

A Feather in its Cap? The Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2013

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Abstract

This article analyses Lithuania's presidency of the Council of the European Union and provides detailed guidelines for a theoretical evaluation of it through the use of a modified contingency management theory. The study recalibrates the assessment of presidencies that can be examined through the relationship between demand and supply, in which an operationalised supply side yields relevant dimensions in the evaluation of a presidency's effectiveness. The analysis revealed a well-executed Lithuanian presidency of the Council of the EU and came up with recommendations of a theoretical and empirical nature.¹

Introduction

Presidencies of the Council of the EU stepped into a brighter scholarly limelight after 12 new states joined the ranks of the EU in 2004 and 2007. A tangible influx of newcomers, mainly in former communist countries raised questions about possible shifts in the EU's agenda and their transformation from 'takers' to 'shakers and shapers'. Naturally, the EU accession process and the logic of EU enlargement *ipso facto* dictated 'take it or leave it' policies of governance among the future EU wannabes.² However, the EU enlargement yielded fully fledged rights among new

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² Grabbe H., "How does Europeanization affect CEE governance? Conditionality, diffusion and diversity", *Journal of European Public Policy* 8(6), 2001, pp. 1013-1031; Schimmelfennig F. and Sedelmeier U., "Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11(4), 2004, pp. 669-687.

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and small states of various stripes to affect the formation of the EU agenda.³ New theorising on Europeanisation also grasps the role of member states in the mechanics of the EU's plans and working schedules. Pundits see Europeanisation as having top-down, bottom-up and horizontal facets.⁴ The 'uploading' of national long-term interests, values, political models and mundane concerns can be identified from three perspectives: pro-action, rejection-promotion and usage.⁵ Negotiations, bargaining, socialisation and normative persuasion embody the bottom-up Europeanisation of small states. Assuming the presidency of the Council of the EU provides ample opportunities to upload the EU agenda. Certain scholars categorise countries that adopt this position at the helm as 'amplifiers' or 'silencers'.⁶ Some states exploit their presidencies to promote national interests over those of the EU ('amplifiers'), while others keep their heads down and tend to coordinate and stand for the interests of all EU member states and institutions ('silencers'). The latter function is usually ascribed to small and new EU member states that do not want to stand out as black sheep.

Lithuania was the first ex-USSR country to hold the rotating six-month presidency of the Council of the EU, which it assumed on 1 July 2013. The country also chaired the Council of the Baltic Sea States in 1998-1999 and 2009-2010, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2011 and other multilateral frameworks both regionally and internationally. However, the EU presidency was viewed in the country as a challenge of epic proportions. The presidency permits contribution to the EU's agenda through running and representing the Council in a joint decision-making process. Many expect such a country to coordinate the positions of all EU members. The presidency also presents an opportunity to reprioritise some of the region's established goals. The position involves cooperation with two other member states, with this trio preparing long-term goals and a joint EU agenda for an 18-month timeframe.

³ Björkdahl A., "Norm advocacy: a small state strategy to influence the EU", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15(1), 2008, pp. 135-154; Panke D., "The Influence of Small States in the EU: Structural Disadvantages and Counterstrategies", UCD Dublin European Institute Working Paper 08-3, May 2008.

⁴ Flockhart T., "Europeanization or EU-ization? The Transfer of European Norms across Time and Space", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 48(4), 2010, pp. 787-810; Radaelli C., "Europeanisation: Solution or problem?", *European Integration online papers* 8(16), 2004.

⁵ McCauley D., "Bottom-Up Europeanization Exposed: Social Movement Theory and Non-state Actors in France", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(5), 2011, pp. 1019-1042.

⁶ Bengtsson R., Elgström O. and Tallberg J., "Silencer or Amplifier? The European Union Presidency and the Nordic Countries", *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27(3), 2004, pp. 311-334.

Lithuania hammered out a common programme with the preceding presidency of Ireland and the succeeding tenure of Greece, which took over at the start of 2014.

The official slogan of the Lithuanian presidency was a ‘credible, growing and open Europe’. Its main focus areas were the EU’s financial stability and competitiveness, and implementation of the growth agenda. However, four national concerns loomed between the lines of the Vilnius agenda: energy security, protection of the EU’s external borders, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the highly emphasised EU Eastern Partnership initiative.⁷ Lithuania saw its presidency as taking on the role of a political broker and aimed to boost its image as a reliable partner and mediator representing the interests of the whole EU.

From an empirical point of view, the Lithuanian presidency is yet to be written about. Examinations before the presidency naturally comprised *ex ante* evaluations, looking at expectations for the tenure⁸ or researching its potential in the areas of EU common foreign policy and primary security policy interests,⁹ namely energy security and EU eastern neighbourhood policies.¹⁰ An evaluation of the latest presidency has been outlined by Mindaugas Jurkynas.¹¹ This article aims to ascertain the effectiveness of Lithuania’s presidency by applying a modified contingency management model. The study is divided into several parts, initially evaluating theoretical approaches to the presidency and delving into the realm of organisational management by employing the aforementioned contingency management theory and critically examining it. Criteria for a successful presidency are then discussed and organised into an analytical model to be applied to Lithuania’s tenure. Needless to say, conclusions and recommendations duly follow.

⁷ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, *Resolution on the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2013*, <http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=411051&cp_tr2=2>, 2011.

⁸ Šešelgytė M., “The First Leadership Test: What to Expect from the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU”, *SIEPS*, <http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/2013_13epa.pdf>, August 2013.

⁹ Šešelgytė M., “Lisabonos sutarties įtakos Europos sąjungos institucinei sandarai BSGP srityje vertinimas ir Lietuvos sėkmingo pirmininkavimo ES Tarybai šioje srityje veiksmų nustatymas”, Policy paper commissioned by the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, 2011.

¹⁰ Vilpišauskas R., Vandecasteele B. and Vaznonytė A., “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, 2013, pp. 11-37.

¹¹ Jurkynas M., “Lithuanian 2013 Presidency at the Council of the EU”, *Žurnāls Latvijas intereses Eiropas Savienībā* 1(13), 2014, pp. 85-96.

1. EU Presidency and Contingency Theory: Towards the Analysis Model

Literature on EU presidencies is not scarce, with different viewpoints on member states' contributions appearing in scholarly radars decades ago. The presidency role has been ascertained as being relevant in EU policymaking.¹² In a similar vein, Metcalfe¹³ and Tallberg¹⁴ have looked at presidency strategies and their effects on general policymaking in the region. Some studies have looked at the functions of the EU Council,¹⁵ while others have examined the results of different presidencies¹⁶ and the potential for countries to influence the EU agenda and content of decisions.¹⁷ Some investigations have argued that the presidency has not been a decisive factor in shaping the EU's agenda.¹⁸ However, most studies

¹² Bunse S., *Small States and EU Governance: Leadership through the Council Presidency*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; Elgström O., *Introduction in European Union Council Presidencies. A Comparative Perspective*, London: Routledge, 2003; Hayes-Renshaw F. and Wallace H., *The Council of Ministers*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997; Schout A. and Vanhoonacker S., "Evaluating Presidencies of the Council of the EU: Revisiting Nice", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44(5), 2006, pp. 1051-1077.

¹³ Metcalfe D., "Leadership in European Union Negotiations: The Presidency of the Council", *International Negotiation* 3(3), 1998, pp. 413-434.

¹⁴ Tallberg J., "Bargaining Power in the European Council", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46(3), 2008, pp. 685-708.

¹⁵ Edwards G. and Wallace H., *The Council of Ministers of the European Community and the President-in-Office*, London: The Federal Trust for Education and Research, 1977; Kirchner J., *Decision-making in the European Council: The Council Presidency and European Integration*, Manchester: Manchester University, 1992.

¹⁶ Edwards G. and Wiessala G., "Conscientious Resolve: The Portuguese Presidency of 2000", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 39(s1), 2001, pp. 43-46; Quaglia L., "Italy's Presidency of the European Union: A Good 'Business Manager'?", *South European Society and Politics* 9(3), 2004, pp. 149-165; Quaglia L., Hough D. and Mayhew A., "You Can't Always get What You Want, But Do You Sometimes Get What You Need? The German Presidency of the EU in 2007", SEI Working Paper No. 97, 2007.

¹⁷ Bengtsson R., Elgström O. and Tallberg J., "Silencer or Amplifier? The European Union Presidency and the Nordic Countries", *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27(3), 2004, pp. 311-334; Quaglia L. and Moxon-Browne E., "What Makes a Good EU Presidency? Italy and Ireland Compared", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44(2), 2006, pp. 349-368; Vandecasteele B., Bossuyt F. and Orbie J., "Unpacking the influence of the Council Presidency on European Union external policies: The Polish Council Presidency and the Eastern Partnership" in Ripoll Servent A. and Busby A., eds., *Agency and influence inside the EU institutions, European Integration online papers*, 2013, Special Issue 1, Vol. 17.

¹⁸ Kaniok P., "The Influence of the EU Council Presidency on Public Opinion", *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 3, September 2012, p. 23.

are still limited in terms of addressing all relevant factors for a presidency's success, while there is no unified formula for the evaluation of an efficient tenure that is anticipated to have results such as quality-oriented outcomes from negotiations, a good atmosphere for trade-offs and the achievement of objectives.

A contingency theory came to light as organisations gained in complexity at the end of the 1970s. Principles and methods for systemic analysis were applied to examinations of decision-making and specific, concrete situations.¹⁹ Problems are thus analysed from two perspectives: an organisation's internal situation in terms of its level of integration and differentiation; and the impact of the environment in which an organisation operates. This contingency theory contends that there is no optimal method for managing an organisation through decision-making because the best course of action is contingent on particular internal and external situations. A leader must employ a certain style of leadership to a specific situation.²⁰ The environment (exogenous variables) can affect the management of an organisation, which needs to fit in with its surroundings to operate smoothly. The organisation's success therefore lies in the method of management meeting the demands of the environment. The style of leadership depends on the assignment's structure (high-level control as a key to success), the strength of leadership (medium-level control and a focus on relations leads to success) and the relationship between a leader and his or her members (low-level control, with a focus on the execution of projects).²¹ In summary, the effectiveness of management hinges on pressure from the environment and the leadership strategy. However, this model has been criticised for its inability to define the environmental impact because the number of situations that the leadership must react to can be uncertain and unique. Another weakness of this contingency theory is the omission of an organisation's potential to affect the environment and thus create a form of two-way interaction. The refined model in this study addresses aspects of an organisation's potential via the supply side, as discussed below.

¹⁹ Luthans F. and Stewart T., "A General Contingency Theory of Management", *The Academy of Management Review* 2(2), 1977.

²⁰ Donaldson L., "The Normal Science of Structural Contingency Theory" in Clegg S. and Hardy C., *Studying Organization: Theory & Method*, London: SAGE Publications, 1999.

²¹ Robbins S., Judge T., *Essentials of Organizational Behavior*, 11th edition, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2011.

1.1. Demand Side of the Presidency

Despite the criticism, contingency theory can be applied in an analysis of a presidency's effectiveness. The presidency faces demands from the environment (expectations and pressure from EU member states and institutions) and supplies its service, which in successful cases adapts to expectations and even surpasses them. A presidency is expected to involve setting short-term goals and offering a creative and compromise-based environment and solutions in the case of political impasses.²² Schout and Vanhoonacker have attributed demand during a presidency to four variables: 1. The complexity of an issue; 2. The level of trust and political support in the country that holds the presidency; 3. The decision-making mechanism; and 4. The sensitivity of a political issue.²³

Examining the complexity of an issue takes into account whether the problem is old or new. An old issue does not call for political leadership because member states' positions are clear and often unchangeable, making the presidency's mediation more complicated. In contrast, a new issue requires the presidency's active involvement. The level of trust and political support for a presidency are significant factors in carrying out the leadership role. As 'amplifiers', large countries can more easily transfer their national interests onto the EU's agenda. However, small countries do not despair because many are trusted as frank mediators and can therefore receive support, especially from other small states.²⁴ Active promotion of national interests and changes in government during a presidency challenge levels of trust. The decision-making mechanism is relevant when there is a qualified majority system because a presidency can actively participate in mustering majority coalitions, whereas the presidency's role is smaller in cases of unanimity.²⁵ The sensitivity of a political issue narrows the opportunities for a presidency to pursue its national interests and raises the need for a mediator, particularly among large EU powers and institutions.

These four criteria for demand from the environment (the EU) should be understood in the light of recent institutional and policy amendments in the region's foreign policy and the presidency's rules. Recent 'constitutional' changes

²² "Pirmininkavimas Europos Sąjungai", *Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo Europos Informacijos Biuras*, <<http://www.eic.lrs.lt/index.php?-1288465814>>, 28 04 2014.

²³ Schout A. and Vanhoonacker S., "Evaluating Presidencies of the Council of the EU: Revisiting Nice", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44(5), 2006, pp. 1051-1077.

²⁴ Quaglia L., (note 16).

²⁵ Thorhallsson B. and Wivel A., "Small States in the European Union: What Do We Know and What Would We Like to Know?", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19(4), 2006, pp. 651-668.

in the EU after the Lisbon Treaty have made the role of the presidency broader and more developed. EU foreign policy became more unified after the Lisbon Treaty introduced a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and European External Action Service. Common EU foreign policy reduces a presidency's room for manoeuvre, but the presidency can prepare discussion papers before the meetings of Committees of Permanent Representatives (COREPERs), summon coalitions and promote certain common foreign policy options. The creation of rules for the presidency²⁶ almost by default requires a country's mediation and neutrality with regard to its national interests.

1.2. Supply Side of the Presidency

Supply-side or leadership strategies in the management of EU demands during a presidency are no less relevant than the demand side in the search for effectiveness. Schout and Vanhoonacker²⁷ single out three factors in domestic politics that influence the presidency's functions: 1. The importance of the issue for the presidency; 2. The positions of the main policy makers in the presidency; and 3. Readiness for presidency.

The importance of issues for the presidency determines activities for mediation and leadership. If a concern coincides with national interests during a tenure, it is expected that the presidency will take an active role and promote the issue in the decision-making process. The stances of a presidency frequently depend on leading politicians, whose opinions at an EU level must more or less concur. If they do not, neither leadership nor mediation can succeed. As for preparing for a presidency, qualified human resources and chairpeople in working groups, a grasp on the post-Lisbon institutional environment and efficient communication and coordination among EU institutions and member states boost the chances of success. Preparation naturally reveals how ambitious a presidency is.

This analysis adds several variables that expand the supply side and wrap up the analytical model for the examination of a presidency's effectiveness, especially among small states. These factors add new dimensions that can either enhance or weaken the supply: 1. The orientation of foreign policy; 2. Cooperation with

²⁶ *Europos Sąjungos Tarybai pirmininkaujančios valstybės narės procedūrų vadovas*, Liuksemburgas: Europos Sąjungos leidinių biuras, <<http://www.am.lt/VI/files/0.008681001345798367.pdf>>, 2011, pp. 11-13.

²⁷ Schout A. and Vanhoonacker S., (note 22).

the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU; 3. Administrative capacity; and 4. Presidency experience; and 5. Relations with other institutions. The orientation of foreign policy in terms of interests and identities and their potential incompatibility with the values of other member states can hamper the success of a presidency, whereas a high degree of congruence gives promise for a good tenure.²⁸ Cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU is important for small states, especially those that hold the presidency for the first time. The Secretariat organises day-to-day coordination and practical activities for a presidency, files these with institutional memory and other information and assists in finding solutions that are acceptable for all.²⁹ Large states find the General Secretariat less relevant because they rely more on their own capacities. Administrative capacity is perceived as a presidency's strategic, tactical, managerial, diplomatic, political and public-relations resources and qualifications for orientating itself and staying coherent in the face of divergent interests, as well as in areas such as EU institutional policies and strategic documents. Finally, the impact of a presidency's experience can to some extent have a two-fold effect. On the one hand, experienced countries know the drill in terms of assuming the presidency, so they can employ resources more efficiently. On the other hand, experienced countries can allocate fewer resources to their new presidencies, whereas novices exploit their tenures as opportunities to present themselves at their best and are inclined to make significant efforts towards better preparation and execution of duties. The Lisbon Treaty has boosted the presidency's powers with regard to lawmaking, the EU budget and the approval of international agreements. Due to the enhanced influence of the European Parliament, effective cooperation with this institution is a prerequisite for a successful presidency. The Parliament must always be kept informed about issues that are discussed in the Council. This allows work between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission to be better coordinated. However, the intensity of relations with other institutions during the term of a presidency mostly depends on the workload inherited or, in other words, on the number of laws that must be adopted.

²⁸ For instance, Italian support for Russia's policies in Chechnya resulted in tensions among member states and the European Commission (Quaglia, 2005); "EU dismay at Berlusconi comments", *BBC news*, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3251705.stm>>, 07 11 2003.

²⁹ Tarybos Generalinis Sekretoriatas, *Europos Sąjungos Tarybai pirmininkaujančios valstybės narės procedūrų vadovas*, Liuksemburgas: Europos Sąjungos leidinių biuras, 2011, p. 14.

1.3. Operationalisation of Supply Criteria

The supply variables that explain a presidency's effectiveness can be defined in terms of criteria arranged in an ordinal scale. How a country performs during its presidency can be measured by turning these criteria into weighted numerical expressions from 1 (poor) to 5 (very good), thus helping to calculate the weighted average effectiveness of the presidency's performance. A maximum of 5 points are attributed to the country's performance, whereas 2 points at most are given to a presidency's experience because this factor has become less frequent as a result of the EU's enlargement and institutional and constitutional changes. Furthermore, the presidency's institutional memory is not that important at the highest political level because a country's presidency is no longer viable at the EU Council among heads of state or government. Finally, countries without experience of a presidency are inclined to thoroughly analyse the previous tenures of other countries and thereby compensate for their lack of expertise.

Table 1. Operationalisation of Supply of the Presidency

	5 points (Very good)	4 points (Good)	3 points (Average)	2 Points (Satisfactory)	1 point (Poor)
Readiness for presidency	Clear presidency priorities that are acceptable to EU states; preparation in advance; qualified human resources; knowledge of the positions of other states and actions foreseen	Fulfilment of the criterion with minor flaws	Sufficient fulfilment of the criterion, but lacking several components; partial conformity	Weak fulfilment of the criterion (e.g. distrust in priorities)	Poor preparation; low attention to readiness

Cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Council	Accepted, cherished and well-employed assistance of the General Secretariat; active consultations	Accepted assistance of the General Secretariat	Accepted assistance of the General Secretariat, but duty not always taken into consideration	Limited communication with the General Secretariat	No communication with the General Secretariat
Administrative capacity	Investments in administrative capacity (communication, diplomacy, leadership, negotiations, working groups and conflict management)	Good fulfilment of the criterion; close attention to raising qualifications; several minor flaws	Sufficient attention to administrative capacity	Low level of attention to administrative capacity	No attention to administrative capacity (e.g. no seminars or training)
Positions of main policy makers in a presidency	Smooth integration of political leaders into the presidency's activities; horizontal coordination at a national level; agreement on priorities; continuation of activities after elections	Good fulfilment of the criterion; continuity; several minor flaws	Consensus on priorities and continuity; debates and disagreements during presidency	Poor execution due to disagreements regarding political leadership	Internal disagreements about political leadership; no continuity after elections

Relations with other institutions	Intensive cooperation with EU institutions, support from the EU and regular visits to institutions; Parliament is regularly informed about the progress of issues under discussion in the Council	Good relations with EU institutions, but several minor flaws.	Relations with EU institutions are sufficiently maintained, but distrust or hostility from the European Parliament is sometimes noticeable	Limited or complicated communication and disagreements on certain issues	Relations with other institutions is disorderly, with a lack of consensus, poor handling of information and a lack of confidence in the chairing country
Presidency experience	-	-	-	Has presidency experience	Does not have presidency experience
Importance of issues	Presidency seeks to resolve an important national and European issue by including the most important aspects for the presidency in decision-making	Active resolution of an issue; opportunities exploited; several minor flaws	Sufficient involvement in resolving an issue; simultaneous advocacy of national interests	Weak involvement in resolving an issue; simultaneous advocacy of national interests that result in opposing stances of other states	Clear advocacy of national interests through neglecting the European agenda; opposing reactions from other member states; falling trust in a presidency country

<p>Foreign-policy orientation</p>	<p>The state displays pro-European stances, with a high level of trust from citizens in the EU; the presidency's priorities do not conflict with EU policies</p>	<p>The state displays pro-European stances, with a high level of trust from citizens in the EU; several minor flaws</p>	<p>Sufficient pro-European stances, with a medium level of trust from citizens in the EU; the presidency's priorities do not always coincide with the CFSP</p>	<p>The activities or stances of a presidency state are at odds with EU values on some issues; low level of citizen support for the EU</p>	<p>The state advocates stances that are at loggerheads with those of the EU; the state raises opposition to the presidency among other EU members; low level of citizen support for the EU</p>
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2. Measuring the Effectiveness of the 2013 Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU

2.1. Demand for Presidency

On 1 July 2013, Lithuania took over the presidency of the Council of the European Union from Ireland, assuming this role for the first time since joining the EU in 2004. The country's tenure was anticipated to continue the elimination of a symbolic divide between old and new EU member states and served as a litmus test for Lithuania's ability to ensure the Council's smooth operation. In 2013, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė stated that the country would seek the best solutions not only for itself but for all 28 EU members in a period of global problems.³⁰ The start of the presidency was marked with the same challenges that had already been outlined in the Trio programme and Vilnius pledged to carry on with resolving them. At the same time, the economic situation in Europe called for new measures because a number of EU member states had been severely affected by

³⁰ *Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentės Dalios Grybauskaitės metinis pranešimas*, <http://www.president.lt/lt/prezidento_veikla/metinis_pranesimas/2013_m..html>, 11 06 2013.

the financial crisis and the ensuing recession. Many countries introduced socially bittersweet, and thus politically challenging, austerity measures. European leaders focused on reducing poverty and unemployment.³¹

When providing recommendations for economic reforms to EU states, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, expressed an opinion that inaction and delays to necessary reforms would rapidly lead to poverty and widespread social exclusion. The need for reforms created additional requirements for the Lithuanian presidency to be not only a mediator, but also to show political leadership in the face of economic and social problems. The Vilnius presidency faced an increased legislative workload compared with other EU tenures because 2013 was the final year of the current European Parliament and European Commission. This implied enhanced political and administrative pressure to adopt remaining normative acts before the outbreak of electoral frenzy in 2014. According to the Head of the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU, Ambassador Raimundas Karoblis, Greece had just three months of real presidency because the final legislative acts had to be adopted by February 10 so that the European Parliament had time to approve them.³² Furthermore, 2013 was the last year of the 2007-2013 financial framework. The necessary normative documents, programmes, technical regulations and other relevant elements had to be finalised and agreed upon during the Lithuanian presidency. Decreasing support among citizens for the EU and challenges for solidarity rose in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Pessimistic opinions on the free movement of people and the resulting instability with regard to social policy formed some countries' negative attitudes towards an open Europe. Eurosceptic and populist parties were anticipated to win about a quarter of all seats at the European Parliament elections in May 2014.³³

2.2. Supply of Presidency

2.2.1. Readiness for presidency and results. Comprehensive preparation for Lithuania's presidency took place early.³⁴ Preparatory work began as soon as 2006,

³¹ Strupczewski J., "EU shifts focus to economic reforms in quest for growth", <http://article.wn.com/view/2013/05/29/EU_shifts_focus_to_economic_reforms_in_quest_for_growth_g/>.

³² Interview with Raimundas Karoblis, 22 January 2014.

³³ "Europe goes to the polls", *The Economist*, <<http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21602206-although-economies-around-europe-may-be-mend-voters-disillusion-could-cause-new>>, 17 05 2014.

³⁴ Interview with Julius Pranevičius, 19 March 2014.

when the Lithuanian government adopted the first action plan for preparation.³⁵ This was initiated under a left-of-centre Social-Democratic-led government, continued by a right-of-centre Conservative-led government and completed by another left-of-centre Social-Democratic-led cabinet. On 27 August 2008, a new edition of the action plan for preparation was approved.³⁶ In 2010, the government approved basic guidelines for Lithuania's preparation for the presidency and these were approved in 2011 by the government and parliament in their inter-institutional action plan. The final version of the project identified key elements in the preparation for the presidency (including the programme, priorities, administrative capacity, budget and logistics). Lithuania earmarked a budget of 214 million litas for the presidency.

Groundwork for the presidency was detailed, comprehensive and systematic. No previous EU presidencies between 2004 and 2013 had plans as elaborate as Lithuania's.³⁷ There were two stages of political and administrative preparation: 2006-2008 and 2009-2013. The first phase was devoted to training, seminars and an analysis of earlier presidencies; and the second stage involved measures that included devising specific activity programmes, leadership for working groups and discussion topics.³⁸ A report by the National Audit Office of Lithuania that evaluated the country's preparation for the presidency identified the main positive factors: an inter-institutional action plan, intensive regular consultations among the trio of EU presidencies, a developed organisational system, staff training and an upgrade of structures in the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the European Union. The report also noted that Lithuania properly exploited the opportunity to finance part of its preparation for presidency (for logistical and communication strategies) from EU structural funds. Risk factors were identified that comprised possible duplications of measures that might result in some wasted funds, missed opportunities to share the workload among the EU trio and insufficiently developed infrastructure facilities for presidency events.³⁹

In November 2011, the Seimas adopted the resolution 'Project for the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013'.⁴⁰ This set

³⁵ LRV, *Lietuvos Respublikos Nutarimas dėl Lietuvos pasirengimo pirmininkauti Europos Sąjungoje 2006–2009 veiksmų plano patvirtinimo*, 12 04 2006.

³⁶ *LR Valstybės kontrolės Valstybinio audito ataskaita kaip rengiamasi pirmininkauti ES Tarybai*, Vilnius, 29 March 2012, p. 3.

³⁷ Interview with Julius Pranevičius, 19 March 2014.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *LR Valstybės kontrolės Valstybinio audito ataskaita*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ "Priimtas nutarimo "Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos pirmininkavimo Europos Sąjungos Tarybai 2013 m."

out the presidency's main priority areas and objectives, such as energy security, the integration of energy systems, creation of a common EU energy market, the Europeanisation of Eastern Partnership countries and protection of the EU's external borders. Lithuania's priorities in the preparatory stage were selected in line with two main criteria: firstly, issues had to be important to all EU members so that resolutions would provide added value for the whole region; secondly, the selection of priorities presented an opportunity for Lithuania to draw attention to areas that may have been partially overlooked at an EU level or that derived from the country's national interests.⁴¹ The start of Lithuania's presidency coincided with EU enlargement, as Croatia became the 28th member state on 1 July 2013. The country's presidency also ended symbolically, with Latvia's accession to the eurozone.

In a nutshell, the presidency's key achievements were the approval of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-20, the 2014 annual budget and a sharp focus on the EU's Eastern Partnership. Vilnius aimed to enhance the EU's capacity to respond to economic, financial and social challenges. The Lithuanian presidency progressed by completing the first pillar of the banking union – the single supervisory mechanism – which is aimed at avoiding financial and debt crises. Barroso exclaimed: "Today Europe's banks are better capitalised, better regulated to manage risks and better supervised. We are now at the beginning of the end of public bank bail-outs with the welcome agreements reached by the co-legislators in December on the Bank Resolution Directive and Deposit Guarantee Schemes. So it is now imperative to work for agreement on the Single Resolution Mechanism, the remaining building block needed for a genuine European banking union".⁴²

The presidency reached an agreement with the European Parliament on directives for bank recovery and resolution and on deposit guarantee schemes, which ought to create a basis for greater financial stability. In the last days of the presidency, the Council also reached a decision on the single resolution mechanism, another important element of the banking union. The presidency put in place the elements of the so-called budgetary package: voting on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and agreement on related legal acts, as well as on the 2014 annual budget and additional spending for 2013. Negotiations on 59 programmes

projektas", 2011 m. lapkričio 10 d. pranešimas VIR (iš plenarinio posėdžio), <http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=4445&p_d=117438&p_k=1>.

⁴¹ LR Valstybės kontrolės Valstybinio audito ataskaita kaip rengiamasi pirmininkauti ES Tarybai, Vilnius, 29 March 2012, p. 25.

⁴² Speech by President Barroso on the review of the Lithuanian Presidency, <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-14-15_en.htm>, 14 01 2014.

that were essential to implementation of the financial framework must have been the most difficult and important achievement. The agreement on the EU budget guaranteed funds to be allocated for key areas such as the creation of jobs for young people and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.⁴³ Implementation documents for the Multiannual Financial Framework and directives such as those on posted workers and fluorinated gas have been among important sectorial issues that have required not only mediation but have stood for national interests.⁴⁴ The Lithuanian presidency also finished the first three rounds of negotiations in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and free trade talks with Canada. A mandate was received to negotiate investment protection with China, while some also note progress with the enlargement agenda in the cases of Turkey, Serbia and Montenegro.⁴⁵ As for energy security, agreement was reached for the first time on the list of strategic projects for financing from the EU budget. The list included six projects important to Lithuania's energy security.⁴⁶ Agreements about directives on tobacco and employee business trips were stuck in the process of negotiation.

The third Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius was perhaps the pinnacle of Lithuania's presidency, making bold headlines. The Eastern Partnership initiative was devised as a tailored neighbourhood policy for Eastern European countries to adopt tried and tested European practices, norms and values. The initiative was by no means a road towards a promised land of EU membership, but a strong incentive towards Europeanisation – in other words, reforms under the aegis of the EU in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

There has been a Lithuanian and even broader Baltic, Polish and Swedish interest in Europeanising the EU's Eastern neighbourhood and pushing away the Russian political lifestyle from the area.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the Baltic states in particular have seen the eastern neighbourhood as their place of concern, with the

⁴³ Pirmininkaujanti Lietuva pasiekė susitarimą dėl 2014 m. ES biudžeto, <<http://www.eu2013.lt/lt/naujienos/pranesimaispaudai/pirmininkaujanti-lietuva-pasieke-susitarima-del-2014-m-es-biudžeto>>, 12 11 2013.

⁴⁴ A remark by an anonymous reviewer of this article.

⁴⁵ Council of the European Union, *Key achievements of the Lithuanian Presidency*, <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/homepage/showfocus?focusName=key-achievements-of-the-lithuanian-presidency&lang=en>>, 20 12 2013.

⁴⁶ Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013. *Lithuania has justified Europe's trust*, <<http://www.eu2013.lt/en/news/lithuania-has-justified-europes-trust>>, 30 12 2013.

⁴⁷ Jurkynas M., "Security Concerns of the Baltic States in the 21st century" in Archer C., Bailes A. J. K. and Wivel A., eds., *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, London: Routledge, 2014.

ability as former Soviet states to share their expertise in successful post-communist transformation into the 'new West'. Possessing the image of small, non-patronising and relatively successful nations has increased their chances of a good reception and the Baltic states have also always been in dire need of rolling Russia's influence and legacies further back from their eastern borders. Ukraine was perceived as a litmus test for the success of the Eastern Partnership.

The Eastern Partnership progressed to some extent at the 2013 Vilnius summit, when agreements were initialised on political association and economic integration with Moldova and Georgia. A visa-facilitation agreement was signed with Azerbaijan and Moldova was offered a visa-free regime. The latter was seen as a frontrunner in the Eastern Partnership, whereas Azerbaijan was barely interested in cooperation with the EU apart from on technical issues. An agreement on participation in EU-led initiatives was signed with Georgia and an aviation agreement with Ukraine was initialled.

However, the summit suffered several let-downs, namely with Belarus, Armenia and Ukraine. Belarus remains practically absent in EU summits after Minsk's suppression of protesters following the presidential election in 2010 and the ensuing persecution of political opponents. Nevertheless, Belarus, represented by foreign minister Vladimir Makei, expressed a wish to start negotiations with the EU about an agreement on visa facilitation and readmission. Armenia, which has made among the most advanced progress in agreements on association and free trade, took almost everyone by surprise. Moldova made an unexpected U-turn by yielding to Russia's pressure and opting for a then Russia-led customs union, which now seems rather nebulous after Ukraine started turning westwards in March 2014.

The Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine was probably the most awaited goal of the Eastern Partnership summit, if not the whole Lithuanian presidency. The EU's negotiations with Ukraine were protracted because the latter was sandwiched between the interests of Europe and Russia. The EU required the release of former Ukraine prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko from jail and called for broader social, economic and judicial reforms, while Moscow pressed Kiev through restrictions on the export of Ukrainian goods to Russia and threatened an embargo should Ukraine sign a free-trade deal with the EU. Just before the Eastern Partnership summit, on 21 November 2013, Ukraine suspended its preparations to sign the Association Agreement. Ukraine was not 'alone' in bullying from Russia, as the Kremlin imposed arbitrary food and safety restrictions that were commercially and politically motivated on different countries before the Eastern Partnership summit. As a zealous advocate for the Eastern Partnership, Lithuania

felt the pressure too. Lithuanian dairy products were announced as not meeting safety standards and increased scrutiny of the country's vehicles and cargo trucks cost some nerves in August 2013.⁴⁸

The then Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich refused to sign the deal at the Vilnius summit. In the aftermath, mass street protests erupted in Ukraine and toppled Yanukovich's regime in February 2014; Russia's occupation and annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region followed in March 2014. The failure of the Eastern Partnership summit in 2013 to deliver with regard to Ukraine tainted the Lithuanian presidency, but an agreement with the country was beyond the reach of Vilnius. Despite the Ukraine letdown, the Lithuanian presidency did a relatively good job with garnering positive feedback. In opinion polls conducted in December 2013, 65% of respondents evaluated the presidency as successful. Voters for the Social Democrats, Conservatives and Liberals noted its success, whereas the electorate of the Labour, Order and Justice and Polish parties disagreed with this stance.⁴⁹

2.2.2. Positions of main policy makers. Studies of the presidency tend to claim that its success is related to domestic political stability. According to David Kral, groundless ambitions, poor inter-institutional coordination and a lack of professional staff are key features of a failed presidency.⁵⁰ During Lithuania's presidency, stable domestic politics prevailed and no elections were organised. Political parties reached consensus on the presidency's objectives as early as October 2011.⁵¹ On the one hand, such agreement facilitates the presidency's functions; on the other, even without consensus the new government elected during the presidency term would not be able to change much because of previously adopted documents like the EU 18-month Trio programme.⁵² Finally, the politically

⁴⁸ Chaffin J., Weaver C., "Moscow strikes back at former Soviet bloc nations by barring imports", *The Financial Times*, <<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/15d68e58-3027-11e3-9eec-001444feab7de.html?siteedition=uk#axzz2uyXaKJoC>>, 08 10 2013.

⁴⁹ "Daugiau nei pusė šalies gyventojų Lietuvos pirmininkavimą ES Tarybai laiko sėkmingu", <http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/33526/daugiau_nei_puse_salies_gyventoju_lietuvos_pirmininkavima_es_tarybai_laiko_sekmingu>.

⁵⁰ Vilpišauskas R., Vandecasteele B. and Vaznonytė A., "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, 2013, pp. 11-37.

⁵¹ "Seime atstovaujamos politinės partijos pasirašė susitarimą dėl Lietuvos pirmininkavimo ES Tarybai 2013 m. antrąjį pusmetį", <[⁵² Interview with Julius Pranevičius, 19 March 2014.](http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=8029&p_d=116470&p_k=1> 14 10 2011.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

influential president Dalia Grybauskaitė has been the public ‘face’ of the country’s presidency and a vocal supporter of an active Lithuania within the EU.

2.2.3. Cooperation with the General Secretariat. The success of the General Secretariat strongly depends on the presidency’s willingness to sustain mutual cooperation. Lithuania addressed the Secretariat, but did not fully rely on it because the body was considered to have its own agenda. EU officials and the staff of its institutions have their own ways of thinking, and are often very pro-European and support deep integration, so their proposals are naturally imbued with these institutional values. One cannot rule out the influence of a strong lobby in Brussels.⁵³ Because of limited capacity, the Secretariat does not react equally to the activities of different working groups and its assistance may vary from shared institutional practices to technical help through measures such as the organisation of meetings and assistance with legislative processes.⁵⁴

2.2.4. Administrative capacity. Diplomatic circles noted positive Lithuanian initiatives, organisation, coordination and representation.⁵⁵ Well-prepared and qualified personnel were among the presidency’s strongest pillars. A large amount of training in areas including communication, public speaking, negotiation and stress management was implemented several years in advance. During preparations for the presidency, the number of employees at the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU rose from 85 to 188. Many experts who have worked on EU issues for at least three years and who already have experience in EU institutions joined the ranks.⁵⁶ The main workload was carried out by the foreign ministry, in which several structural units were set up. Between December 2010 and June 2014, the Department of the Presidency of the EU Council was established with an additional 29 employees.⁵⁷ The Governmental Commission on EU Affairs consisting of deputy ministers from all the ministries and chaired by the minister of foreign affairs, worked in parallel with the presidency structure at the foreign ministry. The Governmental Commission and the EU Affairs Department of the foreign ministry jointly coordinated the make-up of the presidency, and all logistics were left to the devices of the European Union Council Presidency Department at

⁵³ Interview with Julius Pranevičius, 19 March 2014.

⁵⁴ Interview with Antanas Venckus, 2nd Secretary at the Trade Policy Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 March 2014.

⁵⁵ Interview with the Swedish Ambassador to Lithuania, Cecilia Ruthström-Ruin, 8 January 2014.

⁵⁶ Šešelgytė M., “The First Leadership Test: What to Expect from the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU”, *SIEPS*, <http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/2013_13epa.pdf>, August 2013.

⁵⁷ *LR Valstybės kontrolės Valstybinio audito ataskaita kaip rengiamasi pirmininkauti ES Tarybai*, Vilnius, 29 March 2012, p. 22.

the foreign ministry.⁵⁸ The presidency's organisational structure was balanced and did not run into major trouble during the preparation phase. Clear accountability made communication among the institutions in charge more flexible.

Special attention was paid to training staff for the presidency. This was carried out in two ways: a centralised manner, which included almost all civil servants; and a decentralised manner, for only employees of the foreign ministry.⁵⁹ Lithuania chose a 'Brussels-based' organisation model, under which chairs of working groups are relatively independent, possess flexible mandates and most meetings take place in Brussels. The main advantage of this model is the improved use of resources by giving more responsibility to country representatives based in Brussels, who are in touch with day-to-day EU matters. The level of responsibility given to chairpeople in Brussels is higher than that allocated to professionals in the country's capital.⁶⁰

2.2.5. Relations with other EU institutions. Cooperation with the European Parliament was relatively intensive. The workload that Lithuania had to cope with was two-and-a-half times higher than usual because the existing term of the European Parliament and European Commission was drawing to a close. A number of agreements had to be reached to sustain the EU's financial and economic aims and its stance with regard to energy security. Traditionally, communication with the Commission, Council and Parliament constitutes routine action for the chairing country. However, Lithuania entered into a zone of tension because of the number of laws that had to be adopted. Such intense cooperation with the European Parliament was partly determined by existing circumstances.⁶¹ Within half a year, 40 Council sessions and 1,350 meetings of various working groups and committees were organised.⁶² Vilnius tripled the regular legislative workload: 128 legal acts, 250 non-legislative files and 50 Council conclusions were adopted during the presidency, whereas the average workload of a country in the middle of a trio during its tenure is about 50-55 normative EU documents. During its presidency, Lithuania was responsible for 478 European initiatives: negotiations were completed for 261 and progress has been achieved on an additional 113 normative acts. Such a unique situation, in which a chairing country must adopt a

⁵⁸ Šešelgytė M., "The First Leadership Test: What to Expect from the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU", *SIEPS*, August 2013, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Interview with Julius Pranevičius, 19 March 2014.

⁶⁰ Lecture by Raimundas Karoblis, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU, at Vytautas Magnus University, 27 March 2014.

⁶¹ Interview with Julius Pranevičius, 19 March 2014.

⁶² "ES Tarybos sekretoriatas lietuviams: jūs džiaugiatės, kad baigiate pirmininkauti, mes – ne", <<http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/es-tarybos-sekretoriatas-lietuviams-jus-dziaugiates-kad-baigiate-pirmininkauti-mes-ne-56-393392>>.

similarly high number of laws, occurs once in 35 years.⁶³ Mathematically, the level of ‘success’ was 78%.⁶⁴

2.2.6. Presidency experience. Needless to say, this was Lithuania’s first presidency. The country was the first Baltic state to run the political show following accession to the European Union. Practice indicates that smaller countries, particularly those that hold the presidency for the first time and are not among the political heavyweights, can compensate for their lack of experience by choosing appropriate priorities and maintaining a good negotiation strategy. Small and medium-sized presidencies sometimes aspire to ‘punch above their weight’, seeking to exercise more power on specific issues than a mere assessment of their structural resources would indicate, and thereby trying to increase their visibility and influence.⁶⁵ Lack of experience of a presidency may also pose some challenges. For example, member states that have a large amount of experience in terms of chairing the EU often dismiss the need for detailed preparations and improvements to administrative capabilities by considering that the existing situation suffices despite changes after the Lisbon Treaty came into force. Lithuania compensated for its lack of experience through detailed, systematic and coherent preparation, including analysis of both pre-Lisbon and post-Lisbon presidencies. The biggest obstacle presented by the lack of chairing experience was associated with management of external events. On the opening day of the presidency itself, two-thirds of the questions at the first press conference were about a spy scandal in the United States and free-trade negotiations. These events slightly adjusted the course of the presidency and forced sharper reactions.⁶⁶

2.2.7. Importance of issues. Two radically different arguments about the impact of a presidency on the behaviour of a member state can be found in the literature. Some maintain that the position functions as an ‘amplifier’, strengthening an already existing tendency to propagate national concerns. Others argue that it functions as a ‘silencer’, subordinating national material interests to common European concerns.⁶⁷ The Lithuanian tenure falls somewhere between these situations. Although the presidency encompassed its official aims in a pompous verbiage about a ‘credible, growing and open Europe’ and was well-accepted for

⁶³ Lecture by Raimundas Karoblis, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU, at Vytautas Magnus University, 27 March 2014.

⁶⁴ “Pirmininkavimo sėkmės procentas 78 iš 100”, *Verslo žinios*, <<http://vz.lt/article/2013/12/18/pirmininkavimo-sekmes-procentas-78-is-100#ixzz2uueOrfzi>>, 18 12 2013.

⁶⁵ Šešelgytė M., 2013 (note 56).

⁶⁶ Lecture by Raimundas Karoblis, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU, at Vytautas Magnus University, 27 March 2014.

⁶⁷ Bengtsson R., Elgström, O. and Tallberg J., “Silencer or Amplifier? The European Union Presidency and the Nordic Countries”, *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27(3), 2004, pp. 311-334.

its relatively neutral stance, secondary aims that concerned the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, energy security and the EU's Eastern Partnership were directly linked to Lithuania's existing and medium-term interests.⁶⁸ Despite Lithuania selecting a Brussels-based presidency model and acting as a broker for the EU, other interests were also on the mind of Vilnius. Traditionally, 90% of issues are inherited from the previous presidency. A further 5% may be a *force majeure* that cannot really be planned for, with the remaining 5% providing an opening for a presidency to come up with suggestions of a national nature.⁶⁹ A member state must think far ahead to prepare an informal agenda because it takes approximately two years for a normative act to be passed through the EU's legislative procedure. A chairing country may accelerate developments on important issues by asking the Commission to present its conclusions or recommendations on those areas. Vilnius fully used the latter 5% opportunity.⁷⁰ In negotiations on the EU multi-year budget, Lithuania achieved much more than Lithuania had expected. During the Lithuanian presidency, the first set of Projects of Common Interest (PCIs) regarding Europe's energy infrastructure was adopted, where the strategic list of energy projects was approved. In a similar vein, the Commission adopted conclusions on the regional energy-strategy review as a result of consistent and systematic work.⁷¹ The EU's Eastern Partnership initiative, as discussed above, has been in the interest of both Lithuania and the EU and has placed a significant focus on the presidency.

2.2.8. Foreign-policy orientation. After re-establishing its independence, Lithuania formulated three main foreign-policy goals: membership of the EU, membership of NATO and good relations with neighbouring countries. NATO was seen at the time as the main guarantor of solid security, while the EU was more associated with 'soft' security through economic reforms and welfare.⁷² The EU's constitutional arrangement prohibited joining any post-Soviet frameworks.⁷³ Membership of both organisations has been logical from a geopolitical perspective

⁶⁸ Jurkynas M., "Lithuanian 2014 Presidency at the Council of the EU", *Žurnāls Latvijas intereses Eiropas Savienībā* 1(13), 2014, p. 7.

⁶⁹ Interview with Julius Pranevičius, 19 March 2014.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Lecture by Raimundas Karoblis, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU, at Vytautas Magnus University, 27 March 2014.

⁷² Nekrašas E., "Kritiniai pamąstymai apie Lietuvos užsienio politiką", *Politologija* 2(54), Vilniaus Universitetas, Tarptautinių santykių ir politikos mokslų institutas, 2009, p. 124.

⁷³ *Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija, 1992 m. birželio 8 d. Konstitucinis aktas "Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos nesijungimo į postsovietinės Rytų sąjungas"*, <<http://www3.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Konstitucija.htm>>.

since Vilnius has sought to reintegrate into the European community, which for many years was prevented because of the Soviet occupation. For Lithuania, a 'return to Europe' meant not only emancipation from Russia's influence but also a move to another geopolitical region based on Western values reflected in Copenhagen's criteria for EU membership. During its 10-year membership, Lithuania has been an active and pro-European member state, supporting deeper EU integration, tight relations with NATO, energy security and active Europeanisation of the EU's Eastern neighbourhood. For instance, Lithuania was the first member state to ratify the treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, which unfortunately did not come to fruition after the French and Dutch referenda of 2005 sank the treaty. Support for the EU is also reflected in Lithuanian society, which is more pro-European than average. The country ranks among the most significant recipients of EU financial aid,⁷⁴ and the idea of being a European country, and a eurozone member from 2015, means enhanced security and welfare in a sensitive geopolitical situation close to Russia.⁷⁵

3. Evaluation of the Lithuanian Presidency

The analytical model designed enables the study to provide an evaluation of Lithuania's presidency under the weighted criteria discussed above. Fulfilment of the first, third, fifth and eighth criteria meant that the presidency gained the highest score of 5 points in these categories. Chairing the Council of the EU for the first time, Vilnius paid significant attention to early preparations and set itself an ambitious and targeted agenda. Early planning for the presidency created favourable conditions for training of qualified personnel. Lithuania sought to prepare in a way that would improve the country's representation in EU institutions and strengthen its administrative capacity. Vilnius maintained close contact with the European Parliament and European Commission, as well as various committees and working groups. The second and fourth criteria were attributed 4 points each. There were no elections during the presidency, while Lithuania's mainstream political parties signed a solidarity agreement on the goals of the tenure in 2011 and political leaders worked hand in hand during the presidency, thus maintaining continuity.

⁷⁴ Jurkynas M. in: Beacháin D. Ó., Sheridan V. and Stan S., eds., *Life in Post-Communist Eastern Europe after EU Membership*, Routledge, 2012.

⁷⁵ Jurkynas M., 2012 (note 74).

There were only several domestic disagreements between the president of Lithuania and the government of Lithuania. A lack of bidirectional cooperation with the General Secretariat was also noted. The country’s performance with regard to the seventh criterion can be allocated 3 points. Lithuania was proactive in organising activities of the Trio group and preparing a related 18-month programme. But despite a relatively result-oriented management of the presidency, some important issues were not fully implemented and unexpected obstacles at times remained unresolved by the presidency (such as the results of the EU Eastern Partnership). The presidency scored 1 point from 2 under the sixth criterion. Although experience of a presidency is among the effectiveness criteria, an empirical analysis confirmed that this experience itself can be considered only as a supplement for effectiveness but not a necessary condition. With regard to compliance with the effectiveness criteria, Lithuania’s presidency scored 32 points from a total of 40. In terms of the weighted average of all criteria, the presidency received 4.2 points on a 5-point scale.

Table 2. Evaluation of the Lithuanian Presidency

	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
1. Readiness for presidency and results	+				
2. Cooperation with the General Secretariat		+			
3. Administrative capacity	+				
4. Positions of main policy makers		+			
5. Relations with other EU institutions	+				
6. Presidency experience					+
7. Importance of issues			+		
8. Foreign-policy orientation	+				

Conclusions

After examining theoretical and empirical literature on presidencies of the Council of the EU and the Lithuanian case, the study singled out a contingency theory in which effectiveness relies on congruence between management strategies (supply) and exogenous factors (demand), and modified it by selecting the most appropriate criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of the presidency.

The analysis of the demand side revealed that Lithuania's presidency was expected to execute functions of political leadership when necessary, as well as being an organiser and mediator. Analysis of the operationalised supply side (readiness for presidency, cooperation with the General Secretariat, administrative capacity, positions of the main policy makers, relations with other EU institutions, presidency experience, importance of issues and foreign-policy orientation) enabled an evaluation of the effectiveness of Lithuania's presidency, which was allocated a weighted average of 4.2 points from 5.

Further studies of the presidency could take into consideration further modification (expansion) of the demand-supply relationship and supply factors such as a country's political size, the motivation and ambition of a presidency team and a comparison of capital-based versus Brussels-based models. An evaluation of international media and assessments by other EU institutions and leading politicians would shed more light on a presidency's effectiveness. As for practicalities, preparation for a presidency requires informal political socialisation and intensive networking long before the tenure commences – this consolidates political cohesion in coalitions and oils the presidency's future effectiveness.

Lithuania's tenure falls somewhere between classification as an 'amplifier' or 'silencer' of national interests. The presidency's official aims produced the slogan of a 'credible, growing and open Europe', and were well-accepted for their unbiased approach. However, the secondary, and perhaps true, objectives on energy security and the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative were directly linked to Lithuania's existing and medium-term interests.

Lithuania became more deeply rooted within the EU: its diplomats, politicians and part of the public sector became more Europeanised through developing their European expertise and networking during the presidency. Lithuania's image was not tainted, with the presidency sustaining Vilnius's trademark of reliability, effectiveness and objectivity as a small state. Although the country is a parliamentary republic with minor features of presidentialism, the politically active incumbent president Dalia Grybauskaitė has been a very active and pro-European face of the country.

The presidency did not engender a Eurosceptic mood, which stays at the political fringes. Support for the country's EU membership remains high and European awareness among the population has risen, especially in the context of Russia's aggression in Ukraine in 2014. The membership and responsibilities of a small state in the EU help to reduce asymmetries in power and in the case of Lithuania have improved the promotion of Vilnius's identity and national interests in the EU agenda. In summary, Lithuania's first presidency has been a positive litmus test of the country's political maturity in the EU.