidency of 2011 (Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Orbie 2013). The article assesses three interlinked indicators for influence: (i) Lithuania's achievement of goals associated with EaP issues; (ii) the extent to which the achievement of these goals can be ascribed to the presidency; and (iii) the political relevance of EaP-related policy developments in the second half of 2013. The main sources for this article are official documents, news articles and 25 interviews – mostly with Lithuanian civil servants, but also with a member-state diplomat and officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission.

The remainder of this article consists of two parts. First, I outline the analytical framework of the article and point to its benefits in analysing political influence. The second and main part reviews the key developments in EaP policies during the Lithuanian presidency, indicating the country's influence herein. This part is divided into two sections: one on the EU's bilateral relations with individual EaP

countries, and the other on multilateral relations in each policy area. The conclusion reflects on the article's findings and implications for both the EaP initiative and the role of the presidency in external policies. The scholarly contribution of this article is both empirical and methodological. Empirically, it provides a detailed account of Lithuania's efforts and influence in promoting EaP policies during its presidency. Methodologically, the article attempts to further advance tools for measuring the influence of the presidency and, by extension, other actors in the EU as well.

2. Analytical framework: measuring influence through goal achievement, ascription and political relevance

The definition of influence in this article is inspired by the work of Bunse (2009, p. 5). For the purposes of this study, I classify presidency influence as *intentionally changing a policy from what it would have been in the absence of an action*. This definition is modified in two ways from that proposed by Bunse. Firstly, the word 'intentionally' is added to indicate that influence is only considered as the possible result of deliberate actions. Secondly, the word 'outcome' from the original definition is replaced by 'policy' to emphasise that only concrete developments in EU-EaP relations are taken into account. Indeed, not all 'outcomes' have a real impact on those policies.

The influence of the Lithuanian presidency is studied through a review of EaP-related outputs and 'non-outputs' in the second semester of 2013. The terms 'output' and 'non-output' in this context refer to any topic that is, or is not, placed on the agenda, and any decision that is, or is not, taken. The method for measuring influence is largely based on the method used in an earlier study on the Polish presidency of 2011 (Vandecasteele *et al.* 2013), which in turn drew from the framework developed by Arts and Verschuren (1999). The presidency's political influence (PI) is assessed using three indicators: the degree of goal achievement (GA), the extent to which GA can be ascribed to the presidency (AS), and the political relevance (PR) of the output. In line with what Arts and Verschuren proposed, the data on these indicators are gathered using the EAR method, which comprises a triangulation of 'Ego', 'Alter' and 'Researcher's analysis'. Information on Ego (the perception of the actors whose influence is studied) and Alter (the perception of other actors who were involved in the decision-making process) assessments of political influence is often obtained through expert interviews. The 'Researcher's analysis', which is usually based on written primary and secondary sources, complements these Ego and Alter assessments.

The operationalisation of the indicators for influence is shown in Table 1. Definitions of the first two indicators speak for themselves: GA refers to the extent to which the presidency's goals were attained, with AS showing the contribution of the presidency to output. PR in turn encompasses three criteria: the political importance, novelty and tangibility of an output. 'Political importance' is the political and symbolic value of an output. For example, it would be politically important if EU and EaP countries announced that they would deploy joint police operations: this would indicate the 'European' orientation of governments in EaP countries and the EU's readiness to cooperate more closely with these nations. 'Novelty' refers to new issues being put on the EU's agenda or changes to the nature of EU policies. The establishment of new forums for cooperation or the consolidation of existing relations in binding treaties would be novel policy outputs. 'Tangibility' reflects the extent to which an output has real effects. To cite the example of police operations again: a declaration of intent for joint deployment is not necessarily tangible, but becomes so if made official in a written document and/or implemented. In sum, 'political relevance' refers to much more than what would

be intuitively understood as something 'relevant' for EaP policies. Taken together, the GA, AS and PR indicators capture the extent to which an actor exerts influence on a policy.

Table 1: Indicators for the presidency's political influence

Indicator	Level	Description
Goal Achievement (GA)	0	The (non-)output entirely contradicts the presidency's preferences.
	1	The (non-)output partly contradicts the presidency's preferences.
	2	The (non-)output does not contradict the presidency's preferences, but is not its most preferred result.
	3	The (non-)output reflects the presidency's preferences as much as was legally and practically feasible.
Ascription of goal achievement (AS)	0	The presidency was not involved as a chair, or was involved as a chair but had no role in developing the (non-)output.
	1	The presidency was involved as a chair to a limited extent, but the (non-)output was mainly developed by other actors.
	2	The presidency was involved as a chair and steered the (non-)output, but other actors also played a role in developing the (non-)output.
	3	The presidency was involved as a chair and it is unlikely that the (non-)output would have been the same if another country was chairing.
Political Relevance (PR)	0	The (non-)output is of little or no political importance, is not novel among EU policies and is not tangible.
	1	The (non-)output is politically important or novel among EU policies, but is not tangible.
	2	The (non-)output is tangible, but of limited political importance and novelty among EU policies.
	3	The (non-)output is tangible and politically important or novel among EU policies.

In comparison with the article on the Polish presidency by Vandecasteele *et al.* (2013), I have changed the method in two ways. The first difference is the use of tangibility as a concept to express the political relevance of an output: 'tangibility' replaces 'political impact', because the former more accurately captures the meaning of political relevance. The second modification lies in the expression of indicators and levels of political influence. Instead of using verbal categories ('none', 'limited', 'substantial' and 'high'), I use numbers from 0 to 3 for GA, AS and PR. The number 0 replaces 'none', 1 means 'limited', 2 is 'substantial' and 3 is 'high'. The level of PI can then be expressed as a number between 0 and 1, based on the average of GA, AS and PR: the scores of the three indicators are summed up and divided by 9. The use of numbers has two main advantages: it allows finer-tuned assessments of PI and the results can be more easily employed in comparative research by using methods such as Qualitative Comparative Analysis. The formula for calculating the PI level is

(GA+AS+PR)/9. This produces one of ten possible values: 0, 0.11, 0.22, 0.33, 0.44, 0.56, 0.67, 0.78, 0.89, and 1. If reformulated in verbal terms, scores below half equate to 'no influence'; 0.56 indicates 'limited influence'; 0.67 and 0.78 show 'substantial influence'; and 0.89 and 1 are expressions of 'high influence'.

Three issues should be clarified before we move on to analysing the data. Firstly, a score of 0 for any of the three PI indicators means that either the goals of the presidency were not achieved, the output was politically irrelevant, or the output cannot be ascribed to the presidency; in these cases, one cannot claim that the presidency has influenced EaP policies. A GA, AS or PR of 0 automatically implies that PI is also 0, so the scores 0.11 and 0.22 are not used in practice. Secondly, because influence is defined as an intentional process, I assign particular importance to ascription of goal achievement as an indicator on influence. The PI level can therefore not be higher than the AS level: if AS is limited (a score of 1), PI cannot be higher than limited (0.56); if AS is substantial (a score of 2), PI cannot be higher than substantial (0.78). Thirdly, it is important to note that the numbers and scores in this paper serve to describe presidency influence as accurately as possible on an ordinal, not on an interval scale. The numbers should not be interpreted as reflecting exact values.

3. EU-Eastern Partnership relations during the Lithuanian presidency

3.1. Bilateral relations

In the second half of 2013, bilateral relations with each of the EaP countries were developed in different ways and in several areas. The most significant progress was notable in EU relations with Georgia and Moldova. Although Lithuania was sympathetic to closer relations with EaP countries, the analysis below shows that much of this was led by the European Commission and the presidency was often not (directly) involved.

When the presidency did play a role, developments could not always be considered the result of its influence. For example, Lithuanian foreign minister Linas Linkevičius co-chaired the Cooperation Councils with the South Caucasus countries: Armenia (Council of the European Union 2013, 9 December-a), Azerbaijan (Council of the European Union 2013, 9 December-b) and Georgia (Council of the European Union 2013, 12 December). Cooperation Councils are officially chaired by Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy. However, Ashton has the habit of delegating the chairmanship of this body to the incumbent presidency. The main function of Cooperation Councils is setting political deadlines and providing policy-makers with the chance to regularly review bilateral relations (Interview 76). Because these meetings are not decisive in EU policy towards EaP countries, the presidency that chairs them cannot be seen as politically relevant in these cases (PR=0).

3.1.1. Armenia

Until summer 2013, the EU and Armenia seemed on track in terms of strengthening their relations: talks on an Association Agreement, including a DCFTA, were concluded in July (ENPI info centre 2013, 26 July). However, in a move that surprised many in the EU, President Sargsyan announced on 3 September that his country would join a customs union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan instead of establishing a free-trade area with the EU. The announcement was followed by intense high-level consultations between the EU and Armenia on the way forward (ENPI info centre 2013, 8 October).

Armenian foreign minister Edward Nalbandian travelled to Brussels for talks with Füle, after which the latter stated that it was 'difficult to imagine the initialling at Vilnius summit in November of the Association Agreement with Armenia as it had been negotiated' (Füle 2013). Indeed, the DCFTA and the rest of the Association Agreement are deeply interconnected and it would be impossible to simply remove one part (Interview 76; 77). Nalbandian then travelled to Vilnius for a meeting with Linkevičius. The latter said afterwards that 'the decision to join the Customs Union diminishes Armenia's ambitions of integration in and cooperation with the EU' (The Lithuania Tribune 2013, 7 September). In summary, failure to sign the Association Agreement meant that Lithuania did not achieve its main goal stated for Armenia (GA=0), even though this cannot be ascribed to the presidency (AS=0) but to Sargsyan's decision.

Relations between the EU and Armenia developed more successfully in the area of mobility. The European Parliament (EP) approved visa facilitation and readmission agreements on 9 October (ENPI info centre 2013, 9 October). This could not be ascribed to Lithuania (AS=0), as the agreements had been negotiated by the European Commission and the presidency did not intervene to convince MEPs to vote for them (Interview 76).

3.1.2. Azerbaijan

The Azeri presidential elections of 9 October put relations between the EU and Azerbaijan to the test. In the run-up to the elections, EU representatives noted pressure on opposition activists, civil society and the media through intimidation, arrests and detentions (European Commission 2013, 3 October). The election itself was disturbed by the 'appgate' scandal: the Central Election Commission (CEC) hired the firm Happy Baku to create a phone app to publish the outcome. The 'result' was published on 8 October, one day before the election, with incumbent president Ilham Aliyev shown as receiving 73% of the votes. The CEC explained that this was a test using data from previous elections, but the names of new candidates also appeared in the list of results. Aliyev finally won the election with 85% of the vote (EUObserver 2013, 10 October), and reactions to the result were mixed. The EP and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called the election process 'free, fair and transparent' (Council of Europe 2013), while the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) found that the election was 'undermined by limitations on the freedoms of expression, assembly and association that did not guarantee a level playing field for candidates' (OSCE 2013). Spokespeople for Ashton and Füle praised the high voter turnout, but also pointed to problems raised by OSCE observers (European Commission 2013, 11 October). Lithuania was absent from these reactions and was not involved in the statements made on the Azeri elections (AS=0). Officials gave two explanations for Lithuania's attitude: on the one hand, an interviewee stated that 'Azerbaijan has a very low ambition on the EaP, it doesn't need our carrots and using sticks is difficult' (Interview 58), and a harsh reaction was thus deemed unnecessary; on the other hand, there is an 'Armenian factor', with Lithuanians cautious not to criticise Azerbaijan more than Armenia or vice versa (Interview 58; 65).

Vilnius hosted the signing ceremony for the agreement on visa facilitation between the EU and Azerbaijan on 29 November, with Linkevičius and Füle signing the document on behalf of the EU (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-b). A week later, Azerbaijan signed a Mobility Partnership with eight EU member states, including Lithuania (European Commission 2013, 5 December). The former agreement cannot be ascribed to the Lithuanian presidency (AS=0) because

negotiations were conducted by the European Commission. The latter is not seen as EU policy, as it involves only a limited number of member states.

3.1.3. Belarus

Although Lithuania would be in favour of further developing EU-Belarus relations, it did not expect much progress during its presidency. The most important aim was to have a high-level Belarusian representative at the EaP Summit; some interviewees for this study said that foreign minister Vladimir Makey could be an option to represent the country (Interview 38; 46; 52). The visa ban against Makey was suspended in June (Council of the European Union 2013, 24 June) to make such a visit possible and he attended the EU-EaP meeting of foreign ministers in Brussels on 22 July. The Council extended sanctions against Belarus in October, but maintained the exemption for Makey (European External Action Service 2013, 31 October). Lithuania achieved its goal (GA=3) in this regard because, in contrast with 2011, there was a high-level Belarusian delegation at the EaP Summit (European Commission 2013, 26 November). The presence of Makey was however of limited political relevance (PR=1). As discussed below, the presence of a Belarusian delegation cannot be ascribed to Lithuania in particular (AS=0).

During the EaP Summit, Belarus showed its willingness to start negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a | Lithuanian Presidency website 2014, 8 January). This good news however 'drowned' in the more important news about Ukrainian President Yanukovych's refusal to sign the Association Agreement (see below). The move was preceded by several meetings between the Lithuanian and Belarusian vice-ministers for foreign affairs, at which the subject of visa facilitation was consistently raised (Interview 55). It could thus be ascribed to Lithuania to a limited extent (AS=1). Given the previous reluctance of Belarus on this issue, Lithuania's goals were achieved in that there was a concrete step forward in bilateral relations between the EU and Belarus (GA=3). Interestingly, Lithuania did not influence *EU policies*, but rather the Belarusian government's *receptiveness* to these policies. The declaration of intent to start negotiations was of limited political relevance (PR=1); negotiations were initiated in February 2014 (ENPI info centre 2014, 6 February), but an agreement is not expected any time soon (Interview 57).

3.1.4. Georgia

Negotiations on the key issue in relations between the EU and Georgia – an Association Agreement, including a DCFTA – were completed in July (ENPI info centre 2013, 25 July). The preamble to the agreement states that Georgia is an 'Eastern European country' (European External Action Service 2013a), differing slightly from the wording in Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) that 'European States' can become EU members, and thus not entirely as Lithuania would have liked. At the EaP Summit (see below), the Association Agreement was initialled, as well as a Framework Participation Agreement between the EU and Georgia for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions (European External Action Service 2013, 29 November). The latter agreement is important both legally and politically. In legal terms, it is indispensable because without such an agreement there can be no cooperation in this area. Politically, it signifies mutual trust, with the EU considering the EaP country worthy of participating in its missions (Interview 68; 75). Lithuania's goals were largely achieved with regard to the Association Agreement – except for the formulation in

the preamble (GA=2) – and the Framework Participation Agreement (GA=3), and the initialling and signature of the agreements were of high political relevance (PR= 3). However, Lithuania was not involved in the negotiations on both agreements (Interview 68; 76), so their initialling cannot be ascribed to the country (AS=0).

3.1.5. Moldova

Moldova's pro-European course was supported and encouraged by Lithuanian high-ranking officials on several occasions (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 21 August; 2013, 27 September). The EU as a whole also strongly supported pro-European forces in Moldova. Most importantly, the EU initialled an Association Agreement, including a DCFTA, with Moldova at the EaP Summit (see below). As a reaction to a Russian wine embargo, the EU also revoked the autonomous-trade-preferences scheme with quotas and fully opened its market for Moldovan wines (European Parliament 2013, 10 December). Both developments fully reflected Lithuania's goals (GA=3) and were respectively of high and limited political relevance (PR=3 and PR=1). However, they could not be ascribed to the presidency (AS=0). Negotiations on the Association Agreement had been concluded by the European Commission in June 2013 (Council of the European Union 2013, 25 June). The decision to open the EU market for Moldovan wines would have been taken regardless of the country that held the presidency, as it reflected broad consensus in the EU (Interview 77; 80).
Lithuania's goal on visa liberalisation was also fully achieved (GA=3) and was of high political relevance (PR=3). In its November report on the implementation of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP), the European Commission announced that the visa requirement for Moldovan citizens could be lifted (European Commission 2013, 15 November). In a *tour de force*, the presidency rushed the file through the necessary procedural steps and obtained formal backing from the member states during the final Coreper meeting of 2013 to establish a visa-free regime for Moldovans (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 20 December). Several member states had formulated reservations about this quick decision because of discussions on whether Moldova should issue third- or fourth-generation biometric passports with. With the European Commission's support, the presidency convinced these delegations to agree on a third generation – the VLAP had never required the issuance of fourth-generation biometric passports (Interview 57). The agreement can be partly ascribed to the Lithuanian presidency, especially the speed with which it was adopted (AS=1).

3.1.6. Ukraine

Throughout 2013, the (conditions for) signing an Association Agreement dominated the agenda of bilateral relations between the EU and Ukraine. The EU and its member states tried several means to convince Yanukovych of the benefits that an Association Agreement could bring to Ukraine, in terms of withstanding the pressure exerted by Russia and stepping up efforts to meet the requirements, defined in 2012, on selective justice, electoral regulations, and the mutually agreed association agenda. The duration of the informal mission of former Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski and former EP president Pat Cox to Kiev was prolonged several times (European Parliament 2013; 2013, 13 November | EurActiv 2013, 16 October), and some high-ranking European politicians, including Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė, held meetings and consultations with Yanukovych (Interfax 2013, 8 October | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 10 July | EUObserver 2013, 19 November | EurActiv 2013, 23 October).

The EU tried to make its offer of an Association Agreement even more attractive, when on 26 July the Trade Policy Committee decided that the DCFTA would be provisionally applied upon signature, before it was fully ratified (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 22 October). This step was in line with Lithuania's preferences (GA=3) and of high political relevance (PR=3), and can be ascribed to Lithuania to a limited extent (AS=1). Some member states objected to the move; this was not because of its content, with everyone agreeing that free trade with Ukraine was a good thing, but rather because of concerns about the distribution of competences between the European Commission and member states. The European Commission played a key role in negotiating with the reluctant countries, but Lithuania also played a part in finding formulations that would accommodate these concerns (Interview 65; 77; 80).

Although it initially seemed that Ukraine would implement the requested reforms in order to sign the Association Agreement (Konończuk & Olszański 2013 | Ukrainian Government 2013, 18 September), EU diplomats started to give up hope in November that an agreement would be signed during the Vilnius Summit (EUObserver 2013, 11 November). On 21 November, the Ukrainian parliament passed a law on electoral reform but not on judicial reform and the release of prisoners for treatment abroad. On the same day, the country's government adopted a resolution that suspended the preparation process for signing the Association Agreement (EUObserver 2013, 21 November | Ukrainian Government 2013, 21 November). Yanukovych reportedly told Grybauskaitė in a phone conversation that this decision was taken because Russia threatened to limit imports from Ukraine if the agreement was signed (Delfi.lt 2013, 22 November). In response, European Commission president José Manuel Barroso and European Council president Herman Van Rompuy stated that the offer of association was still on the table and disapproved of Russia's position in this respect (European Commission 2013, 25 November). Lithuanian politicians strongly criticised Ukraine's decision (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 22 November | EUObserver 2013, 29 November) and hoped that Yanukovych would change his mind at the last minute. During the summit, an informal offer was even made for the signing of the Association Agreement without Yulia Tymoshenko being released – which had been one of the key conditions for signing the agreement (Interview 58 | EurActiv 2013, 29 November). An official from the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented that 'up until the very last moment we had scenarios A and B. If Yanukovych signed the agreement, we were ready to hold a huge signing ceremony. We even prepared special pens for this event' (Interview 63).

In the end, despite the efforts of Lithuania and other EU institutions and officials, the presidency's goal of signing an Association Agreement with Ukraine was not achieved (GA=0). This triggered a chain of events in Ukraine that has continued into 2014, including regime change, early presidential elections and annexation of part of Ukraine's territory by Russia.

The most tangible development in the EU's relations with Ukraine was perhaps the initialling of an Air Services Agreement to pave the way towards an EU-Ukrainian Common Aviation Area. Although this was not mentioned in the presidency's programme, it did correspond with Lithuania's goal to deepen cooperation between the EU and Ukraine (GA=3). However, the agreement was negotiated by the European Commission without Lithuania being involved (AS=0) (Interview 74; 78).

3.2. Multilateral relations

Whereas with bilateral relations the Lithuanian presidency sought, with varying success, to advance political association and mobility between the EU and individual EaP countries, its main aim with multilateral policies was to broaden EU-EaP cooperation to new policy areas, and to consolidate

existing formats for collaboration. Its priority programme(Lithuanian Presidency website 2013) foresaw activities in an array of fields, including business, defence, education, research, justice, home affairs, transport and youth. In addition to objectives in these areas, Lithuania wanted to launch a reflection on the question 'what next?' at the EaP Summit in November (Interview 46 | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, p. 17). Until then, most attention had been given to negotiating Association Agreements. Once the agreements are signed, how much is the EU prepared to contribute financially and politically to their implementation?

3.2.1. The Eastern Partnership Summit

Most of the presidency's actions and priorities were directed towards confirming and formalising the achievements of the EaP initiative at the EaP Summit in Vilnius on 28-29 November. The main expected results were the initialling of Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Armenia, the signature of the Association Agreement with Ukraine, and completion of work for provisional application of the DCFTA with Ukraine.

Preparations for the summit differed from those for earlier ones, in that EaP countries were involved from an early stage in drafting the summit's joint declaration. EU member states and institutions first defined the main topics to be included in the declaration, with the text then jointly negotiated at two meetings between senior EU and EaP officials. This process ensured a more cooperative stance among EaP countries (Interview 43; 46; 58). Invitations to the summit were handed by the Lithuanian vice-minister of foreign affairs, Andrius Krivas, to the EaP countries' heads of diplomatic missions to Lithuania (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 16 October) and were not addressed to specific people, but to states. The main aim was to avoid the scenario of 2011, when Belarus boycotted the summit. The EU wanted to give the impression that the EaP countries, and Belarus in particular, could 'choose' who to send to the summit (Interview 55; 58; 65). None of the interviewees remembered exactly who came up with the idea, but it was clear that this strategy was undisputed in the EU and there are thus no reasons to ascribe this to the presidency (AS=0). In any case, it was a successful *modus operandi*: in contrast with the 2011 summit, all EaP countries were represented (European Commission 2013, 26 November).

The EaP Summit took stock of EU-EaP relations since the 2011 summit in Warsaw: the first part (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a, pp. 1-3) of the joint declaration discussed progress made in different policy areas, including the numerous multilateral events that took place during the Lithuanian presidency. The meeting also produced a number of tangible results (for an overview, see e.g. ENPI info centre 2013, 29 November). A series of important documents were initialled (including EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia Association Agreements and an EU-Ukraine Air Services Agreement) or signed (including an EU-Azerbaijan visa facilitation agreement and a CSDP Framework Participation Agreement with Georgia), and Ukraine agreed to contribute to the EU NAVFOR Atalanta mission from January 2014 and to participate in EU Battlegroups in 2014 and 2016.

The second part (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a, pp. 4-5) of the joint declaration outlined a number of steps to be taken to deepen relations between the EU and EaP countries until 2015, including further reforms of the judiciary and the strengthening of law enforcement, the signature by autumn 2014 of Association Agreements or establishment of an association agenda 'where applicable', and progress in cooperation on a number of policy areas such as visa liberalisation, business, knowledge and innovation, agriculture, the environment, transport, defence, and energy. The declaration also foresaw the strengthening of the multilateral dimension

through a continuation of multilateral platforms and other multilateral forms of cooperation, as well as regular ministerial meetings on relevant policy areas. Participants agreed that the EU's political and financial institutions would continue to support reforms and projects with financial assistance through an incentive-based approach, taking into account the provisional application and implementation of Association Agreements.

Despite these tangible results, most attention from the media and politicians was on issues that were *not* achieved. The joint declaration stated that the participants at the summit 'reaffirm their acknowledgement of the European aspirations and the European choice of some partners and their commitment to build deep and sustainable democracy' (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a, p. 3) which was weaker than what Lithuania and other pro-enlargement countries would have liked (RFERL 2013, 31 October). Nevertheless, one interviewee noted some progress: in contrast with the joint declarations of 2009 and 2011, the EaP countries were no longer just referred to as 'Eastern European partners' or 'partner countries', but as 'Eastern European countries, States participating in the Eastern Partnership'. The EaP countries were thus still not called 'European states', which would resemble Article 49 of the TEU too closely, but the word 'state' was mentioned immediately after 'Eastern European countries' (Interview 58).

The summit's main failure was the refusal of Yanukovych to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, which was a major disappointment for the EU in general and for Lithuania in particular. Relations between the EU and Armenia also cooled after Sargsyan announced that his country would join a customs union with Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus instead of signing a DCFTA with the EU.

Taken as a whole, Lithuania's goals set for the EaP Summit were achieved to a limited extent (GA=1). However, the summit's successes and failures can hardly be ascribed to the Lithuanian presidency (AS=0). On the one hand, much was prepared under the auspices of the EEAS and the European Commission. On the other hand, decisions by authorities in partner countries could not be controlled by Lithuania.

3.2.2. Other regular multilateral EaP-related events: the Business Forum, CORLEAP and civil society cooperation

The Lithuanian presidency hosted a number of other regular multilateral events related to the EaP. However, these did not amount to increased presidency influence. Neither the EaP Business Forum (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 28 November) – organised in parallel with the EaP Summit in Vilnius – nor the third meeting of the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), which took place in Vilnius on 3 September and adopted a number of recommendations for the EaP Summit (Committee of the Regions 2013a; 2013b), could be ascribed to the Presidency (AS=0). Both events take place regularly, independently from the incumbent presidency. The annual EaP Civil Society Forum, which took place on 4-5 October in Chisinau, Moldova, and made several recommendations to the EaP Summit (EaP CSF 2013 | Kostanyan & Vandecasteele 2013), is also a regular event that cannot be ascribed to individual presidencies. Lithuania followed the same approach as Poland in 2011 by organising a Civil Society Conference in Vilnius, in parallel with the EaP Summit. The event united some 300 participants (ENPI info centre 2013, 27 November), but had no political relevance as understood in this research (PR=0); it was of low political importance and did not produce tangible results.

3.2.3. Defence

The Lithuanian presidency wished to engage EaP countries in the EU's CSDP by strengthening mutual dialogue and operational collaboration, leading to a number of related multilateral actions and results.

On 2-3 July, the presidency held a high-level seminar on EU-EaP defence cooperation in Vilnius. More than 100 participants from member states, EaP countries, EU institutions and non-governmental organisations discussed common security threats and contributions of EaP countries to the region's CSDP (Interview 64; 68 | ENPI info centre 2013, 3 July). There had been a dialogue between the EU and EaP on defence before, but the special focus on the CSDP was to a certain extent because of Lithuania's prioritisation of this issue (AS=1) and the presidency achieved its goals in this respect (GA=3). The meeting did not lead to tangible decisions – which is normal because concrete cooperation takes place only at a bilateral level – but was important for exploring cooperation on the CSDP (Interview 68). The presence of delegations from EaP countries also contributed to the (limited) political relevance of the event (PR=1).

In parallel with the traditional informal Foreign Affairs Council of 4-6 September, Vilnius hosted the biannual Inter-parliamentary Conference for the CFSP and CSDP, which was also attended by High Representative Ashton and NATO secretary-general Anders Fogh Rasmussen (Seimas 2013). This series of conferences was launched in 2012, in the aftermath of the Polish presidency of the Council, and takes place every semester. The occurrence and outcome of the meeting can thus not be ascribed to the presidency (AS=0).

Lithuania also put cooperation with the EaP on the agenda on several other occasions. On 17-18 September, Vilnius hosted an informal meeting of EU security-policy directors that was co-chaired by the EEAS and the presidency. One issue discussed was political dialogue and practical cooperation with EaP countries on security and defence, including the EaP's participation in training and crisis management and support for security-sector reform in these countries (Interview 64 | Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 19 September). Lithuania achieved its goals (GA=3) and the agenda was to a large extent set by the presidency (AS=2). However, because this meeting was a mere moment for reflection on the way ahead (Interview 75), it was not politically relevant (PR=0).

Also in September, the EU-EaP CSDP panel held its first meeting, under the scope of multilateral platform 1 (democracy, good governance and stability). The idea of establishing such a panel was advanced in the EaP's roadmap of 2012 (European Commission/HRVP 2012), with the EEAS taking the decision to set it up in spring 2013 (Interview 64; 68). Panel members exchange experiences and best practice on EU Battlegroups, joint operations and missions, training, and security-sector reform. The panel's role is therefore mainly informative rather than operational; as stated above, concrete cooperation is discussed and agreed at a bilateral level. The panel runs permanently, independently of presidencies, and is able to cater for all EaP countries with very different expectations. Although this corresponds to Lithuania's preferences and goals (GA=3), establishment of the CSDP panel cannot be ascribed to the presidency (AS=0).

Lithuania also co-hosted a CSDP orientation course of the European Security and Defence College in Brussels on 4-8 November (European External Action Service 2013b). It is common practice for the presidency to invite non-EU countries to these trainings, and it was unsurprising that Lithuania invited EaP representatives (Interview 64; 68). The country achieved its goals (GA=3) and the presence of EaP countries could to a large extent be ascribed to the presidency (AS=2), but the training course had no political relevance (PR=0).

Because *costs lie where they fall* in CSDP missions, Lithuania also promoted the establishment of a Trust Fund. This was set up by the end of the presidency and is supported by France, the UK, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania (Interview 75). The fund will provide financial support to EaP countries for training and the organisational expenses of mission personnel. The presidency's goals in this area were also fully achieved (GA=3) and the establishment of the fund could to a large extent be ascribed to Lithuania's efforts (AS=2). However, the fund's political relevance (PR) is 0: it involves only a few EU members and cannot be considered an *EU policy*.

Contrary to what Lithuania had hoped, cooperation with the EaP on defence was not central to the agendas of the informal meeting of defence ministers on 5-6 September in Vilnius (Lithuanian MFA 2013). The presidency wanted to hold a separate session on the EaP during the meeting, but the EEAS objected and the request was dropped in the end (Interview 64; 68). The December meeting of the European Council also paid little attention to the EaP (European Council 2013, 20 December). Lithuania's goals in both cases were not achieved (GA=0).

3.2.4. Education and research

To advance EU-EaP cooperation in higher education, research and innovation, Lithuania's Ministry of Education and Science and Vilnius University organised and hosted a conference on this topic on 30 September-1 October. The event was attended by policy-makers from the EU and EaP countries, as well as other stakeholders such as research institutions and the European Commission (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 30 September). All EaP countries were represented apart from Belarus, 'probably because Lukashenko didn't allow anyone to come' (Interview 61). Participants adopted a joint declaration that, *inter alia*, stressed the importance of drawing up a roadmap for cooperation between the EU and EaP on research under the Horizon 2020 programme (European Commission 2013, 1 October). They also agreed to launch a panel on research and innovation under the scope of multilateral platform 4 (contacts between people), which will among other things discuss the possible association of the EaP countries to Horizon 2020. Belarus did participate in this panel's first meeting in November 2013. The presidency also organised a round-table discussion with political representatives from the EaP and some EU member states, which was aimed at giving the conference political backing and including a reference to research cooperation in the joint declaration of the EaP Summit (Interview 61). Lithuania fully achieved its goals in these policy areas (GA=3) and organisation of the conference could to a large extent be ascribed to the presidency (AS=2), but the event was of limited political relevance (PR=1).

During the EaP Youth Forum (see below), Kaunas University of Technology also hosted information days on the Erasmus+ programme on 24-25 October. Erasmus+ became operational in 2014 and provides increased funding for mobility and academic partnerships for students and higher-education institutions in EaP countries (European Commission 2013, 24 October). The programme was prepared by the European Commission and most of its content had been agreed in the first half of 2013 (Interview 70), so its launch cannot be ascribed to Lithuanian (AS=0).

3.2.5. Justice and home affairs

The presidency invested much in strengthening police cooperation between the EU and EaP. Lithuania hosted the annual presidency conference of the European Police College (CEPOL) on 17-19 September and organised two preparatory events for it (Interview 62): one of these was held at the

Lithuanian Embassy in Kiev on 3 July with Polish, German and Czech liaison officers and Ukrainian law-enforcement officials (Council of the European Union 2013, 3 July), and one on 16 July at the EU's Horizontal Working Party on Drugs that included participation from EaP countries (Council of the European Union 2013, 9 September). EaP countries were invited to the CEPOL conference in September, which is rather unusual (Interview 62). Participants discussed several aspects of existing and future police cooperation, with special attention on the fight against organised crime, drugs, cybercrime and smuggling (CEPOL 2013). The involvement of EaP countries in the CEPOL conference was of limited political relevance (PR=1) and Lithuania achieved its goal of enhancing police cooperation (GA=3). This could to a large extent be ascribed to the presidency's efforts (AS=2).

The main event in cooperation on justice and home affairs (JHA) was the EU-EaP meeting of justice and home-affairs ministers – the first of its kind – on 7-8 October in parallel with the EU's regular JHA Council. All EaP countries and EU members were represented, but not all at ministerial level. Azerbaijan sent its ambassador to Belgium to the justice- and home-affairs parts of the meeting, while Belarus was represented by its deputy ministers of justice and home affairs. Participants at the meeting endorsed a joint declaration that focused mainly on practical concerns and not on fundamental issues such as respect for human rights. They welcomed progress made in the respective policy areas, especially under platform 1, and emphasised that all judicial systems should meet European standards. They also stressed the importance of continuing and strengthening judicial cooperation between the EU and EaP on civil and criminal matters, as well as collaboration on issues related to organised and transnational crime, corruption, drug crime, data protection, cybercrime, migration and mobility. Finally, participants undertook to meet regularly to monitor progress and further shape their cooperation (Council of the European Union 2013, 8 October). Interviewees mentioned that there had been discussions on the necessity of the meeting, its format, the status of its outcome, and the division of labour. Lithuanian officials felt that they had to convince the European Commission and member states that the meeting should be held in the first place, and that it should aim at broad participation and adopt a joint declaration. The Commission was apparently the most reluctant to participate: it first proposed holding a meeting in the 'Western Balkans format' (Interview 56; 73), meaning that it would be attended by EU institutions and the presidency on the one hand, and EaP countries on the other. Lithuania wanted a fully-fledged ministerial meeting in a 28+6 format – comprising all EU member states and EaP countries – in order to ensure more political backing. Furthermore, the Commission planned to conclude with presidency conclusions rather than a joint declaration (Interview 54; 62). A final issue was who would chair the meeting – the Commission or the Presidency (Interview 73) – and the compromise solution was to co-chair the event. In summary, Lithuania fully achieved its goals with regard to this ministerial meeting in terms of content and formal aspects (GA=3). The meeting would not have been organised – at least not at this level – if the presidency had not pushed it (AS=3). The results of the meeting were novel and politically important, but have not had tangible results so far (PR=1).

3.2.6. Transport

The highlight of multilateral cooperation on transport between the EU and EaP was the meeting of EU and EaP transport ministers in Luxembourg on 9 October, prior to the EU's regular Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council. Four EaP countries were represented at a ministerial level, while Belarus sent its director of the relevant department at the transport ministry and Azerbaijan delegated a ministry chancellor. The presidency's push to organise this meeting was met with

lukewarm reactions from EU institutions, especially the Council Secretariat. The latter even refused to provide space at its premises for the meeting, citing a lack of staff even though this had been no problem at the EU-EaP JHA meeting. The Lithuanian presidency therefore had to look for an alternative venue, which it found at the premises of the European Investment Bank three weeks before the meeting took place (Interview 74; 78).

At the meeting itself, bilateral disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia threatened to undermine the outcome: both countries proposed amendments that explicitly or implicitly referred to the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and Azerbaijan threatened not to support the joint declaration if its amendments were not inserted. The presidency convinced the Azeri delegation to endorse the declaration without amendments and the country's remarks were included in the minutes of the meeting, with both Armenia and Azerbaijan adding individual statements to the minutes (Interview 74; 78). In the joint declaration (European Commission 2013, 9 October), participants took stock of the progress made in transport cooperation over the last two years, committed to strengthening their cooperation towards gradual legislative approximation and agreed to speed up the implementation of agreements on all main modes of transport. They also aimed to more closely involve EU and other international financial institutions in carrying out transport projects. In addition, delegates approved a map for an EaP Transport Network (Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications 2013) and a list of priority projects located across the network. They recommended that the European Commission include it in the guidelines for the development of Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T), and promote coordination between the EU's core network and key transport corridors in the EaP area. This would imply a *de facto* extension of TEN-T to EaP countries.

Lithuania achieved most of its goals through this meeting (GA=2), although it would have liked stronger political support from the EU side and more guarantees that transport cooperation would become a permanent issue in EU-EaP relations (Interview 74). Even though the European Commission played a role in negotiating the EaP Transport Network and financing the related event, the meeting would not have taken place without the presidency's efforts (AS=3). The event led to novel and tangible results and was therefore of high political relevance (PR=3).

3.2.7. Youth

Finally, Lithuania wanted to enhance cooperation on youth policy with EaP countries. To this end, the presidency organised an EaP Youth Forum on 22-25 October in Kaunas, bringing together more than 200 representatives of the EaP and the EU (Lithuanian Presidency website 2013, 25 October). Participants adopted joint conclusions on, *inter alia*, the importance of non-formal and formal education, youth organisations' links with other sectors of civil society and the labour market, and the professionalisation and maximisation of the visibility and impact of youth work (EaP Youth Forum 2013b; 2013a). The Youth Forum's establishment was also mentioned in the joint declaration of the EaP Summit (Council of the European Union 2013, 29 November-a). The event was organised under the initiative of Lithuania in cooperation with the European Commission and several pan-European youth organisations. Its occurrence could to a large extent be ascribed to the presidency (AS=2) and. With the conference, Lithuania achieved most of its goals in expanding EU-EaP cooperation to other sectors (GA=2), even though it is not clear whether the forum will continue to be part of relations between the EU and EaP. The outcome of the forum is of limited political relevance (PR=1).

4. Discussion and conclusions

This article reviews the most important events and developments in the EU's EaP-related policies during the Lithuanian presidency. In exploring the main research area – to what extent Lithuania influenced these policies – I assessed goal achievement, ascription of achievements to the presidency, and the political relevance of each case. A summary of the results is provided in Table 2 (below), ranked from the highest to the lowest observed level of political influence. Some scores for PI are lower than GA+AS+PR/9. This is because of the importance attached to ascription as an indicator of influence, as explained above. Where applicable, the score for AS is underlined in the table to indicate that this is the reason why PI scores lower. The table includes 34 EaP-related cases in a broad range of policy areas and illustrates that, despite several major disappointments and important tensions, the EU and EaP regions continue to cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally and this cooperation is intensifying.

The analysis shows that the Lithuanian presidency exerted an influence in 9 cases out of 34. In the other 25 cases, the lack of influence was mainly attributable to an AS of 0. Such cases would also have occurred if another country was chairing, mostly because these are related to permanent structures for cooperation or pushed by other actors in the EU. A few cases lacked political relevance (PR=0): these are developments that cannot be considered to stem from the presidency's political influence because they were not decisive in shaping the EU's policies towards the EaP region. Four cases gained a score of 0 because GA was 0: failures with regard to the Association Agreements with Armenia and Ukraine were the main setbacks, but could hardly be ascribed to the presidency. The other two cases when GA was 0, in which the presidency did not manage to draw explicit attention to the EaP region during the informal defence ministers' meeting and the European Council, show that these meetings are mostly steered by EU institutions – namely the EEAS and Van Rompuy's office respectively. In other cases, Lithuania's goals were achieved even when they could not be ascribed to the presidency and this points to an adequate setting of priorities. Lithuanian officials did not over-promise, assumed responsibility where appropriate, and pushed where necessary to achieve their goals.

The relatively small number of cases in which Lithuania exerted influence despite its strong prioritisation and efforts, indicates that the presidency has limited opportunities to steer EaP policies. The presidency can play its most prominent role in areas of cooperation that are not yet well-developed: the Lithuanian presidency managed to establish or deepen cooperation in different sectors with EaP countries through careful selection of priorities and resources, alliances with EU institutions and linkages to existing policy frameworks. Once a framework for cooperation is in place, EU institutions take over and the only role for the presidency to play is to secure political backing where necessary.

Table 2: Influence of the Lithuanian presidency on EaP policies

Case	**Political influence (GA+AS+PR)/9**
Transport: ministerial meeting	(2+3+3)/9=high (0.89)
JHA: ministerial meeting	(3+3+1)/9=substantial (0.78)
CEPOL annual presidency conference	(3+2+1)/9=substantial (0.67)
Education, science and research conference	(3+2+1)/9=substantial (0.67)
Belarus: visa facilitation and readmission	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Defence: high-level conference on EU-EaP cooperation	(3+1+1)/9=limited (0.56)
EaP Youth Forum	(2+2+1)/9=limited (0.56)
Moldova: visa liberalisation	(3+1+3)/9=limited (0.56)
Ukraine: DCFTA provisional application	(3+1+3)/9=limited (0.56)
Armenia: Association Agreement	GA & AS=0.00 (no influence)
Armenia: Cooperation Council	PR=0.00 (no)
Armenia: visa-facilitation agreement (EP approval)	AS=0.00 (no)
Azerbaijan: Cooperation Council	PR=0.00 (no)
Azerbaijan: reaction to elections	AS=0.00 (no)
Azerbaijan: visa-facilitation agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
CORLEAP: annual meeting	AS=0.00 (no)
Defence: European Council conclusions	GA=0.00 (no)
EaP Business Forum	AS=0.00 (no)
EaP Civil Society Conference	PR=0.00 (no)
EaP Civil Society Forum	AS=0.00 (no)
EaP Summit: format of invitations	AS=0.00 (no)
EaP Summit: results	AS=0.00 (no)
Erasmus+ launch	AS=0.00 (no)
EU-EaP CSDP Panel	AS=0.00 (no)
Georgia: Association Agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
Georgia: Cooperation Council	PR=0.00 (no)
Georgia: CSDP Framework Participation Agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
Informal defence ministers' meeting	GA=0.00 (no)
Inter-parliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP	AS & PR=0.00 (no)
Moldova: Association Agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
Moldova: opening up of the wine market	AS=0.00 (no)
Security policy directors' informal meeting	PR=0.00 (no)
Ukraine: Air Services Agreement	AS=0.00 (no)
Ukraine: Association Agreement	GA & AS=0.00 (no)

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Interview 37. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 7 March 2013.
Interview 38. Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 12 March 2013.
Interview 43. Diplomat from EU country, Vilnius, 19 March 2013.
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Interview 52. Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 19 June 2013.
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