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.

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

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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.[1]

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.[2] 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.[3] Lithuania's EaP-related political

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[1] Lithuanian presidency website, "Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 1 July to 31 December 2013: For a Credible, Growing and Open Europe", *Lithuanian presidency website,* <http://static.eu2013.lt/uploads/documents/Programos/Programa_ EN.pdf>, 01 07 2013; 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, p. 11-37.

[2] Janeliūnas T. et al., "The EU New Member States as Agenda Setters in the Enlarged European Union", Lithuania, Sofia: Open Society Institute, 2009; Kesa K., "Latvian and Lithuanian Policy in the Eastern Neighbourhood: Between Solidarity and Self Promotion", *Perspectives*, 19(2, Special Issue, Identity and Solidarity in Foreign Policy: Investigating East Central European Relations with the Eastern Neighbourhood), 2000, p. 81-100; Vilpišauskas R., "National Preferences and Bargaining of the New Member States Since the Enlargement of the EU: the Baltic States - Still Policy Takers?", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* (25), 2011, p. 9-32; Vaïsse J., Dennison S., Kundnani H., eds., European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2013. London: European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), 2013; see e.g. Vilpišauskas R., "Lithuanian foreign policy since EU accession: torn between history and interdependence", in Baun M., Marek D., eds., *The New Member States and the European Union: Foreign policy and Europeanization*, New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 127-141.

[3] Seimas, "Seimo Nutarimo Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos pirmininkavimo Europos Sąjungos Tarybai 2013 m. Projektas (XIP-3550*)", Seimas,* <http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter2/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_ id=409464&p_query=&p_tr2=>, 30 03 2012; The Lithuania Tribune, "E. Zingeris: Lithuania's

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.[4] 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[5] and later applied to the influence of the Polish presidency of 2011.[6] 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

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EU presidency will focus on energy security and Eastern neighbourhood", *The Lithuania Tribune*, <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/11617/e-zingeris-lithuanias-eu-presidency-will-focus-on-energy-security-and-eastern-neighbourhood-201211617/>, 15 02 2013; Lithuanian presidency website, (note 1).

4   Interview 1, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 6 March 2013; Interview 2, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 7 March 2013; Interview 5, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 5 April 2013; Interview 6, Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 19 June 2013; EUObserver, "EU countries split on Ukraine treaty", *EUObserver,* <http://euobserver.com/foreign/118316>, 10 12 2012; Lithuanian presidency website, (note 1), p. 17.

5   Arts B., Verschuren P., "Assessing Political Influence in Complex Decision-making: An Instrument Based on Triangulation", *International Political Science Review*, No. 20(4), 1999, p. 411-424.

6   Vandecasteele B., Bossuyt, F. and Orbie, J., 2013. "Unpacking the influence of the Council Presidency on European Union external policies: The Polish Council Presidency and the Eastern Partnership", *European Integration online Papers*, No. 17(Special Issue 1: Agency and influence inside the EU institutions), 2013, p. 1-28.

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.

1. 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.[7] 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,[8] which in turn drew from the framework developed by Arts and Verschuren.[9] 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

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[7]   Bunse S., *Small states and EU governance: leadership through the Council presidency*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 5.

[8]   Vandecasteele B. et al., (note 6).

[9]   Arts B., Verschuren P., (note 5), p. 411-424.

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.

In comparison with the article on the Polish presidency by Vandecasteele et al.,[10] 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

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[10]   Vandecasteele B. et al., (note 6).

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.

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.

2. EU-Eastern Partnership relations during the Lithuanian presidency

2.1. 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,[11] Azerbaijan[12] and Georgia.[13] 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.[14] 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).

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.[15] 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.[16] 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

[11] Council of the European Union, *Press release, Fourteenth Cooperation Council between the European Union and the Republic of Armenia (17529/13)*, Council of the European Union, 9 December 2013.

[12] Council of the European Union, *Press release, Fourteenth Cooperation Council between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan (17530/13)*, Council of the European Union, 9 December 2013.

[13] Council of the European Union, *Press release, 14th EU-Georgia Cooperation Council (17693/13)*, Council of the European Union, 12 December 2013.

[14] Interview 22, European External Action Service, Brussels, 9 April 2014.

[15] ENPI info centre, "EU-Armenia: Ashton and Füle hail completion of talks on Association Agreement and Free Trade Agreement", *ENPI info centre,* <http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=34077&lang_id=450>, 30 07 2013.

[16] See e.g. ENPI info centre, "Ashton meets Armenian foreign minister ahead of Vilnius summit", *ENPI info centre* , <http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=34730&lang_id=450>, 08 10 2013.

negotiated'.[17] Indeed, the DCFTA and the rest of the Association Agreement are deeply interconnected and it would be impossible to simply remove one part.[18] 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'.[19] 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.[20] 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.[21]

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.[22] 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

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[17]   Füle Š., "EU-Armenia: About decision to join the Customs Union", *European Commission,* <http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/fule/headlines/news/2013/09/20130906_en.htm>, 10 09 2013.

[18]   Interview 22, (note 14); Interview 23, Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 9 April 2014.

[19]   The Lithuania Tribune, "Lithuanian and Armenian foreign ministers discussed Armenia's decision to seek Customs Union membership",. *The Lithuania Tribune*, <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/49939/lithuanian-and-armenian-foreign-ministers-discussed-armenias-decision-to-seek-customs-union-membership-201349939/>, 10 09 2013.

[20]   ENPI info centre, "European Parliament gives green light to EU-Armenia visa facilitation agreement", *ENPI info centre,* <http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=34757&lang_id=450>, 16 10 2013.

[21]   Interview 22, (note 14).

[22]   European Commission, *Azerbaijan: EU concerned by developments in the pre-election period*, European Commission, 3 October 2013.

of results. Aliyev finally won the election with 85% of the vote,[23] 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',[24] 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'.[25] Spokespeople for Ashton and Füle praised the high voter turnout, but also pointed to problems raised by OSCE observers.[26] 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',[27] 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.[28]

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.[29] A week later, Azerbaijan signed a Mobility Partnership with eight EU member states, including Lithuania.[30] 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.

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[23] EUObserver, "EU ponders reaction to Azerbaijan's 'appgate'", *EUObserver,* <http://euobserver.com/foreign/121741>, 11 10 2013.

[24] Council of Europe, *Presidential election in Azerbaijan: joint statement by PACE and EP delegations*, Council of Europe, 2013.

[25] OSCE, *International Election Observation Mission, Republic of Azerbaijan, Presidential Election, 9 October 2013: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions*, OSCE, 2013.

[26] European Commission, "Statement by the Spokespersons of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle on Presidential elections in Azerbaijan (MEMO/13/879)", *European Commission*, <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-879_en.htm>, 11 10 2013.

[27] Interview 11, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 21 February 2014.

[28] Interview 11 (note 27); Interview 16, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 12 March 2014.

[29] Council of the European Union, *Press release, EU-Azerbaijan agreement on facilitating the issuing of visas (17088/13)*, Council of the European Union, 29 November 2013.

[30] European Commission, *Mobility Partnership signed between the EU and Azerbaijan (IP/13/1215)*, European Commission, 5 December 2013.

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.[31] The visa ban against Makey was suspended in June[32] 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.[33] 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.[34] 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.[35] 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.[36] 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

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[31]   Interview 3, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 12 March 2013; Interview 5, (note 4); Interview 6, (note 4).

[32]   Council of the European Union, *Press release, Council eases diplomatic contacts between EU and Belarus (11371/13),* Council of the European Union, 24 June 2013.

[33]   European External Action Service, "EU extends restrictive measures against Belarus", *European External Action Service*, <http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/press_corner/all_news/news/2013/20131031_en.htm>, 29 01 2014.

[34]   European Commission, "Factsheet: Eastern Partnership summit, Vilnius, 28-29 November 2013 (MEMO/13/1057), European Commission, < http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-1057_en.htm>, 11 02 2014.

[35]   Council of the European Union, *Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Vilnius, 28-29 November 2013. Eastern Partnership: the way ahead (17130/13)*, Council of the European Union, 2013; Lithuanian presidency website, "Achievements of the Lithuanian Presidency: open Europe", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en/open-europe>, 15 01 2013.

[36]   Interview 8, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 18 February 2014.

political relevance (PR=1); negotiations were initiated in February 2014,[37] but an agreement is not expected any time soon.[38]

Georgia

Negotiations on the key issue in relations between the EU and Georgia – an Association Agreement, including a DCFTA – were completed in July.[39] The preamble to the agreement states that Georgia is an 'Eastern European country,'[40] 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.[41] 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.[42] 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,[43] so their initialling cannot be ascribed to the country (AS=0).

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[37] ENPI info centre, "EU-Belarus: negotiations launched on visa facilitation and readmission agreements", *ENPI info centre*, <http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=36037&lang_id=450>, 07 02 2014.

[38] Interview 10, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 21 February 2014.

[39] ENPI info centre, "EU-Georgia: completion of talks on Association Agreement a 'very important milestone'", *ENPI info centre*, <http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=34056&lang_id=450>, 30 07 2013.

[40] European External Action Service, *Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part: Preamble*, European External Action Service, 2013, p. 2.

[41] European External Action Service, *Press release, EU and Georgia sign Framework Agreement on participation in EU crisis management operations (131129/02)*, European External Action Service, 29 November 2013.

[42] Interview 17, Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence, Vilnius, 14 March 2014; Interview 21, Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 9 April 2014.

[43] Interview 17, (note 42); Interview 22, (note 14).

Moldova

Moldova's pro-European course was supported and encouraged by Lithuanian high-ranking officials on several occasions.[44] 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.[45] 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.[46] 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.[47]

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.[48] 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.[49] Several member states had formulated

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[44] see e.g. Lithuanian presidency website, "Minister of Foreign Affairs and Speaker of the Parliament of Moldova discuss preparations for the Vilnius Summit", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www. eu2013.lt/en/news/pressreleases/minister-of-foreign-affairs-and-speaker-of-the-parliament-of-moldova-discuss-preparations-for-the-vilnius-summit>, 26 08 2013; Lithuanian presidency website, "Vilnius Summit – a new beginning for Moldova", *Lithuanian presidency website,* <http://www. eu2013.lt/en/news/pressreleases/vilnius-summita-new-beginning-for-moldova>, 02 10 2013.

[45] European Parliament, "MEPs back freeing wine trade with Moldova to offset Russian trade sanctions", *European Parliament*, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20131206IPR30026/html/MEPs-back-freeing-wine-trade-with-Moldova-to-offset-Russian-trade-sanctions>, 29 01 2014.

[46] Council of the European Union, *EU - Republic of Moldova Cooperation Council, fifteenth meeting (11472/13)*, *Council of the European Union*, 25 June 2013.

[47] Interview 23, (note 18); Interview 25, European Commission, Brussels, 6 May 2014.

[48] European Commission, *Press release, Commission assesses the implementation of Visa Liberalisation Action Plans by Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia (IP/13/1085)*, European Commission, 15 November 2013.

[49] Lithuanian presidency website, "Lithuanian Presidency reaches agreement on visa free travels for the Republic of Moldova", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en//news/pressreleases/

reservations about this quick decision because of discussions on whether Moldova should issue third- or fourth-generation biometric passports. 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.[50] The agreement can be partly ascribed to the Lithuanian presidency, especially the speed with which it was adopted (AS=1).

Ukraine

Throughout 2013, the (conditions for) signing of 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,[51] and some high-ranking European politicians, including Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė, held meetings and consultations with Yanukovych.[52]

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lithuanian-presidency-reaches-agreement-on-visa-free-travels-for-the-republic-of-moldova>, 30 12 2013.

[50]   Interview 10, (note 38).

[51]   see e.g. European Parliament, "EP monitoring mission to Ukraine – Key observations to the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament", *European Parliament*, <http://www.europarl. europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press_release_speeches/press_release/2013/2013-october/html/ ep-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine--key-observations-to-the-conference-of-presidents-of-the-european-parliament>, 16 10 2013; European Parliament, "European Parliament Monitoring Mission to Ukraine - Mission statement", *European Parliament*, <http://www.europarl.europa. eu/the-president/en-fa/press/press_release_speeches/press_release/2013/2013-november/html/ european-parliament-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine--mission-statement>, 15 11 2013; EurActiv, "Suspense grows in EU-Ukraine gamble", *EurActiv*, <http://www.euractiv.com/europes-east/ suspense-grows-eu-ukraine-gamble-news-531131>, 17 10 2013.

[52]   Interfax, "German president urging Yanukovych to release Tymoshenko to enable signing of Association Agreement with EU", *Interfax*, <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/169669. html >, 08 10 2013; Lithuanian presidency website, "Dalia Grybauskaitė spoke by the phone with the President of Ukraine", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en/news/ pressreleases/dalia-grybauskaite-spoke-by-the-phone-with-the-president-of-ukraine->, 10 07 2013; EUObserver, "EU-Ukraine deal to be decided at the 'last minute'", *EUobserver*, <http://euobserver. com/foreign/122153>, 19 11 2013; EurActiv, "EU ministers urge Ukraine to stop bluffing on Tymoshenko", *EurActiv*, <http://www.euractiv.com/europes-east/eu-ministers-urge-ukraine-bluffi-news-531247>, 07 11 2013.

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.[53] 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.[54]

Although it initially seemed that Ukraine would implement the requested reforms in order to sign the Association Agreement,[55] EU diplomats started to give up hope in November that an agreement would be signed during the Vilnius Summit.[56] 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.[57] 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.[58] In response, European Commission president José Manuel Barroso

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[53] Lithuanian presidency website, "The Lithuanian Presidency's first month: Council agreements for the benefit of the European Union", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en/news/pressreleases/the-lithuanian-presidencys-first-month-council-agreements-for-the-benefit-of-the-european-union>, 06 08 2013.

[54] Interview 16, (note 28); Interview 23, (note 18); Interview 25, (note 47).

[55] Konończuk W., Olszański, T., "Ukrainian parliament adopts part of European laws", *Centre for Eastern Studies*, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2013-09-25/ukrainian-parliament-adopts-part-european-laws>, 27 09 2013; Ukrainian Government, "Government endorses unanimously draft Association Agreement with EU", *Ukrainian Government*, <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article;jsessionid=D44AD74C822CA0E86537DB8AB730F637?art_id=246687905&cat_id=244314975>, 19 09 2013.

[56] EUObserver, "EU gives up hope on Ukraine deal at Vilnius summit", *EUObserver*, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/122088>, 13 11 2013.

[57] EUObserver, "Ukraine pulls the plug on EU treaty", *EUObserver*, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/122190>, 25 11 2013; Ukrainian Government, "Government adopted resolution on suspension of preparation process to conclude Association Agreement with EU," *Ukrainian Government*, <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article?art_id=246867400&cat_id=244314971>, 25 11 2013.

[58] Delfi.lt, "V. Janukovyčius prisipažino D. Grybauskaitei: Ukraina priremta", *Delfi.lt*, <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/v-janukovycius-prisipazino-d-grybauskaitei-ukraina-priremta.d?id=63349578>, 25 11 2013.

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.[59] Lithuanian politicians strongly criticised Ukraine's decision[60] 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.[61] 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.'[62]

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).[63]

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[59]   European Commission, *Joint statement by the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso and the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy on Ukraine (MEMO/13/1052)*, European Commission, 25 November 2013.

[60]   Lithuanian presidency website, "Statement of Foreign Minister of Lithuania Linas Linkevičius on Decision of Ukrainian Government", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/ en/news/statements/statement-of-foreign-minister-of-lithuania-linas-linkevicius-on-decision-of-ukrainian-government>, 23 11 2013; EUObserver, "EU to Yanukovych: You are taking Ukraine 'nowhere'", *EUObserver*, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/122292>, 02 12 2013.

[61]   Interview 11, (note 27); Interview 16, (note 28); EurActiv, "EU seeks 'time for reflection' after Vilnius summit failure", *EurActiv*, <http://www.euractiv.com/global-europe/vilnius-summit-time-reflection-news-532048>, 02 12 2013.

[62]   Interview 14, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 3 March 2014.

[63]   Interview 20, Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications, Vilnius, 26 March 2014; Interview 24, Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 11 April 2014.

2.2. 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[64] 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.[65] 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?

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.[66] 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[67] and were not addressed to specific people, but to states. The main aim was to avoid the scenario of 2011, when Belarus boycotted

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[64] Lithuanian presidency website, (note 1).

[65] Interview 5, (note 4); Lithuanian presidency website, (note 1), p. 17.

[66] Interview 4, Diplomat from EU country, Vilnius, 19 March 2013; Interview 5, (note 4); Interview 11, (note 27).

[67] Lithuanian presidency website, "Invitations to Vilnius summit handed out to heads of diplomatic missions of Eastern Partnership countries", Lithuanian presidency website, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en/news/invitations-to-vilnius-summit-handed-out-to-heads-of-diplomatic-missions-of-eastern-partnership-countries->, 21 10 2013.

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.[68] None of the interviewees remembered exactly who came up with the idea, but it was clear that this strategy was undisputed in the EU[69] 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.[70]

The EaP Summit took stock of EU-EaP relations since the 2011 summit in Warsaw: the first part[71] 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.[72] 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[73] 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.

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[68]   Interview 8, (note 36); Interview 11, (note 27); Interview 16, (note 28).

[69]   *Ibid.*

[70]   Belta, (note 34); European Commission, "Factsheet: Eastern Partnership summit, Vilnius, 28-29 November 2013 (MEMO/13/1057)", *European Commission*, <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-1057_en.htm>, 11 02 2014.

[71]   Council of the European Union, (note 35), p. 1-13.

[72]   For an overview, see e.g. Council of the European Union, (note 71); ENPI info centre, "Eastern Partnership in Vilnius writing history", *ENPI info centre*, <http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=35365&lang_id=450>, 02 12 2013.

[73]   Council of the European Union, (note 35), p. 4-5.

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',[74] which was weaker than what Lithuania and other pro-enlargement countries would have liked.[75] 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'.[76]

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.

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[77] – organised in parallel with the EaP

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[74] Council of the European Union, (note 35), p. 3.

[75] On the discussions about the joint declaration; see also Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, "Draft EU Summit Text Acknowledges 'Aspirations' Of Eastern Neighbors", *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, <http://www.rferl.org/content/eu-neighbors-eastern-statement/25153908.html>, 02 11 2013.

[76] Interview 11, (note 27).

[77] Lithuanian presidency website, "Declaration of the 2nd Eastern Partnership Business Forum", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en//news/statements/declaration-of-the-2nd-eastern-partnership-business-forum>, 02 12 2013.

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,[78] 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,[79] 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,[80] but had no political relevance as understood in this research (PR=0); it was of low political importance and did not produce tangible results.

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.[81] There had been a dialogue between the EU and EaP on defence before, but the special

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[78] Committee of the Regions, *Annual Meeting of the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), Vilnius 3 September 2013. Recommendations to the Heads of State and Government gathering in Vilnius on 28-29 November 2013 for the EaP Summit*, Committee of the Regions, 2013; Committee of the Regions, *Time to rethink the Eastern Partnership – Report from Local and Regional Authorities for the Eastern Partnership to the Heads of State and Government at the Eastern Partnership Summit, Vilnius, Lithuania,* Committee of the Regions, 2013.

[79] EaP Civil Society Forum, Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, EaP Civil Society Forum, 2013; Kostanyan H., Vandecasteele B., "The socialization potential of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum," *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, 2013, No. 4(2), p. 95-110.

[80] ENPI info centre, "Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum conference in Vilnius: thinking ahead for a stronger partnership", *ENPI info centre*, <http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=35330&lang_id=450>, 30 11 2013.

[81] Interview 15, Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence, Vilnius, 3 March 2014; Interview 17, Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence, Vilnius, 14 March 2014; ENPI info centre, "Lithuanian Presidency stresses role of cooperation with Eastern Partners for European security", *ENPI info centre*, <http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=33769&lang_id=450>, 05 07 2013.

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.[82] 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.[83] 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.[84] 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,[85] 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 for 2012,[86]

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[82] Interview 17, (note 42).

[83] Seimas, "Key event of the parliamentary dimension of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU takes place in the Seimas", *Seimas*, <http://www.lrs.lt/intl/presidency.show?theme=125&lang=2&doc=1182>, 09 09 2013.

[84] Interview 15, (note 81); Lithuanian presidency website, "Vilnius hosts informal meeting of EU Security Policy Directors", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en//news/pressreleases/vilnius-hosts-informal-meeting-of-eu-security-policy-directors>, 24 09 2013.

[85] Interview 21, (note 42).

[86] European Commission/HRVP, *Joint staff working document Eastern Partnership Roadmap 2012-13: the multilateral dimension; Accompanying the document Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit {JOIN(2012) 13 final}, {SWD(2012) 109 final} (SWD(2012) 108 final)*, European Commission/HRVP, 2012.

with the EEAS taking the decision to set it up in spring 2013.[87] 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.[88] It is common practice for the presidency to invite non-EU countries to these trainings, and it was unsurprising that Lithuania invited EaP representatives.[89] 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.[90] 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.[91] 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.[92] The December meeting of the European Council also paid little attention to the EaP.[93] Lithuania's goals in both cases were not achieved (GA=0).

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[87] Interview 15, (note 81); Interview 17, (note 42).

[88] European External Action Service, "Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) orientation Course", *European External Action Service*, <http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/structures-instruments-agencies/eumc/news/archives/2013/20131104_en.htm>, 23 01 2014.

[89] Interview 15, (note 81); Interview 17, (note 42).

[90] Interview 21, (note 42).

[91] Lithuanian MFA, "Lithuanian EU Presidency. Unpublished document," 2013.

[92] Interview 15, (note 81); Interview 17, (note 42).

[93] European Council, *European Council conclusions 19/20 December 2013 (EUCO 217/13)*, European Council, 20 December 2013.

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.[94] All EaP countries were represented apart from Belarus, 'probably because Lukashenko didn't allow anyone to come'.[95] 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.[96] 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.[97] 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.[98] The programme was prepared by the European Commission and most of its content had been agreed in the first half of 2013,[99] so its launch cannot be ascribed to Lithuanian (AS=0).

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[94] Lithuanian presidency website, "Focus of Lithuanian Presidency in research – strengthening ties with Eastern Partnership countries", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en/news/pressreleases/focus-of-lithuanian-presidency-in-researchstrengthening-ties-with-eastern-partnership-countries>, 01 10 2013.

[95] Interview 12, Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, Vilnius, 26 February 2014.

[96] European Commission, *Declaration: Towards a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space Between the EU and Eastern Partnership Countries*, European Commission, 1 October 2013.

[97] Interview 12, (note 95).

[98] European Commission, "Information Day on Erasmus+ for Eastern Partnership countries - 24-25 October 2013 - Kaunas, Lithuania", European Commission, <http://www.infodaykaunas.com/>, 24 10 2013.

[99] Interview 18, Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, Vilnius, 18 March 2014.

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:[100] 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,[101] and one on 16 July at the EU's Horizontal Working Party on Drugs that included participation from EaP countries.[102] EaP countries were invited to the CEPOL conference in September, which is rather unusual.[103] Participants discussed several aspects of existing and future police cooperation, with special attention on the fight against organised crime, drugs, cybercrime and smuggling.[104] 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

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[100]   Interview 13, Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, Vilnius, 27 February 2014.

[101]   Council of the European Union, *Outcome of the Meeting of EU Law Enforcement Liaison Officers posted in Kiev, 3 July 2013, Kiev (12867/13)*, Council of the European Union, 3 July 2013.

[102]   Council of the European Union, *Summary of discussions of EU-Eastern partnership dialogue on drugs (12789/13)*, Council of the European Union, 9 September 2013.

[103]   Interview 13, (note 100).

[104]   CEPOL, "The international dimension of law enforcement cooperation: The Lithuanian Presidency conference", *CEPOL*, <https://www.cepol.europa.eu/media/news/20130927/international-dimension-law-enforcement-cooperation-lithuanian-presidency>, 27 01 2014.

shape their cooperation.[105] 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',[106] 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.[107] A final issue was who would chair the meeting – the Commission or the presidency – [108] 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).

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,

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[105]   Council of the European Union, *Joint Declaration on Eastern Partnership Justice and Home Affairs (14558/13),* Council of the European Union, 8 October 2013.

[106]   Interview 9, Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, Vilnius, 20 February 2014; Interview 19, Lithuanian Ministry of Justice, Vilnius, 26 March 2014.

[107]   Interview 7, Lithuanian Ministry of Justice, Vilnius, 18 February 2014; Interview 13, (note 100).

[108]   Interview 19, (note 106).

which it found at the premises of the European Investment Bank three weeks before the meeting took place.[109]

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.[110] In the joint declaration,[111] 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[112] 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.[113] 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).

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[109]   Interview 20, (note 63); Interview 24, (note 63).

[110]   *Ibid.*

[111]   European Commission, *Press release, Strengthening the Eastern Partnership through transport: key results and next steps (IP/13/920)*, European Commission, 9 October 2013.

[112]   Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications, "Joint Declaration - Future of Eastern Partnership transport cooperation", *Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications*, <http://www.sumin.lt/files/uploads//Rytu%20partnerystes%20deklaracija.pdf>, 10 10 2013.

[113]   Interview 20, (note 63).

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.[114] 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.[115] The Youth Forum's establishment was also mentioned in the joint declaration of the EaP Summit.[116] 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). 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).

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, 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,

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[114] Lithuanian presidency website, "Youth conclusions on informal education will be discussed by representatives of Eastern Partnership countries", *Lithuanian presidency website*, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en/news/pressreleases/youth-conclusions-on-informal-education-will-be-discussed-by-representatives-of-eastern-partnership-countries>, 30 10 2013.

[115] EaP Youth Forum, "Frequently Asked Questions about Eastern Partnership Youth Forum", *EaP Youth Forum*, <http://www.youthforum2013.eu/F-A-Q->, 30 10 2013; EaP Youth Forum, "The Eastern Partnership Youth Forum: Joint Conclusions", *EaP Youth Forum*, <http://www.youthforum2013.eu/f/12-11-13_EaP%20Youth%20Forum%20Joint%20Conclusions.pdf>, 27 01 2014.

[116] Council of the European Union, (note 35).

the EU and EaP regions continue to cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally and this cooperation is intensifying.

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)

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.

Appendix 1. List of interviews

Interview 1: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 6 March 2013.

Interview 2: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 7 March 2013.

Interview 3: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 12 March 2013.

Interview 4: Diplomat from EU country, Vilnius, 19 March 2013.

Interview 5: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 5 April 2013.

Interview 6: Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 19 June 2013.

Interview 7: Lithuanian Ministry of Justice, Vilnius, 18 February 2014.

Interview 8: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 18 February 2014.

Interview 9: Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, Vilnius, 20 February 2014.

Interview 10: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 21 February 2014.

Interview 11: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 21 February 2014.

Interview 12: Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, Vilnius, 26 February 2014.

Interview 13: Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, Vilnius, 27 February 2014.

Interview 14: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 3 March 2014.

Interview 15: Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence, Vilnius, 3 March 2014.

Interview 16: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, 12 March 2014.

Interview 17: Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence, Vilnius, 14 March 2014.

Interview 18: Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, Vilnius, 18 March 2014.

Interview 19: Lithuanian Ministry of Justice, Vilnius, 26 March 2014.

Interview 20: Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications, Vilnius, 26 March 2014.

Interview 21: Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 9 April 2014.

Interview 22: European External Action Service, Brussels, 9 April 2014.

Interview 23: Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 9 April 2014.

Interview 24: Lithuanian Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels, 11 April 2014.

Interview 25: European Commission, Brussels, 6 May 2014.