Turning “Them” into “We”

The Impact of the Rotating European Union Council Presidency on the Member States

Ieva Grumbinaitė

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

Florence, 14 February 2020

European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

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Examining Board

Prof. Ulrich Krotz, EUI, supervisor
Prof. Alexander Trechsel, University of Lucerne/EUI, co-supervisor
Prof. Daniel Naurin, University of Oslo
Prof. Dimiter Toshkov, Leiden University

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Abstract

The rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), held by each Member State (MS) for six months in turn, is seen both as an opportunity and a burden for the MS. While the functions and the achievements of the Council presidencies have been widely studied on the EU level, this thesis adopts the inverse, and under-researched perspective of looking at what holding the presidency means for the MS and whether it fulfills its alleged function of bringing Europe closer to the MS. Combining new institutionalist theoretical approaches under the concept of Europeanisation and employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, this thesis addresses the question of whether the Council presidency leads to Europeanisation of national polities and politics. It examines the impact of the presidency on three levels: national administrations; national ministers; and the citizens of the MS.

Firstly, based on nearly 100 expert interviews with civil servants from six MS I find that holding the presidency leads to at least temporary Europeanisation of national administrations and an improvement of national-EU policy coordination practices, mostly through a sociological institutionalist perspective: change of attitudes, skill development and networking. Secondly, analysis of a novel quantitative dataset of ministerial attendance at the meetings of the Council of the EU shows that the Council presidency encourages the ministers of the respective MS to attend more frequently, but the effect is temporary, explained by a rationalist logic of consequentiality rather than appropriateness. Thirdly, conducting a Eurobarometer survey data analysis, I find that the Council presidency relates to a minor improvement of knowledge of the EU among the citizens of small EU Member States and those countries that held the Council presidency for the first time. Overall, my findings suggest that the Council presidency presents an opportunity rather than burden for the MS.

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List of Abbreviations

AGRIFISH	Agriculture and Fisheries Council
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CEE	Central and Eastern European
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CGS	Council General Secretariat
CICPE	Comité interministériel pour la coordination de la politique européenne (EU policy coordinating body in Luxembourg)
COMPET	Competitiveness Council
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
Council presidency	rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DE	Germany
DE-E	East Germany
DE-W	West Germany
DK	Denmark
EB	Eurobarometer
EC	European Commission
ECOFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs Council
ECSC	European Coal and Steal Community
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENV	Environment Council
EP	European Parliament
EPSCO	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
ES	Spain
EU	European Union
EU-28	European Union of 28 Member States, since the accession of Croatia in 2013
EYCS	Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council
FAC	Foreign Affairs Council
FI	Finland
FR	France
GAC	General Affairs Council
HI	Historical institutionalism
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs Council
LT	Lithuania

LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MS	Member State
MT	Malta
NI	Northern Ireland
NL	The Netherlands
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Perm. Rep.	Permanent Representation
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
QMV	Qualified majority vote
RCI	Rational choice institutionalism
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SEA	Single European Act
SI	Sociological institutionalism
SK	Slovakia
SL	Slovenia
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TTE	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

1. Introduction

The presidency is an important piece in turning the "they" to "we"[1]

1.1. The puzzle and the research question(s)

The rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union (Council presidency) is a position held by each Member State (MS) of the European Union (EU) in turn for six months. During this period, the incumbent Member State prepares and chairs Council meetings, and ensures that the agenda is followed. The Council presidency acts as a neutral broker facilitating compromise between the MS and represents the Council of the EU vis-à-vis other EU institutions, in particular the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission (EC) (Council of the EU, 2019c; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006). The Council presidency is perceived as a mechanism for institutional balance and equality in the EU, giving every member state six months of leadership, regardless of its size or duration of EU membership (Bunse, 2009; Kirchner, 1992).

Functions, actions, and achievements of Council presidencies on the EU level have been widely studied (see next section for a literature review). This thesis, however, inverts the perspective and instead tackles the impact of the rotating presidency on the Member States, looking at whether the rotating presidency fulfils its alleged function of bringing the European Union closer to the Member States. Adopting new institutionalist approaches and the concept of Europeanisation as a theoretical framework, I examine the impact of holding the rotating Council presidency on national administrations, ministers and citizens, addressing the following research question on three levels:

Does the EU Council presidency have an impact on the Member State holding it?

1. *Does holding the EU Council Presidency have any (long term) impact on national administrations and their participation in EU policy-making processes?*
2. *Does holding the EU Council presidency have any (long term) impact on the engagement of national ministers in the meetings of the Council of the EU?*
3. *Does holding the EU Council Presidency have any impact on public opinion?*

[1] Interview #50 (IE)

This thesis was inspired by closely following how Lithuania prepared and conducted its first EU Council presidency in 2013. The ministries hired hundreds of people, mostly young graduates, to assist with the presidency preparation. With the upcoming Council presidency in mind, the president tested the language skills of the ministers to be appointed in the new government, and even struck some of the candidates off the list for insufficient knowledge of English. Presidency logos were posted all around Vilnius, and a lavish opening event took place. The Eastern Partnership summit, both the highlight and one of the main troubles of the Lithuanian presidency due to the Maidan events preventing Ukraine from signing an association agreement with the EU, took place in the heart of the city under the eyes of the media and the public. EU-related news about the informal Council meetings received considerable media attention. The overall message of the Lithuanian Council presidency was that the small Baltic country was on an equal footing with other larger and more experienced EU Member States and could master the task equally well, if not better. These observations led me to question whether it was just Lithuania that took the task of the Council presidency to heart so strongly, or do all the MS, especially those that have held the position before, approach it similarly? Moreover, is all this hassle about the Council presidency temporary, or does it have any long-term impact on the Member State?

After all, holding the Council presidency means that, depending on the size of the national administration, anything between hundreds and thousands of civil servants shift their working schedules and spend long hours focusing on EU affairs and presidency dossiers. It also means that national ministers cannot just skip meetings of the Council of the EU that they are supposed to chair, where they might otherwise have just listened in or refrained from attending. Finally, it is a time when ministers of EU-28 visit the country holding the Council presidency for the informal Council meetings, not only causing traffic jams in the capitals of the Member States due to road closures for security reasons, but also shifting national media attention to the European Union and EU affairs. The existing literature frequently identifies these three levels as the most likely targets for Europeanisation through the EU Council presidency, or at least an opportunity for the MS to re-engage with the EU (Elgström, 2003; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006). Firstly, it should have a “learning effect” on public servants at the Permanent Representations (Perm. Rep.) in Brussels and at the national ministries, giving them intense first-hand EU-experience by being on top of the legislative proceedings of the

Council of the EU for a period of six months, particularly in small, less resourceful MS (Bunse, 2009; Kaniok & Gergelova Štegirova, 2014; Panke, 2010c; Westlake & Galloway, 2004). Secondly, national ministers engage with Council proceedings more actively by acting as chairs during the presidency, which could lead them to change their attitudes towards the EU and European politics (Elgström, 2003; Leconte, 2012). Finally, the presidency can serve as a link between the citizens of the respective MS and the European Union by creating considerable publicity for the European Union and bringing otherwise distant EU affairs closer to the public (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006; Kirchner, 1992).

These questions were particularly timely considering that the EU was facing a legitimacy crisis, and experiencing growing disengagement and dissatisfaction amongst both political elites and citizens of the MS after the economic and the refugee crises, as well as the Brexit referendum between 2009 and 2016 (Dinan, Nugent, & Paterson, 2017; Hobolt, 2018). Both academics and policy-makers criticised the rotating Council presidency as an unsuitable leadership structure for the European Union of 28 Member States, for lacking accountability, disrupting the continuity of policy-making and being a costly burden for the MS (Crum, 2009; Pernice, 2003). However, the findings of this thesis indicate that, despite being costly and currently repeating only every 14 years, the Council presidency remains a beneficial institution for the Member States, especially for national administrations. It presents invaluable learning and networking opportunities for the civil servants from the countries that are holding the position for the first time, and an important period of re-engagement with EU affairs for their experienced counterparts. Furthermore, the presidency pushes national ministers to engage with EU affairs more actively, even if only for a short period. Finally, it adds publicity and visibility to EU affairs in the Member States, which is particularly important considering that current crises of European integration result from, among other issues, a lack of European identity and public interest in EU affairs (Börzel & Risse, 2018; Hobolt, 2018). Overall, my findings indicate that the rotating Council presidency does contribute to bringing the European Union closer to the Member States and bridging the gap between Brussels and national capitals, even if mostly in narrow expert circles. In this research I do not consider the capabilities and achievements of the rotating presidencies on the EU level, but find that it constitutes an opportunity rather than a burden for the Member States domestically.

1.2. Literature review and contribution

The Council of the European Union and its rotating presidency have received increasing academic attention but are still under-researched if compared to other EU institutions, especially the European Parliament and the European Commission. This is partly because the proceedings of the Council of the EU have become more transparent and open to the public only recently (Van Hecke & Bursens, 2011, p. 19). Studies of the Council presidency form a small fraction of the academic literature covering the Council of the EU and the European Council. Most focus on the leadership qualities and achievements of the presidency on the EU level (Beach & Mazzucelli, 2007; Kirchner, 1992; Metcalfe, 1998). Agenda-setting powers of the presidency and its influence on the decision-making of the Council of the EU is a salient and dividing topic among scholars. On the one hand, some found that the presidency has constrained but nevertheless considerable opportunities to influence the legislative agenda of the EU and policy outcomes (Alexandrova & Timmermans, 2013; Bengtsson, Elgstrom, & Tallberg, 2004; Bunse, 2009; Panke & Gurol, 2018; Schalk, Torenvlied, Weesie, & Stokman, 2007; Tallberg, 2003a, 2006; Thomson, 2008). On the other hand, others argue that the presidency is an administrator with little power, which was further constrained by the Lisbon treaty in 2009 (Bunse, Rittelmeyer, & Van Hecke, 2011; Leconte, 2012; Warntjen, 2007, 2008). A further issue dominating the literature on the rotating EU Council presidency is the assessment of its performance and success on the EU level, mostly focusing on single cases (Auers & Rostoks, 2016; Batory & Puetter, 2013; Bilčík, 2017; Bunse, 2004, 2009; Dür & Mateo, 2008; Högenauer, 2016; Jurkynas & Daukšaitė, 2014; Klemenčič, 2008; Laffan, 2014; Leconte, 2012; Nielsen & Christensen, 2015; Raś, 2017; Schout, 2017; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006; Šešelgytė, 2013; Van Hecke & Bursens, 2011; Vandecasteele & Bossuyt, 2014; Vandecasteele, Bossuyt, & Orbie, 2013; Vilpišauskas, 2014).

Compared to the studies of success and strategies of the Council presidency on the EU level, researchers pay much less attention to how it affects the Member States holding it. Existing literature suggests that the Council presidency contributes to more active and effective member state participation in EU affairs (Panke, 2010b), to the emergence of new methods of coordination, Europeanisation of national public administrations, and enhanced skill development amongst civil servants (Bunse, 2009, p. 213; Galušková, 2017; Hayes-Renshaw &

Wallace, 2006, p. 156; Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017; Jesień, 2013, p. 155; Kaniok & Gergelova Štegirova, 2014; Klemenčič, 2008; Marek & Baun, 2011, p. 142; Panke, 2010b, p. 67). The presidency has the potential to bring the otherwise distant European Union and its affairs closer to the citizens of the country holding the position, to increase awareness of and interest in the EU and its institutions (Bendel & Magnusdottir, 2017; Elgström, 2003, p. 196; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, pp. 134, 276; Jesień, 2013, p. 294; Kirchner, 1992). It also affects national politics and has a socialising effect on national executives (Elgström, 2003; Leconte, 2012; Šešelgytė, 2013). However, apart from a few in-depth studies (Galušková, 2017; Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017; Kaniok, 2012; Kaniok & Gergelova Štegirova, 2014), these claims are frequently made as side notes and are not sufficiently explored empirically.

Empirical studies of the impact of the Council presidency on the Member State holding it are few and often not sufficiently detailed. Panke (2010c) studies small state participation in EU policy-making processes on the European level. She uses the Council presidency as an independent variable producing a learning effect and improving opportunities for small Member States to engage in EU policy-making and to seek contacts with EU institutions more actively. She finds that the presidency has a strong positive impact on participation, but only "old" EU Member States that joined before 2004 had held it at the time of the study and the impact on the "new"[2] MS is not assessed. The socialising effect of the EU Council presidency in the new Member States is explored using the examples of the Czech Republic and Slovenia by Drulák & Šabič (2010). They offer a detailed analysis of different aspects of the impact of the presidency, but the number of cases they study is limited. Kaniok and Gergelova Štegirova (2014) examine the impact of the presidency on the national public administration of the Czech Republic. They find that while long-term capacity building through an increase of qualified and well-trained staff in the ministries did not take place, policy coordination mechanisms between the ministries, the Permanent Representations, and the EU institutions have improved. They conclude with a call for more case studies, including countries with different, less politicised administrative structures within the group of the "new" Member States that have held the

[2] I use quotation marks to distinguish between "old" and "new" Member States of the European Union throughout the thesis since I do not consider the division very timely a decade and a half after the Eastern Enlargement. However, it is the easiest distinction to differentiate between the MS who have held multiple Council presidencies before and those that take on the role for the first time.

Council presidency for the first time. Galušková (2017) partially answers this call, finding that holding the Council presidency provided critical junctures to the EU policy coordination systems of first-time presidencies. Jensen and Nedergaard (2017) recently posed a similar question to that of this thesis by analysing the impact of the Council presidency on national administrations of the Polish, Danish, and Cypriot presidency Trio, finding that Cyprus, the smallest of the three countries holding the presidency for the first time, underwent the most notable administrative change. Few scholars studied the influence of the presidency on public opinion in the Member State holding it, they primarily focused on several selected Council presidencies and "old" MS, finding no significant impact. (Fraussen & Dejaeghere, 2011; Kaniok, 2012). Fraussen and Dejaeghere (2011) observed that public awareness of the Council presidency is on average 52 percent, or just a little over half of the population, while countries that have held the position recently score higher. However, the presidency does not impact the knowledge of EU institutions or support for the EU, as also confirmed by Kaniok (2012).

The thesis contributes to the literature on the domestic impact of the rotating EU Council presidency by, firstly, providing a comprehensive assessment of what the presidency means to the MS on three different levels employing broader timeframes, more diverse case selection, and current data than the literature to date. Secondly, it provides a comprehensive comparison between "old" and "new" Member States that was not available to date, and also establishes a difference between big and small MS on two of the three levels of the study (ministers and public opinion). Thirdly, the thesis also contributes to studies of legitimacy and accountability of decision-making in the Council of the EU by looking into ministerial attendance at the Council meetings and adding to the existing body of literature on who decides in the Council: bureaucrats or elected politicians (Grøn & Salomonsen, 2015; Häge, 2008, 2012). Finally, theoretically, it adds to the literature on Europeanisation, especially of national administrations, establishing that the rotating presidency is a means for an (at least temporary) Europeanisation of national administrations and ministers. The thesis also tests whether a temporary (and therefore atypical to the studies of the domestic impact of Europe) source of adaptational pressure such as the Council presidency can account for any lasting change on the national level of the Member States (Kassim, 2015), as opposed to Europeanisation as a gradual process due to long-term EU membership (Héritier, 2001).

1.3. Source materials

The thesis draws on both qualitative and quantitative data as source materials, which I briefly introduce in the present section before elaborating in the respective chapters. The study of the impact of the Council presidency on national administrations (Chapters 3 and 4) builds on data from 93 semi-structured expert interviews conducted between the spring of 2015 and the summer of 2017 with representatives involved in the conduct of six recent Council presidencies. I interviewed civil servants who worked for presidency coordinating institutions, experts from national ministries dealing with EU affairs or policy areas that fell under the priorities of the respective presidency, and diplomats as well as delegates who worked at the Permanent Representations in Brussels during the presidency period. For triangulation I complement the interview data with government documents and reports on presidency planning and evaluation, as well as academic articles on the respective presidencies.

Chapter 5 on the impact of the Council presidency on national ministers draws on the same interview data to build the argument, which is then tested by constructing a novel dataset of officials' attendance at the Council meetings over a period of eight years. I hand-coded lists of participants of Council meetings from the first post-Lisbon presidency in the beginning of 2010 to the last completed presidency at the point of data collection at the end of 2017. I coded the position of the officials present, differentiating between ministers, and other lower level officials such as vice-ministers or state secretaries, other civil servants from national ministries, and permanent representatives as the dependent variable. Periods before, during, and after the Council presidency serve as the main independent variables, and data on Council formation, meeting saliency, national elections, size of Member State and its EU Membership duration, among others, were added as control variables.

To assess the potential impact of the Council presidency on public opinion (Chapter 6), I use aggregate country-level Eurobarometer (EB) survey data from the Eastern enlargement in 2004 to the last presidency at the point of data collection in 2016. Despite inconsistencies and the limited availability of the data, which greatly constrained the selection of the dependent variable, the Eurobarometer is the only EU-wide survey conducted frequently enough to capture the potential impact of this six-month event. I examine the questions specifically

relating to the Council presidency and those on knowledge of the European Union to test whether the Council presidency has any impact on it.

1.4. Structure and main findings

The thesis consists of a chapter introducing the institution of the rotating Council presidency and the broader theoretical framework, followed by four empirical chapters addressing the three research questions, and the conclusion. Chapters 3 and 4 analyse six small Member States as cases, and chapters 5 and 6 provide a broader picture that includes all the 28 MS of the EU. The empirical chapters build on different data and methods, which are introduced in the respective chapters instead of an overarching section on research design and methodology. See Table 1.1. for an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 sets the scene for further empirical analysis by introducing the institution of the rotating Council presidency and the new institutionalist theoretical approaches, as well as the concept of Europeanisation. It presents the evolution and the key reforms of the rotating presidency, outlines its functions and summarises the praise and criticism of this institution. The section underlines that a rotating chair of the Council of the EU ensures equality and a balance of interests between the Member States, but is not necessarily a suitable leadership option for the EU of 28. Theoretically, the chapter outlines how new institutionalist approaches apply to the study of the domestic impact of the Council presidency and how they are combined under the umbrella of Europeanisation. It conceptualises the Council presidency as an independent variable for the following empirical chapters. The chapter elaborates on the structural disadvantages of small and "new" Member States of the EU as opposed to their bigger or more experienced counterparts, namely, the limited administrative capacity and resources, the role of institutional memory, and how these disadvantages play into the subsequent analysis and case selection.

	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Focus	National administrations		National ministers	Public opinion
	Preparation and presidency periods	Long-term impact of the presidency		
Case selection	6 Small MS, 3 “old”: Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, 3 “new”: Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia.		EU-28	EU-28
Theoretical framework	Sociological institutionalism, Rational choice institutionalism, Historical institutionalism, Europeanisation			Cognitive mobilisation, Europeanisation
Hypotheses	H1: Holding the presidency improves administrative capacity of the MS. H1a: The impact is greater in “new” MS.	H2: Holding the Council presidency has a lasting impact on the administrative capacity of the MS. H2a: The impact is greater in “new” MS.	H3: Ministers attend Council meetings more frequently during their country’s Council presidency. H4: Ministers who chaired Council meetings during their country’s Council presidency attend them more frequently: H4a: in the run up to the presidency (RCI); H4b: both before and after the presidency (SI).	H5: The Council presidency leads to a greater public visibility of and improved public knowledge of the EU in the MS holding the position. H5a: Impact is greater in “new” MS. H5b: Impact is greater in small MS.
Data	93 semi-structured expert interviews, government documents, presidency reports.		Hand-coded dataset of ministerial attendance at Council meetings 2010-2017	Aggregate Eurobarometer survey data 2004-2016
Methods	Comparative case studies		Descriptive statistics, logistic regression analysis	Descriptive statistics, OLS regression analysis
DV	Administrative capacity	Administrative capacity	Ministers’ presence at a Council meeting	Knowledge of how EU works
Main IV	EU Council presidency			

Table 1.1: Structure of the empirical chapters. Source: own elaboration

Chapters 3 and 4 explore the impact of the Council presidency on national administrations, focusing on six small Member States that have recently held the position as cases. The case selection was driven by the most-similar logic differentiating on EU membership duration as an independent variable and choosing three "new" and three "old" Member States (George & Bennett, 2005; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). The size of the Member State (all cases classified as small) is held constant to avoid bringing in an additional dimension into the analysis since

there is a considerable difference in how small and big MS manage their Council presidencies, ranging from administrative arrangements to political priority setting (Bunse 2009, Panke 2010b). The empirical basis of the chapters consists of 93 expert interviews conducted with civil servants and diplomats from Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Slovakia.

Chapter 3 addresses the changes and adjustments made by the national administrations before and during the Council presidency. It introduces the concept of administrative capacity enabling a Member State to participate in EU policy-making successfully, consisting of rational choice (RCI), sociological (SI), and historical (HI) institutionalist components. The concept is used as the dependent variable, to systematically pinpoint and measure the changes induced by the Council presidency. The findings suggest that all the six small Member States invested significantly in the presidency preparation, often more so than in the presidency itself. While the financial resources were similar across the cases, the strategies of distributing them differed. New institutional coordination and communication structures emerged to manage additional information flows between the national ministries and the Permanent Representations in Brussels, as well as between national and EU institutions. The governments hired additional workforce to deal with the increased workload and numerous civil servants went through extensive training programmes. However, while "old" member states built on past experience, learning by doing, and an expansion of existing coordination structures, "new" MS established separate temporary institutions for presidency coordination, invested extensive resources in centralised training programmes and put more formal inter-institutional arrangements in place to ensure the smooth conduct of their first presidencies. Overall, the findings suggest that the Council presidency presented a more significant challenge for smaller administrations with limited human resources and for those having no institutional memory.

Chapter 4 assesses the long-term impact of the Council presidency by reviewing whether and how the Member States internalised the presidency experience and arrangements. The chapter juxtaposes rational choice and sociological institutionalist perspectives to test which better explains the impact of the presidency on national administrations. The findings indicate that the governments dismantled the institutional structures set up for the presidency period in all the MS immediately afterwards, keeping only some minor adjustments of communication

practices between the line ministries and the Permanent Representations. Furthermore, except for Luxembourg, the administrations made no conscious effort to retain the additional staff. However, attitudes and skill levels of the civil servants, as well as ways they approach EU institutions changed significantly, providing opportunities for better representation of national interests on the EU level after the presidency. The results hint that holding the Council presidency improves the administrative capacity in the Member States mostly, however, only from a sociological institutionalist perspective, resulting in changes of attitudes and approaches on a personal level rather than an institutional change of EU policy coordination practices. Finally, there is a notable difference between first-time and routine presidencies. For the latter, the presidency presented an opportunity to re-engage with EU institutions and affairs, while for the former it was a game-changer, equated to "*attaining full membership of the EU*".[3] Overall, the presidency contributes to Europeanisation of national administrations, even if only from a sociological institutionalist perspective, and especially so in the "new" Member States.

Chapter 5 moves on to a different group of actors and quantitatively explores the impact of the Council presidency on ministers of the 28 Member States of the EU. It employs logistic regression models to analyse a novel dataset composed of hand-coded attendance lists of ministerial meetings of the Council of the EU to test whether ministers participate in the meetings more frequently before, during, and after the presidency. The attendance rates rise notably before and during the Council presidency but drop almost immediately afterwards, hinting that the presidency does not have a long-term socialising impact on the ministers. This chapter also ties into the literature on legitimacy and accountability of decision-making in the Council of the EU and the debate on who - politicians or bureaucrats - decide in the Council. I find that even in the ministerial Council meetings, high-level civil servants or diplomats frequently replace the ministers.

Chapter 6 explores the impact of the Council presidency on public opinion in the Member States. Analysing Eurobarometer data for the EU-28 from 2004 to 2015, I find that public awareness of the Council presidency is fairly high and that it has a positive impact on citizens' knowledge of the EU, especially in the small and the "new" Member States. The results hint

[3] Interviews #1 (LT), #6 (LT), #32 (LT), #17 (LV), #18 (LV), #18 (LV), #19 (LV), #26 (LV), #29 (LV), #78 (SK)

that information campaigns and increased media coverage of EU affairs during the presidency period have a minor positive impact on citizens' awareness of the European Union.

The Conclusion summarises the findings, underlining the persisting importance of the institution of the rotating Council presidency, especially to national administrations of the Member States, despite widespread criticism of it as an unsuitable mechanism of leadership for the EU-28. It addresses the limitations of the thesis and provides ideas for future research.

Chapter 2: Setting the Scene: The Council of the EU, the Rotating Presidency, and New Institutionalist Theory

2.1. Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for further empirical work by introducing the institution of the Council presidency and new institutionalist theoretical approaches, as well as the concept of Europeanisation. It outlines the role of the rotating presidency in the Council of the EU, sketches the functions and the evolution of the institution from a mostly administrative body to a reputable role with constrained agenda-setting power. It also discusses the critical aspects pertaining to the rotating presidency becoming an unsuitable leadership option in the EU-28 and how in 2009 the Lisbon Treaty addressed these by limiting the functions of the Council presidency. It provides a theoretical basis for the hypotheses, which, due to differing research questions and designs, I formulate in the respective empirical chapters.

The chapter covers sociological, rational choice and historical institutionalist approaches commonly applied to the study of EU institutions and European integration (Bulmer, 2007; Pollack, 2009). Those approaches are then combined under the concept of Europeanisation, frequently employed to assess the domestic impact of the EU and the process of European integration on the MS. It is a fairly straightforward choice of theoretical framework for a study examining the impact of an EU-level process on the structures of a Member State, despite the criticism of Europeanisation as potentially tautological, raising difficulties with regard to establishing causality, and the overdetermination of the "European" factor (Bulmer, 2007; Exadaktylos & Radaelli, 2012; Graziano & Vink, 2007, p. 16). Europeanisation allows the rotating presidency to be conceptualised as an independent variable that could lead to a change in politics and polity of the Member States. Combining and juxtaposing several institutionalist approaches enables analysis of different aspects of the impact of the presidency on the MS, including changes in institutional set up (rational choice institutionalism), socialisation (sociological institutionalism), and the role of institutional memory (historical institutionalism). Finally, the approach is novel in the sense that it looks at potential Europeanisation through a temporary event instead of focusing on a gradual long-term process induced by EU

membership, as is the case in most studies in the field. The chapter also delves into the literature on small states in the European Union to explain why the impact of holding the Council presidency is likely to be the strongest in small and "new" member states. In the end, it identifies three groups of actors that are most likely to be exposed to the presidency: national administrations, ministers, and citizens of the Member States.

2.2. The Council of the European Union

Along with the European Council, the Council of the European Union, or the Council of Ministers, is one of the two intergovernmental institutions of the EU that safeguards the interests of the Member States (Lewis, 2016). Furthermore, it is the main legislative institution of the EU, along with the European Parliament. It also shares executive powers with the European Commission and has limited legislative initiative. The Council of the EU meets in ten distinct configurations depending on the issue on the agenda and is composed of ministers of the Member States of the EU. Ministerial meetings where legislative proposals are debated or approved take place about 50 times annually across all policy domains and the minister of the MS holding the rotating Council presidency chairs them (Council of the EU, 2019b; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, pp. 1, 6). The Council of the EU is not to be confused with the European Council, which consists of the 28 heads of state and is the supreme political authority of the EU, providing strategic guidelines and resolving most sensitive political issues but not performing any legislative activity, and chaired by a permanent president since the Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2009 (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, pp. 1, 6; Wessels, 2015).

The Council of the EU started as the Special Council of Ministers, created by the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. Its primary function was the endorsement and amendment of decisions made by a strong and supranational High Authority. Depending on the issue area, the Council made decisions by weighted votes, qualified or simple majorities, or unanimity rule. The Treaty of Rome in 1957 established the preparatory committee for Council meetings, which later developed into Committees of Permanent Representatives, COREPER I and COREPER II, and a vast series of committees responsible for the preparation of the ministerial meetings (Lewis, 2017, p. 336). The Single European Act (SEA) in 1986 extended the scope of decisions under qualified majority vote

(QMV) to ensure that the small Member States do not get outvoted easily. It also expanded the legislative powers of the European Parliament, requiring the Council to incorporate it into the legislative process on more issues. The Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 further strengthened the EP and extended the areas where QMV applied. It also established a three-pillar structure giving predominance to the Council over the EP in the areas of Common Foreign and Security policy (CFSP) and Justice and Home Affairs (JHA). In 2000 the Treaty of Nice changed the definition of majorities and the weighting of votes in the Council to redistribute the influence of small and large MS before the Eastern Enlargement in 2004, when one big and nine small states joined the Union (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, pp. 10–12). Finally, in 2009 the Lisbon Treaty established the Council of the EU as a separate legislative institution, led by the rotating Council presidency and taking decisions mostly by QMV. It also collapsed the three-pillar system of the Maastricht Treaty, further extending the involvement of the EP through the ordinary legislative procedure. The Treaty formalised ten different formations of the Council of the EU (see Table 2.1.), and to increase transparency made its meetings more open to the public (Hayes-Renshaw, 2017, p. 84). QMV rules also changed. Instead of 352 votes distributed to the Member States by population, they were based on a double majority. Legislative proposals are approved if 55%, or at least 16 of the currently 28 MS representing 65% of the population of the EU vote in favour, while at least four states representing 35% of the population can form a blocking minority (Council of the EU, 2019a; Laursen, 2012).

The Council of the EU is both a legislative and an executive institution. It is legally a single body, which meets in ten different formations consisting of the respective ministers of the 28 Member States depending on the policy areas and topics that are discussed (see Table 2.1. for a list of different Council configurations and meeting frequency). EU Commissioners relevant to the issues on the agenda also attend the meetings. The minister of the MS holding the rotating Council presidency chairs the meetings, with the exception of the Foreign Affairs Council, which since the Lisbon Treaty is chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs (Hayes-Renshaw, 2017, p. 83).

Council Configuration	Abbreviation	Representing ministers*	Meet. Frequency
Agriculture and Fisheries	AGRIFISH	Agriculture, Fisheries, or both	Monthly
Competitiveness	COMPET	Trade, Economy, Industry, Research and Innovation, Space	4 times a year
Economic and Financial Affairs	ECOFIN	Economics and Finance	Monthly
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	EYCS	Education, Culture, Youth, Media, Communication, Sport	3-4 times a year
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	EPSCO	Employment, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Policy	4 times a year
Environment	ENV	Environment	4 times a year
Foreign Affairs**	FAC	Foreign affairs or defense, development, trade	Monthly
General Affairs	GAC	European affairs	Monthly
Justice and Home Affairs	JHA	Justice and Home affairs	4 times a year
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy	TTE	Transport Energy Telecommunications	4 times a year 3-4 times a year 2 times a year

Table 2.1: The Configurations of the Council of the EU. Adapted from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/configurations/ (last access: 21.08.2019)
*Exact composition depends on the issues on the agenda;
**Meetings are chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, except for common commercial policy, which is chaired by the Rotating Presidency

Among other functions, the institution responds to the EC's legislative proposals, legislates in tandem with the EP, produces regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations, opinions, as well as resolutions about future policy. Currently, the ordinary legislative procedure where the Council of the EU and the EP share powers applies to most of the EU legislation, but the Council still retains stronger or exclusive agenda-setting and policy-making capacities in some policy areas, such as Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), taxation, and CFSP (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, pp. 8–9). The Council of the EU co-decides on the budget of the European Union together with the EP. It provides an arena where MS discuss and develop converging approaches in the fields where the EU has no formal capacity to act.

Ministerial meetings are just the top of the three levels of the Council of the EU. The second level consists of committees, most notably COREPER I and COREPER II, the former made up of deputy permanent representatives and the latter of permanent representatives of the MS. The committees deal with political aspects of legislative proposals, and if they reach an agreement, the ministers adopt the proposals without further deliberation. The third level consists of numerous working parties comprised of high-level specialists from the national ministries and Permanent Representations of the MS. They deliberate over the specific technical aspects of the legislative proposals before forwarding them to the committee level. It is not uncommon

that complex or politically sensitive proposals return to the committee or working party level before eventually being approved by the ministers. Finally, the Council General Secretariat (CGS) supports the three levels of the Council of the EU as a permanent administrative backbone consisting of EU-bureaucrats ensuring the continuity of the work of the body led by a rotating presidency (Buonanno & Nugent, 2013; Hayes-Renshaw, 2017; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006).

The Council of the EU, formerly known as the "black box of the European Union" has received criticism for lack of transparency, despite some recent reforms (Héritier, 2003; Hillebrandt, Curtin, & Meijer, 2014; Naurin & Wallace, 2008). In 2009 the Lisbon Treaty brought more transparency into the Council by opening the ministerial meetings to the public. However, it is questionable whether this step made much difference, as committee and working party meetings, where most of the deliberations take place, are still held behind closed doors (Häge, 2008; Hayes-Renshaw, 2017; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006). The lower levels of the Council make a significant proportion of the decisions, which ministers then merely approve as a "package deal" (Häge, 2012). Furthermore, informal intra- and inter-institutional practices are very common in the Council. Trialogues, meetings between the representatives of the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of the EU to reach early agreements to speed up the ordinary legislative procedure, are just one notable example (Brandsma, 2015; Rasmussen & Reh, 2013; Reh, 2014; Roederer-Rynning & Greenwood, 2017). The Council of the EU may meet informally without publishing any agenda or conclusions of the meeting, and representatives of the MS can build coalitions and deliberate in informal settings outside the Council (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, p. 8). All of the above practices cast a shadow on the legitimacy of the decision-making processes of the institution. The lack of transparency in the Council has not only attracted a substantial amount of criticism, but also impacted the amount of research on the activity of the institution. As a result, even though academic attention is growing rapidly with increasing openness of the Council, it remains the least studied of the key European Union institutions (Hayes-Renshaw, 2009; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, p. 4; McCormick, 2017, p. 85; Naurin & Wallace, 2008).

2.3. The rotating Council presidency

Every Member State holds the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU for a period of six months in turn. The main tasks of the presidency include, firstly managing the activities of the Council. The presidency organises and chairs Council meetings on all three levels in Brussels, as well as the informal ministerial meetings in the incumbent MS, excepting the Foreign Affairs Council which since the Lisbon Treaty is chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs. Secondly, it can exert a limited agenda-setting power by prioritising issues on the meeting agendas, even if this is constrained by the priorities of the European Commission and the European Council. Thirdly, the incumbent MS acts as a neutral broker, seeking consensus and compromise between the Member States to drive the legislative processes forward. Fourthly, the presidency represents the Council of the EU in legislative activities with other EU institutions, mainly with the EC and the EP (Council of the EU, 2019c; Elgström, 2003, pp. 4–7; Wallace, 1985, pp. 17–18). The presidency receives administrative support from the Council General Secretariat (CGS), a permanent administrative body which retains institutional memory and helps to ensure continuity between the rotating chairs (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006).

The rotating presidency was initially established in the 1950s to share the administrative burden of organising Council meetings equally between the six founding MS of the ECSC. The Member States held the presidency in alphabetical order, and the cycle between presidencies for each MS was merely three years because of the low number of MS. It was not unlikely that the same government would get to hold the presidency twice, which encouraged continuity in its conduct (Pernice, 2003, p. 45). The rotation order was adjusted twice. First, from 1993 onwards, the alphabetical order was reversed to ensure that Member States would hold the presidency in different halves of each year due to the unequal workload in each term because of the timing of holidays and important budgetary decisions (Bunse, 2009, p. 28). After the accession of Austria in 1998, the alphabetical order was abandoned to better create a balance between big and small as well as old and new Member State presidencies (Jensen & Nedergaard, 2014). The current rotation order was set up by a Council Decision in 2007 to run until 2020, as seen in Table 2.2 (Council of the EU, 2007). It was adjusted in 2016 for two reasons. Firstly, the United Kingdom (UK) opted out of its presidency obligation for the second half of 2017 on short notice after British citizens voted to leave the EU in the Brexit referendum.

This caused additional stress for Estonia, the presidency meant to succeed the UK, which was shifted forward by six months and suddenly had to accommodate the termination of the United Kingdoms' EU membership on its agenda. The UK's opt-out also disrupted the big-small and "old"-"new" Member State balance in the rotation order. Moreover, Croatia, which joined the EU in 2013, had to be included in the order. At the same time, it was also extended until 2030 (Council of the EU, 2016).

Country	Trio	Period
Germany	1	Jan-Jun 2007
Portugal		Jul-Dec 2007
Slovenia		Jan-Jun 2008
France	2	Jul-Dec 2008
Czech Republic		Jan-Jun 2009
Sweden		Jul-Dec 2009
Spain	3	Jan-Jun 2010
Belgium		Jul-Dec 2010
Hungary		Jan-Jun 2011
Poland	4	Jul-Dec 2011
Denmark		Jan-Jun 2012
Cyprus		Jul-Dec 2012
Ireland	5	**Jan-Jun 2013**
Lithuania		**Jul-Dec 2013**
Greece		Jan-Jun 2014
Italy	6	Jul-Dec 2014
Latvia		**Jan-Jun 2015**
Luxembourg		**Jul-Dec 2015**
Netherlands	7	**Jan-Jun 2016**
Slovakia		**Jul-Dec 2016**
Malta		Jan-Jun 2017
Estonia	8	Jul-Dec 2017
Bulgaria		Jan-Jun 2018
Austria		Jul-Dec 2018
Romania	9	Jan-Jun 2019
Finland		Jul-Dec 2019
Croatia		Jan-Jun 2020

Table 2.2.: Council Presidency rotation order, 2007-2020. Source: Council Decisions 2009/908/EU and 2016/1316 (Council of the EU, 2009, 2016). Case studies in **bold.**

Since the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, to ensure continuity and a smooth handover of legislative files between the changing chairs, presidencies cooperated through informal troika-presidencies. In 2007, the setup of Trio presidencies was introduced and was later formalised by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 (Jensen & Nedergaard, 2014, pp. 1037–1038). Troika-presidency refers to informal cooperation between current, preceding, and succeeding presidencies, while the Trio divides consecutive presidencies into fixed groups of three. They must prepare a joint 18-month programme and divide agenda items set out by the EC. The set-up should ensure a

smooth transition between the individual presidencies. Each Trio consists, if possible, of both old and new, and at least one big MS, taking geographic location into account to provide a balance of regional interests (Council of the EU, 2006). However, such diversity also complicates cooperation due to a lack of common ground, shared geopolitical interests, or administrative compatibility (Batory & Puetter, 2011, 2013; Jensen & Nedergaard, 2014). An assessment of Trios five to seven showed that the cooperation between preceding, current and succeeding presidencies still persists so as to ensure a smooth handover of files, while many civil servants involved in presidency preparation and conduct identify the pre-assigned Trios as an "artificial construct" (Grumbinaitė, 2018). See Table 2.2. for the first nine Trio-Presidencies from 2007 to 2020.

The Treaties do not strictly define the functions of the presidency. Informal rules based on established practices largely govern the institution. The body of rules and the informal code of conduct of the Council presidency developed and expanded together with the growing policy competence, role in international politics, and size of the European Union (Elgström, 2003, p. 4, 2003; Héritier, 2007; Sherrington, 2000, p. 41; Westlake & Galloway, 2004, pp. 325–330). The institution of the presidency saw few formal changes until the Lisbon Treaty reform in 2009 (Jensen & Nedergaard, 2014, p. 1037; Sherrington, 2000, p. 42). Pressures to change the rules governing the Council presidency were both endogenous and exogenous. They came about as a response to the enlargements, to the expansion of policy and scope of action of the EU, and as a need to redefine the interactions between the presidency and other EU institutions, in particular with the increasingly strong European Parliament (Fernández, 2008). The Lisbon Treaty set up the European Council as one of the seven EU institutions and established the post of the permanent President of the European Council to replace the rotating presidency as the chair. Furthermore, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs took the competence of chairing the Foreign Affairs Council, as well as of foreign representation of the EU, from the rotating presidency. While ensuring more continuity in the work of the Councils, these reforms also considerably weakened the institution of the rotating presidency and decreased its visibility (Batory & Puetter, 2013; Bunse et al., 2011; Puetter, 2014). The reforms reflect a trade-off between fairness and institutional balance on the one hand, and continuity and effectiveness on the other. They are a compromise between small MS unwillingness to give up the rotating institution that protects their interests and acts as an intergovernmental

counterweight to the EC, and big MS demand for stronger leadership and more continuity in the Council of the EU (Fernández, 2008; Héritier, 2007; Jensen & Nedergaard, 2014).

Apart from managing and chairing the Council meetings, the presidencies are also, to a limited extent, political actors. They set out political priorities in line with the Trio programme and the legislative agenda of the European Commission, and in coordination with the Council General Secretariat. Albeit limited, there is some space for national preferences of the Member States. For instance, recent years were dominated by issues of economic growth and job creation relating to the after-effects of the economic crisis, migration issues connected to the refugee crisis, security challenges stemming from recurrence of terrorist attacks, and the digital agenda. As to national preferences, the Member States still address EU-wide priorities, but while Central and Eastern European Member States are likely to prioritise Eastern Partnership, their Southern counterparts focus rather on the Mediterranean strategy, and environmental issues are more likely to dominate the agendas of the Nordic countries (Högenauer, 2016; Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017; Laffan, 2014; Vilpišauskas, 2014). However, most of the current presidencies, especially those held by small Member States, attempt to steer clear of becoming too political and play the role of a neutral broker since neutrality and political credibility is one of the key criteria for a successful presidency to help the MS establish a good image with its EU counterparts (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006).

The rotation principle is the main point of both praise and criticism of the institution of the Council presidency. It has been criticised for disrupting the policy-making process of the Council of the EU. The six-month term is deemed to be too short to yield any remarkable achievements, but frequent changes of the meeting chairs bringing different preferences are enough to damage continuity. Enlargements of the EU sharpen the problem. The presidency is deemed an unsuitable institution for a Union of 28 with fourteen years between presidencies held by the same MS. This not only disrupts continuity but also diminishes learning effects for the Member States (Jesień, 2013; Pernice, 2003). Suggested reforms included replacing the rotating presidency with a permanent institution, or extending the six-month term (Crum, 2009). The Lisbon Treaty accommodated some of these points by handing over the more politically sensitive chairs of the European Council and the FA Council to permanent officials (Batory & Puetter, 2013; Bunse et al., 2011).

The Member States, especially the small ones, appreciate the rotating presidency for providing each of them with an equal leadership opportunity in the EU regardless of their size or membership duration. The MS tend to see the institution as a shared responsibility and not as a mechanism empowering any particular state while disadvantaging the others (Héritier, 2007). The six-month term is a safeguard against any MS gaining too much influence over the EU agenda or performing its duty poorly (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, p. 156; Sherrington, 2000, pp. 42, 172). Small Member States strongly opposed any reforms to the rotation principle, seeing the institution of the presidency as a means to counter interests of the bigger MS and gain more influence and visibility on the EU level (Bunse, 2009, p. 28; Héritier, 2007).

There are numerous academic accounts of what makes a good Council presidency based on different criteria (Batory & Puetter, 2011; Jurkynas & Daukšaitė, 2014; Karolewski, Mehlhausen, & Sus, 2015; Pomorska & Vanhoonacker, 2012; Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006; Smeets & Vennix, 2014; Van Hecke & Bursens, 2011; Vandecasteele & Bossuyt, 2014; Vandecasteele, Bossuyt, & Orbie, 2015). Generally, a successful presidency is one that adheres to the norms of effectiveness and impartiality. It achieves the goals set out in the agenda in a timely manner, and acts as a neutral broker and a compromise seeker instead of pushing national interests (Niemann & Mak, 2010; Sherrington, 2000, p. 44; Tallberg, 2006). Furthermore, previous presidency experience as well as past exposure of national executives to EU politics, credibility of the national government, the general political environment, as well the administrative capacity and bureaucratic set up of the Member State contribute to the success of the rotating presidency (Batory & Puetter, 2011, pp. 6–7).

After briefly outlining what the institution of the rotating Council presidency is and does, the chapter now moves on to introduce new institutional theory and Europeanisation, so as to conceptualise the presidency as a potential driver of change in administrative structures, in the behaviour of national political executives, and in public opinion about the EU in the Member States.

2.4. Foundations of the theoretical framework: New institutionalisms and Europeanisation

In analysing the impact of the rotating Council presidency, an EU institution, on politics and polities of the Member States, institutionalist theory presented a straightforward choice of theoretical framework for this thesis. This section introduces the main ideas behind institutionalist theory, the relevant varieties of new institutionalism, Europeanisation, and explains the rationale behind the choice of framework.

The main idea behind institutionalist theory is that institutions matter. The definition of an institution is rather broad. They can be described as sets of rules created by actors to enable or constrain their behaviour and to structure interactions between individuals. Both formal rules and informal practices fall under the definition of institutions (Héritier, 2007, p. 5; March & Olsen, 1989; North, 1990, p. 3). Institutions shape and govern interactions between individuals and political life as much as individuals are the key actors in constructing the institutions – as such, the relationship is multidirectional (Peters, 2012).

New institutionalism is "new" because behaviouralism, emphasising individual, rational actions over group behaviour, largely replaced institutional assumptions in political science in the mid-20th century. March and Olsen (1989) reintroduced institutions into political theory, underlining the essential role of collective action and the importance of institutions in shaping political life and outcomes. They also emphasise the role of a logic of appropriateness and behaviour driven by norms and values over the logic of consequentiality based on rational cost-benefit calculations in collective behaviour and political decisions (March & Olsen, 1989, 2008).

New institutionalism provided a promising research agenda in the field of international relations and developed several varieties focusing on different aspects of institutions and providing different explanations for their development and change (Katzenstein, Krasner, & Keohane, 1998; Keohane & Martin, 1995). The approaches range from those underlining rational decisions and cost-benefit calculations, to the ones building upon past institutional structures and path-dependency, to frameworks emphasising norms and values as determinants of institutional behaviour (P. A. Hall & Taylor, 1996; Peters, 2012). The most prominent new institutionalist approaches are sociological (SI), historical (HI) and rational

choice institutionalisms (RCI), routinely applied to the study of EU and European integration (P. A. Hall & Taylor, 1996; M. Pollack, 2007; Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001). The approaches are not mutually exclusive, and even though they emphasise different logics of action, can be combined to provide more complete explanations of the phenomena studied (Jupille, Caporaso, & Checkel, 2003).

Scholars have previously employed new institutionalist approaches to study the EU Council presidency (Bunse, 2009; Elgström, 2003). One of the main benefits of new institutionalism for this research is that through its flexible definition of institutions and institutional interactions, it allows us to view individual institutions as components of a bigger, multilevel or international institutional framework. This enables us to explain interactions both between different political institutions, as well as between institutions and society, covering all three levels addressed in the empirical chapters of this thesis with a uniform theoretical framework. Furthermore, new institutionalism allows us to conceptualise the EU Council presidency as a set of both formal rules and informal practices, and to explain how new experiences through interaction between institutions lead to institutional change and an update of strategies and preferences of the actors (March & Olsen, 2008). Most importantly, the approach permits the operationalisation of the Council presidency as an independent variable and as a possible determinant of institutional change (Bunse, 2009, p. 7). To capture different aspects of the impact of the Council presidency, such as learning effects and socialisation, change in institutional structures, and the role of institutional memory, I employ and contrast three commonly used complementary varieties of institutionalist theory, namely sociological, rational choice, and historical institutionalisms.

Sociological institutionalism (SI), similarly to the constructivist theory in international relations, emphasises the role of cultural practices, norms and values as well as a strong logic of appropriateness in determining and shaping behaviour. Institutions are defined very broadly and include not only formal rules and procedures, but also moral templates. Institutional change in sociological institutionalism results not only in change of behaviour, structures or practices but also in adjustment of identities, goals, and preferences of the actors (P. Hall & Taylor, 1996).

The key processes behind constructivism and sociological institutionalism that are relevant for this research are social learning, and specifically for a study of interactions beyond the national level, international socialisation. Social learning describes a process through which actor preferences and identities are changed through interaction between institutions (Checkel, 2001a, pp. 25–26). Checkel hypothesises under what conditions social learning and internalisation of new rules and norms is more likely to occur: it should be a result of intense, sustained contact of a significant duration between agents who have previous experience in similar settings, have corresponding professional backgrounds, interact frequently, are insulated from political pressure, and are faced with a crisis or evidence of policy failure. Furthermore, agents who are facing a novel, uncertain environment, have few prior beliefs inconsistent with a socialising agency to which they either belong or want to belong, are persuaded instead of coerced, and are in a less politicised environment are more prone to social learning and more likely to internalise the norms and values promoted by the socialising agency (Checkel, 2005, pp. 811–813). International socialisation stands for "*a process in which states are induced to adopt the constitutive rules of an international community*", and emphasises the involvement of supranational actors in the process of institutional change (Schimmelfennig, Engert, & Knobel, 2006, p. 2).

The main assumption behind rational choice institutionalism (RCI) is that actors have fixed, exogenous preferences and behave rationally and strategically to achieve them. The role of institutions is to reduce uncertainty and transaction costs while solving collective action problems, a logic of consequentiality prevails (P. Hall & Taylor, 1996; Peters, 2012). Institutions, as sets of rules and incentives, shape individual behaviour, but the individuals still act and react rationally to maximise their personal utility (Peters, 2019). Institutional change can occur through interaction with other institutions where new information and knowledge is obtained. However, in contrast to SI, where interaction also changes identities and preferences of the actors, these are fixed in RCI. Interaction leads to acquisition of new information, which in turn motivates actors to update their strategies in order to better pursue fixed goals that remain unchanged by the interaction (Checkel, 2001a; Héritier, 2007). Although there is a debate on how fixed actor preferences are in RCI and how much institutions may shape them, here I take the nature of fixed preferences as the main point of differentiation between RCI and SI (Peters, 2019).

Historical institutionalism (HI) shares features of both RCI and SI, but also, and most importantly, emphasises long-term consequences of institutions (Aspinwall & Schneider, 2001, p. 2). According to historical institutionalists, past choices and structures influence, either enabling or constraining, current ones and shape actor preferences. As past choices matter, institutions and policy change become path-dependent, present and future choices are influenced by past ones (P. Hall & Taylor, 1996; Pierson, 1996; Sandholtz & Stone Sweet, 1998). As a result, there is a normative aspect to HI. Institutions are not necessarily rational, efficient or unbiased, they can develop based on a distinct set of values or institutional culture, grow to privilege certain groups of actors or actions over the others (Aspinwall & Schneider, 2001, p. 11). Finally, combining assumptions from SI and RCI, historical institutionalism assumes that institutions affect both strategic behaviour as well as identities and preferences of individuals (P. Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 8). Historical institutionalism features less prominently in this thesis than SI and RCI, since it is only employed to explain the role of institutional memory in the preparation and the conduct of the Council presidencies. Table 2.3 summarises the key features of each of the dominant new institutionalist approaches.

	RCI	HI	SI	Europeanisation
Logic of action	Consequentiality (cost-benefit)	Legacy of past choices	Appropriateness (norms, values)	Any of the former
Actor preferences	Fixed	Fixed or flexible	Flexible	Any of the former
Other characteristics	Individualism	Path dependency	Focus on learning/ socialisation	EU-centered

Table 2.3: Varieties of new institutionalism and the concept of Europeanisation (Source: Own elaboration)

To achieve more complete explanations of the domestic impact of the European Union Council presidency, I combine and contrast new institutionalist approaches under Europeanisation, as suggested by Risse (2009, p. 159). While the strengths of SI lie in explaining processes of institutional learning and actions based on a logic of appropriateness, it also assumes a convergence of goals (Héritier, 2001). RCI, as well as HI, compensates for shortcomings of SI to capture changes in institutions and structures of the MS. At the same time however, RCI is unable to theorise the processes of endogenous change, which is one of the strengths of SI (M. Pollack, 2007).

Top-down Europeanisation is an insightful way to link the three institutionalist approaches while focusing on the impact of European integration and the European Union on the Member States (Börzel & Panke, 2016). This thesis relies on a systematised concept where Europeanisation stands for the impact of European integration, the EU and its decisions on the domestic polity, politics and policy (Börzel & Risse, 2003, p. 57; Héritier, 2001; Radaelli & Pasquier, 2007, p. 36). The concept of Europeanisation was introduced to account for the domestic impact of Europe that could no longer be sufficiently captured by the classic theories of European integration, neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism (Caporaso, 2007, pp. 24–26). Europeanisation studies frequently rely on new institutionalist approaches, and rather than being mutually exclusive, RCI, SI and HI are combined to provide more comprehensive explanations of the domestic impact of the EU (Börzel & Risse, 2003; Bulmer, 2007, pp. 50–51; Graziano & Vink, 2007, p. 13; Kassim, 2003). Policy change is the most widely studied component of the three. Multiple EU-policy areas have been covered examining national adjustments occurring through implementation of EU regulations, motivation and reluctance of the member states to adapt, and the resulting convergence or divergence between them (Börzel, 1999, 2002; Bulmer, 2013; Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003; Héritier, 2001; Knill, 1998; Knill & Lehmkuhl, 2002). Multiple scholars have focused on the impact of European integration on national politics, mainly on political parties (Ladrech, 2002; Mair, 1997, 2000) and interest groups (Beyers, Eising, & Maloney, 2008a, 2008b; Beyers & Kerremans, 2007; Klüver, 2010). Europeanisation is not restricted to policy-making and politics, it also has an impact on national polities, most notably on society through development of new identities and change of discourses (Checkel, 1998; Risse, 2010). Another strand of Europeanisation studies focus on domestic change in either polities, policies or politics in Central and Eastern Europe after the Eastern enlargement in 2004 when the external EU accession conditionality shifted to an internal adaptation process (Bachtler, Mendez, & Oraže, 2014; Bauer, Knill, & Pitschel, 2007; Dimitrova & Toshkov, 2009; Grabbe, 2001; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Toshkov, 2008).

A widely used approach to Europeanisation has been developed by Risse, Cowles and Caporaso (2001). It takes the goodness of fit as a starting point and a necessary condition for Europeanisation. The goodness of fit stands for the difference between the domestic level and the demands posed by the EU resulting from the processes of European integration. The

mechanism includes further necessary conditions, adaptational pressure and mediating factors. Adaptational pressure depends on the degree of institutional fit between national and European institutions or practices. The greater the misfit, the higher the adaptational pressure is likely to be as the costs of adjustment and domestic resistance to the EU-induced change rise. Mediating factors relate to structure or agency. Structural factors include veto points, mediating formal institutions and political and organisational cultures. Agency-related factors are differential empowerment of actors and learning, which leads to a change of actors' interests and identities (Risse et al., 2001, pp. 6–12). In short, as seen in Figure 2.1, domestic change occurs when there is pressure on the domestic level through Europeanisation – European policies and related activities on the EU level – and some degree of misfit between domestic and EU levels, through which adaptational pressure is present. The differing degrees of adaptational pressure account for a differential impact of Europeanisation, rather than convergence between the Member States (Börzel, 2005, p. 50). The resulting change is facilitated and shaped by the presence of mediating institutions and actors.

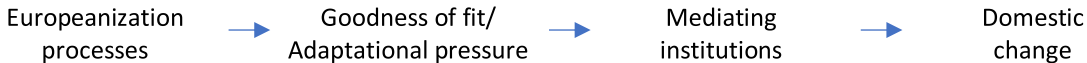

Figure 2.1: Europeanisation and domestic change. Source: adapted from Risse, Cowles, Caporaso 2001, p. 6)

The concept of Europeanisation has been criticised, first for its lack of usefulness in general and for being a mere attention-directing definition without a sound theoretical model, its fluidity and the overdetermination of the European factor (Graziano & Vink, 2007, pp. 4, 16; Olsen, 2002; Radaelli & Pasquier, 2007, p. 37). The goodness of fit approach has received critique for overemphasising misfit as well as for its difficulty of application in the cases where the EU does not prescribe precise templates for adjustment (Bulmer, 2013, p. 368; Héritier, 2001). However, the rotating Council presidency does constitute a temporary source of adaptational, or functional pressure, as conceptualised by Kassim, that is weaker but similar to the EU accession process, especially in the "new" Member States (Kassim, 2013, 2015, p. 698).

Based on their flexibility and previous applications, a combination of new institutionalist approaches under Europeanisation is a fairly straightforward choice of theoretical framework

for a study assessing the impact of an EU-level process on the Member States. It allows us to conceptualise the rotating Council presidency as an independent variable and a source of adaptational pressure throughout different domains, including national administrations, politicians, and public opinion. The approach is also novel in the sense that instead of looking at a gradual process of Europeanisation as a result of long-term EU membership and external pressures on the Member States that come with it, like most of the literature to date, I seek to establish whether a temporary event like the Council presidency can lead to lasting domestic change, as suggested by Kassim (2015).

2.5. Implications of holding the Council presidency for the Member States

2.5.1. Council presidency and national administrations, ministers and public opinion

Holding the rotating EU Council presidency does not only mean that the respective Member State gains additional responsibilities and influence on the EU level. It could be hypothesised that the presidency also impacts domestic institutions and actors of the MS. However, while studies of the performance and functions of the Council presidency on the EU level are common, little attention has been paid to the structures and actors in the Member States. Often seen as an administrative burden and a costly obligation, the presidency also presents an opportunity for MS to promote the EU among its citizens (Batory & Puetter, 2013; Bunse, 2009; Fraussen & Dejaeghere, 2011; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006). A well conducted Council presidency adds prestige and improves the image of the Member State, both internationally and domestically. Furthermore, it has a learning effect on national diplomats, civil servants, and administrations, especially in the preparation period stretching to about two years before the presidency, which has received very little academic attention to date (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006; Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017; Jesień, 2013; Westlake & Galloway, 2004, p. 335). Holding the Council presidency, preparing and chairing the Council meetings and being in frequent contact with political leaders from other EU Member States is a major opportunity for national political executives to extend their networks on the European level, to improve their knowledge of the EU political processes and to internalise European values and practices (Batory & Puetter, 2013). Following these implications in the literature, I select three groups of actors as the most likely targets for the domestic impact of the rotating presidency:

National administrations, especially national-EU policy coordination structures; ministers; and citizens of the Member States (see Figure 2.2.). The following empirical chapters will discuss the limited literature on the impact of the rotating presidency on each of the three groups of actors separately. To underline the contributions of this thesis mainly by providing more comprehensive, theory-driven analyses and comparisons of multiple cases than the studies have to date.

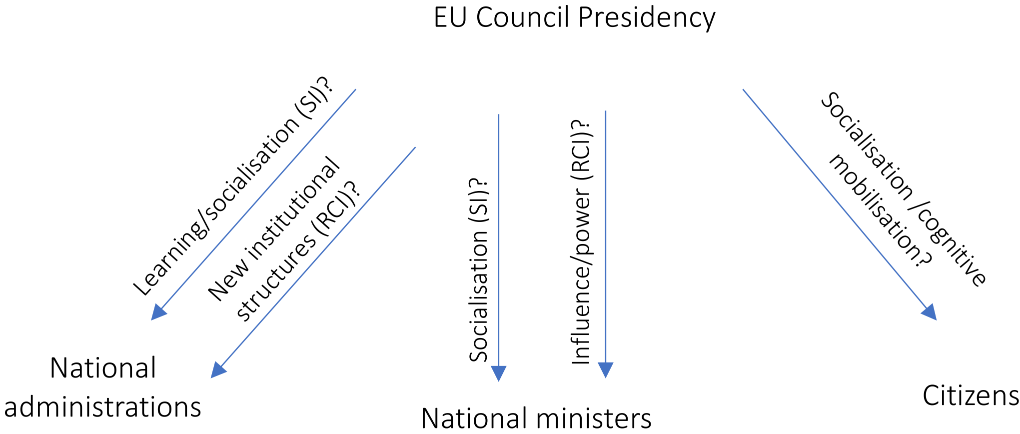

Figure 2.2.: Potential impact of the EU Council presidency on the Member States. Source: own elaboration.

2.5.2. Council presidency and small and "new" Member States

Holding the Council presidency should have a greater impact on small and "new" Member States. EU membership alone is already a challenge for national administrations, demanding additional staff and resources, and holding the EU Council presidency is even more so. It requires intensive preparation and is a costly burden, falling even heavier on small Member States with less well-resourced administrations (Bendel & Magnusdottir, 2017, p. 38; Bunse, 2009; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006; Kassim, 2013, p. 283). The workload of each presidency is usually similar, with some fluctuation depending on the time of year and the EU agenda (Westlake & Galloway, 2004, p. 336). As a result, the Council presidency is a bigger challenge for smaller administrations with limited financial and human resources. More additional staff must be hired, sensitivity to staff turnover is greater compared to bigger MS with larger administrative capacities, where a temporary reallocation of civil servants can suffice to cover the need for additional human resources during the presidency period (Panke, 2010b, p. 17).

On the other hand, small administrations also tend to be more personalised, have more flexible structures and are more susceptible to adjustments and change due to external factors, such as the Council presidency, than bigger ones (Baldur Thorhallsson, 2000; Bendel & Magnusdottir, 2017, p. 39; Hearl, 2006). Moreover, the presidency provides an opportunity for ministers from small Member States, who are frequently less active in the Council of the EU, to make their voices heard while chairing the meetings during the presidency.

"New" MS differ from the "old" for similar reasons. First of all, countries that joined the EU in 2004 or later, mostly Central and Eastern European (CEE), lack resources, have less established and stable national systems of EU policy coordination, and advance national positions on fewer issues than their counterparts (Dimitrova & Toshkov, 2007; Gärtner, Hörner, & Obholzer, 2011; Jensen, 2014, p. 1285). "Old" MS have held the presidency multiple times and can build on previous experience and institutional memory as a result, even though the latter is a diminishing asset now that the span between two consecutive presidencies held by the same Member State is 14 years (Puetter, 2014, p. 22). Still, for the "new" MS, the presidency is a first-time event and a bigger challenge involving more uncertainty and requiring extensive preparation. However, the presidency should also have a greater learning effect when held for the first time and may potentially lead to a consolidation and centralisation of national EU policy-coordination systems (Kassim, 2013, p. 286). Panke (2010b) finds that "new" small MS engage in bargaining with EU institutions less frequently than older ones and the learning effect, next to the domestic-EU policy coordination practices, plays a significant role in this. Member States with a longer duration of EU membership and those that have held the Council presidency before, apply bargaining strategies on the EU level more often than new, inexperienced member states. However, none of the "new" MS in her sample have held the presidency yet, and it remains unclear whether the learning effect should be attributed to the presidency or the duration of membership (Panke, 2010b, pp. 69–70, 104).

Summing up, as seen in Table 2.4, the impact of the Council presidency is likely to be stronger in small and "new" MS of the EU. This is why the qualitative interview-based chapters (3 and 4) of this thesis that rely on small-N case studies focus on small MS, and the quantitative ones including all 28 Member States as cases explore the difference between the big and the small

MS. The second line of comparison, consistent through all the chapters, is the difference between the "old" and the "new" Member States (bottom line of Table 2.4).

		Membership duration	
		„Old“	„New“
Size	Big	-	+
	Small	**+**	**++**

Table 2.4: Expected impact of the Council presidency on MS by size and EU membership duration. Source: own elaboration

2.6. Conclusion

After introducing the institution of the rotating Council presidency and the new institutionalist theoretical approaches, this chapter outlined the potential domestic implications of the Council presidency on three groups of actors in small "new" and "old" Member States. For the sake of readability, since the empirical chapters employ different research designs and hypotheses, I will develop the hypotheses in the respective chapters. The hypotheses based on institutionalist theoretical approaches are separate for each of the three groups of actors: with national administrations; ministers; and citizens of the Member States serving as dependent variables. I conceptualise the Council presidency as adaptational pressure and as an independent variable throughout all four of the empirical chapters, examining whether it fulfils its alleged function of bringing the EU closer to the Member States and whether it has any long-term impact, which could be defined as Europeanisation.

Theoretically, the impact of the Council presidency on the Member States could be twofold. From a rational choice institutionalist perspective, the presidency should lead to at least temporary establishment of institutional structures and policy coordination practices to deal with the additional workload during the term. National ministers may use the presidency as a tool to maximise their influence and make their voices better heard at Council meetings as representatives of small states. Council presidencies resulting in more publicity for EU affairs in the Member State should lead to a temporary improvement of citizens' awareness and knowledge of the EU and its institutions. From a sociological institutionalist perspective, on the other hand, the Council presidency should lead to changes in the attitudes and perceptions of

both the civil servants and the ministers involved in the conduct of the presidency who are exposed to EU affairs and institutions more intensely than otherwise for a period of up to two years. If a socialising effect would be present with regard to public opinion and knowledge of the EU, a long-term improvement of citizen's views should be apparent. From a historical institutionalist perspective, there should be a difference in how "old" and "new" Member States prepare and conduct their Council presidencies, since the former can build on past experience and institutional memory.

The thesis does not intend to criticise any of the new institutionalist approaches or to establish which is superior. It aims rather to contrast them and test whether the Council presidency leads to Europeanisation of polities and politics of the Member States holding the position, and if so, which of the institutionalisms explains the change. Finally, as opposed to most of the literature on Europeanisation that studies domestic change as a result of a gradual process and long-term EU membership, the thesis takes a novel approach by questioning whether a temporary event, such as the Council presidency, can lead to Europeanisation of polities and politics of the Member States.

Chapter 3: EU Council Presidency and National Administrations: The Preparation and the Presidency Period

3.1. Introduction

The EU Council presidency presents an extraordinary challenge for the administrations of the Member States. None of the similar obligations in other international or regional organisations, such as a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations (UN), the presidency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Višegrad, Benelux, the Baltic Sea Council or others, compare in their scope and intensity to the EU Council presidency. A handful of diplomats at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs usually handle UN or OECD matters, NATO summits only last several days, while the EU Council presidency requires the involvement of all national ministries for six months, preceded by over a year of intensive preparation.[4] According to civil servants from "new" MS, the only event that compared to the Council presidency was the EU accession in 2004.[5] Aside from that, the presidency is an extraordinary event in the area of international cooperation, providing unprecedented exposure to EU affairs not only to political elites but also to a large group of civil servants (Schout, 2009).

Both preparing and holding an EU Council presidency are challenging for administrations of the Member States, and late stages of the preparation are sometimes even identified as busier than the presidency itself.[6] Instead of merely participating in the meetings of the Council of the EU, the representatives of the presiding Member State must chair them,[7] act as brokers between the ministers, the diplomats, and the bureaucrats of the EU-28 on all Council levels, and represent the Council of the EU in trialogues with the European Parliament and the European Commission, steering the legislative process of the EU. Furthermore, the presidency organises informal ministerial Council meetings in the capital, demanding extensive preparation and resources, which are often scarce in compact administrations of small MS. This chapter examines the administrative challenge of preparing and holding the EU Council

[4] Interviews #1 (LT), #3 (LT), #5 (LT), #18 (LV), #24 (LV), #34 (LU), #35 (NL), #36 (LU), #37 (IE), #39 (IE), #42 (IE), #43 (IE), #45 (IE), #46 (IE), #48 (IE), #50 (IE), #51 (LU), #54 (LU), #55 (LU), #60 (SK), #66 (NL), #68 (SK), #69 (NL), #70 (LU), #73 (SK), #74 (SK), #76 (SK), #78 (SK)

[5] Interview #1 (LT), #10 (LT), #18 (LV), #26 (LV), #64 (SK), #50 (IE)

[6] Interviews #9 (LT), #18 (LV), #20 (LV), #46 (IE), #55 (LU), #64 (SK)

[7] except for the Foreign Affairs Council as of Lisbon Treaty reforms in 2009.

presidency in six small Member States, comparing three first-time and three routine presidencies and explaining how the presidency contributes to building administrative capacity in the incumbent state.

The literature on the impact of the Council presidency on the Member States, and specifically the national administrations, is limited. Existing studies suggest that holding the EU Council Presidency contributes to more active and effective Member State participation in EU affairs, the emergence of new methods of policy coordination, enhanced skill development and Europeanisation of national public administrations (Batory & Puetter, 2013; Bunse, 2009, p. 213; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, p. 156; Jesień, 2013, p. 155; Marek & Baun, 2011, p. 142; Panke, 2010b, p. 67). Holding the Council presidency leads to extensive political and administrative capacity building on behalf of the MS, especially if the countries are small and new to the EU, and as a result have had limited resources and time to internalise EU policy-making processes (Gärtner et al., 2011; Panke, 2010c). However, apart from identifying the presidency as an opportunity for the Member State, these studies do not specify what happens in national administrations, and especially, whether the governments maintain the adjustments. The literature that goes deeper into the administrative impact of the Council presidency only focuses on a small number of cases and a comprehensive comparison is missing. The influence of the Council presidency on national governments was studied by Nuallain and Hoscheit (1985) back in the EU of 10 Member States when the presidency still rotated alphabetically and had a mostly administrative function, encompassing fewer policy areas and following different legislative procedures. Kaniok & Gergelova Štegirova (2014) examined the impact of the Council presidency on the Czech administration, finding that it expanded the capacity and skills of national administration, but was a "wasted opportunity" in the end, since the government did not invest in maintaining the practices or staff involved. In her recent study, Galušková looks at implications of five first-time presidencies for EU policy coordination mechanisms, finding that it constituted a critical juncture for the Czech Republic and partly for Poland and Lithuania (2017). Jensen and Nedergaard (2017, p. 2) note that the presidency preparation period has barely received any attention in the literature, constituting a gap which this chapter contributes to filling by examining and comprehensively comparing six presidencies. Jensen and Nedergaard recently raised the same question that this chapter examines and tested the implications of the Council presidency on the administrations of one

presidency Trio - Poland, Denmark, and Cyprus in 2011-2012 - finding that the presidency had the most transforming effect on the small Cypriot administration holding the post for the first time (Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017). To contribute to this literature, I explore six small MS presidencies as likely targets for administrative change as a result of holding the position, including both the preparation and the presidency period. This chapter also adds to the existing research by comprehensively comparing several, namely three "old" and three "new" Member State presidencies to establish whether there is a consistent difference between them. Analysing six cases and comparing two groups of presidencies provides new, more generalisable insights into whether and how the Council presidency contributes to Europeanisation of national administrations.

Theoretically, the chapter introduces the concept of administrative capacity, composed of skills and resources necessary for successful participation in and coordination of EU affairs in a MS, building on new institutionalist approaches. Administrative capacity is employed as a dependent variable, while the EU Council presidency serves as the primary independent variable. Administrative capacity is broken down to institutional memory, institutional set-up including administrative structures, resources, coordination practices, as well as soft skills such as knowledge, and attitudes of civil servants involved. Based on 93 semi-structured expert interviews and primary sources, the chapter explores how the Council presidency impacts administrative capacity and whether there are any differences between the six cases. It serves as the basis for Chapter 5, which examines the long-term impact of holding the Council presidency by tackling what administrative adjustments remained after the respective presidencies.

The key findings of the chapter indicate that all six Member States examined underwent significant administrative adjustments in the run-up to, and during the Council presidency. All aspects of administrative capacity are affected. The governments must reinforce existing, or establish new coordination structures for the presidency, to manage the flows of information between the national ministries and the Permanent Representations promptly and to organise informal Council meetings in the capitals. The civil servants involved go through intensive learning and skill-building either in the shape of centralised training programmes or learning on the job. Furthermore, they establish extensive contact networks both nationally and with

EU institutions. The role of institutional memory in the process is also apparent, "new" Member States invest more resources and gain more from the preparation and presidency period.

3.2. Theory: Administrative capacity and the Council presidency

Conceptualising the rotating EU Council presidency as intensified interaction between a Member State and the EU institutions and an adaptational pressure, I argue that holding it contributes to Europeanisation of national administrations. Looking at Europeanisation through the lenses of rational choice and sociological institutionalisms, and complementing them with historical institutionalism to assess the role of institutional memory, the Council presidency could lead to changes of institutional structures and strategies (RCI) or attitudes and perceptions (SI) of the actors involved. The chapter employs the concept of administrative capacity consisting of RCI, SI, and HI elements to break down and operationalise the Europeanisation of national administrations through the Council presidency.

The literature on small state participation in EU affairs identifies structural disadvantages faced by the small states as well as factors necessary for successful participation in the EU policy-making process (Panke, 2010b, 2010c; Thorhallsson, 2006; Thorhallsson & Wivel, 2006). The concept of administrative capacity, employed as the dependent variable, is based on a combination of these factors as identified by Panke (2010b, 2010c). The key structural disadvantage of small states in the EU is fewer human and material resources both at the national ministries and Permanent Representations in Brussels. A lack or limited number of skilled experts and leaner EU policy coordination structures complicate the timely shaping of high-quality national positions for Council negotiations. Furthermore, for the same reason small states also have weaker networks with EU institutions and interest groups, complicating access to relevant information, and as a result, are also less reputable. Finally, less established or stable EU policy coordination systems, lack of experience due to shorter duration of EU membership, and even leaner resources constitute additional structural disadvantages for "new" Member States (Dimitrova & Toshkov, 2007; Gärtner et al., 2011; Panke, 2010b).

Administrative capacity here stands for the combination of requirements for a Member State to successfully engage in EU policy-making. It serves as an aggregate dependent variable, on

which the impact of the main independent variable, the EU Council presidency, will be studied. Administrative capacity is conceptualised as a combination of institutional set-up in the Member States (explained by RCI) and soft skills of the civil servants involved (explained by SI), as well as institutional memory (HI). Additional material and human resources allocated or employed for the presidency, changes in coordination practices between the involved institutions as well as the set-up of new institutional structures for the Council presidency, fall under institutional set-up. Soft skills consist of contact networks both on domestic and EU levels facilitating participation in EU policy-making, attitudes, and motivation of the civil servants, as well as their skills and learning experience. Institutional memory stands for previous presidency experience and duration of EU membership (see Figure 3.1 for a graphic definition of the concept of administrative capacity).

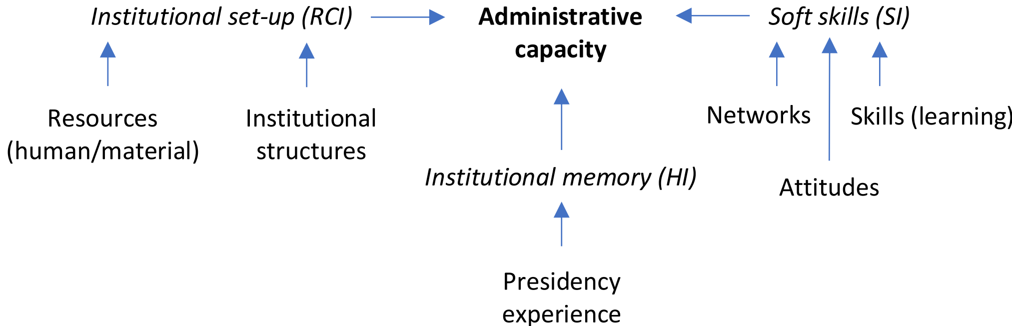

Figure 3.1: Defining administrative capacity. Source: own elaboration.

The rotating EU Council presidency and the preparations it demands, conceptualised as a temporary adaptational pressure coming from the EU level, should have an impact on the administrative capacity of the MS on all of the levels outlined in Figure 3.1. To conduct a successful presidency, the Member State must reinforce its EU policy-coordination structures, and hire and train staff to manage the additional workload, all of which needs additional human and material resources. Overall, I expect that:

> *H1: Holding the EU Council Presidency strengthens the administrative capacity of the respective Member State.*

Finally, packed presidency agendas are similar for all the Member States regardless of their size, administrative system, or whether or not they held the position before. The MS that joined the EU in 2004 or later tend to have less established national-EU policy coordination systems and fewer resources than their counterparts with longer EU membership histories (Dimitrova & Toshkov, 2007; Gärtner et al., 2011; Panke, 2010b). They also cannot build on institutional memory originating from having managed the same challenge before. Therefore, having to deal with the same task as their more experienced counterparts, I expect that:

> *H1a: The impact of holding the EU Council Presidency is greater on the administrative capacity of Member States with no previous presidency experience.*

3.3. Case selection and context

The six cases, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Slovakia, were selected based on a most-similar logic holding the small size of the MS as well recent presidency experience constant (George & Bennett, 2005; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Previous presidency experience is the variable that differs among the cases, dividing them into three old MS and three first-time presidencies, and is expected to cause the variance in the outcome variable, which is administrative capacity. Feasibility also played a role in case selection: all cases are recent presidencies because it is easier to identify the relevant interviewees and more likely that they will have retained detailed accounts of the presidency period. Secondly, the focus is placed on the small Member States in order to allow in-depth analysis of the cases where the impact of the Council Presidency is most likely to be notable (see Chapter 2), instead of extending the comparison of old versus new and big versus small MS.

Regardless of the size of the administration of the Member State, each Council Presidency entails a similar set of tasks such as organising working party or informal Council meetings, which require similar levels of resources and expertise. Presidency reports of the six countries show that regardless of the size of the administration of the MS, over a thousand civil servants were usually involved in managing the task (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European

Union, 2015; LR Užsienio Reikalų Ministerija, 2014a).[8] However, three groups of contextual factors that emerged from the interviews and were also identified by Kirchner (1992, pp. 92–93) additionally define and differentiate the individual presidencies: domestic, EU-institutional, and external. Domestic factors include the availability of financial and human resources, previous presidency experience, domestic EU-affair coordination practices, national elections and changes in the cabinet immediately before or during the presidency, and public opinion towards the EU in the MS, the presidency expenditure being harder to justify in Eurosceptic countries. The main EU-level factors determining the presidency period and the agenda are the institutional evolution of the EU (with the Lisbon Treaty reforming the presidency in this case) and the legislative cycles of the European Commission and the European Parliament. The agenda is busier and EU institutions are more willing to cooperate and conclude legislative files at the end, and the presidency has more space for manoeuvre at the beginning of a legislative cycle. External factors include unforeseen or unexpected events that can dictate or reformulate the priorities of the presidency, such as the recent economic crisis, refugee crisis, or terrorist attacks. The following paragraphs briefly present and contextualise the six cases. See table 3.1 for an overview of the cases.

Presidency	Domestic factors	EU-level factors	External crises
Ireland (2013)	Demotivated administration; Limited human/material resources;	End of legislative cycle; 1st post-Lisbon Presidency	-
Lithuania (2013)	Limited financial resources	End of legislative cycle; First-time Presidency	Snowden scandal; Maidan events in Ukraine
Latvia (2015)	National election; Limited material resources; Some Euroscepticism	First-time Presidency	Charlie Hebdo attacks; Refugee crisis
Luxembourg (2015)	Small administration; Pro-European population	1st post-Lisbon Presidency	Refugee crisis (quotas)
Netherlands (2016)	Large administration; Euroscepticism	1st post-Lisbon Presidency	Refugee crisis; Brussels attacks
Slovakia (2016)	Limited human resources; National election	First-time presidency	Refugee crisis (less salient)

Table 3.1.: Summary of the cases. Source: own compilation based on interview data and presidency reports.

[8] Interviews #18 (LV), #24 (LV)

Ireland, an experienced MS having joined the EU in 1973, held its seventh Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2013. The defining domestic factor of the Irish Presidency was the ongoing economic crisis, which reflected in the priorities of the Presidency: "For Stability, Jobs and Growth" and meant limited financial and human resources (Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2013; Laffan, 2014). The national political environment was stable with no changes of ministers or elections close to the presidency period. On the EU-level, Ireland had a busy Presidency agenda and claimed numerous achievements due to both efficient coordination and legislative cycles of the European Commission and the European Parliament coming to an end, both institutions striving to conclude open issues.[9] Furthermore, it was the first post-Lisbon presidency for Ireland, meaning a change in cooperation practices with EU institutions. While the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) were less involved than during the previous presidencies, the intensity of cooperation with the European Parliament and trialogues was new to Irish civil servants.[10] As to external factors, the Irish presidency did not face any major challenges, since, apart from the ongoing economic crisis, no unexpected events altered the presidency agenda.[11]

Lithuania held its first Council presidency in the second half of 2013. The priorities of the Lithuanian presidency, for Credible, Growing, and Open Europe, show a continuing focus on recovery from the economic crisis and cooperation with Eastern Neighbourhood partners (LR Užsienio Reikalų Ministerija, 2014b). The government approved the presidency budget during the economic crisis, meaning limited financial resources, but human resources were not a problem, even in a small administration.[12] The national parliamentary elections in Lithuania took place less than a year before the presidency, but most of the new ministers had sufficient time to prepare.[13] On the EU level, the Lithuanian presidency faced an extraordinarily busy agenda due to the end of legislative cycles of the EP and the EC as well as pending agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework, setting record numbers in agreements reached on various levels of the Council.[14] Externally, the Snowden scandal broke just two days into the

[9] Interviews #38 (IE), #48 (IE)
[10] Interview #43 (IE)
[11] Interviews #43 (IE), #48 (IE), #49 (IE), #50 (IE)
[12] Interviews #1 (LT), #5 (LT)
[13] Interviews #12 (LT), #32 (LT)
[14] Interview #5 (LT)

Lithuanian presidency, altering agendas of the opening events. Furthermore, the Eastern Partnership Summit, supposed to be the highlight of the Lithuanian presidency, was overshadowed by crisis moods instead of achievements when the Maidan events began in Ukraine, the planned DCFTA agreement wasn't signed, and Armenia opted out of association agreements.[15]

Latvia held its first EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2015, setting Competitive, Digital and Engaged Europe as its priorities (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015). The Presidency came soon after the economic crisis and financial resources were rather lean. National elections took place just several months before the presidency, but it did not cause major disruptions in the preparation process and interviewees even identified it as a favourable factor, since new ministers showed great willingness to prepare for the presidency.[16] Latvians are rather Eurosceptic, but national surveys have shown that support for the EU increased after the Council presidency hinting at the successfully communicated message that Latvia steered the EU for six months.[17] On the EU-level, the EC and EP were at the beginning of a legislative cycle and the Latvian presidency agenda was not extraordinarily busy, leaving more freedom to set priorities. External factors determining the presidency were the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015, unexpectedly bringing terrorism to the top of the agenda, as well as the early stages of the refugee crisis.[18]

"A Union for the Citizens" was the priority of the twelfth Luxembourgish Council presidency in the second half of 2015, focusing on the social dimension of the EU, aiming to boost growth and employment and manage migration and security issues (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2015a). The presidency had a solid financial basis, but human resources in the very small administration were a major challenge.[19] A pro-European population and stable government created a favourable domestic environment for the presidency.[20] On the EU-level, Luxembourg held its first post-Lisbon presidency, which was less challenging for the prime minister, as well

[15] Interview #5 (LT)
[16] Interviews #17 (LV), #19 (LV)
[17] Interview #28 (LV)
[18] Interviews #23 (LV), #25 (LV), #28 (LV)
[19] Interviews #41 (LU), #52 (LU), #58 (LU), #61 (LU)
[20] Interviews #51 (LU), #52 (LU)

as the MFA compared to the last.[21] The presidency came in the middle of the legislative cycle of the EU institutions, resulting in a moderately busy agenda. The refugee crisis and negotiation of refugee resettlement quotas provided the defining external factor for the Luxembourgish presidency, putting a lot of pressure on the civil servants dealing with Justice and Home Affairs.[22]

The Netherlands set international security, a comprehensive approach to migration, economic innovation, a robust Eurozone and job creation, as well as a forward-looking policy on climate and energy as their priorities for the Council presidency in the first half of 2016 (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). Being a relatively large MS and having held eleven Council presidencies before, the Netherlands has a large, experienced administration and well-functioning coordination practices between the Hague and the Permanent Representation in Brussels that needed little adjustment for the presidency.[23] No election happened shortly before the presidency and the government was stable. The presidency was pragmatic, cost-effective and efficient, seeking to give a positive message to increasingly Eurosceptic Dutch citizens, who voted against the Association Agreement with Ukraine in a referendum held at the time.[24] On the EU-level, the presidency agenda in the middle of the legislative cycle of the EU institutions was moderate. However, as the first post-Lisbon presidency, it required more active interactions with the EP than previous Dutch presidencies.[25] External factors that influenced the Dutch presidency were the ongoing refugee crisis and terrorist attacks in Brussels, demanding a quick reaction and pushing security and terrorism issues up on the agenda.

Slovakia had an economically Strong Europe, a modern single market, sustainable migration and asylum policies, as well as a globally engaged Europe as priorities for its first Council presidency in the second half of 2016 (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2016). Lack of qualified human resources in a small administration and limited experience in the coordination of EU affairs were the main domestic challenges of the presidency.[26] The national

[21] Interviews #36 (LU), #55 (LU)
[22] Interviews #36 (LU), #52 (LU), #70 (LU)
[23] Interviews #62 (NL), #63 (NL)
[24] Interview #67 (NL)
[25] Interview #59 (NL)
[26] Interviews #73 (SK9, #76 (SK), #79 (SK)

parliamentary elections took place three months before the presidency, but several ministers remained in their posts and it did not pose major obstacles in the preparation process. A disinterested, but not Eurosceptic population did not burden the presidency either.[27] On the EU-level, the agenda of the Slovak presidency in the middle of the legislative cycle was not extraordinarily busy, and aside from innovative ideas for the strengthening of the Euro-zone, was even criticised as not ambitious enough.[28] Externally, the migration crisis continued to play a role during the Slovak presidency, and the Brexit referendum took place just before. However, it did not dominate the agenda of the presidency, since the UK did not trigger Art 50 until 2017.[29]

3.4. Data: Semi-structured expert interviews and primary sources

Country	Timing	Interviewees	By institution			Response rate[30]
			Perm. Rep.	National ministries	Coordinating institutions	
Ireland	Jan 2017	14	7	6	1	0,63
Lithuania	Mar-Apr 2016	20[31]	8	9	2	0,61
Latvia	Apr 2016	17	2	11	4	0,75
Luxembourg	Jan-Feb2017	12[32]	3	6	3	0,48
Netherlands	Jan-Mar 2017	12	6	5	1	0,55
Slovakia	Jan, May 2017	18[33]	8	8	2	0,52
Total		**93**	**33**	**44**	**15**	

Table 3.2.: Summary of interviews. Source: Own data.

The empirical basis of the chapter consists of 93 semi-structured interviews with public servants from the six countries: Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovakia. Interviewees were selected based on their tasks and working positions during the Council Presidency. Three groups of the main actors involved in each EU Council Presidency were identified and targeted: employees of the Permanent Representations in Brussels; representatives from key national ministries; and people who have worked for presidency coordinating institutions. See Table 3.2 for a summary and Appendix 1 for a full list of

[27] Interviews #75 (SK), #80 (SK)
[28] Interview #60 (SK)
[29] Interviews #57 (SK), #60 (SK), #74 (SK)
[30] Interview appointments divided by the number of sent requests.
[31] One interview with a representative of national Parliament.
[32] One written response.
[33] One written response.

interviewees. Presidency planning and evaluation reports by the governments of the respective Member States complement the interview data for triangulation.

The first group of respondents are the people who worked in various positions at the Permanent Representations in Brussels of the respective Member States during the presidency. These people are central to the Brussels-side of the presidency: coordinating the working parties, COREPER and ministerial Council meetings, representing the Council with other EU institutions, participation in trialogues with the European Commission and the European Parliament, and communication and coordination with the capitals. When available, ambassadors, as well as their deputies (members of Antici and Mertens groups[34]) were approached to provide a broad perspective on the presidency challenges and activities in Brussels. Furthermore, attachés and policy officers working with the policy areas corresponding to presidency priorities were interviewed. Regular diplomats and attachés seconded from the capitals for the presidency period, as well as temporary policy officers hired specifically for the presidency provided insights into how the presidency period differs from the usual work of the Permanent Representations of the six small MS.

The second group consists of respondents from national ministries. In contrast to obligations resulting from membership in other international organisations such as the UN or the OSCE, which are routinely handled by the diplomats of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the EU Council Presidency requires involvement and active participation of all the line ministries. Similarly to the first group, public servants from the ministries dealing with the priority policy areas of the respective presidencies were targeted first. I interviewed a few respondents from the less active ministries to identify whether there is a great difference between the central and the low-key ministries. Most of the respondents were from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economy, Agriculture, Finance, Interior, Justice, and Employment or Social Affairs. I selected people most actively involved in the presidency coordination. These included several state secretaries, heads, or deputy heads of departments of EU affairs, or, if such departments did

[34] Antici group consists of high-level diplomats assisting the Permanent Representatives of the Member State in COREPER II meetings, Mertens play the same role in COREPER I. Antici and Mertens are comprised of the officials ranking second and third respectively in seniority at the Permanent Representations of the Member States after the Permanent Representative, or the Ambassador.

not exist, people specifically responsible for the coordination of presidency activities. I also interviewed several spokespersons as well as a few temporary employees hired specifically to manage presidency activities.

The third group of respondents are people employed in the bodies specifically responsible for the coordination of the Council presidency. These institutions differ across the six countries, ranging from independent institutions specifically established for the presidency period (Latvia) to temporary presidency coordination departments at MFAs (Lithuania, Slovakia), to reinforcement of existing EU policy coordination structures (Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands). I approached senior level civil servants from these institutions responsible for the political priorities, the presidency programme, logistics, human resource management and training, and communication.

The three groups described largely cover the different perspectives of national civil servants and institutions involved in the organisation and conduct of the EU Council Presidency in the Member States. Perspectives from Brussels and the capitals are covered by the first two, while the respondents from the third group provide a broad picture of the overall organisation, and of communication between the different actors.

On average, I planned about 15 interviews per country, balancing between the three groups of respondents. The number of respondents from coordinating institutions is smaller due to their relatively smaller size if compared to ministries or Permanent Representations. The numbers for Latvia and Lithuania are higher because the first round also included some pilot interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in three rounds, either in person in Vilnius, Riga, Dublin, Luxembourg, Bratislava, and Brussels, or in telephone or video conversations between March 2016 and May 2017 (see Table 3.2 and Appendix 1 for details). Moreover, there were two written responses. An important consideration while timing the interviews was to allow some, but not too much time to have passed after the presidency so that the respondents could provide a detailed evaluation of its impact and still have retained vivid memories. For logistical reasons, most of the respondents from the Slovak Permanent Representation were interviewed only a month after the end of their Presidency, therefore the third round in the capital was postponed to May 2017 to allow for some cool-off period and potentially more

accurate evaluations of the long-term impact. The interviews were anonymous, took about 40 minutes on average and were recorded. The questionnaire, presented in Appendix 2, included a number of open questions adjusted by different groups and areas of expertise of the respondents.

The representativeness of the number of respondents as well as the potential over-reliance on interview data instead of adopting an alternative or complementary research design, such as a survey covering a wider range of respondents, constitute notable limitations to the study. However, the selection of respondents from coordinating positions with a high degree of responsibility and oversight ensures that they have a wide profile and aggregate knowledge capable of representing their institutions. The limitation is also alleviated by the fact that I am examining coordination practices and administrative adjustments within and between various institutions rather than specific policy or political issues, and they are fairly similar across policy areas. This is also underlined by the fact that there was little disagreement on the core issues between the interviewees, with most reinforcing each other's rather than providing conflicting opinions and experiences. Finally, a strong positive bias must be acknowledged in the selection of the interviewees, since firstly getting involved in the challenge of organising a Council presidency is a voluntary professional choice, probably influenced by respondent's positive attitudes towards the EU, and secondly respondents are unlikely to criticise their own work. However, opting for expert interviews rather than a survey design, while complicating the generalisation of the findings, also enriches the upcoming analysis with more detailed and fine-grained insights.

3.5. Analysis: Case studies

3.5.1. Costs and timing of the preparation

Regardless of the size of the administration of the MS, planning and holding a Council presidency requires a similar amount of resources. With some variations depending on the agenda of EU institutions, each presidency organises a similar number of informal Council meetings in the capital and chairs about the same number of meetings in Brussels. Recent presidency budgets range from about 35 million Euro for the exceptionally cost-effective

Danish "Tap Water" presidency in 2012, to as much as over 100 million Euro for the Polish presidency in 2011 (Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017, pp. 24–25). However, due to the economic crisis and rising Euroscepticism in some member states, a trend towards cost-cutting, sustainability, and efficiency, rather than the organisation of lavish events to impress EU counterparts has prevailed among recent presidencies (Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017, p. 17).[35]

The most cost-effective of the six presidencies analysed here were the Irish, the Lithuanian and the Dutch, with budgets of just over 60 million Euro each. Ireland spent double the amount on its 2004 Presidency, but due to economic crisis costs for the 2013 presidency were cut by saving on additional staff, foregoing extensive training programmes, centralising all the informal Council meetings in Dublin instead of spreading them out across the country, organising less events, and drawing lessons from the 2012 Danish presidency (Irish Council Presidency, 2013).[36] The Lithuanian presidency had a lean budget of 63 million Euro approved by the government during the economic crisis (LR Užsienio Reikalų Ministerija, 2014a, p. 14). The costs were cut by centralising the venue of the informal Council meetings and their logistics in Vilnius, attracting numerous external sponsors for transportation and catering services, as well as financing large parts of the extensive staff training programme from EU Structural Funds.[37] In the Netherlands, crumbling public support for the EU was one of the main reasons for organising an exceptionally efficient and inexpensive presidency.[38] The budget of under 63 Million Euro was almost half that of the 2004 presidency, achieved by centralising informal Council meetings at a single location in Amsterdam, outsourcing logistics, prioritising sustainability and even reusing the old logo from 2004 (Europa Nu, 2016).[39] The Slovak presidency falls in the middle with a budget of up to 70 million Euro (Slovak Council Presidency, 2016). Centralising some of the logistics of the informal Council meetings and holding all of them in Bratislava, as well as funding staff training from EU structural funds helped cut the spending.[40]

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[35] Interviews #33 (IE), #47 (IE), #50 (IE), #54 (LU), #69 (NL)
[36] Interviews #33 (IE), #38 (IE), #40 (IE), #44 (IE), #46 (IE)
[37] Interviews #1 (LT), #5 (LT)
[38] Interviews #62 (NL), #69 (NL)
[39] Interviews #66 (NL), #69 (NL)
[40] Interviews #76 (SK), #80 (SK)

Latvia and Luxembourg were the most expensive presidencies of the six, having spent over 82 million Euro and 93 million Euro respectively. The costs were high mostly because Latvia could not apply for EU Structural Funds to finance staff training, and a remarkable part of the budget, over 36.5 million Euro, was spent on this training (Auers & Rostoks, 2016; KPMG Baltics SIA, 2014).[41] Otherwise, Latvia used the same cost-cutting strategies as other MS by centralising event locations and logistics, as well as attracting external sponsors and achieved a significantly lower final budget than had initially been estimated (Leitāns, 2015). The initial budget of the Luxembourgish presidency was 71 million Euro, but combining all the additional costs of preparation and post-presidency period, it increased to 93 million Euro, or €169 per capita, as was reported by the media (Högenauer, 2016; Luxembourg Times, 2015). Despite this criticism, Luxembourg has a largely pro-EU population and was not severely affected by the economic crisis, which allowed it to use a similar budget to that of the 2005 presidency.[42]

The Council presidency only lasts six months, but preparations start much earlier. In the "old" MS, Luxembourg, Ireland and the Netherlands, initial planning of the presidency budget, training programmes, and communication strategies began about three to four years before the position was held.[43] Latvia followed by starting planning and preparations in 2012, three years in advance.[44] However, detailed plans for training, communication, and the budget for the Lithuanian presidency were approved by the government as early as 2006,[45] while Slovakia held its first presidency-planning meetings in 2012, five to six years before their respective terms.[46] The intense preparation phase, often identified as busier than the presidency itself,[47] begins between two years and six months before the presidency. This period is similar in length for both first-time presidencies and experienced MS. However, the intensity differs between the two groups. First-time presidencies hire and train additional staff at the ministries and Permanent Representations earlier than the experienced MS. They also prepare the agenda and the content of the presidency more intensely, or, indeed, anxiously than MS with previous

[41] Interview #22 (LV)
[42] Interviews #54 (LU), #58 (LU)
[43] Interviews #51 (LU), #69 (NL)
[44] Interview #18 (LV) #22 (LV), #24 (LV)
[45] Interview #1 (LT)
[46] Interviews #57 (SK), #73 (SK)
[47] Interviews #9 (LT), #18 (LV), #20 (LV), #46 (IE), #55 (LU), #64 (SK)

experience.[48] Several respondents from Lithuania noted that they were seen as overly and even unnecessarily eager by the EU institutions for approaching them with presidency-related matters too early.[49] Representatives of all three first-time presidencies mentioned that the early preparation for any possible expected and unexpected scenarios was not worth the resources because of later changes in the agenda.[50]

3.5.2. Additional institutional arrangements and staff

Planning and conducting a Council presidency not only requires funds and time; it also demands additional institutional structures and human resources. Major adjustments within national administrations for the presidency happen on three levels. First of all, each MS sets up or designates a presidency coordinating institution responsible for drafting the presidency programme, centralised coordination of logistics around the informal Council meetings in the capitals, communication, and coordination of training and hiring procedures for additional staff. Second, line ministries establish structures and assign staff responsible for presidency dossiers and coordination between the ministries as well as with the Permanent Representations in Brussels. Third, Perm. Reps. in Brussels get expanded, often at least doubling in size during the presidency period to handle all the working party and committee meetings that the presidency country must chair. This section tackles how the six MS addressed the need for additional structures and staff on each of the three levels during their respective presidencies.

In Ireland, the coordination of the presidency was led by the Prime Minister's Office, which at the time also coordinated EU affairs.[51] The 2013 Irish Council presidency took place during an EU and IMF bailout programme and an economic crisis that hit the public sector heavily. The government placed a moratorium on recruitment in the civil service for the years leading up to and during the presidency. Numerous people with previous presidency experience left their jobs because of wage cuts and being encouraged to take early retirement.[52] "*Things were*

[48] Interviews #9 (LT), #11 (LT), #12 (LT), #18 (LV), #38 (IE), #39 (IE), #55 (LU), #56 (NL), #60 (SK), #68 (SK), #75 (SK), #77 (SK), #79 (SK)
[49] Interview #15 (LT)
[50] Interviews #6 (LT), #18 (LV)
[51] Interviews #37 (IE), #45 (IE)
[52] Interviews #33 (IE), #37 (IE)

depressing and depressed in Dublin,"[53] demotivation and disengagement, including with EU affairs, was felt and ministerial as well as working party meeting attendance at the Council of the EU dropped.[54] As a result, the lack of experienced and motivated staff was one of the main challenges for the Irish Council presidency. Ministries temporarily re-hired some of the retired experts and built on internships, temporary reassignments of civil servants to perform presidency tasks for nine months, and state agencies to assist with event management, hiring only a minimum number of additional employees.[55] As an example, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade hired or redeployed 98 people for the Council presidency. It assigned 47 to the Permanent Representation in Brussels and other diplomatic missions, recalled one from retirement, reassigned five civil servants to presidency duties, engaged 21 temporary administrative and clerical officers, hired nine interns, and seconded six diplomats from other MS.[56] In Brussels, the size of the Irish Perm. Rep. increased from about 100 to 180 employees for the period of the presidency.[57] To cut costs, along with experts sent from national ministries, the Irish Permanent Representation hired 33 policy officers on a paid internship basis for nine months, three before and six during the presidency.[58] The policy officers were recruited locally in Brussels, targeting a pool of young professionals having first-hand experience working for EU institutions. About 30% of the officers were of other nationalities, and 70% were Irish. This practice both cut costs and brought young, motivated people with relevant experience and contact networks into the Permanent Representation.[59]

Lithuania set up a department for presidency coordination consisting of approximately 40 people at the MFA.[60] Among other tasks, it centrally managed the hiring of additional staff at the ministries, which ensured control and oversight by the MFA, but was criticised for lack of flexibility on the part of some ministries.[61] The MFA allocated additional staff to each ministry depending on their involvement with the presidency, ranging from 59 people at the MFA, 27 at the Ministry of Environment, and one to seven at the remaining ministries. In total, the

[53] Interview #33 (IE)
[54] Interview #37 (IE)
[55] Interviews #38 (IE), #44 (IE), #49 (IE), #50 (IE)
[56] Interview #33 (IE)
[57] Interview #48 (IE)
[58] Interview #33 (IE), #50 (IE)
[59] Interviews #40 (IE), #50 (IE)
[60] Interviews #1 (LT), #32 (LT)
[61] Interviews #13 (LT), #15 (LT)

ministries hired 142 additional employees to assist with administrative and coordination tasks. Moreover, ten experts from EU institutions, mainly the European Commission, were employed across the ministries, along with several seconded experts from other MS.[62] Most of the additional staff joined the ministries about a year before the presidency and had temporary contacts of 1.5-2 years to replace experts sent to Brussels as chairs of Council working parties (LR Užsienio Reikalų Ministerija, 2014a, pp. 35–37). Eighty temporarily hired liaison officers, and sixty volunteers assisted with the organisation of informal Council meetings in the capital (LR Užsienio Reikalų Ministerija, 2014a, p. 37). The Lithuanian Permanent Representation in Brussels grew from 80-90 employees to 197 for the presidency period.[63] Starting in 2011, the ministries gradually deployed 75 additional people as attachés and special attachés. Most of them came about a year before the presidency in 2012 and stayed until March 2014. Forty-nine secretaries were hired on temporary contracts for administrative assistance (LR Užsienio Reikalų Ministerija, 2014a, p. 39). If possible, experienced diplomats were sent to Brussels for the presidency, for many attachés it was at least their second rotation at the Permanent Representation.[64]

Latvia set up a Council Presidency Secretariat, a temporary institution independent from line ministries, to coordinate the presidency.[65] At the ministries, "*presidency staff was 99% existing civil servants*", only about 100 people were hired, mostly administrative assistants.[66] Temporary contracts ranged from 6 to 12 months.[67] The government devised a voluntary internship scheme for liaison officers allowing the involvement of 107 university students in Riga (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 97). While cost-effective, the practice was also described as "*painful,*" since the few additional employees could not fully replace the experts sent to the Permanent Representation.[68] The Latvian Perm. Rep. in Brussels tripled in size for the presidency period. Normally having just over 60 employees, it grew to 185, mostly experts sent from the national ministries to chair working party meetings,

[62] Interviews #9 (LT) #15 (LT)
[63] Interview #5 (LT)
[64] Interviews #5 (LT), #16 (LT)
[65] Interview #24 (LV)
[66] Interview #22 (LV)
[67] Interviews #25 (LV), #26 (LV), #30 (LV)
[68] Interview #27 (LV)

as well as some temporary administrative staff (Permanent Representation of the Republic of Latvia to the EU, 2015, 2017).[69]

The MFA coordinated the Luxembourgish Council presidency, reinforcing existing committees for coordination of EU affairs for the task.[70] The very small administration posed both a challenge and an opportunity for the presidency. Civil servants reported a lot of pressure, but flat hierarchies and short communication chains facilitated coordination between national ministries (Hearl, 2006, p. 52).[71] To reinforce administrative capacity, the government hired 280 additional people, mostly at the MFA. Temporary two-year contracts started 18 months before the presidency to ensure sufficient preparation time.[72] Additional staff, constituting about 2-3% of the small Luxembourgish civil service mainly handled supporting tasks, while experts at the ministries took over substantive policy issues.[73] The Luxembourgish Council presidency in 2015 was more Brussels-based than in 2005, delegating more staff to the Permanent Representation.[74] It doubled in size from nearly 80 to over 140 employees (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2015b, 2017). A unique characteristic of the Luxembourgish Perm. Rep. is that unlike the diplomatic personnel in most of the other Permanent Representations, attachés do not have fixed terms of service of 3-5 years, they can stay longer and retain experience and extensive contact networks, which are useful both during and after the presidency.[75]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinated the Dutch Council presidency, reinforcing existing EU policy coordination structures with some additional staff.[76] The Netherlands has a much larger administration than the other five countries. For indicative purposes, around 6000-7000 people worked with the Dutch presidency, compared to about 400 in Luxembourg, 1140 in Latvia, and 1500 in Lithuania (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 97; LR Užsienio Reikalų Ministerija, 2014a, p. 32).[77] Ministries redeployed existing staff for the presidency, set up small coordination teams of up to five people and assigned contact

[69] Interview #27 (LV)
[70] Interview #51 (LU)
[71] Interview #36 (LU)
[72] Interview #34 (LU)
[73] Interview #58 (LU)
[74] Interview #61 (LU)
[75] Interview #70 (LU)
[76] Interview #69 (NL)
[77] Interviews #54 (LU), #62 (NL)

points at all the Directorates-General within the ministries.[78] Trainees, routinely hired by the Dutch civil service as part of its recruitment scheme, largely covered the need for additional staff.[79] The government outsourced part of the logistics of informal Council meetings in Amsterdam to external contractors.[80] The Dutch Permanent Representation almost doubled in size for the presidency period, from nearly 100 to about 180 members of staff.[81] Alongside experts deployed from the capital for 1-2 years before, and for the six months during the presidency, a number of government trainees got placements at the Perm. Rep. for nine months, three before and six during the presidency.[82]

Slovakia followed the Lithuanian example and established a Presidency Secretariat within the MFA, consisting of about 50 employees.[83] Lack of staff and difficulty in hiring qualified people on short-term contracts were among the main challenges of the Slovak Council presidency.[84] The temporary outflow of experts from the ministries to the Permanent Representation for the presidency period was notably felt in this small administration. The Presidency Secretariat at the MFA hired about 50 employees, and the Ministry of Finance allocated resources for additional staff to other line ministries.[85] The Ministry of Finance alone hired about 15 people.[86] The ministries hired additional staff in three waves, July 2015, September 2015 and February 2016, most about a year before the start of the presidency, on temporary contracts until December 2016. About a dozen seconded experts from other MS worked at the MFA.[87] Furthermore, temporary high-level posts of state secretaries were created for the presidency period at several ministries to strengthen political leadership.[88] The Slovak Permanent Representation in Brussels grew from 70-80 members of staff to about 220 for the presidency. Some 190 were experts sent from national ministries, there were 20 interns and several

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[78] Interview #65 (NL)
[79] Interviews #62 (NL), #67 (NL), #72 (NL)
[80] Interview #62 (NL)
[81] Interview #59 (NL)
[82] Interviews #59 (NL), #62 (NL), #63 (NL)
[83] Interviews #73 (SK), #76 (SK)
[84] Interviews #75 (SK), #78 (SK)
[85] Interview #73 (SK)
[86] Interview #75 (SK)
[87] Interview #73 (SK)
[88] Interview #79 (SK)

seconded experts from EU institutions.[89] Furthermore, the Perm. Rep. was restructured to improve communication between different units for the period of the presidency.[90]

3.5.3. Presidency staff training

More or less extensive training for the civil servants takes place before each Council presidency. Some training is offered to incoming presidencies by the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU (CGS). They include intensive courses on the EU institutional set-up, negotiation skills, and target future chairs of the Council working parties. The MS also offer additional training programmes to include civil servants working on presidency dossiers in the capitals, often in cooperation with other institutions, such as the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), or the College of Europe in Bruges. All of the six MS took advantage of the training offered by the CGS in Brussels but took different approaches to further training in the capitals.[91]

In Ireland, presidency staff training did not have a strict structure.[92] Due to the unfavourable financial situation in the public sector, but also due to a fair number of civil servants with previous presidency experience still working at or having temporarily returned to the national ministries, the training was mostly "*learning by doing*" on the job from more experienced colleagues.[93]

In Lithuania, the Council Presidency Coordination Department at the MFA prepared an extensive training programme for the staff both at the ministries and the Perm. Rep. in addition to the CGS seminars. An innovation seeking to cut costs that Lithuania introduced was the securing of funding from EU Structural Funds, a practice several succeeding presidencies also adopted.[94] The training took place in two steps. The Lithuanian Institute of Public administration organised the first centralised general training on EU institutions, legislative and policy-making procedures. External contractors offered further specific decentralised expert training. There were three target groups: politicians and high-level experts at the ministries (40 people), civil servants working on EU affairs in the capital (1240 people), and civil servants sent

[89] Interview #57 (SK)
[90] Interviews #54 (SK), #74 (SK)
[91] Interviews #43 (IE), #44 (IE), #46 (IE), #60 (SK), #64 (SK)
[92] Interviews #43 (IE), #44 (IE), #46 (IE)
[93] Interview #37 (IE), #39 (IE), #40 (IE), #43 (IE)
[94] Interview #5 (LT)

to the Permanent Representation in Brussels (135 people). Courses ranged from language, negotiation, and communication skills to specifics of EU policy-making processes. Most of the training took place in 2012 and was centralised to encourage networking between civil servants from different line ministries. The training programme received a highly positive evaluation with 75% of the participants being very satisfied and a further 21% satisfied (LR Užsienio Reikalų Ministerija, 2014a, pp. 41–58).

Latvia, like Lithuania, offered a centralised training programme for the presidency staff. However, no resources from EU Structural Funds were available and the presidency budget had to cover the training, therefore the programme was "*less lavish*" than the Lithuanian one.[95] The organisers carefully targeted compulsory training and employed pragmatic solutions, such as not investing in French language courses. The programme consisted of four blocks: The EU institutional framework; the EU legislative processes; negotiation, communication, and interpersonal skills; and work with EU documents. The Presidency Secretariat planned, and in cooperation with EIPA the Latvian School of Public Administration conducted the training between March 2013 and December 2014. In addition, the ministries offered decentralised issue-specific training for a limited number of experts (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 96). The training was the biggest investment in skill development of civil servants in the years leading up to the presidency because essentially no such training was organised in the period of the economic crisis - 2008 to 2012 (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 96).[96] A self-evaluation survey showed that the participants had greatly improved their knowledge of the EU and its institutions (an improvement from 4.8 to 7.3 on a scale from 1 to 10) (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 97).

Luxembourg, aside from some negotiation skill training organised by the MFA and the National Institute of Public Administration for future working party chairs, did not offer any centralised training programme.[97] Instead, the government hired additional staff early, 1.5 years before

[95] Interview #22 (LV)
[96] Interviews #22 (LV), #24 (LV)
[97] Interview #54 (LU)

the presidency, to allow time for "learning by doing" from experienced colleagues through frequent cooperation and planning meetings.[98]
In the Netherlands, training courses delivered by representatives of recent presidencies on negotiation skills as well as logistics and practicalities were offered to the core presidency staff by the Clingendael Institute for International Relations.[99] Aside from that, most of the preparation was learning on the job, while decentralised short seminars on the EU institutional set up were offered by individual ministries to their staff.[100]

Slovakia followed the Lithuanian example and used EU Structural Funds to finance some of the presidency staff training programmes in the capital. In cooperation with EIPA, the Presidency Secretariat at the MFA organised centralised training. They focused on English and French language skills, the institutional set-up of the EU, and practicalities of holding a Council presidency.[101] The second round of specific training targeted ministers, spokespersons, liaison officers, and diplomats.[102] Individual ministries organised short specific training, offered internship opportunities in Brussels and other line ministries, and encouraged participation in international seminars and conferences.[103]

3.5.4. Inter-institutional cooperation and coordination during the Council presidency

After intense preparations taking between one and two years, the period of the Council presidency itself also entailed a remarkable increase in the workloads of national administrations in all of the six cases. Both for the civil servants at the national ministries and the Permanent Representations, *"the main challenge was to get some sleep at some point."*[104]
The presidency demanded intense cooperation on three levels: between the line ministries and the presidency coordinating institutions in the capitals, between national ministries and Permanent Representations in Brussels, and between Perm. Reps. and EU institutions. This

[98] Interview #36 (LU), #51 (LU), #58 (LU)
[99] Interviews #5 (LT), #56 (NL)
[100] Interview #65 (NL), #72 (NL)
[101] Interviews #73 (SK), #77 (SK)
[102] Interviews #73 (SK), #74 (SK)
[103] Interviews #75 (SK), #81 (SK)
[104] Interview #59 (NL)

section walks the reader through arrangements and approaches taken by the six MS to ensure the successful conduct of the Council presidency on each of the levels.

In Ireland, the Prime Minister's Office coordinated the Council presidency, and two additional committees were established to facilitate cooperation between the ministries, an interdepartmental administrative planning group for logistics and administrative issues, and an interdepartmental committee to coordinate the presidency for policy planning.[105] The committees met weekly during the presidency, and inter-ministerial coordination of EU affairs was more structured than it would otherwise have been.[106] A separate communications team at the Prime Minister's Office coordinated and jointly communicated presidency messages from the line ministries.[107] On the ministry – Permanent Representation level, Ireland held a Brussels-based presidency. There was no major change in coordination with the capital during the presidency period, since the Irish system of EU policy coordination is balanced, leaning towards Brussels-based, with the Perm. Rep. only consulting the capital extensively on issues of high national significance (Panke, 2010a).[108] Only communication of presidency messages between the Permanent Representation and the Prime Minister's Office intensified.[109] On the third level, to improve working contacts with EU institutions and other MS, which are "*key to a successful presidency,*"[110] Irish diplomats and policy officers organised informal breakfast meetings with attachés from other delegations starting about six weeks before the presidency.[111] Ireland used its Council presidency to re-establish its image of a reliable partner with EU institutions, and to reverse the disengagement with EU affairs in the civil service and on the political level due to the financial crisis.[112]

In Lithuania, the ministries prepared their presidency programmes and budgets individually, but closely coordinated their activities with the Presidency Coordination Department at the MFA, especially on files where competences of several ministries overlapped. A network of EU-

[105] Interview #33 (IE)
[106] Interview #44 (IE)
[107] Interviews #47 (IE), #49 (IE)
[108] Interview #48 (IE)
[109] Interview #48 (IE)
[110] Interview #47 (IE)
[111] Interview #40 (IE)
[112] Interview #37 (IE)

coordinators consisting of heads of EU affairs departments, as well as their deputies from all the line ministries and headed by the MFA met monthly during the presidency to discuss overlapping affairs.[113] The centralised training held before the presidency facilitated inter-ministerial contacts.[114] The ministries used a unified communication scheme, the same format applied to all presidency-related messages and reports.[115] LINESIS, a digital system for inter-ministerial coordination of EU legislation was updated and widely used during the presidency.[116] On the informal side, having the common mobilising goal of the presidency, civil servants from different ministries communicated more openly and effectively than normally, putting tensions and competition between the individual institutions aside.[117] On the second level, ministries were informed about the status of legislative proceedings, but a principle of non-response often applied. If a ministry did not provide its position within several hours, attachés chairing the Council working parties took full responsibility for handling the issue.[118] Weekly videoconferences with the capital took place, and reporting practices were simplified for the presidency, with short memos immediately after the Council meetings complementing extensive reports that followed.[119] On the third level, the Lithuanian presidency was working with the EU institutions very intensely due to the end of the legislative cycle of the EC and the EP, combined with the Multiannual Financial Framework, and as a result had an extraordinarily busy agenda.[120] In preparation, diplomats from the Lithuanian Perm. Rep. organised dinners with ministers and representatives of EU institutions and informal lunch meetings with attachés as early as three months before their presidency.[121] Reliance on EU institutions was key to the success of the Lithuanian presidency, although the interactions with the EP and the CGS were not always easy or straightforward. Many respondents identified the European Parliament as a difficult and very political partner, while contacts with CGS depended on personal connections, being seen as either very helpful or disturbing.[122] Lithuania largely succeeded in building an image of a hardworking and reliable partner with EU institutions and other MS.[123]

[113] Interviews #6 (LT), #9 (LT), #13 (LT)
[114] Interview #4 (LT)
[115] Interview #2 (LT)
[116] Interviews #11 (LT), #7 (LT)
[117] Interview #10 (LT)
[118] Interviews #6 (LT), #14 (LT)
[119] Interviews #1 (LT), #5 (LT)
[120] Interview #12 (LT)
[121] Interviews #7 (LT), #12 (LT), #16 (LT)
[122] Interviews #1 (LT), #6 (LT), #12 (LT)
[123] Interviews #5 (LT), #8 (LT), #9 (LT), #10 (LT), #13 (LT)

Similar to Lithuania, Latvia introduced 'Lines to take', an inter-ministerial digital system for coordination of EU legislation for the presidency, which still remains in use.[124] The government established an independent Presidency Secretariat for central coordination, which prevented tensions between the ministries due to one taking a leading role in presidency preparations.[125] Ministries shortened formal information chains for quicker intra- and inter-ministerial coordination and frequently fell back on informal communication.[126] As in the Lithuanian case, ministries established a network of representatives responsible for the presidency matters coordinated by the Council Secretariat.[127] The Secretariat coordinated media communication and press releases of all the ministries centrally.[128] The presidency was an exceptional mobilising and networking experience for the entire Latvian civil service.[129] On the second level, Latvia employed a strongly Brussels-based approach with intensified exchanges between the capital and the Perm. Rep.[130] Finally, Latvian civil servants identified intensified contacts with the EP, EC and the CGS, being helpful in most cases, or very political and complicating matters in others, but overall an invaluable learning experience.[131]

In Luxembourg, the government reinforced an existing structure, the *Comité interministériel pour la coordination de la politique européenne (CICPE)*, chaired by the EU Director-General of the MFA, by an additional presidency configuration. It met in four formations: Protocol and Organisation; Communication, Press, Culture and Nation Branding; Budget and Finance; and Instruments of communication. All were chaired by the Secretary-General of the MFA. Similarly, the ministries reinforced existing communication structures.[132] Apart from that, due to the flat hierarchy in this small administration, and the fact that there are no EU affairs departments at the ministries and all the employees handle EU issues on a daily basis, the presidency did not demand major adjustments. On the second level, Luxembourg had the advantage of the capital being just a couple of hours away from Brussels, which had some impact on the coordination

[124] Interviews #18 (LV), #28 (LV)
[125] Interview #24 (LV)
[126] Interviews #22 (LV), #23 (LV), #25 (LV), #26 (LV)
[127] Interview #24 (LV)
[128] Interview #28 (LV)
[129] Interviews #21 (LV), #23 (LV), #29 (LV)
[130] Interviews #19 (LV), #27 (LV)
[131] Interviews #18 (LV), #23 (LV)
[132] Interviews #34 (LU), #36 (LU), #55 (LU)

between Perm. Reps. and national institutions. Even though the presidency was Brussels-based and delegates at the Permanent Representation had more autonomy, interactions between Brussels and the capital, diplomats, and experts from the ministries traveling back and forth between the two, were more intense and frequent than in the other cases.[133] The Perm. Rep. nevertheless suspended consultations with the capital on some legislative dossiers for the presidency period and shortened communication chains by establishing direct contact between ministers and diplomats to save time.[134] On the EU level, civil servants from Luxembourg, a well-established old MS and a natural ally for the Commission, reported more frequent, but otherwise unusual daily exchanges with the EC, and major changes in the way they engaged with the EP as compared to their last presidency in 2005, as well as a positive relationship with the CGS.[135]

The Netherlands, like Luxembourg, reinforced the existing system of EU policy coordination between the ministries. Ministries set up small teams of civil servants focusing on presidency coordination, adding up to about 20 teams of approximately five people each, while the MFA took over central coordination.[136] These teams met monthly in the preparation period and every two weeks during the presidency. Due to the centralisation of informal Council meetings in Amsterdam, inter-ministerial coordination was more active than otherwise, or during previous Dutch presidencies.[137] On the capital – Perm. Rep. side, the Dutch, similar to Luxembourg, also had the advantage of The Hague being close to Brussels, which enabled experts to be sent from the capital on day trips.[138] The Dutch started to send their working party chairs to the meetings a year before the presidency started, to familiarise them with the environment.[139] Even though the presidency was Brussels-based, the capital was more involved than during the previous Dutch presidency, the guidelines from The Hague on politically sensitive files were strict, but the delegates in Brussels still had more decision-making freedom to shape national positions than otherwise.[140] Frequent information exchanges between The

[133] Interview #41 (LU)
[134] Interviews #34 (LU), #58 (LU), #70 (LU)
[135] Interviews #54 (LU), #61 (LU), #70 (LU)
[136] Interviews #62 (NL), #65 (NL), #67 (NL)
[137] Interview #66 (NL)
[138] Interview #62 (NL)
[139] Interview #56 (NL)
[140] Interviews #62 (NL), #63 (NL), #69 (NL)

Hague and Brussels, such as otherwise uncommon videoconferences between the prime minister and the Perm. Rep., took place to keep everyone up to date with the latest proceedings.[141] Reporting practices changed for the presidency, short newsflashes were sent to the ministries instead of extensive reports.[142] On the third level, the presidency was an opportunity to refresh contact networks with EU institutions.[143] Despite having previous experience, the presidencies are currently only repeated once every 13-14 years, and as personnel at the ministries and especially at the Perm. Rep. change frequently, it was an invaluable first-hand learning experience for many civil servants (Schout, 2017).[144] The Dutch could also benefit from their image and reputation with the EU institutions, seen as reliable, well-organised, pro-European partners. They were trusted by the CGS and the EC to have the necessary competence to deal with the key files in their presidency Trio.[145]

In Slovakia, the Presidency Secretariat at the MFA organised communication and logistics centrally.[146] The ministries expanded the digital system for management of the EU agenda and legislation to be accessible by all the institutions rather than only EU and international affairs departments. Civil servants from different ministries communicated less formally to ensure quicker coordination.[147] Communication practices between the Perm. Rep. and the national ministries simplified for the presidency. Short flash reports replaced extensive reports sent to the ministries from Brussels, complemented with weekly video conferences to exchange updates.[148] There was no advance mandating as in Latvia and Lithuania, but contacts with the capital were informal, communication chains were shortened, and delegates personally coordinated positions with their counterparts in the capital.[149] In preparation, newly elected ministers attended Council meetings before the presidency, even in different policy areas, to familiarise themselves with the environment of the Council.[150] Slovak representatives also experienced intensified contacts with EU institutions through drafting sessions with the

[141] Interviews #56 (NL), #63 (NL), #69 (NL)
[142] Interview #63 (NL)
[143] Interview #66 (NL)
[144] Interviews #35 (NL), #59 (NL), #63 (NL)
[145] Interview #59 (NL)
[146] Interview #76 (SK)
[147] Interview #78 (SK)
[148] Interviews #60 (SK), #64 (SK), #79 (SK), #80 (SK)
[149] Interviews #64 (SK), #74 (SK)
[150] Interview #68 (SK)

Commission and the CGS as well as formal and informal meetings in the run-up to and during the presidency.[151] However, they reported not relying on the CGS or having problems with it more frequently than the other new MS.[152]

Aside from inter-ministerial cooperation, other national institutions, especially the Parliaments, make formal and informal arrangements for the Council presidency. In the old MS, they are rather informal. For instance, the Parliaments in the Netherlands and Luxembourg showed understanding for the additional workload at the ministries and were less pushy with national files.[153] All the three new MS, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia, made formal arrangements to speed up decision-making processes during the presidency and ensure that it was not disturbed by national political issues. Lithuania put an advance mandating system in place for the presidency period, meaning that parliaments and ministries agreed on positions on EU legislative files on the presidency agenda in advance so as to forego consultations and speed up preparation of national positions during the presidency.[154] Furthermore, in Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia, governing political parties signed formal declarations stating that they would not use the presidency to further any political goals.[155]

3.6. Comparison and conclusion

As seen in Table 3.3, a summary of the findings shows a difference is apparent between how MS with and without previous presidency experience handled the preparations and the Council presidency period, though not in all aspects. First of all, previous presidency experience or lack thereof does not seem to impact the budget, since Ireland, Lithuania, and the Netherlands stand out as the most cost-effective and Latvia and Luxembourg as the costliest ones. Instead, domestic factors, such as the economic situation and Euroscepticism suggest varying employment of cost-cutting measures, not the least to show the public that the EU is not a wasteful or costly project.[156] First-time presidencies, however, start to plan their terms earlier and more extensively than the MS that can build on institutional memory and past experience.

[151] Interview #78 (SK)
[152] Interviews #75 (SK), #81 (SK)
[153] Interviews #41 (LU), #63 (NL)
[154] Interviews #1 (LT), #4 (LT), 5 (LT), #6 (LT)
[155] Interviews #5 (LT), #24 (LV), #76 (SK)
[156] Interviews #39 (IE), #49 (IE), #50 (IE), #54 (LU), #69 (NL)

	Preparation timing (years)	Material resources (Million €)	Coordination structures	Human R. (ministries)	Human R. (perm. Rep.)	Training	Learning (institutional)	Coordination/ Networking
Ireland	3	60	Prime Minister's Office	Few staff hired, temporary redeployment of existing staff, calling experts back from retirement.	From 100 to 180 people (almost doubled)	Learning on the job/ CGS seminars	Introducing new generation of civil servants to EU affairs/ learning Post-Lisbon processes/ not a major eye opener	Re-engagement with EU institutions
Lithuania	6	63	Designated temporary department at MFA	Centrally assigned quotas for additional (mostly administrative) staff at the ministries, temporary liaison officers.	From 80 to 200 people (doubled to tripled)	Centralised training programme funded by ESF/ CGS seminars	Thoroughly learning about how EU works, especially informal practices	Establishing crucial contacts with EU institutions
Latvia	3	82	Independent temporary institution	Only a few administrative staff hired, liaison volunteer programme, internships.	From 60 to 185 people (tripled)	Centralised training programme/ CGS seminars	Thoroughly learning about how EU works, especially informal practices	Establishing crucial contacts with EU institutions
Luxembourg	3	93	EU Affairs department, MFA	About 200 people (2-3% of civil service) hired on 2 year contracts.	From 80 to 140 people (almost doubled)	Learning on the job/ CGS seminars	Learning Post-Lisbon processes/ not a major eye opener	Refreshing contact networks with EU institutions
Netherlands	3	63	MFA	Few staff hired, temporary redeployment of existing staff, extended traineeship programme.	From 100 to 180 people (almost doubled)	Learning on the job/ Short seminars/ CGS seminars	Learning Post-Lisbon processes/ not a major eye opener	Refreshing contact networks with EU institutions
Slovakia	5	70	Designated temporary department at MFA	Centrally assigned quotas for additional (mostly administrative) staff at the ministries.	From 70-80 to 220 people (tripled)	Centralised training programme funded by ESF/ CGS seminars	Thoroughly learning about how EU works, especially informal practices	Establishing crucial contacts with EU institutions
Old MS	3 years on average	Economic difficulties/ Euroscepticism account for variation.	Reinforcing existing structures	Except for Luxembourg, few additional staff.	Smaller increase: less than doubled in size	Focused on learning on the job	Not a major eye-opener	Refreshing contact networks
New MS	Mostly longer, 3-6 years		Creating elaborate temporary coordination bodies	Except for Latvia, centralised hiring practices for temporary administrative staff.	Larger increase: doubled to tripled in size	Centralised intensive training programmes	Crucial learning opportunity, especially for informal practices, "becoming a full EU MS"	Establishing essential contacts, "becoming a full EU MS"

Table 3.3: Summary of the findings (Source: own elaboration based on interview data and presidency reports)

As to institutional adjustments and allocation of additional human resources, all the first-time presidencies established coordinating institutions with clearly defined functions and structures employing high numbers of staff. Experienced MS, on the other hand, merely reinforced existing EU policy coordination structures without major institutional adjustments. However, the size of the administration and the availability of resources rather than previous presidency experience account for differing hiring practices for additional staff at the ministries. The more cost-cutting presidencies, and excepting Latvia, the larger administrations, namely Ireland, the Netherlands, and Latvia, relied on existing civil servants, while Luxembourg, Lithuania and Slovakia used centralised hiring practices to reinforce their administrations. All the six small MS chose a Brussels-based presidency model, where Permanent Representations play a key role and have to expand for the presidency period. However, the increases are relatively smaller in the MS with previous presidency experience: instead of tripling, like Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia, the size of Irish, Luxembourgish and Dutch Perm. Reps. merely doubled. Finally, regarding cooperation with other national institutions, in particular national parliaments, all first-time presidencies implemented some formal arrangements such as advanced mandating systems or written declarations by political parties, while experienced MS built on mutual understanding.

There is a difference between how first-time presidencies and those with previous experience train their presidency staff. The three experienced MS used the staff training offered by the CGS and built on their existing administrative capacity by learning from experienced colleagues or by organising a few specific seminars at the national ministries. First-time presidencies, on the other hand, invested extensively in intensive, centralised training programmes for large numbers of staff, serving as a networking opportunity for staff from different line ministries, compensating for weaker administrative capacity, and using the presidency to strengthen the civil service as a whole.[157]

The changes in inter-institutional cooperation during the presidency are also more notable in first-time presidencies. Again, there are more formal arrangements in cooperation between the capitals and the Permanent Representations in the new MS, such as the advance mandating schemes in Lithuania and Latvia or agreements between the political parties and the

[157] Interview #1 (LT)

government like in Lithuania and Slovakia. However, shortened communication chains, more frequent contact, and simplified reporting practices are common to all the cases.

All MS employed networking strategies before the presidency, but there was a difference in the intensity and the timing. First-time presidencies were more thorough in networking and started engaging with the EU institutions and other delegations earlier than their experienced counterparts. This made up for structural disadvantages of having a less established reputation and networks with the EU institutions, as well as fewer nationals working in key positions there, and a leaner presence in Brussels.[158] Overall, all the six MS intensified their working relations with the EU institutions during their presidencies. In all the cases, contact networks and knowledge of the EU institutions were refreshed or built up. Old MS had to adjust to the Lisbon Treaty changes and establish a closer working relationship with the EP, but for the "new" MS the presidency constituted a crucial learning experience, even identified as "*taking off the newcomer's hat*", "*the graduation exam*" for the "new" Member States, or becoming a full member of the EU.[159]

However, the fact that presidencies currently repeat every 14 years in the EU-28 makes it a "once in a lifetime" experience in the career of a civil servant, there are few people in the administrations who have been involved in conducting one or more presidencies before.[160] Secondly, the Lisbon Treaty reforms intensified cooperation with the European Parliament, which is new for all the post-Lisbon presidencies.[161] As the above comparative analysis shows, institutional memory facilitated presidency preparation for experienced MS, but it was not a major advantage.[162] In the current context, learning from other presidencies is just as, or even more important than building on own institutional memory, where exchanges with other recent first-time or Post-Lisbon presidencies, or countries of similar size and administrative culture are identified as essential.[163]

[158] Interviews #6 (LT), #9 (LT), #48 (IE)
[159] Interviews #1 (LT) – first quote, #6 (LT), #32 (LT), #17 (LV), #18 (LV), #18 (LV) – second quote, #19 (LV), #26 (LV), #29 (LV), #78 (SK)
[160] Interviews #33 (IE), #39 (IE), #40 (IE), #52 (LU)
[161] Interviews #33 (IE), #35 (NL), #36 (LU), #56 (LU), #66 (NL), #69 (NL)
[162] Interviews #33 (IE), #34 (LU), #38 (IE), #42 (IE), #43 (IE), #44 (IE), #47 (IE), #48 (IE), #50 (IE), #51 (LU), #53 (LU), #55 (LU), #58 (LU), #63 (NL), #65 (NL), #67 (NL), #70 (LU), #71 (NL)
[163] Interviews #1 (LT), #3 (LT), #5 (LT), #6 (LT), #8 (LT), #11 (LT), #16 (LT), #20 (LV), #28 (LV), #33 (IE), #36 (LU), #60 (SK), #76 (SK)

The overall findings of the chapter suggest that holding the EU Council presidency is an intense and demanding experience for all six small Member States. It requires an extensive investment of human and material resources in preparation and is an extraordinary amount of work for the civil servants involved, requiring careful coordination and cooperation between both national and EU institutions. Theoretically, the preparation and the presidency period impact both components of administrative capacity alike, suggesting at least a temporary Europeanisation of national administrations and confirming H1. The administrations set up new institutional structures, deployed human and material resources to manage the additional workload (rational choice institutionalism), but motivation and attitudes of the civil servants also changed through training, skill-development, and the networks they established during the presidency (sociological institutionalism). The findings confirm H1, at least temporarily. However, I return to the theoretical implications again in the next chapter, which focuses on the long-term impact of the Council presidency on the administrations and EU policy coordination systems of small Member States.

The chapter also points at several differences in how “old” and “new” MS prepare and hold their presidencies. Institutional memory plays a lesser role in the post-Lisbon EU of 28 with Council presidencies recurring only every 14 years and does not impact on the success of “new” MS presidencies. However, comparing the cases, it is apparent that “new” MS invest more in the development of their administrative capacity than their “old” counterparts. They start preparations earlier, set up separate coordinating institutions and invest in extensive centralised training programmes for the presidency staff, instead of the reinforcement of coordination mechanisms and largely learning-by-doing in their counterparts with previous presidency experience. During the presidency, “new” MS also get greater returns in networking and institutional learning, catching up in experience and expertise with their “older” counterparts. These trends confirm H1a: the Council presidency is a tool for re-engagement with the EU for “old” Member States and an “eye-opener” for the “new” ones, having a stronger overall impact on the latter and showing how the historical institutionalist component, namely previous presidency experience, influences administrative capacity-building before and during the presidency. Building on these findings, the following chapter goes on to explore whether holding the Council presidency had a lasting impact on the administrations of the six Member States and whether they maintained any of the adjustments presented here.

Chapter 4: Long-Term Impact of the Council Presidency on National Administrations

4.1. Introduction

As established in Chapter 3, national administrations of the Member States undergo adjustments for their terms as presidents of the Council of the EU. The governments set up additional coordination bodies in the capitals, reinforce Permanent Representations in Brussels to about double their size, and cooperation between national ministries intensifies in the run-up to, and during the presidency period. The ministries hire additional people to manage increased workload in the administrations during the presidency, and large groups of staff go through extensive training. Civil servants build up contact networks with EU institutions and acquire in-depth knowledge of EU policy-making processes, both formally and informally, during the presidency. Especially in smaller MS, practically entire administrations are mobilised for the presidency, assigning highest priority to EU affairs during the preparation and presidency periods, typically extending to about two years. Using the same case selection, data, and methods as Chapter 3, this Chapter traces the legacies of the Council presidency. It aims to establish whether the governments of the MS maintained any of the adjustments and practices and whether the presidency had any long-term impact. Theoretically, it seeks to explain whether and how the presidency contributed to strengthening the administrative capacity in the administrations of the six small Member States that have recently held the position.

Existing literature on the impact of holding the EU Council presidency on national administrations acknowledges it as a crucial learning opportunity for the civil servants (Bunse, 2009; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006; Jesień, 2013; Panke, 2010c), especially in small MS and those holding the presidency for the first time (Galušková, 2017; Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017). However, detailed empirical research on the potential impact of holding the position on national administrations of the Member States is limited so far, particularly comparisons of multiple presidencies. Kaniok and Gergelova Štegirova (2014) establish that the Council presidency in 2009 was to an extent a missed opportunity for the Czech Republic. Coordination structures between the national ministries improved, but staff hired and trained for the

presidency were not retained. In their recent publication, Jensen and Nedergaard (2017) study the implications of the presidency for national administrations of the countries of the fourth Presidency Trio, Poland, Denmark, and Cyprus. They find that the Cypriot administration has undergone the most lasting changes through the presidency, suggesting that the small size of the country and the absence of previous presidency experience are the key factors explaining the long-term impact of the position. Galušková (2017) identifies the Council presidency as a critical juncture in national-EU policy coordination practices in most of the "new" MS holding the position for the first time. This chapter responds to a call for further comparative research on the impact of the Council presidency on national administrations, using six recent presidencies by both old and new small Member States as cases. This chapter analyses the same cases as the previous chapter: Ireland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands as experienced member states, and Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia as first-time presidencies. In terms of size, all the countries qualify as small MS in the context of the EU-28, but the Netherlands and Luxembourg are outliers in the sense that the former is comparatively large in terms of size of national administration and the latter very small.

The findings indicate that the Council presidency improves the administrative capacity of the Member States, but only in one aspect. It is an important mechanism of socialisation, contributing to building the administrative capacity of the MS by enhancing the qualifications as well as changing attitudes and perceptions of the civil servants. Presidency experience improves EU policy coordination on the national level, helps to build, or re-build, extensive contact networks with EU institutions and results in a higher quality of national positions, as well as more active engagement in Council meetings on all levels. There is a clear difference between experienced and new MS in the sense that for the latter the presidency also means becoming full members of the EU[164] - only by holding the position do the civil servants gain full understanding of how the EU institutions work. This is especially the case with informal practices, such as Trialogues between the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. However, this is not to downplay the impact of the presidency on the older MS currently only holding the position every 13-14 years and holding their first post-Lisbon

[164] Interviews #1 (LT), #6 (LT), #32 (LT), #17 (LV), #18 (LV), #18 (LV), #19 (LV), #26 (LV), #29 (LV), #78 (SK)

presidencies.[165] The presidency presents them with an opportunity to re-engage in EU affairs and to introduce a new generation of civil servants to them thoroughly, as well as to re-establish contacts with EU institutions. For both old and new MS, holding the presidency is "*an experience that is not attainable in other ways*,"[166] bringing the EU closer to national affairs and creating a sense of ownership in national administrations. However, it does not lead to lasting institutional changes within national administrations. While governments frequently set the goal of using the presidency to strengthen the civil service, there is little effort afterwards to follow up on and maintain the structures, or the staff involved.

Theoretically, the impact of the presidency on the administrative capacity on the Member States is best explained through sociological institutionalism. Historical institutionalism also plays a role in explaining the difference between the "old" and the "new" Member States, since the impact of the presidency is stronger in the MS without previous experience of holding the position. Rational choice institutionalist components, visible in the presidency preparation period, do not remain in the long term. Overall, even if only from sociological and historical institutionalist perspectives, a temporary event such as the Council presidency still contributes to Europeanisation of the administrations of small Member States.

After briefly introducing the theoretical framework and the hypotheses, the chapter tackles the long-term impact of the Council presidency on the institutions involved in the process. It begins with the coordinating institutions, moves on to national ministries, continues with Permanent Representations in Brussels, and addresses the overall impact on national administrations. For the case selection and methodology, see Chapter 3, as I build here on the same empirical basis while focusing on the implications and long-term impact instead of adjustments for the presidency period. The conclusion summarises the findings and compares the cases, establishing a difference between routine and first-time presidencies, and also discusses the theoretical implications and the contribution of the presidency to the administrative capacity of the MS.

[165] The Lisbon Treaty in 2009 changed the competences of the rotating presidency by introducing permanent chairs of the European Council and Foreign Affairs Council, among others, decreasing the workload but also limiting the visibility of the rotating presidency.
[166] Interview #43 (LU)

4.2. Theoretical framework

This chapter employs the same new institutionalist theoretical framework and concept of administrative capacity as Chapter 3. However, it shifts the timeframe and explores the aftermath of a Council presidency by identifying whether there is any long-term impact, and whether any of the adjustments pinpointed in Chapter 3 had a lasting value:

> *H2: Holding the Council presidency improves the administrative capacity of a Member State in the long-term.*

Here, both outcomes are likely. It is possible that the national governments do not retain the qualified staff and do not maintain the structures that enhanced coordination of EU affairs during the Presidency. On the other hand, it is also unlikely that the staff that have been involved in conducting the presidency activities and remained at the ministries or Permanent Representations would lose the skills and knowledge acquired during the six-month Presidency period, and a certain extent of Europeanisation of national administrations can still be present even if the institutional adjustments of administrative capacity made for the Presidency were temporary. The chapter tests whether RCI or SI explains the long-term impact of a Council presidency better, whether it led rather to any long-term institutional adjustments or a change of attitudes and working practices or skills of civil servants involved, or both.

Similar to the previous Chapter, based on HI assumptions, the long-term impact of a Council presidency, if there is any, should be stronger on administrations of Member States that held the position for the first time. I therefore derive the following, additional hypothesis:

> *H2a: The impact of holding the EU Council presidency is likely to be stronger on the Member States with no previous presidency experience.*

This Chapter employs the same data and case selection as Chapter 3, therefore the next section immediately jumps to the case studies.

4.3. Analysis: Case studies

For the sake of simplicity, this section is structured into three parts covering the three main (groups of) institutions involved in the conduct of a Council presidency. It begins by exploring the long-term impact of the Council presidency on the coordinating institutions, moves on to the national ministries, and concludes with the Permanent Representations of the Member States. Within each of the subsections, the findings are reported separately for each of the six presidencies in chronological order.

4.3.1. Coordinating institutions

As previously discussed, each member state sets up a coordinating institution in the run-up to their presidency. These are either independent institutions, or departments at the MFA or the Prime Minister's office. They usually have several dozen employees responsible for, among other tasks, for the drafting of the presidency programme, coordination of presidency dossiers and activities between the line ministries, centralised planning of informal ministerial meetings and other events in the capitals, hiring, and staff training. This section tackles what remained of these institutions after the presidency in the six countries studied and whether national governments maintained any of the practices and experience.

In Ireland, the Prime Minister's office coordinated the Council presidency. Unrelated to the presidency, coordination of EU affairs moved from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister's office, and back to the MFA shortly after, therefore any structures or experience were difficult to retain.[167] However, the inter-ministerial presidency planning group, which met in different formations to coordinate administrative and political issues, remained in the political formation and was renamed the EU Engagement Group. It still meets to better coordinate handling of EU affairs and to identify issues of Irish national interest early on in the working programme of the European Commission. The meetings have been less frequent after the presidency, taking place bi-annually to review the progress of the current, and priorities of the incoming Council presidencies.[168] Many people involved in the presidency coordination

[167] Interview #33 (IE), #47 (IE)
[168] Interviews #33 (IE), #44 (IE)

moved on to other diplomatic postings abroad.[169] However, staff remaining at the Prime Minister's office reported improved communication between the office and the line ministries after the presidency, even if it was mostly through personal contacts. The presidency also led to a better understanding of working practices among different ministries and departments, and, to an extent, to a unification of communication practices among them.[170]

In Lithuania, the Department for Presidency Coordination established at the MFA was dismantled and people moved on to different jobs within the ministry or to diplomatic postings.[171] Contact networks between civil servants, especially those responsible for communication at the Presidency Department and the line ministries, remained on a personal level, facilitating work on EU-related issues between the ministries.[172] Furthermore, numerous people from the Council Presidency Department moved on to work on Lithuania's OECD accession, where skills acquired coordinating the presidency proved useful.[173] The MFA kept lists of temporarily hired people to use the presidency as a headhunting opportunity. However, it was an individual initiative by the MFA and a few other ministries, rather than a centralised effort, to keep the trained and experienced staff in the civil service.[174]

An independent secretariat set up to coordinate the Latvian Council presidency was dismantled afterwards. The majority of civil servants returned to the ministries they had previously worked for, while people newly hired to work for the Presidency Secretariat (about one third) used the experience to get jobs with the civil service or advance their careers in the private or NGO sectors. The network of communication specialists across the ministries still works closely together, even after the Presidency Secretariat dissolved. The State Chancellery continues the practice of employing English and French native speakers for communication tasks.[175] The ministries adjusted laws governing centralised procurement procedures, making them more transparent and cost-effective. The government kept the legislation enabling voluntary work for government events that it passed for the presidency to employ a number of volunteer

[169] Interview #37 (IE)
[170] Interview #47 (IE)
[171] Interview #1 (LT)
[172] Interviews #3 (LT), #6 (LT), #10 (LT), #13 (LT)
[173] Interview #9 (LT)
[174] Interview #3 (LT)
[175] Interview #28 (LV)

liaison officers.[176] Finally, positive feedback on presidency staff training was an incentive for the Latvian Institute for Public Administration to develop an online training programme for self-learning afterwards.[177]

In Luxembourg, the Interministerial Committee for Coordination of European Politics (CICPE) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, chaired by the EU Director-General of the MFA, coordinated the presidency. The existing structure was merely temporarily reinforced by an additional temporary presidency configuration chaired by the secretary-general of the MFA.[178] This being the leanest coordination structure of all the six analysed countries, the presidency still led to better and lasting personal contacts between experts working at different ministries.

Similar to Luxembourg, the Department for European Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinated the Dutch Council presidency. The Netherlands has an established and efficient EU policy coordination scheme at the national ministries, which was only reinforced with additional staff. The line ministries had teams of under ten civil servants responsible for the presidency files, who later returned to their previous jobs.[179] The Department centralised and largely outsourced the logistical coordination to private providers to unburden the ministries.[180] Only video conferences between ministries and diplomatic representations around Europe still take place, although less frequently, occurring every two to three weeks in the aftermath of the presidency to keep up to date with current EU affairs.[181]

Similar to Lithuania, Slovakia set up a temporary Presidency Secretariat as a directorate-general with three departments at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. Out of 50 people working for the Presidency Secretariat on a temporary contract basis, about a quarter remained at the ministry after passing selection procedures for vacant posts, presidency experience being a notable competitive advantage. Immediately after the presidency, a department to prepare

[176] Interview #18 (LV)
[177] Interview #22 (LV)
[178] Interview #34 (LU)
[179] Interviews #62 (NL), #72 (NL)
[180] Interview #69 (NL)
[181] Interview #69 (NL)

for the Slovak OSCE chairmanship in 2019 was set up at the MFA, where some of the presidency experience was useful.[182]

4.3.2. National ministries

Holding the EU Council presidency means a remarkable increase in workload in the area of EU affairs for national ministries, as well as an intensified need for inter-ministerial coordination. As established in Chapter 3, ministries address these issues by first hiring additional employees, or reassigning civil servants at the ministry to work on presidency-related issues, as well as by organising extensive training for the presidency staff to ensure their competence. Second, the ministries set up additional coordination structures and practices to handle the workload promptly. I now turn to examine whether and how the extra workforce and the competences the civil servants gain through the presidency, as well as the institutional structures, and the coordination practices set up for the period, contributed to the improvement of the administrative capacity of the six MS in the long run.

Apart from some practices, the institutional set up at the ministries mostly returned to normal after the Irish presidency. Observing the surge in motivation and the skills gained by the staff through the presidency, one civil servant referred to it as an "*Olympics for the civil service*".[183] The presidency was not a major eye-opener for the experienced Irish civil servants but it served as a very timely opportunity to re-engage with EU institutions, which were, to an extent, neglected during the financial crisis. Furthermore, as the first Post-Lisbon presidency, it strengthened ties with the European Parliament.[184] The presidency introduced a new generation of civil servants to EU affairs, which was important considering that numerous experienced ministry employees went into early retirement during the financial crisis just before 2013.[185] Civil servants from the ministries reported improved contacts with EU institutions. It was easier to acquire information and make one's voice heard having established direct personal contacts with relevant officers at the Commission during the presidency. The contacts are, admittedly, a "*wasting asset*" because of staff turnover, but they tend to have a

[182] Interview #72 (SK)
[183] Interview #44 (IE)
[184] Interviews #33 (IE), #37 (IE), #37 (IE), #38 (IE), #44 (IE)
[185] Interview #37 (IE)

lifespan of several years after the presidency.[186] The Council presidency underlined that a small Member State is not only a policy-taker, but can be a successful policy-maker once it knows the strategies to make its voice heard.[187] Irish civil servants were more proactive and after the presidency used their extensive contact networks to monitor and engage with the legislative proposals by the European Commission earlier. On the practical side, the Presidency Hub website remained to share learning materials and updates on relevant EC legislative proposals between the line ministries. The ministries kept briefing arrangements introduced for the presidency: they exchange short flash notes on relevant EU issues before producing extensive reports.[188] Some ministries considered reforming their internship programmes to keep active engagement with EU affairs and post interns to the Permanent Representation in Brussels.[189] Finally, after the presidency, Irish ministers continued to visit the European Parliament on a more regular basis than before.[190]

Lithuania set the strengthening of the civil service as one of the goals for the presidency. While "*no magic happened there*,"[191] there has been some lasting value. First of all, for about half of the people employed on temporary contracts, the presidency was "*a stepping stone into the civil service*".[192] Some ministries used the presidency as a headhunting opportunity. The MFA and the ministry of energy kept lists of promising candidates, who were hired once positions at the institutions became available. The temporary presidency contracts of about two years, in contrast to usually shorter internships, allowed for assessment of the skills and the competences of the candidates better, even though there was no centralised effort by the government to keep them and they had to pass the usual personnel selections.[193] Regular staff turnover after the presidency was low, most of the trained and experienced civil servants remained at the ministries.[194] The Council presidency also contributed to improving of the competence of the civil servants. Firstly, hundreds of people enhanced their language skills and knowledge of EU institutions through extensive presidency staff training.[195] Secondly, daily

[186] Interviews #37 (IE), #44 (IE), #49 (IE)
[187] Interview #37 (IE)
[188] Interview #44 (IE)
[189] Interview #44 (IE)
[190] Interviews #44 (IE), #45 (IE)
[191] Interview #1 (LT)
[192] Interviews #2 (LT), #4 (LT) – quote, #6 (LT), #13 (LT)
[193] Interview #1 (LT), #3 (LT), #13 (LT)
[194]Interview #6 (LT)
[195] Interviews #3 (LT), #4 (LT), #6 (LT), #10 (LT) #13 (LT)

exposure to the preparation of the informal Council meetings in Vilnius, or the working party meetings in Brussels gave the civil servants first-hand experience of how the EU institutions work. Exceptionally, this happened on all levels, rather than just in the international affairs departments at the ministries. The presidency brought about an understanding that EU affairs are an integral part of domestic policy-making, rather than international cooperation.[196] Civil servants working with the presidency files at the ministries established lasting close professional contacts with the EC and the CGS, to "*a level 'they' have never had before and will not reach again for a long time"*.[197] Being able to directly approach heads of DGs at the European Commission, and having one's face known by high-level EU officials, facilitated representation of national interests with the EU institutions after the presidency.[198] Thorough knowledge of the EU legislative processes acquired by the civil servants during the presidency allowed for better formation of national positions in Brussels.[199] The presidency established the image of Lithuania as a reliable partner with the EU institutions.[200] On the technical side, LINESIS, an electronic system for inter-ministerial coordination of EU legislation, was updated for the presidency and is still in use.[201] Networks which emerged through centralised training and inter-ministerial coordination of presidency dossiers still facilitate communication between the line ministries.[202] Finally, the MFA engages in more twinning projects to share experience with other new MS and ENP countries after holding the Council presidency.[203] In a nutshell, "*in every ministry there is that little team of people who really can tell and understand what Brussels is, how decisions are made and who you have to work with in order to influence them. All of this turns into a greater understanding and protection of own interests."*[204]

In Latvia, the majority of the presidency team consisted of existing civil servants, who underwent extensive training before, and gained invaluable experience managing EU-related dossiers during the presidency.[205] Staff turnover after the presidency was low, over 90% of the people remained working for the ministries. Furthermore, several experts took up jobs with the

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[196] Interviews #3 (LT), #6 (LT), #10 (LT), #13 (LT)
[197] Interview #1 (LT)
[198] Interviews #6 (LT), #13 (LT)
[199] Interview #4 (LT), #12 (LT)
[200] Interview #10 (LT)
[201] Interviews #7 (LT), #11 (LT)
[202] Interview #13 (LT)
[203] Interview #1 (LT)
[204] Interview #5 (LT)
[205] Interview #22 (LV)

EU institutions in Brussels afterwards, where the presidency served as a door-opener, strengthening the network of Latvian experts on the EU level.[206] The government made no centralised effort to retain the trained and experienced staff, but numerous people returning from Brussels were promoted, especially at the MFA and ministries of Economy and Finance, to keep them motivated and to make better use of their skills.[207] The presidency increased the competence and the confidence of the experts, only afterwards did they feel they were standing on an equal footing with the experts from older and bigger Member States.[208] The working practices and procedures at the national ministries largely went back to normal after the presidency.[209] However, "Lines to take", an electronic system for inter-ministerial coordination of EU legislative files, is still in use.[210] Information sharing chains between line ministries that were temporarily shortened returned to usual, but communication is facilitated through personal contacts established during the presidency.[211] Furthermore, coordination of EU affairs improved between the departments within line ministries, particularly at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Finance. A new perception of EU affairs as part of domestic policy emerged, and knowledge of how the EU institutions function improved greatly across the departments, from the ministers to lower grade civil servants.[212] Knowledge of the legislative processes on the EU level, as well as personal contacts acquired during the presidency with high-level officials at the EU institutions, especially at the EC, have allowed Latvian civil servants to engage more actively and in a more timely manner, leading to higher-quality national positions on EU legislative proposals. The civil servants learned when and how to approach the EC and the CGS to acquire relevant information and voice the interests of a small Member State.[213] Furthermore, the European Neighbourhood Policy being one of the priorities of the Latvian presidency, afterwards The Ministry of Home Affairs started to engage more actively in mobility partnerships with Belarus and Azerbaijan.[214] Through active engagement with NGOs and civil society organisations during the presidency, the ministries improved the involvement of social partners and stakeholders in policy-making processes.[215]

[206] Interview #19 (LV)
[207] Interview #29 (LV)
[208] Interviews #19 (LV), #26 (LV)
[209] Interviews #25 (LV), #27 (LV), #30 (LV)
[210] Interviews #18 (LV), #30 (LV)
[211] Interviews #22 (LV), 25 (LV), #29 (LV), #30 (LV)
[212] Interviews #19 (LV), #20 (LV), #23 (LV), #29 (LV), #30 (LV)
[213] Interviews #17 (LV), #23 (LV), #26 (LV), #27 (LV)
[214] Interview #25 (LV)
[215] Interview #20 (LV)

Luxembourg was the only of the six MS analysed here to take a different approach to retaining people temporarily hired for the presidency in the civil service by considering it in the recruitment policy.[216] As was the practice with previous Luxembourgish Council presidencies, the government hired about 200 people on temporary two to three-year contracts to reinforce the ministries. For the same period, recruitment in the civil service was suspended to be able to offer more positions to the candidates with presidency experience. They still had to pass the ordinary civil service exams, but an extended period working for the government during the presidency was a notable competitive advantage.[217] The government hired about 70-80% of the presidency trainees afterwards, MFA alone took on about 20 people, which is a notable number for the small Luxembourgish public administration.[218] Since the same experts deal with a certain policy issue or a legislative proposal on all levels, be it national or EU, in Luxembourg, they already had sufficient knowledge of EU institutions and processes that did not improve greatly with the presidency.[219] Contacts with EU institutions intensified, but these contacts tend to only have a lifespan of 3-4 years after the presidency.[220] However, as a coordinating institution the MFA retained closer connections with line ministries, which are helpful for dispute settlement on the national level. The presidency also consolidated the networks between the Permanent Representation and the capital.[221]

In the Netherlands, the majority of the presidency staff were regular civil servants temporarily reassigned from their usual duties.[222] In addition, numerous trainees worked with presidency dossiers at the national ministries. The traineeship programme, a part of the governments' hiring scheme, was adjusted for the presidency period to allow trainees a longer nine-month stay at the Permanent Representation in Brussels.[223] Similar to other experienced MS, the Dutch administration boasts a well-established and efficient system of EU policy coordination, so the presidency did not present a major learning experience, but still served as a "*pressure cooker*" raising awareness of and interest in EU affairs.[224] Dutch national ministries went back

[216] Interview #61 (LU)
[217] Interviews #70 (LU), #55 (LU)
[218] Interviews #51 (LU), #61 (LU)
[219] Interviews #34 (LU), #41 (LU)
[220] Interviews #34 (LU), #51 (LU)
[221] Interview #34 (LU)
[222] Interview #67 (NL)
[223] Interview #59 (NL)
[224] Interview #63 (NL)

to the usual EU policy coordination system after the presidency, small teams set up for the coordination at the line ministries dissolved.[225] However, directors of EU affairs departments still meet quarterly.[226] The presidency structured and improved coordination of EU issues and cooperation within some of the ministries, and was a useful tool for re-engaging the civil servants in EU affairs.[227] It freshened up contact networks with the EU institutions and representatives of other MS, which retain value for a few years after the presidency.[228]

For the Slovak presidency, national ministries hired additional staff, the Ministry of Finance alone employed about 15 people. There was no effort by the government to keep the additional staff afterwards, but many passed competitions and remained working for the civil service, so the experience gained training and working for the presidency largely remained within the ministries.[229] The presidency contributed to a change in the attitudes of civil servants. As in the other new MS, an understanding that EU issues are an essential part of domestic politics emerged.[230] After the Slovak presidency, EU affairs coordination went back to the usual capital-based model where national ministries give detailed instructions to the Permanent Representation in Brussels.[231] However, the flash report system implemented for the presidency period to speed up information exchange between the Perm. Rep. and the capital remained. Furthermore, an inter-ministerial online system to coordinate EU legislation was updated and extended to the entire ministries rather than only international affairs departments.[232] Experts who returned to the ministries from Brussels had better knowledge of when and which EU actors or institutions to approach, which improves the quality of national positions and leads to a more proactive representation of national interests instead of following the guidance of the EC and the CGS.[233] Contact networks established between the Slovak civil servants and EU institutions have lasting value, and national experts participate in working party meetings more actively after the presidency. Additionally, inter-ministerial cooperation improved through personal contacts established by coordinating presidency files.[234] Holding

[225] Interviews #59 (NL), #67 (NL)
[226] Interview #66 (NL)
[227] Interview #72 (NL)
[228] Interviews #66 (NL), #71 (NL)
[229] Interview #75 (SK), #81 (SK)
[230] Interview #78 (SK)
[231] Interview #73 (SK)
[232] Interview #78 (SK)
[233] Interviews #75 (SK), #79 (SK), #81 (SK)
[234] Interviews #78 (SK), #81 (SK)

the presidency added visibility and strengthened the image of Slovakia as a reliable partner of the EU institutions.[235] Similar to the other new MS, the Slovak civil servants frequently referred to the presidency as attainment of full membership of the European Union.[236]

4.3.3. Permanent Representations

The Irish Permanent Representation expanded for the presidency period, mostly by hiring temporary policy officers, and went back to its normal size shortly afterwards. Even though most of the high-level diplomats rotated to different postings almost immediately after the presidency, close contacts with EU institutions and other Member States remained for months afterwards.[237] They helped to obtain relevant information on COREPER agendas or planned legislative proposals made by the EC earlier, which was essential for the preparation of well-informed national positions.[238] For a small Member State like Ireland, good relations with other MS, as well as awareness of their positions for coalition-building in the Council are very important, and they have improved notably with the presidency.[239] Not least, by chairing working party meetings and acting as brokers during the presidency, Irish experts participating in Council negotiations improved their competences.[240] Furthermore, diplomats at the Perm. Rep. successfully used the presidency period to restore the Irish reputation as a reliable partner with the EU institutions and other MS, which had suffered during the economic crisis.[241] Presidency experience served as a door-opener for Irish experts to the EU institutions. Several returned to Brussels after the presidency as high-level seconded national experts, securing posts strategically important for Ireland, which was a "*win-win situation on all sides*".[242] Finally, along with other MS and EU institutions, lobbyists constitute a group of key actors in Brussels. Interest groups rarely approach small Member States, unless they hold the rotating presidency and become the primary point of contact for the lobbyists. The Irish diplomats could establish lasting contacts with key interest groups that are sustained after the presidency, although not at the same intensity.[243]

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[235] Interview #82 (SK)
[236] Interviews #1 (LT), #6 (LT), #32 (LT), #17 (LV), #18 (LV), #18 (LV), #19 (LV), #26 (LV), #29 (LV), #78 (SK)
[237] Interviews #38 (IE), #40 (IE), #43 (IE)
[238] Interviews #43 (IE), 45 (IE)
[239] Interviews #43 (IE), #49 (IE), #50 (IE)
[240] Interview #46 (IE)
[241] Interviews #33 (IE), #37 (IE), #38 (IE), #39 (IE), #42 (IE), #43 (IE), #45 (IE), #47 (IE), #48 (IE), #49 (IE)
[242] Interviews #37 (IE), #38 (IE), #40 (IE)
[243] Interview #46 (IE)

The Lithuanian Permanent Representation went back to its usual size after the presidency. About 80-90% of the attachés who returned from Brussels continued to work for the ministries in Vilnius, where skills and connections gained allowed them to shape more informed national positions on EU matters.[244] Several working practices remained after the presidency. Regular videoconferences still take place between the national ministries and the Perm. Rep. to quickly exchange information.[245] Contacts with EU institutions returned to being pragmatic and demand driven.[246] However, Lithuanian diplomats attained a level of skill and knowledge of EU policy-making processes, informal practices such as trialogues, and intensity of contact with the CGS and the EC that they had never had before and are unlikely to achieve again in the near future.[247] Former Council working party chairs, over 200 people who went through intensive negotiation skill training and led the meetings for six months, have participated more actively in the working parties after the presidency.[248] Learning who to approach, when and how to build alliances between MS while acting as a neutral broker during the presidency equipped the people involved with indispensable skills for the better representation of national interests later.[249] Multiple attachés reported that they are on equal footing with experts from older and bigger MS, have more courage and confidence and feel like "*a full member of the EU*" only after the presidency.[250] For Lithuania, the presidency helped to strengthen its position and make its voice heard in matters regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia from 2014 onwards.[251] Connections with the EC and other Member States also had the "*value of gold*" when discussing energy security issues, a crucial Lithuanian national interest, after the presidency.[252] Finally, several diplomats and attachés from the Lithuanian Perm. Rep. got offered jobs with the EC and the EEAS after the presidency, strengthening the network of national experts in Brussels.[253]

Latvian experience at the Permanent Representation was similar to the Lithuanian. The number of experts deployed in Brussels went back to normal after the presidency, but contact networks

[244] Interview #16 (LT)
[245] Interviews #1 (LT), #5 (LT)
[246] Interviews #6 (LT), #16 (LT)
[247] Interviews #1 (LT), #5 (LT)
[248] Interviews #1 (LT), #16 (LT)
[249] Interviews #1, #6, #8 (LT)
[250] Interviews #6 (LT), #16 (LT), #32 (LT)
[251] Interview #5 (LT), #12 (LT)
[252] Interview #3 (LT)
[253] Interview #5 (LT)

and insider understanding of how EU institutions work remained, despite being a diminishing asset largely based on personal connections. Latvian diplomats approached EU institutions more actively and voiced their interests better in the working party meetings after having chaired them for the presidency period.[254] Contacts between the Perm. Rep. and the capital improved after the presidency, regular video conferences between the national ministries and the Permanent Representation still take place to coordinate national positions faster.[255] Like Lithuania, Latvian civil servants underlined that only after holding the Council presidency did the small Baltic country with a relatively short EU membership history become a full, equal member of the European Union.[256]

The number of people and the intensity of work also went back to normal at the Luxembourgish Permanent Representation after the presidency. However, while EU institutions move on to the next presidency, crucial contacts on a private basis, which are not attainable otherwise, are refreshed and remain for several years afterwards.[257] Here, a national speciality at the Luxembourgish Perm. Rep. helps, since rotation periods for attachés are longer than in most other MS, with the same people remaining at the Perm. Rep. for well over the usual 3-5 years.[258] Even an experienced MS like Luxembourg, having held multiple Council presidencies before, identified the presidency as a means to learn about informal and less bureaucratic ways to approach EU institutions.[259] Furthermore, contacts with lobbyists established during the presidency remained useful afterwards, since otherwise Luxembourg is rarely the primary point of contact for interest groups in Brussels.[260]

After the Dutch presidency, things went back to normal very quickly at the Permanent Representation. The 25 junior trainees already returned to the Hague on the 1st of July 2016, followed by the rest of the additional staff.[261] The Perm. Rep. even shrank in size due to budget cuts. Because of this "*major walk-out*" the contacts established with the EU institutions and

[254] Interview #27 (LV)
[255] Interview #29 (LV)
[256] Interviews #17 (LV), #18 (LV), #18 (LV), #19 (LV), #26 (LV), #29 (LV)
[257] Interview #58 (LU)
[258] Interview #61 (LU)
[259] Interview #58 (LU)
[260] Interview #61 (LU)
[261] Interview #59 (NL)

other MS during the presidency were difficult to sustain and only had a minor lasting value.[262] There were some improvements in the coordination between the Perm. Rep. and the Hague that remained. Short flash reports adopted for the presidency became a common practice to exchange information faster, and video conferences between the Perm. Rep., capital, and embassies still take place 2-3 times per week.[263] The presidency also helped to establish closer lasting contacts with interest groups in Brussels.[264]

Slovakia went back to capital-based coordination of EU affairs after the presidency.[265] However, the Permanent Representation grew by 10-15 people, or 10%, since some ministries, realising the centrality of EU affairs to national policy-making, kept more experts in Brussels.[266] The Perm. Rep. was restructured and decentralised for the presidency, and the new structure prevailed.[267] Furthermore, as in the other cases, information exchange between the Perm. Rep. and national ministries improved. Short flash reports and video conferences are still used to exchange updates more quickly, even though standard, more extensive reporting practices also returned.[268] Slovak diplomats shifted back to the representation of national interests in the Council meetings after the presidency, but it led to a change of mentality, much better knowledge of EU institutions, and informal practices of policy-making.[269] Diplomats at the Slovak Permanent Representation developed closer contacts with the EC and the CGS, as well as with MEPs and rapporteurs, and approach them more proactively after the presidency.[270] The diplomats have better access to information on the EU level and shape more informed national positions, which facilitates the representation of Slovak national interests.[271] As in the cases of Latvia and Lithuania, Slovak civil servants reported that the presidency and the expertise they gained through it made a difference, and made them feel like full members of the EU.[272]

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[262] Interviews #56 (NL), #59 (NL) – quote
[263] Interviews #56 (NL), #63 (NL), #69 (NL)
[264] Interview #62 (NL)
[265] Interviews #73 (SK), #78 (SK)
[266] Interviews #57 (SK), #77 (SK)
[267] Interview #74 (SK)
[268] Interview 60 (SK)
[269] Interviews #64 (SK), #75 (SK)
[270] Interviews #68 (SK), #78 (SK)
[271] Interview #68 (SK)
[272] Interview #57 (SK)

4.4. Comparison and conclusion

Before summarising the results, it should be underlined that due to the research design building mainly on expert interviews and the potential positive bias, these findings must be taken with some caution and the impact of the Council presidency might be overstated. While I triangulated the results with official documents and presidency reports where possible, some of the claims might still be subjective. This might be due to the respondents being civil servants who were actively engaged with the conduct of the Council presidency and are therefore unwilling to reveal critical aspects of their work. Furthermore, the sample, even if fairly large and carefully selected, is limited to make very reliable conclusions for the entire civil service of six countries. Unlike with a survey design, a clear ranking of more or less impact of the Council presidency on national administrations of the Member States is difficult in this case. This is especially the true for attempting to classify the finer-grained changes in skills, attitudes, networks of the civil servants involved, which should be viewed with particular caution. However, due to a large number of interviews and a notable difference of claims and opinions of the respondents, the variance between the presidency impact on "old" and "new" Member States emerges clearly.

To sum up the results of the case studies, in all six Member States presidency coordination institutions did not create much legacy. While old MS only temporarily adjusted and reinforced their existing coordination practices, new MS created elaborate separate institutions. In all the cases, governments did not retain any of the additional structures. However, civil servants built up useful lasting personal contact network, and a better understanding of how other line ministries work. Furthermore, extensive experience in logistical planning and event management obtained through the presidency was useful for similar future obligations, although none can quite compare to the presidency in scope and intensity.[273]

At the national ministries, the Council presidency, albeit to a limited extent, contributed to capacity building in human resources in all six MS. Out of the six, only Luxembourgish administration made a conscious effort to retain staff temporarily hired and trained for the

[273] Interviews #1 (LT), #3 (LT), #5 (LT), #18 (LV), #24 (LV), #34 (LU), #35 (NL), #36 (LU), #37 (IE), #39 (IE), #42 (IE), #43 (IE), #45 (IE), #46 (IE), #48 (IE), #50 (IE), #51 (LU), #54 (LU), #55 (LU), #60 (SK), #66 (NL), #68 (SK), #69 (NL), #70 (LU), #73 (SK), #74 (SK), #76 (SK), #78 (SK).

presidency in the civil service. However, even without any specific measures in the other five MS, the presidency served as a stepping stone into the civil service for numerous young professionals.[274] Intensive work with the presidency dossiers and coordination, as well as training, led to improved competence and knowledge of EU institutions and processes among the civil servants at the national ministries. In the old Member States, the presidency served to introduce a new generation of civil servants to EU-affairs.[275] More importantly, it notably changed the attitudes of civil servants in the MS holding their first presidencies, where an understanding that EU issues are an integral part of domestic policy-making emerged. Apart from some improvements in how EU legislative files are handled between line ministries, the Council presidency did not change much in the institutional set-up or working practices at the national ministries. However, it greatly enhanced competence in EU matters and confidence among the civil servants. In the MS with previous presidency experience and well-developed EU policy coordination systems, the presidency meant a re-engagement with the EU institutions and a re-establishment of closer contacts with them. For the first-time presidencies, however, it was a major eye-opener on how EU institutions function and produce legislation. They acquired knowledge of both formal and informal ways of influencing the EU agenda, built up contact networks with high level officials at EU institutions that would be unattainable in other ways and that persisted after the presidency. These allowed the small MS to better shape national positions and make their voices heard afterwards.

Finally, in all six Permanent Representations, the nature and the load of work, as well as staff numbers, largely went back to levels that prevailed before the presidency, with the exception of the Dutch and Slovak Perm. Reps. - the former decreasing in size and the latter expanding. All the six cases adopted a Brussels-based presidency model giving greater autonomy to the Perm. Reps., and all returned to more capital-based practices, dropped their neutral broker roles and shifted back to representation of national interests immediately after the presidency. However, in all the cases, communication with the capitals improved and practices such as video conferences or flash reporting remained. Furthermore, both respondents from old and new MS built extensive and close contact networks with the EU institutions, which, while a "wasting asset", have a lasting value of several years and are essential for obtaining relevant

[274] Interviews #1 (LT), #2 (LT), #3 (LT), #11 (LT), #26 (LV), #50 (LT), #76 (SK)
[275] Interview #37 (IE)

information and better representing interests of a small state. As the presidency currently only repeats itself every 13-14 years, it was a new experience for most of the working party chairs, both from routine and first-time presidencies, which improved their negotiation, brokering and coalition-building skills. Finally, it was an enormous learning experience, especially for diplomats from first-time presidencies. Having chaired Council meetings, participated in trialogues, and represented the Council at the EP, they agree that only after the presidency did they feel that their countries became full members of equal standing of the European Union. To a lesser extent, this was also the case for diplomats from "experienced" MS holding their first post-Lisbon presidencies, which required more sustained cooperation with the European Parliament. See Table 4.1 for a summary of the key findings.

Overall, my findings show that the EU Council presidency matters for national administrations. Holding the presidency is a large and costly administrative burden putting a strain on the civil servants involved for a period well beyond the initial six months. However, while acknowledging the burden civil servants tend to identify the presidency as a major opportunity bringing benefits such as contact networks and knowledge of EU institutions and processes that cannot be attained in other ways.[276] Holding the rotating Council presidency mobilises entire national administrations towards one common goal and immerses all the line ministries in coordination of EU affairs.[277] Asked to compare the presidency to other similar engagements or events, civil servants could not name anything similar in terms of workload and intensity.[278] Depending on the size of national administration, the EU Council presidency mobilises between hundreds and thousands of civil servants for a period of about two years.[279]

[276] Interviews #1 (LT), #5 (LT), #12 (LT), #13 (LT), #17 (LV), #18 (LV), #19 (LV), #26 (LV), #29 (LV), #30 (LV), #34 (LU), #39 (IE), #40 (IE), #42 (IE), #43 (IE), #45 (IE), #47 (IE), #49 (IE), #50 (IE), #53 (LU), #59 (NL)

[277] Interview #16 (LT)

[278] Interviews #1 (LT), #3 (LT), #5 (LT), #18 (LV), #24 (LV), #34 (LU), #35 (NL), #36 (LU), #37 (IE), #39 (IE), #42 (IE), #43 (IE), #45 (IE), #46 (IE), #48 (IE), #50 (IE), #51 (LU), #54 (LU), #55 (LU), #60 (SK), #66 (NL), #68 (SK), #69 (NL), #70 (LU), #73 (SK), #74 (SK), #76 (SK), #78 (SK)

[279] Interviews #1 (LT) ,#5 (LT), #18 (LV), #22 (LV), #33 (IE), #35 (LU), #38 (IE), #39 (IE), #40 (IE), #41 (LU), #65 (NL), #80 (SK), #81 (SK)

	Rational Choice Institutionalism			Sociological institutionalism		
	Structures	Coordination/communication practices	Staff	Networks	Skills	Attitudes
Ireland	Capital: Dismantled. Only committees remained. Perm rep: size back to normal	Improvement	No measures to retain additional staff; Civil servants largely remained.	Re-engagement (crucial after crisis)	Improvement	Motivational boost
Lithuania	Capital: Dismantled. Perm rep: size back to normal.	Improvement	No measures to retain additional staff (only competitive advantage); Civil servants largely remained	Emergence	Notable improvement	Substantive change
Latvia	Capital: Dismantled. Perm rep: size back to normal	Improvement	No measures to retain additional staff (only competitive advantage); Civil servants largely remained	Emergence	Notable improvement	Substantive change
Luxembourg	Capital: Lean to begin with, Dismantled. Perm rep: size back to normal	Marginal improvement	Hiring suspended to retain additional staff; Civil servants largely remained.	Re-engagement	Minor improvement	Little change
Netherlands	Capital: Lean to begin with, Dismantled. Perm rep: size back to normal	Marginal improvement	No measures to retain additional staff (only extended traineeships); Civil servants largely remained.	Re-engagement (temporary)	Minor improvement	Little change
Slovakia	Capital: Dismantled. Perm rep: size back to normal	Improvement	No measures to retain additional staff (only competitive advantage); Civil servants largely remained.	Emergence	Notable improvement	Substantive change
Old MS New MS	Back to normal for all	Improvement for all	Only Luxembourg attempted to retain temporary staff. Low turnover for all	(Temporary) re-engagement Emergence of crucial networks	(Minor) improvement Notable improvement	Little change Substantive change

Table 4.1.: Summary of the findings. Source: own elaboration.

As to the long-term impact, although institutional coordination structures set up for the presidency are dismantled immediately afterward, and formal institutional practices of EU policy coordination only change marginally, the Council presidency has some legacies. First of all, holding the EU Council presidency greatly improves skills and knowledge of the civil servants involved. Be it through massive centralised training programmes, which were organised in the MS holding the position for the first time, or through learning-by-doing for a period of usually at least 18 months, as is common in experienced MS.[280] Civil servants and diplomats greatly improve their knowledge of the EU, its institutional set-up, and especially the informal practices of decision-making, which are invisible for representatives of ordinary MS, and remain largely unknown until it gets to hold the Council presidency.[281] Numerous civil servants from the MS holding the presidency for the first time identified the experience as "*attaining full membership of the EU*", but the learning experience is also present in the older MS, especially since they held their first post-Lisbon presidencies.[282] Apart from the EU-specific knowledge and skills, civil servants, especially working party chairs, get extensive training and experience in negotiation, leadership, mediation, public speaking, and language training, which are applicable in different contexts after the presidency.[283] However, national administrations do little to retain these experienced people after the presidency, especially the temporary employees. Nonetheless, most of the presidency staff are civil servants and a great majority remain working for the public sector, so the skills and knowledge largely stay within the national administrations, strengthening the civil service as a whole.[284] Presidency experience also contributes to "*building up muscles in Brussels*", especially for representatives of the new Member States, who learn to better shape and voice national positions in Council meetings on all levels.[285] Secondly, on the national level, inter-ministerial communication and contact networks improve through coordination of presidency dossiers and participation in centralised trainings.[286] Furthermore, especially in the MS holding the position for the first time, understanding the importance of EU affairs and EU legislation on the national level emerges,

[280] Interviews #2 (LT), #6 (LT),
[281] Interviews #13 (LT),
[282] Interviews #1 (LT), #6 (LT), #18 (LV), #19 (LV)
[283] Interviews #13 (LT), #32 (LT)
[284] Interview #12 (LT)
[285] Interview #12 (LT) – quote (translated)
[286] Interview #9 (LT)

or is reinforced.[287] Holding the presidency creates a sense of ownership of EU affairs among civil servants in the member states, and brings them out of the narrow scope of international affairs departments at the ministries.[288]

The Council presidency is an unprecedented experience for both old and new MS. However, it certainly contributes more to capacity building in the new MS. A common experience among the first-time presidencies is that "*you only become a normal EU member state after the presidency […], there certainly is an effect of taking off a newcomer hat in all countries*".[289] Civil servants from new MS agreed that it is impossible to fully understand how EU institutions function, especially behind the scenes, without having held the Council presidency.[290] While respondents from experienced MS also reported learning a lot about cooperation with the EP and the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, the effect of the presidency was weaker than in the countries that held the position for the first time, confirming H2a.

Connecting the findings to the theoretical argument and the concept of administrative capacity, it is notable that the presidency fulfils a strong socialisation function in national administrations, rather than leading to any lasting institutional change in coordination structures and practices. It is "*not the structure, but the quality of EU issue coordination that changes after the presidency.*"[291] These findings confirm H2, but also point out that long-term Europeanisation of national administrations through holding the EU Council presidency is predominantly apparent through the sociological institutionalist perspective. On the rational choice side, only minor adjustments of administrative capacity, such as communication practices between the institutions, have lasting value. From a historical institutionalist perspective, there is a difference between "old" and "new" Member States, with the latter reporting greater returns from the presidency and a stronger impact on administrative capacity, confirming H2a.

[287] Interview #1 (LT)
[288] Interviews #13 (LT), #17 (LV), #19 (LV), #23 (LV), #26 (LV), #27 (LV), , #29 (LV), #33 (IE), # 36 (LU), #37 (IE), #39 (IE), #40 (IE), #42 (IE), #45 (IE), #46 (IE), #50 (IE), #78 (SK)
[289] Interviews #1 (LT) – quote (translated), #6 (LT), #32 (LT), #17 (LV), #18 (LV), #19 (LV)
[290] Interview #17 (LV)
[291] Interview #32 (LT) – quote (translated).

Chapter 5: The Impact of the EU Council Presidency on National Ministers: a Quantitative Analysis of Attendance at Council Meetings

5.1. Introduction

This chapter, as the second empirical component of the thesis, assesses the impact of the rotating European Union Council presidency on national ministers. The utility of the chapter was strengthened by evidence from my interviews suggesting that the Council presidency motivates national ministers to engage in European Union affairs more actively. Holding the presidency supposedly led to a change of attitudes and behaviour not only among civil servants and diplomats, but also among political elites. Firstly, ministers are expected to chair the ministerial meetings during their country's presidency of the Council of the EU. By chairing, the ministers network with their EU counterparts and gain a higher awareness of EU affairs.[292] The presidency is "*really good for political buy-in*", the ministers cannot just decide to skip a Council meeting, and must be adequately prepared for it.[293] Normally, "*not every minister is always that excited about attending a Council, but being in the seat, being the chair and experiencing how you can, to a certain level, set the agenda, made them much more aware of the fact that you can do something*".[294] Although it has not been measured, civil servants from the ministries and Permanent Representations often stated that even after the presidency, some ministers maintained their active engagement, attended Council meetings more frequently than before, and showed more commitment to EU affairs for the duration that they remained in their posts.[295]

The ministers are supposed to vote on or debate legislative proposals already discussed by the working party and committee levels in the ministerial meetings of the Council of the EU. Studies on who actually makes decisions in the Council and how many are made by bureaucrats rather than elected politicians tie into the debate on the legitimacy and the accountability of EU decision-making. The findings of these studies vary greatly. Based on different data sources,

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[292] Interviews #4 (LT), #12 (LT), #19 (LV)
[293] Interview #45 (IE)
[294] Interview #63 (NL)
[295] Interviews #4 (LT), #12 (LT), #19 (LV), #25 (LV), #37 (IE), #62 (NL), #68 (SK), #71 (NL), #76 (SK), #77 (SK), #81 (SK)

ministers were found to be involved in anything between 15% and 74% of Council decisions, while the rest were made by the lower levels consisting of diplomats and civil servants (Andersen & Rasmussen, 1998; Beyers, 2005; Häge, 2008; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 1997, 2006; Schendelen, 1996). One of the latest studies by Häge (2012, p. 74) suggests that almost 47% of Council decisions are made by ministers, a further 16% are debated by them at some point in the legislative cycle, and the remaining 37% are agreed upon at lower levels of the Council. These results are more optimistic than many earlier studies, but they still pose legitimacy and accountability concerns in the sense that over half of Council decisions are made by bureaucrats and diplomats rather than elected politicians. Furthermore, the Treaty on European Union requires ministerial level politicians to be present at the respective ministerial Council meetings. Article 16.2 (TEU) states that "*The Council shall consist of a representative of each Member State at ministerial level, who may commit the government of the Member State in question and cast its vote*" (European Commission, 2016). However, this is not always the case, and as Grøn and Salomonsen (2015, p. 1072) put it, "*the extended debate regarding the share of decisions being made in working groups and COREPER […] loses some of its importance if those negotiating in Council are still the civil servants and not politicians.*"

Research on who takes part in ministerial meetings is very limited. Grøn and Salomonsen (2015) analysed participation in ministerial Council meetings from 2005 to 2009 and found that the average minister attendance rate is 76%, while junior ministers, senior civil servants, or Permanent Representatives replace them in the other cases. Building their theoretical framework on rational choice and sociological institutionalisms, they find that meeting salience, EU policy competence in a given policy area, length of the country's EU membership along with level of Euroscepticism determine whether ministers go to Council meetings more or less frequently. Surprisingly, the study does not consider the EU Council presidency as an independent variable, which constitutes a gap that I attempt to fill with this analysis.

In this chapter, I quantitatively explore the impact of holding the EU Council presidency on ministerial attendance at Council meetings. I derive my hypotheses from rational choice and sociological institutionalist approaches. Using a novel dataset of hand-coded participant lists of ministerial Council meetings from 2010 to 2017 spanning 16 Council presidencies, I test the

hypotheses. I build on the study by Grøn & Salomonsen (2015) by re-exploring the impact of some of the determinants they identify bearing on minister attendance at Council meetings and add, among others, the Council presidency to the set of independent variables. The results show that the Council presidency indeed has a strong positive impact on minister attendance. However, the data indicates that while the same ministers who chaired the Council meetings attend them more frequently before and during the presidency, attendance rates drop immediately after. The results hint that the Council presidency does not have long-term or socialising impact on the national ministers, at least not on the EU level.

5.2. Theoretical framework

Decision-making in the Council of the EU has long been one of the central topics in the legitimacy, accountability, and transparency debates in the EU. To skim just the tip of this topic, Moravcsik (2002) and Majone (1998) argue for a system of checks and balances sufficient to assure democratic legitimacy of the EU, including having the Council of the EU consisting of elected politicians. Follesdal and Hix (2006) and Héritier (2003), on the other hand, point out a persisting democratic deficit and lack of transparency and accountability in EU decision-making. The Council is arguably the least transparent and accessible institution in the decision-making process of the EU. Informal proceedings and negotiations between various actors within it, and between the Council and other EU institutions are a vital feature of its work to ensure policy progress (Buonanno & Nugent, 2013, p. 52; Heisenberg, 2008).

The work of the Council of the EU is divided into three hierarchical levels. Working parties consist of national government officials who examine legislative proposals of the Commission and seek agreement on specific, technical details. Committees make up the second tier, where COREPER II consists of Permanent Representatives of the MS and deals with intergovernmental and politically sensitive issues. COREPER I, comprising the Deputy Permanent Representatives, handles more routine issues and legislative proposals. About 250 working parties and committees support the highest level, the ministerial meetings where ministers of the Member States (MS) formally take decisions and discuss controversial and politically sensitive matters (Buonanno & Nugent, 2013, p. 50; Häge, 2012; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006). The agenda

of the ministerial meetings consists of lists of A and B points. A-points are those that have been approved at the committee level and are adopted by the ministers as a package without further debate. B-points, on the other hand, are sensitive issues that need further deliberation. If no agreement can be reached by the ministers, B-points move back down to the working party or committee level (Häge, 2008, 2012, pp. 13–18; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006).

Decision-making in the Council is characterised by a culture of consensus. Even during ministerial meetings, a large share of agreements are reached by consensus and voting rarely takes place, casting the first shadow on the legitimacy of its decision-making (Buonanno & Nugent, 2013; Häge, 2008; Heisenberg, 2005; Sullivan & Selck, 2007). Furthermore, over one third of legislative proposals passing through the Council are agreed upon by bureaucrats and diplomats on the two lower levels before even reaching ministerial meetings (Häge, 2012, p. 73). In addition, data for 2004-2009 shows that even though, "*The Council shall consist of a representative of each Member State at ministerial level*" (European Commission, 2016), the ministerial attendance rate was only 76% and lower level officials, such as vice ministers, state secretaries, high-level bureaucrats or diplomats replaced them in other cases (Grøn & Salomonsen, 2015).

In this chapter I explore possible determinants for why ministers choose to attend a Council meeting or send a lower level official instead. My point is that, among other consequences, holding the Council presidency should have a strong positive impact on ministerial attendance at Council meetings, a factor which has been overlooked by past research. As discussed in previous chapters of the thesis, the Council presidency adds considerable visibility to the ministers and officials from a respective Member State, who must chair Council meetings on all levels. It serves as an incentive for the MS to establish an image of a reliable partner with its counterparts (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006; Jesień, 2013). Furthermore, even though agenda-setting powers of the presidency have been constrained in the run up to, and especially by the Lisbon Treaty, the presidency still retains some power in prioritising issues or steering the debate in the Council, giving the ministers, especially those of smaller MS, a louder voice than otherwise (Bunse et al., 2011; Tallberg, 2003b, 2006). Theoretically, it is difficult to disentangle whether the ministers would be driven by a logic of consequentiality by making use of more power given to them by the Council presidency (rational choice institutionalism,

RCI), or a logic of appropriateness by doing what is expected of them in the role of a representative of a presiding country (sociological institutionalism, SI). However, since both theoretical strands would lead to the same expected outcome, I believe a strict separation in this case is not necessary. Whether motivated by a logic of consequentiality or appropriateness, I would expect that:

H3: Ministers attend Council meetings more frequently during their country's EU Council presidency than outside a presidency period.

Furthermore, the Council presidency should have an impact on the individual ministers as long as they remain in their posts. As stated by multiple interviewees, ministers attend Council meetings more often in order to prepare in the run up to the presidency, and some feel more engaged in EU affairs and continue to participate more actively afterwards as well.[296] Here, the expectations that ECI and SI would provide differ. Following a rational choice logic, if ministers are rationally calculating individuals, they should attend Council meetings more often in the run up to the presidency to prepare and network to best use the six-month period to achieve their goals, but not necessarily continue to do so once the presidency finishes. However, following sociological institutionalism and the logic of appropriateness, through their more frequent presence at Council meetings, both in preparation and during the Council presidency, ministers should get socialised into the "Council business". They should establish connections with their counterparts, learn how to better exert influence on the EU level, and continue active engagement after the presidency. The impact of the Council presidency on the individual ministers who were involved in the proceedings can be summarised as follows:

H3a The same ministers who chaired the Council meetings during their country's Council presidency attend them more in the run up to the respective presidency (RCI);

H3b: The same ministers who chaired Council meetings during their country's Council presidency attend them more frequently both before and after the Council presidency (SI).

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[296] Interviews #4 (LT), #12 (LT), #19 (LV), #25 (LV), #37 (IE), #62 (NL), #68 (SK), #71 (NL), #76 (SK), #77 (SK), #81 (SK)

The impact of the Council presidency on ministerial attendance at Council meetings should be temporary and cannot be captured by aggregate data for a period of eight years. The next section therefore presents the dataset and a logistic regression model employed to analyse the data.

5.3. The dataset

The original dataset used for the analysis consists of hand-coded attendance lists and agendas of ministerial meetings of the Council of the EU from the beginning of 2010 to the end of 2017. They were retrieved from the online Council archive. The starting point, the first Council presidency after the Lisbon Treaty, was selected for consistency and comparability, since the Lisbon Treaty reformed the institution of the rotating presidency by introducing permanent chairs of the European Council and Foreign Affairs Council. The Estonian presidency in the second half of 2017 completes the dataset as the last Council presidency at the point of data collection. Attendance lists and agendas of 583 ministerial meetings were coded (from the 2989th to the 3590th) excluding 18 meetings of which the participant lists were not available in the online Council archive. If more than one person per country attended a given meeting, the highest-level official was coded. So, for example, if a minister was accompanied by a state secretary and a permanent representative, the minister and not the latter officials appear in the dataset. Names of the ministers were noted in the dataset to establish whether the same ministers that were involved in the Council presidency would continue to be more active whilst they remained in their posts. The dataset consists of 16,335 complete observations.

5.4. Operationalisation and methodology

The dependent variable is the minister's presence at a Council meeting. It is a binary variable coded as 1 if a minister attended a given Council meeting and 0 otherwise, if a lower grade official (vice minister, state secretary, official from a national ministry or Permanent Representative) attended instead. Depending on the administrative and political system of a Member State, the variable is somewhat problematic. For instance, some countries have vice

ministers for EU affairs who routinely attend meetings of General Affairs Council, or specific state secretaries and numerous vice ministers in bigger MS such as Germany or France, who are designated to attend meetings on specific issues instead of the ministers. However, these cases constitute several exceptions rather than a pattern, and should not distort the results significantly.

Three independent variables are introduced to explain the impact of the EU Council presidency on ministers' attendance to Council meetings. Firstly, the Council presidency is a binary variable coded as 1 if the Member State is holding the Council presidency at a time of a given meeting and 0 otherwise. Secondly, to test whether the Council presidency has a socialising effect on the ministers, two binary variables denote periods before and after the respective presidency in which the same minister was in his post. The first variable is coded as 1 for the period before the presidency and 0 otherwise. The second is coded as 1 for the period after the presidency and 0 otherwise. If more than one minister was chairing a meeting, those attended by at least one of the ministers who were acting as chairs during the Council presidency were coded as 1. These periods vary between the Member States and depend on the timing of national elections or government changes. Instead of opting for fixed periods of half a year or a year before or after the presidency, I attempt to follow the impact of a Council presidency on a particular minister who was chairing the Council meetings during his or her country's presidency term.

I control for Council formation, since different formations deal with policy areas where the EU has varying degrees of competence and handle issues of differing salience for the Member States. Instead of grouping Council formations by EU policy competence in the respective area, all ten are introduced as binary variables, using Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council as a baseline. More ministers should attend Council formations with higher EU policy competences, such as Agriculture and Fisheries (AGRIFISH), Competition (COMPET), Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN) and General Affairs (GA). I expect similar to baseline attendance at the meetings where the competences are shared between the EU and the MS, such as Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), Telecommunications, Transport and Energy (TTE), Foreign Affairs (FA), and Environment. Lower ministerial attendance is expected in the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS), where the

EU only provides recommendations. The division of policy competences is based on articles 2-6 of The Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (European Commission, 2016).

The number of points on the meeting agenda serves as a measure of the salience of the respective meeting. More points on the meeting agenda should motivate ministers to attend. Council meeting agendas consist of some procedural points, B-points and separate lists of A-points. Procedural points are common among all meeting protocols and denote activities such as approval of lists of A-points, or "Any other business" at the end of the meeting. B-points listed in the agenda are legislative and non-legislative items that must be debated by the ministers because no prior agreement has been reached by lower levels of the Council. A-points are lists of legislative and non-legislative items already approved by COREPER prior to the Council meeting, which the ministers adopt without further discussion and are not considered here. The length of meeting agenda is not the perfect, but the most feasible measure of saliency, since assessing qualitative content and weight of agenda items is beyond the scope of this study. The variable is continuous.

I control for national elections, because changes of government and appointment of new ministers might disrupt their attendance at Council meetings, and high-level permanent civil servants or permanent representatives might be sent instead. The binary variable is coded as 1 for the six-month period in which an election took place (first or second half of a year) and 0 otherwise. A continuous variable for size of the country serves as a proxy for the size of administrative system. To group the countries, the variable represents the number of votes each MS had in the Council before the qualified majority was redefined in 2014 ("EUR-Lex - 12008E/PRO/36," n.d.). Larger administrations are likely to have more layers, including junior ministers for EU affairs and specialist state secretaries who customarily attend certain meetings instead of ministers. As a result, the larger the MS, the less likely ministers should be to attend Council meetings. A binary variable controls for the effects of EU membership duration, coded as 0 for "old" MS and 1 for countries that joined the EU in 2004 or later. Newer Member States that joined the EU in and after 2004 were found to participate in EU affairs less actively due to lack of resources, expertise, shorter periods of socialisation, as well as structural disadvantages (Gärtner et al., 2011; Panke, 2010c). Therefore, ministers from new MS should be less likely to attend Council meetings.

I borrow a further control variable from Grøn and Salomonsen (2015) to improve the comparability of my results with their study of ministerial attendance for 2005-2009. Distance from Brussels, where the majority of Council meetings take place, is a continuous variable measured in hundreds of kilometres to the capital of the respective MS, expecting that ministers from countries further away would be less likely to attend the meetings. Almost 70% of the meetings in my sample took place in Brussels, while another 25% were held in Luxembourg. The location of the remaining 5% was either not indicated or they took place elsewhere as part of international summits or conferences. For the sake of simplicity, and considering that Brussels is close to Luxembourg, distance from Brussels was chosen as the control variable.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Minister present	16 363	0.633	0.482	0	1
Council presidency	17 108	0.036	0.186	0	1
Same minister before presidency	16 389	0.112	0.316	0	1
Same minister after presidency	16 389	0.139	0.346	0	1
Council formation					
AGRIFISH	16 632	0.135	0.341	0	1
COMPET	16 632	0.057	0.232	0	1
ECOFIN	16 632	0.138	0.345	0	1
Environment	16 632	0.056	0.229	0	1
EPSCO	16 632	0.059	0.235	0	1
EYCS	16 632	0.039	0.193	0	1
Foreign Affairs.	16 632	0.199	0.399	0	1
General Affairs	16 632	0.148	0.355	0	1
JHA	16 632	0.086	0.280	0	1
TTE	16 632	0.084	0.278	0	1
Agenda (B) points	16 828	9.306	4.139	1	27
National election	17 108	0.135	0.342	0	1
Size of MS	17 108	12.571	8.793	3	29
New MS	17 108	0.464	0.499	0	1
Distance from Brussels (in 100 km)	17 108	10.948	6.619	0	29

Table 5.1: Summary of variables. Source: Own data.

Since the dependent variable is binary, I use logistic regression to analyse the data. I estimate two models to test the hypotheses. To address the assumption of independence of observations, I correct for dependencies by clustering standard errors on the Member State (Model 1) and individual meeting levels (Model 2).

5.5. Analysis and results

I begin with descriptive statistics of ministerial attendance rates at Council meetings in 2010-2017 and estimate four logistic regression models to explain the variance and test the hypotheses afterwards. As can be seen in Table 5.2, the data I collected for 2010-2017 shows an average ministerial attendance rate of 63.2%, which is even lower than in 2005-2009 (Grøn & Salomonsen, 2015). In the end, just over half of all the ministerial level Council meetings are attended by the highest-level politicians rather than vice-ministers, state secretaries, or bureaucrats. Furthermore, there is a considerable variation between individual Member States, with Luxembourg topping the list and sending ministers to Council meetings 84% of the time and UK lying as low as below 38%. The data suggests that the determinants of ministerial attendance identified by Grøn & Salomonsen (2015) are at least partially valid. Euroscepticism and EU membership duration seem to play a role, with old pro-EU member states such as Luxembourg, Sweden or Belgium topping the list and Eurosceptic countries, for instance UK, Hungary, and Greece appearing at the bottom. Furthermore, none of the MS that joined the EU in 2004 or later attain an attendance rate of 70%. Finally, national administrative tradition, size of administrations, and systems of domestic EU policy coordination might account for differing divisions between ministers and vice ministers or state secretaries. For example, MS that have designated junior ministers or state secretaries for EU affairs send them rather than the minister of foreign affairs to General Affairs council meetings, the same being the case if there are designated state secretaries for EU affairs in other ministries.

However, as I argued above, previous research has missed the importance of the Council presidency as a significant temporary determinant of ministerial attendance at Council meetings. The last column of Table 5.2 shows ministerial attendance rates at Council meetings during the respective country's Council presidency. They are over 25% higher than the EU average and even reach 100% in Luxembourg, Denmark, and Spain. See also Appendix 3 for country-level graphs depicting ministerial attendance at the Council meetings from 2009 to 2017 and indicating Council presidency periods to display its potential impact.

Country	Minister	Vice minister/ State secretary	High level civil servant	Permanent Representative	Minister during presidency
Luxembourg	84,2	0,7	0,7	14,5	100
Sweden	81,7	13,6	0,7	4,0	-
Denmark	80,1	6,1	1,2	12,7	100
Belgium	77,8	5,6	4,6	12,1	91,7
Finland	76,9	9,3	0,3	13,5	-
France	76,3	4,4	2,7	16,7	-
Netherlands	74,2	6,9	1,4	17,5	97,6
Estonia	69,2	3,2	0,7	26,9	75,8
Cyprus	69,2	7,9	1,9	21,0	84,9
Latvia	65,7	23,4	1,2	9,8	94,9
Malta	65,7	1,2	14,0	19,2	83,3
Austria	65,3	7,4	2,2	25,1	-
Ireland	63,5	22,2	2,0	12,3	97,2
Italy	62,1	25,1	1,2	11,6	76,5
Czech Republic	60,9	33,2	1,2	4,7	-
Spain	60,9	32,2	0,5	6,4	100
Lithuania	60,8	29,8	0,3	9,1	93,9
Croatia*	58,1	20,4	0,0	21,6	-
Bulgaria	57,6	28,5	0,3	13,6	-
Slovenia	57,6	31,7	0,2	10,6	-
Portugal	56,4	35,4	1,0	7,2	-
Germany	54,9	23,2	16,8	5,1	-
Romania	54,6	35,5	0,3	9,6	-
Poland	54,0	18,9	20,5	6,6	74,3
Greece	53,1	19,7	14,8	12,3	89,5
Slovakia	49,3	39,9	0,8	9,9	82,4
Hungary	42,6	39,4	6,4	11,6	81,4
United Kingdom	37,7	37,0	17,2	8,2	-
Average	63,2	20,1	4,1	12,6	89

Table 5.2. Attendance at Council meetings 2009-2017, by rank of official (%), Council meetings 2989 to 3590, *Data for Croatia from EU accession in 2011. Source: Own data.

To identify explanations and determinants of the variance in ministerial attendance at Council meetings, and to test the hypothesis on the impact of the Council presidency, I estimate two logistic regression models. The results in Table 5.3 are reported in odds ratios, meaning that coefficients greater than 1 mean that a minister is more likely, and less than 1 that s/he is less likely to attend a Council meeting. Apart from the statistical significance of distance from Brussels, there is little difference between the models correcting for dependences by clustering standard errors on Member State and individual meeting levels. Therefore, the results are reported jointly.

Variables	Model 1 Minister present	Model 2 Minister present
Council Presidency	6.304***	6.304***
	(1.279)	(0.834)
Same minister before Presidency	1.911***	1.911***
	(0.212)	(0.115)
Same minister after Presidency	1.022	1.022
	(0.154)	(0.0496)
AGRIFISH Council	1.681**	1.681***
	(0.299)	(0.226)
COMPET Council	0.423***	0.423***
	(0.0577)	(0.0580)
ECOFIN Council	1.506*	1.506**
	(0.252)	(0.219)
Environment Council	1.644**	1.644***
	(0.256)	(0.234)
EYCS Council	0.647**	0.647**
	(0.0899)	(0.0976)
Foreign Affairs Council	2.011***	2.011***
	(0.300)	(0.309)
General Affairs Council	0.509***	0.509***
	(0.0612)	(0.0688)
JHA Council	2.005***	2.005***
	(0.380)	(0.349)
TTE Council	0.738*	0.738*
	(0.102)	(0.102)
Agenda points (B)	1.095***	1.095***
	(0.00864)	(0.0119)
National election	0.734***	0.734***
	(0.0582)	(0.0366)
Size of MS	0.967***	0.967***
	(0.00975)	(0.00195)
New MS	0.552**	0.552***
	(0.107)	(0.0229)
Distance from Brussels	0.987	0.987***
	(0.0153)	(0.00273)
Constant	1.463	1.463*
	(0.304)	(0.244)
Pseudo R^2	0.1009	0.1009
Observations	16,335	16,335

Table 5.3. Logistic regression analysis of ministerial attendance at Council meetings. Odds ratios, robust standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05. In Model 1, standard errors are clustered on the Member State level, in Model 2 on the individual meeting level.

I begin the interpretation with the independent variables explaining the impact of Council presidency on ministerial attendance. First of all, while the finding is not unexpected and is also visible in Table 5.2, the impact of the Council presidency is very strong (see Table 5.3). Ministers are over six times more likely to attend Council meetings during the period in which their country is holding the Council presidency, providing strong support for H1. Looking at the impact of Council presidency on individual ministers, I find that the same ministers who chaired

the Council meetings during the presidency attend them twice as frequently as their counterparts in the run up to it. This suggests that the presidency preparation period is taken seriously by the political elites. After the presidency, however, the likelihood of the same ministers attending the meetings is still somewhat higher, but the effect is not statistically significant. As a result, socialisation by the presidency is not apparent and rational calculations by the ministers explain the dynamics of attendance before and after the Council presidency better. H2a is confirmed, but there is no evidence to support H2b. While multiple interviews suggested that ministers become more engaged in EU affairs through the Council presidency, quantitative data shows that this effect is not significant on the European level and relates to a few exceptions rather than the rule. However, they might still become more engaged on the national level, which was not observed here.

Looking at control variables, both models (Table 5.3) suggest that Council formation is a significant determinant of ministerial attendance at Council meetings. However, the results are mixed and do not, as expected, always relate to EU policy competence in a certain area. Following the expectation, ministers are about 1.5 times more likely to attend AGRIFISH and ECOFIN meetings, both of which deal with areas where EU has higher policy competence compared to EPSCO. However, the same should be true for COMPET and GA meetings, but the results show that ministers are significantly less likely to attend those compared to EYCS. This could be explained by the fact that while ministers of economy and foreign affairs tend to attend ECOFIN and FA Council meetings, specific state secretaries or junior/vice ministers dealing with more issues relating to competitiveness and EU affairs are frequently sent to COMPET and GA meetings. For instance, based on the names of individual ministers in my dataset, if a certain MS has a vice-minister for EU affairs, that minister and not the minister of foreign affairs tends to be sent to GA Council meetings. Again, contrary to expectations, while ministerial attendance rates at JHA and FA Councils should be similar to EPSCO, ministers are almost twice as likely to attend them. Moreover, instead of similar attendance rates, ministers are over 1.5 times more likely to attend Environment Council meetings and less likely to attend TTE than EPSCO. Finally, as expected, ministers are less likely to attend EYCS Council. Overall, controlling for individual Council formations rather than grouping them by policy competence like Grøn and Salomonsen (2015), shows that EU policy competence in the area only accounts for higher or lower ministerial attendance at Council meetings in half of the cases. This could

be explained by differences in domestic EU policy coordination systems or the salience of certain policy areas at the time, rather than EU policy competence in the area. For instance, the fact that the economic or refugee crises remarkably defined the EU agenda in 2010-2017 might explain high attendance rates at ECOFIN and JHA Councils, rather than EU policy competence in the fields.

Moving on to other control variables, as expected the number of B points on the agenda as a measure for meeting salience has a significant positive impact on ministerial attendance in all the models. Furthermore, ministerial attendance drops notably during election periods when governments change. Furthermore, ministers from larger Member States are less likely to attend the meetings than their counterparts from small MS, supporting the assumption that large MS have bigger administrations, potentially busier ministerial agendas and more specialised junior ministers or state secretaries to substitute for the ministers. Ministers from MS that joined the EU in 2004 or later are half as likely to attend the meetings, be it due to structural disadvantages, or lack of resources and socialisation. In terms of meeting location and logistical difficulties, greater distance from Brussels makes it less likely that a minister is going to attend a meeting, however the effect is only statistically significant in model 2 with standard errors clustered around individual meetings. Initially, the control variables, apart from indicating that policy competence of the EU in a certain area does not necessarily explain ministerial attendance at Council meetings very well, indicate similar findings to those of Grøn and Salomonsen (2015).

The explanatory power of the model leaves space for consideration of additional control variables explaining ministerial participation in Council meetings, such as Euroscepticism, political left-right position of the ministers and the governments, or better measures of meeting salience based on the actual content of the agenda that were beyond the scope of this study. However, the analysis does prove that Council presidency constitutes a key temporary determinant of ministerial attendance at Council meetings.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter addressed the impact of the EU Council presidency on national ministers. Instead of relying on limited interview evidence from six Member States, I tested the impact of the Council presidency on ministerial attendance at Council meetings quantitatively. Building on an existing study of ministerial attendance by Grøn and Salomonsen (2015), I used a new dataset of hand-coded attendance lists of ministerial Council meetings from 2010 to 2017, and included the EU Council presidency as an explanatory variable. The findings show that it significantly increases the likelihood of the ministers attending Council meetings but does not have a lasting impact.

The results of the data analysis reveal that, along with previously discussed determinants of ministerial attendance at Council meetings such as meeting saliency, location of a meeting, size of a Member State and its duration of EU membership, the Council presidency constitutes an important predictor. Ministers are six times more likely to attend meetings of the Council during their country's presidency. It remains unclear whether this is explained by a logic of consequentiality or logic of appropriateness. Led by the former, the ministers would choose to attend the meetings based on rational calculations concerning how by chairing them they would have greater impact on the meeting outcome or the agenda, as well as greater visibility among their EU counterparts. Led by the latter, the ministers would decide to participate because it is expected of them as the presidents. Regardless of the ministers' motivations, the Council presidency has a remarkably positive impact on their attendance at the meetings of the Council of the EU. However, looking at the impact of the Council presidency on a respective minister who has been chairing Council meetings for a six-month term, the logic of consequentiality prevails over the logic of appropriateness. Ministers are about twice as likely to attend the Council meetings before their country's Council presidency, which can be explained as a rational calculation based on the expectation that they want to be prepared for their role as a chair during the upcoming presidency. However, there is no evidence to support the claim that ministers are more likely to attend the Council meetings more actively after the presidency, as the logic of appropriateness would suggest. This also goes against the claims of several of my interviewees and shows that if the Council presidency has any socialising impact

on the ministers, or increases their involvement in EU affairs, it does not manifest itself through their participation in ministerial Council meetings.

This chapter contributes to studies on decision-making in the Council of the EU, particularly its bureaucratic nature and legitimacy. It tackles the under-researched subject of ministerial attendance at Council meetings, finding that only in two thirds of the cases do highest level elected politicians participate. The main finding is that, while not having an apparent long-term impact, the Council presidency does motivate the ministers to engage in the Council proceedings more actively for a limited period before and during their country holds the position. As a result, the presidency could be seen as a key mechanism for re-engagement of national politicians with EU affairs, even if to a temporary extent.

Chapter 6: The Impact of the European Union Council Presidency on Public Opinion in the Member States: Improving Knowledge of the EU?

6.1. Introduction

The Council presidency attracts public attention and serves as a link between the citizens of the respective MS and the European Union by bringing otherwise distant EU affairs closer to the citizens (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006). This link established by the Council presidency between the European Union and its citizens is frequently implied, but barely empirically explored in the literature. This chapter scrutinises the connection by answering the following questions: Does the EU Council Presidency matter to the public, and does it have any impact on public knowledge of the European Union?

The rotating Council presidency is not explicitly considered a determinant of public support for the European Union in the vast literature on public opinion about the EU and European integration (Gabel, 1998; Sanders, Bellucci, Tóka, & Torcal, 2012; Torcal, Bonet, & Costa Lobo, 2013). However, literature on the rotating presidency frequently suggests that holding the position attracts additional public attention to EU affairs and reinforces the connection between the citizens of the MS and the EU and its institutions (Bendel & Magnusdottir, 2017; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006; Jesień, 2013; Kirchner, 1992). In a series of case studies of Scandinavian Council presidencies, Elgström (2003) finds that the governments of the Member States holding the presidency, especially in the more Eurosceptic countries, actively attempted to influence public perceptions and gather support for the EU. This is the case not least because the high costs of conducting the presidency must be justified to the citizens. However, these claims are only based on a few case studies and on qualitative data (Elgström, 2003). In a similar vein, Fraussen and Dejaeghere (2011) explore the relationship between the awareness of the Council presidency and the distance in time from the last presidency held by the respective Member State. They look into the influence of the Council presidency on support for the EU on the aggregate country level and find no remarkable impact (Fraussen & Dejaeghere, 2011). Nielsen and Christensen (2015) discuss how the post-Lisbon Treaty Council presidency contributes to decreasing the frequently criticised "democratic deficit" of the EU by analysing

the Danish case of 2012. Finally, a study conducted by Kaniok (2012) connects public opinion and the domestic impact of the Council presidency. He explores the influence of the presidency on public opinion in several Member States on an aggregate, country level between 2002 and 2007. The hypotheses are based on cognitive mobilisation theory, implying that higher levels of exposure to education and mass communications should lead to higher levels of support for European integration. The Council presidency is expected to positively influence public support for European integration as well as knowledge of the EU. However, no significant impact is found. I believe that hypotheses similar to those tested by Kaniok are worth re-exploring using a different and longer period to include both “old” and “new” MS Council presidencies. The study by Kaniok only considers presidencies of “old” Member States of the EU, which have performed the function multiple times. I expect there to be a difference between these and “new”, mostly small Member States that have never held the Council presidency before and must therefore undergo more thorough and demanding preparations, due to which the Council presidency might receive higher public visibility.

Using aggregate Eurobarometer (EB) survey data between the Eastern Enlargement of the EU in May 2004 and the most recent survey at the point of data collection in 2016, this chapter explores whether the citizens of the EU are aware of the rotating Council presidency and whether their country holding the position has any impact on their knowledge about the EU. Furthermore, it attempts to establish whether there are any differences between small and big as well as “old” and “new” MS. Descriptive statistics as well as multivariate ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models are employed for the data analysis.

The chapter begins by reviewing measures to promote the EU in the Member States during their respective Council presidencies, with the aim of underlining why the institution could make a difference in public opinion about the European Union. I continue the theoretical framework and derive the hypotheses. The empirical part of the chapter consists of two steps. The first addresses the question of whether the citizens are aware of the Council presidency at all. Descriptive statistics based on Eurobarometer data show that most of the respondents have heard that their country is going to hold or is holding the Council presidency. The second step explores the potential impact of the Council presidency on citizens’ knowledge of the European Union by observing whether there are any changes in public understanding of how

the European Union works over time, and by controlling for similar events, whether these could be attributed to the Council presidency. The results of a multivariate regression analysis show that while the Council presidency has little impact on the attitudes in the "old" MS, it does lead to an improved political knowledge of the EU in the "new" member states holding the position for the first time. Furthermore, the Council presidency has a greater impact on public opinion in small rather than big MS.

6.2. Theoretical framework

Increased visibility of the EU and EU affairs during the Council presidency not only occurs because the informal Council meetings are held in the capital of the presiding country. Rather, it also relates to purposeful promotion of the presidency and the EU during the period, as I will illustrate with some examples from the six MS analysed in Chapters 3 and 4. All organised multiple events to engage their citizens and inform them about the presidency and the EU.

As the cases showed, public events to mark the beginning of the Presidency were organised, such as a public picnic in Luxembourg,[297] the opening event in Dublin Castle,[298] and ceremonies unveiling the presidency logo involving the heads of state in Lithuania and Slovakia.[299] Multiple publicly funded events involving NGOs and civil society organisations were organised during the presidency to increase awareness of current EU affairs and important issues not only in the capitals, but also in the regions of the MS and to increase the outreach of the presidency.[300] In the Netherlands, officials and politicians attending the informal Council meetings in Amsterdam were encouraged to give public lectures at schools and universities.[301] Presidency logos and related decorations were visibly positioned, at least in the capital cities of some of the MS for the duration of their presidency period.[302] In Luxembourg, free public Wi-Fi introduced in the centre of the city was also slated as an accomplishment of the EU Council

[297] Interview #36 (LU), #51 (LU)
[298] Interview #47 (IE)
[299] Interview #78 (SK)
[300] Interview #23 (LV) Interview #47 (IE), #54 (LU), #73 (SK), #74 (SK)
[301] Interview #35 (NL), #62 (NL)
[302] Interview #41 (LU), #54 (LU), #80 (SK)

presidency.[303] Furthermore, communications specialists working with the Council presidency encouraged media reporting of the presidency activities[304] and set up websites as well as social media accounts to increase publicity in all the MS.[305] Some respondents mentioned that these attempts to increase the visibility of the EU worked at least to some extent. Several interviewees argued that media interest, as well as awareness and knowledge of EU affairs, and the quality of reporting on EU issues, increased during the presidency period.[306] Moreover, a national survey conducted immediately after the presidency has shown a record-high increase in support for EU membership in Latvia.[307]

On the other hand, multiple respondents noted that the communication could have been better and that the opportunity to promote the EU was missed due to a lack of resources and time.[308] Unfortunately, the presidency was mainly visible in the capitals where the meetings took place, and mostly only because of traffic jams and closed streets in the city centre due to security arrangements for the informal Council meetings.[309] Media coverage in some MS was less favourable of the presidency, by criticising the spending and focusing on the mistakes the government made rather than the achievements.[310] Furthermore, in a crisis-ridden country like Ireland, or an increasingly Eurosceptic MS like the Netherlands, the profile of the presidency was deliberately kept low to underline sustainability and cost-cutting measures instead of promoting the EU.[311] However, most respondents considered the Council presidency to have the potential to be used, and to have been used to Europeanise public discourse and increase the salience and the visibility of the EU and EU affairs in the Member State holding the position.

Further theoretical framework builds on cognitive mobilisation theory, issue salience theory, and studies of political knowledge identifying media coverage, or information-rich contexts, as

303 Interview #51 (LU)
304 Interview #77 (SK)
305 Interview #47 (IE), #69 (NL)
306 Interview #60 (SK), #78 (SK)
307 Interviews #17 (LV), #28 (LV)
308 Interview #75 (SK)
309 Interviews #18 (LV), #23 (LV), #75 (SK), #80 (SK)
310 Interview #18 (LV)
311 Interview #37 (IE), #43 (IE) #54 (LU)

an important determinant of political knowledge (Fraile, 2013; Inglehart, 1970; Jebril, de Vreese, van Dalen, & Albaek, 2013; Maier, 2016). In line with the issue salience theory, more media coverage and greater importance being assigned to an issue should lead to increasing public interest and knowledge about it (Hutchings, 2001). Holding the Council presidency means greater coverage of EU affairs and therefore could be one of the factors that leads citizens to improve their knowledge of the European Union, its institutions and affairs. Several authors underline that one of the functions, aims, or side effects of the presidency of the Council of the EU is bringing the European Union closer to the public of the member state holding it. The Council presidency is "*a focus for concentrating periodic strategic and public attention on the EU within each member state in turn*" (Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006, p. 154). Some Council presidencies set informing the public, or even an improvement in public perceptions of the EU, as one of their goals (Elgström, 2003; Luif, 2006). These presidencies are often accompanied by information campaigns leading to an increase in media and public attention directed to EU affairs (Kaniok, 2012; Klemenčič, 2008). The presidency, next to occasions such as referendums on EU issues, European Parliament elections, or European Council meetings, could be one of the few events that have the potential to be highly visible both nationally and on the European level and to increase the public saliency of the EU (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Semetko, Van Der Brug, & Valkenburg, 2003). These observations lead to the following hypothesis:

H4: The EU Council presidency contributes to improvement of political knowledge of the EU in the Member State holding the position.

I also return to the argument underlining the difference between big and small as well as "old" and "new" Member States. The Council presidency is a bigger challenge to the "new" member states holding it for the first time, as well as small MS with limited administrative and financial capacities. Holding the Council presidency for the first time, the MS needs greater administrative adjustments and more thorough preparation as it cannot build on previous experience. The novelty of the post, which is often referred to as achieving "*full membership*" of the EU, also contributes to additional visibility.[312] Furthermore, while in the big member

[312] Interviews #1 (LT), #18 (LV), #19 (LV), #20 (LV), #32 (LT), #64 (SK)

states the presidency might only require some allocation of staff and advance planning, for the small MS, the presidency entails an expansion of the civil service and often greater expenses that must be justified to citizens. As a result, I expect the following:

H4a: The EU Council presidency contributes to improvement of political knowledge of the EU in the small Member States more than in the big ones.

H4b: The EU Council presidency contributes to improvement of political knowledge of the EU in the "new" Member States more than in the "old" ones.

6.3. Data and methodology

The following analysis proceeds in two steps using Eurobarometer (EB) survey data from 2004 to 2015. The time frame is set from the second half of 2004 (EB 62) to the first half of 2016 (EB 85) to include a number of both "old" and "new" as well as big and small MS Council presidencies. The first half of 2004 corresponds to Eurobarometer 62, the first survey conducted after the Eastern Enlargement of the EU on the 1st of May 2004. The first half of 2016, or Eurobarometer 85, was the most recent survey at the time of data collection.

Reliability and Inconsistency are known problems of Eurobarometer surveys (see for instance Höpner & Jurczyk, 2015), and the latter in particular posed great limitations for this chapter. For instance, some of the factual questions relating to knowledge of the European Union,[313] or those addressing awareness of specific institutions[314] were not asked consistently throughout the timeframe of interest. However, I opted for a fairly general dependent variable instead of cutting the timeframe of the analysis to include a comprehensive sample of multiple different Council presidencies. Using different surveys, such as the European Social Survey or smaller national surveys as data sources would not necessarily help to overcome the limitations without creating new ones. In the end, the Eurobarometer is still the only available

[313] Questions addressing specific knowledge of the EU, such as "For each of the following statements about the EU could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false: 1. The EU currently consists of 28 Member States; 2. The members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of each Member State; 3. Switzerland is a Member State of the EU."

[314] Questions addressing awareness of separate institutions, such as "Have you heard of...? 1. The European Parliament; 2. The European Commission; 3. The European Central Bank; 4. The Council of the European Union."

survey that covers all the Member States of the EU and is conducted twice a year. The frequency of the survey is particularly relevant, considering that the Council presidency lasts for a relatively short period of six months. Finally, since I focus on subjective self-assessment rather than factual questions measuring knowledge, some degree of potential bias must be acknowledged since the respondents might be reluctant to admit to not being aware of, or not understanding something.

I use aggregate country-level Eurobarometer data to test the hypotheses. For the first step of the analysis, I consider the questions specifically relating to the rotating Council presidency that were asked in several surveys between 2004 and 2016. This poses another major limitation relating to consistency, but still provides an insight into whether citizens know about the presidency at all, and whether further analysis tapping into the impact of the presidency on knowledge of the EU makes sense. The question on the Council presidency was only asked in EB surveys 62 to 64 and 67 to 73 (2004-2005; 2007-2010), and the question about the future Council presidency was not asked consistently. Respondents were asked whether they are aware that their country is going to hold the EU Council presidency half a year before the term and whether they are aware that their country is holding the presidency during it. The results are presented using basic descriptive statistics.

The second step of the analysis uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models to determine whether there is a correlation between changes in political knowledge of the EU and the rotating Council presidency. Political knowledge is measured by the share of positive responses to the question “Do you understand how the European Union works?” aggregated on country level. The question is arguably very general, but also the only one that taps into knowledge of the EU and its institutions and that is consistently included in all the EB surveys from 62 to 85. I also use data from some of the demographic questions, such as level of education, as control variables.

6.4. Analysis and results

6.4.1. Public awareness of the Council presidency

This step of the analysis is mostly data-driven. Since Eurobarometer included some questions specifically addressing the rotating Council presidency, they are examined here to underline the claim that citizens are aware of the Council presidency, and that there is indeed a difference between "old" and "new", as well as big and small Member States. Table 6.1 summarises all the specific data available on rotating Council presidencies in EB surveys 62 to 85, spanning twelve presidencies. The data has gaps since the question "Have you heard that your country is holding the rotating Council presidency?" appeared consistently in the ten surveys mentioned above, while the one on whether it "will hold the presidency", asked half a year before the term, was missing in three out of the twelve cases.

	Country and year	Heard that country will hold the presidency		Heard that country is holding the presidency	
		%	N	%	N
Big MS	UK'05	41,3	1256	46,7	1256
	DE'07	37,3	1440	77	1471
	FR'08	48,9	1029	64,4	1013
	ES'10	48,8	979	66,5	980
Small MS	NL'04	-	-	78,7	975
	LU'05	-	-	85,4	494
	AT'06	75	951	-	-
	FI'06	-	-	92,5	998
	PT'07	58,1	932	64,9	862
	SE'09	88,3	1056	91,5	1029
"New" (small) MS	SI'08	86,1	992	92,6	994
	CZ'09	69,7	991	83,5	1085
	Average	**63,1**	9626	**76,7**	11157
	Big MS	**44,1**	4704	**63,7**	4720
	Small MS	**75,4**	4922	**84,2**	6437
	"Old" MS	**56,8**	7643	**76,0**	9078
	"New" MS	**77,9**	1983	**88,1**	2079

Table 6.1: Public awareness of the Council presidency. N represents the full sample, % the percentage share of positive responses to the questions on whether the citizens hear that their country is holding or will hold the rotating Council presidency. Source: EB 62-64, 67-73

As seen in table 6.1, the overall awareness of the current Council presidency is at 76.7%, meaning that three out of four citizens of a Member State have heard about it. In some MS, over 90% of the respondents claim that they have heard that their country is currently holding

the rotating presidency, supporting the claim that the Council presidency is visible to the public. In all the cases where the data is available for both future and current presidencies, there is an increase in the awareness between the period before and during the presidency.

Furthermore, grouping the results into small and big as well as “old” and “new” Member States shows that the respondents from small Member States tend to be more aware of both the upcoming and the current Council presidency (see Figure 6.1.). In the case of “old” and “new” MS, the trend is similar. The respondents from the “new” MS tend to be more aware of the current and the upcoming presidency than those from the “old” MS. This observation supports the rationale behind the division of the MS into the four groups and provides additional reasoning for H4a and H4b, reinforcing the claim that there is a difference between “old” and “new” as well as big and small Member States.

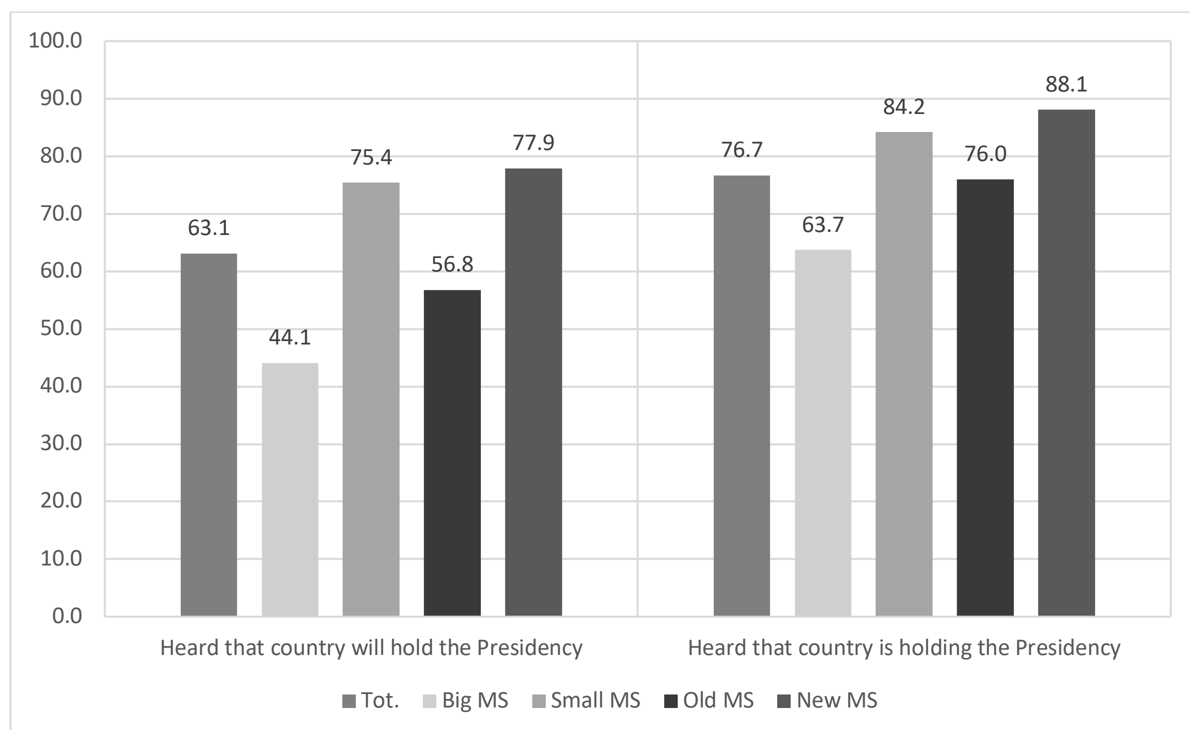

Figure 6.2: Awareness of the Council presidency by groups of MS, in %. Source: EB 62-64, 67-73

Having established that the Council presidency is indeed visible to the public, I move on to the second step of the analysis to ascertain whether it has any notable impact on citizens' knowledge of the European Union.

6.4.2. Political knowledge of the EU and the Council presidency

This step of the analysis estimates several regression models and complements Eurobarometer data with additional independent and control variables to determine whether any of the changes in political knowledge of the EU are caused by the EU Council presidency, or whether it is instead other similar events or socio-economic factors that determine the change. In Appendix 4, as an intermediate step I provide country-level graphs of fluctuations in public knowledge of the European Union, plotting the shares of positive responses to the EB question on understanding how the European Union works and the periods around the Council presidency. As the results are somewhat inconclusive, exhibiting differing patterns from country to country, I extend the analysis here by adding additional control variables to better explain the patterns and the variation.

"Understanding how the EU works" is used as the dependent variable to estimate whether holding the EU Council presidency has any impact on political knowledge of the European Union. The variable is measured by the corresponding survey statement, "I understand how the European Union works", with possible answers being "tend to agree" and "tend to disagree". The positive responses ("tend to agree") are aggregated on the country level for each survey from EB 62 to 85 covering intervals of roughly half a year. The question was selected because it provides a measure of general understanding of the EU (the same question has previously been used to measure political knowledge of the EU (Karp, Banducci, & Bowler, 2003). Furthermore, the inconsistency between EB surveys discussed above played a role in the selection of this variable. The question on understanding how the EU works is asked in the same way throughout all the surveys, unlike the specific factual knowledge questions or questions that could be used to measure awareness of particular EU institutions.

The EU Council presidency is the main independent variable. The relevant EB surveys are usually conducted in April and November of each year, but there are several where the interviews took place as early as February or October, or as late as June or December. Furthermore, the promotion of the presidency, the publicity and the related information campaigns tend to begin about a year before the six-month period and the evaluations and reports of the completed presidency extend beyond the six-month period. This estimation is

based on multiple presidency reports as well as interviews I conducted for Chapters 3 and 4. To account for these lags, Council presidency is a dichotomous variable coded as 1 one year before the respective presidency, during it, and half a year after, and 0 otherwise.

In addition, dichotomous variables are introduced to differentiate between big and small as well as "old" and "new" member states. Two further variables are relevant to measuring political knowledge: GDP depicting the level of income; and the level of education of the population, both of which have been shown to be relevant contextual variables in explaining the levels of political knowledge. Higher levels of GDP represent socio-economic status, and higher levels of education of the population should account for higher degrees of political knowledge (Fraile, 2013; Grönlund & Milner, 2006). GDP values are taken from Eurostat data (Eurostat, 2016) as a percentage of the EU average, the values for 2015 are also used for the first half of 2016 due to limited data availability. To measure the level of education, country level averages of years of full-time education of the EB survey respondents are used. Some values here were recoded: no full-time education is recoded to 0 years, respondents still in education are coded as having 15 years of full-time education, which is an estimate, but provides a solution to the large number of values that were coded as "still studying" in EB surveys.

A number of control variables are added to the model to account for other factors that might explain the variation in public knowledge of the EU. To begin with, literature on media attention directed to EU affairs finds that while coverage of EU affairs is generally low, media attention increases with key events such as referenda, European Council meetings or EP elections (Boomgaarden et al., 2013; Elenbaas, De Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Schuck, 2012; Semetko et al., 2003). First, events that could have a similar impact to the Council presidency, i.e. could increase the visibility and salience of EU issues on the national level, are added as dummy variables for the six-month periods within which they took place. These are the European Parliament elections, national elections and referenda over the EU Constitutional Treaty and Lisbon Treaty (in the countries where they were organised), major treaty reforms (the failure of the Constitutional Treaty and the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty), as well as other referenda on EU issues (the referendum over Great Britain leaving the EU or the referendum over the Association Agreement with Ukraine in the Netherlands). Finally, the

economic crisis is a variable that has had a significant impact on attitudes towards the EU (European Parliament, 2015; Roth, Nowak-Lehmann, & Otter, 2013) and should be controlled for. A dummy equalling 1 for the period of the first half of 2008 to the second half of 2014 and 0 otherwise is introduced to account for the possible effects of the crisis. See Table 6.2 for a summary of the variables. I opt for these variables instead of using a single variable controlling for time or date since events such as election and referenda are country-specific and occur at different times in different Member States. Using specific variables would explain the country-specific variations in public knowledge about the EU better. Having these country-specific variables is also the reason why country dummies are not additionally included in the model.

Variable	Measurement	Mean	Std. Dev.
DV			
Understand how EU works	Aggregate data on the country level. Percentage of "tend to agree" responses to EB question "Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: I understand how the EU works."	52.07	10.08
IVs			
Main:			
EU Council Presidency	Dummy variable. 1 for the period of one year before, six months during and six months after the Council Presidency. 0 otherwise.	0.14	0.35
Control			
Similar events:			
EP election	Dummy variable. 1 for the six-month periods in which an EP election took place, 0 otherwise.	0.08	0.28
National election	Dummy variable. 1 for the six-month periods in which a national election took place, 0 otherwise.	0.17	0.38
Referenda on EU issues	Dummy variable. 1 for the six-month period in which a referendum over EU Constitutional treaty or Lisbon treaty took place (only in France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain), also 1 for the referendum on Brexit in the UK and the referendum on Association Agreement with Ukraine in the Netherlands, 0 otherwise.	0.01	0.1
Economic crisis	Dummy variable. 1 for the period of the first half of 2008 to the second half of 2014, 0 otherwise.	0.58	0.49
Other:			
Small Member State	Dummy variable, 1 for countries with less than average population, 0 for France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain and United Kingdom.	0.70	0.46
New Member State	Dummy variable, 1 for countries that have joined the EU in 2004 or later: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia; 0 otherwise.	0.43	0.50
GDP	GDP per capita, percentage of EU average, Eurostat data (2016=2015 due to data availability)	98.37	40.34
Education	Country level average of years of education. EB data recoded: no full-time education = 0, still studying = 15, 99 = missing value.	18.28	1.71

Table 6.2: Summary of the variables. Sources: own elaboration, EB 62-85, Eurostat (2016)

While media exposure and consumption, as well as measures of political interest such as participation in political discussions, would be a valuable addition to the control variables, the lack in the availability of such questions in the EB surveys in the relevant time period does not allow for the inclusion of such measures here.

Multivariate OLS regression models are estimated using the variables outlined above in order to determine the impact of the EU Council presidency on public knowledge of the European Union. The results of the regression analysis are reported in Table 6.3. Model 1 estimates the overall impact of the EU Council presidency on citizens' understanding of how the EU works. Models 2 and 3 include interaction terms to test H4a and H4b, namely whether there is a difference between "old" and "new" as well as big and small Member States.

	Model 1	Model 2 Interaction new MS	Model 3 Interaction small MS
Variables	Understand how the EU works		
Council Presidency	-0.109	-1.363	-2.633
	(0.949)	(1.151)	(1.701)
New MS	8.839***	8.332***	8.820***
	(0.965)	(0.999)	(0.963)
Council Presidency ## New MS		3.921*	
		(2.046)	
Small MS	0.369	0.379	-0.165
	(0.800)	(0.798)	(0.853)
Council Presidency ## Small MS			3.659*
			(2.048)
EP election	1.970	1.991	2.034*
	(1.235)	(1.233)	(1.234)
National election	1.450	1.320	1.387
	(0.884)	(0.885)	(0.883)
Referendums on EU issues	0.138	0.300	-0.433
	(3.184)	(3.179)	(3.195)
Economic crisis	0.871	0.708	0.783
	(0.698)	(0.702)	(0.698)
GDP	0.0912***	0.0908***	0.0906***
	(0.0116)	(0.0116)	(0.0116)
Education	1.763***	1.768***	1.760***
	(0.203)	(0.203)	(0.203)
Constant	5.880	6.164*	6.446*
	(3.727)	(3.723)	(3.735)
Observations	715	715	715
R-squared	0.242	0.246	0.245

Table 6.3: Multivariate regression models estimating the impact of the EU Council presidency on understanding of how the EU works. Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

As seen in Model 1, the overall impact of holding the Council presidency on understanding how the EU works is not statistically significant, and contrary to expectations, is negative. Significant determinants of understanding how the European Union works are duration of EU membership, and macroeconomic variables, namely GDP and education. Citizens in the MS with higher GDP, and higher average levels of education have a better understanding of how the EU works. Furthermore, respondents from "new" Member States report higher levels of knowledge of how the European Union works, while the size of the MS does not have a significant impact. European Parliament elections have a significant positive impact on public knowledge of the EU in Model 3.

Models 2 and 3 include an interaction term to control for whether there is a difference between groups of countries discussed above: "old" and "new" as well as big and small member states. The interaction term in Model 2 is statistically significant, showing that the citizens of new member states are more likely to improve their understanding of how the EU works during the period of and around the Council presidency. As seen in Model 3, citizens of small MS tend to improve their knowledge of the EU during and around the period of the Council presidency, while the Presidency impact in big MS is insignificant. These results partly confirm H5: firstly, the overall impact of holding the Council presidency and the publicity related to it on citizens' understanding of how the EU works is not significant, and is negative. However, the respondents from new and small MS do seem to improve their knowledge of how the EU works through the Council presidency, which is in line with H5a and H5b. All in all, while H5a and H5b are confirmed, H5 can only partially be confirmed, namely for small as compared to big, and old as compared to new MS.

6.5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore whether and to what extent the European Union Council presidency matters to the public and whether it has any impact on citizens' understanding of how the European Union works. Furthermore, it aimed to establish whether there is any difference between "old" and "new" as well as big and small MS. Aggregate country-level Eurobarometer survey data from 2004 to 2016 was used to test the assumptions. The findings

suggest that public awareness of the Council presidency is high. Furthermore, it is higher in "new" and small member states of the EU. However, taking a deeper look into the impact of the Council presidency on citizens' understanding of how the European Union works offers a mixed picture. First of all, there is no clear pattern of changes in public knowledge of the EU over time that could be attributed to the Council presidency. However, if other similar events and socio-economic factors are accounted for, the results of the regression analysis suggest that the Council presidency has no significant overall impact, but does contribute to the improvement of knowledge of the EU in the "new" and the small MS. The findings hint that holding the Council presidency for the first time comes with more public saliency attached to the position and is in line with the results of the preceding empirical chapters suggesting that the rotating presidency has greater impact on the Member States without previous experience.

The findings call for a more focused individual level analysis, which would allow for the inclusion of more control variables such as the political interests of the respondents and their levels of media consumption. These could be important determinants of their knowledge of the European Union. This would, however, also mean a shorter time frame and the inclusion of less Council presidencies due to large amounts of missing data and inconsistencies in Eurobarometer surveys, but would at the same time facilitate deeper insights into the potential of the Council presidency to contribute to Europeanisation of public discourse.

7. Conclusion

Combining new institutionalist approaches under the concept of Europeanisation as a theoretical framework, this thesis has addressed the impact of the rotating EU Council presidency on the Member States on three distinct levels: national administrations, ministers, and the citizens of the countries holding the position. Firstly, the conclusion summarises the key findings. It moves on to discuss the contribution the thesis makes to the literature on the EU Council presidency, and the theoretical contributions. In the end I address the limitations of the dissertation and possibilities for further research, and make some concluding remarks on the policy implications of the rotating presidency.

7.1. Summary of the findings

As seen in table 7.1, Chapters 3 and 4 analysed the impact of the rotating Council presidency on national administrations and EU policy coordination practices in six Member States, based on 93 semi-structured expert interviews and primary and secondary sources. Chapter 3 focused on the preparation and the presidency period, and Chapter 4 tackled the long-term impact of the Council presidency. The case selection consisted of six recent small state presidencies. Three of these, Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia, held the position for the first time, and three, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, had previous presidency experience. A comparatively large number of cases, and the selection of three "old" and three "new" Member states allowed for generalisable findings with regard to the difference between the two groups. Although, it must be noted that because of the interview-based (rather than survey-based or mixed) research design the results must be taken with caution due to issues relating to generalisability and positive bias. To measure the impact of the presidency, both chapters employed the concept of administrative capacity as a dependent variable. Administrative capacity stands for a combination of factors that the literature identifies as necessary for effective MS participation in EU policy-making. It is split into rational choice, sociological and historical institutionalist components. On the rational choice side, I looked into the changes in institutional structures of national-EU policy-coordination and the allocation of additional human and material resources. Sociological institutionalist components consisted of skill-development, learning and change of attitudes and perceptions among the civil

servants involved in the presidency preparation and conduct. Historical institutionalism accounted for the role of institutional memory.

The findings of Chapter 3 show that all six Member States invested heavily in strengthening their administrative capacity in the run-up to, and during their presidencies. On the rational choice institutionalist side, "old" MS reinforced their existing EU policy coordination bodies to manage the presidency, while all the "new" ones established separate coordinating institutions. All six MS allocated similar amounts of financial and human resources to their presidencies, hiring additional staff at the national ministries and doubling or even tripling their presences at Permanent Representations in Brussels. However, "new" MS started their preparation earlier and were more thorough than their experienced counterparts. On the sociological institutionalist side, all the MS invested in training the civil servants for the presidency. While "old" MS focused on learning-by-doing from experienced colleagues, the "new" MS organised elaborate centralised training for the people involved. With regard to learning and networking, the presidency presented an important opportunity for re-engagement with the EU institutions for the "old" MS. For the "new" ones, on the other hand, it was a real eye-opener with regard to how EU policy-making processes work, especially when it came to trialogues and other informal practices. Civil servants from "new" MS often identified the presidency as attainment of full EU membership which would not be possible in other ways. From the historical institutionalist perspective, the chapter points to a consistent difference between how "old" and "new" MS prepare and conduct their Council presidencies. While previous experience does not play a role in the success of the presidency and both "old" and "new" MS largely achieved their goals, it did matter with regard to the returns of the presidency, which were greater for the "new" Member States in the sense of knowledge and networks that were not available to them before. The chapter shows that the Council presidency is a costly and work-intensive burden for the MS, but it also presents a significant opportunity to understand how to engage in EU policy-making more effectively, especially for the countries that have not held the position before. Theoretically, the chapter points to at least temporary Europeanisation of national administrations of small Member States, and, to an extent, a convergence between the "old" and the "new" MS with the latter compensating for their structural disadvantages concerning lack of knowledge and experience.

	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Focus	National administrations		National ministers	Public opinion
	Preparation and presidency periods	Long-term impact of the presidency		
Theoretical framework	Sociological institutionalism, Rational choice institutionalism, Europeanisation		Issue Salience/cognitive mobilisation/Europeanisation	
Hypotheses	H1: Holding the presidency improves administrative capacity of the MS. H1a: The impact is greater in "new" MS.	H2: Holding the Council presidency has a lasting impact on the administrative capacity of the MS. H2a: The impact is greater in "new" MS.	H3: Ministers attend Council meetings more frequently during their country's Council presidency. H4: Ministers who were chairing Council meetings during their country's Council presidency attend them more frequently: H3a: in the run up to the presidency (RCI); H3b: both before and after the presidency (SI).	H4: The Council contributes to improved public knowledge of the EU in the MS holding the position. H4a: Impact is greater in "new" MS. H4b: Impact is greater in small MS.
Findings	Support for H1 and H1a, Europeanisation both from rational choice and sociological institutionalist perspectives: learning and skill development and establishment of new institutional structures. More elaborate in "new" Member States.	Support for H2 and H2a, long term, even if diminishing Europeanisation from a sociological institutionalist perspective through learning and skill-development. Little evidence of change to institutional structures and practices. More transforming impact in first-time presidencies.	Support for H3, H3a and limited support for H3b, no strong long-term impact: rational choice explanations fit better, no basis to claim socialisation through the Council presidency.	Weak support for H4, support for H4a and H4b: minor improvement of political knowledge, only in small and "new" Member States.

Table 7.1: Summary of the findings. Source: own elaboration

Chapter 4 builds on the findings of Chapter 3 and traces whether the governments of the six Member States afterwards maintained any of the adjustments in administrative capacity made for the Council presidency. On the rational institutionalist side, long-term change is not apparent. While in Chapter 3, all aspects of administrative capacity were affected, Chapter 4 provides a different picture. On the rational institutionalist side of administrative capacity there was not much legacy. The coordinating institutions and reinforcement of national ministries, Permanent Representations or EU policy coordination bodies, were not retained. With very minor exceptions, the institutions went back to their pre-presidency capacity both in "old" and "new" Member States. The governments also let the temporarily hired staff go, and except for Luxembourg, none offered any centralised effort to keep the people with presidency experience in the civil service. In this regard, the Council presidency could be seen as a missed opportunity by the national governments. On the sociological institutionalist side however, the long-term impact of the Council presidency is more visible. Networks with other MS and EU institutions attained through the presidency, knowledge gained by the civil servants chairing the Council working party meetings, participating in trialogues with the European Parliament and the European Commission, or working on presidency dossiers at the national ministries, largely remained within the civil service. Again, for the "old" Member States, this presented an important opportunity for re-engagement, while for the "new" ones it meant the emergence of a thorough understanding of how EU policy-making works. It also brought ownership of the European Union and EU affairs to the national civil service, an understanding that the EU is an integral part of domestic politics. These skills, knowledge and attitudes contribute to more active and better-informed participation in EU policy-making and the better representation of national interests on the EU level for all six MS, and especially for the "new" Member States that did not have the knowledge or skill set before. Even if only from a sociological institutionalist perspective, the Council presidency has some legacy and contributes to Europeanisation of national administrations for the Member States. Furthermore, again, as in Chapter 3, there is a persistent difference between the "old" and the "new" Member States.

Chapter 5 quantitatively explores ministerial participation in Council meetings and the impact of the Council presidency on this participation. As has been suggested in the existing literature, as well as by several of the interviewees, chairing the Council meetings during the presidency motivates ministers to engage in EU affairs more actively and should have a socialising effect.

To test this claim, I analysed a novel dataset consisting of attendance lists at the ministerial meetings of the Council of the EU from 2010 to 2017 spanning 16 Council presidencies by "old" and "new", as well as big and small Member States. The findings suggest that ministers do indeed tend to skip less, or to skip no meetings in the run-up to and during their country's Council presidency. However, the rates drop again almost immediately afterwards, refuting the idea of socialisation and long-term impact. Theoretically, as opposed to Chapter 4, ministerial attendance at Council meetings before and after the presidency is better explained by rational choice institutionalist logic implying cost-benefit calculations and the use of the Council presidency as a tool to exert influence and make one's voice heard, rather than sociological institutionalist assumptions implying socialisation into the Council environment and increased participation rates in the long term. The chapter also provided additional insights into the wider debate on the legitimacy and accountability of the decision-making in the Council of the EU, finding that for one reason or another national ministers skip as many as one third of the meetings and state secretaries or senior bureaucrats attend and vote in their place instead.

Chapter 6 explores the impact of the Council presidency on public opinion. The Member States often invest significant resources in promoting the EU nationally during the Council presidency by organising various events in the capitals and ensuring greater media coverage of EU affairs. The chapter uses Eurobarometer survey data to assess whether these measures have any impact on public knowledge of the EU. The findings show that the presidency is indeed publicly visible, and the citizens are aware of it. However, it only leads to a minor improvement of public knowledge of the European Union in small and "new" Member States. It would be too far-fetched to claim a Europeanisation of public discourse through the Council presidency.

Summing up, the overall answer to the research question, whether the Council presidency matters for the Member States holding it, is yes. However, with some reservations. It is a "yes" for national administrations, especially of the Member States holding the presidency for the first time, leading to a long-term improvement of administrative capacity necessary to successfully engage in EU policy-making process, even if from a rather personal, sociological institutionalist perspective. The Council presidency also motivates national ministers to attend the meetings of the Council of the EU more frequently. However, my findings suggest that they see the presidency as a temporary obligation, since it does not have a long-term positive impact

on meeting attendance rates. Finally, a small positive impact of the Council presidency on public knowledge of the European Union in small and "new" Member States can be observed, but it is hardly transformative. The Council presidency is publicly visible, but does not significantly change citizens' interest in the European Union.

7.2. Contribution to the literature

The literature on the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU could be divided into two broad groups. The first would include research on the performance, achievements and functions of the presidency on the EU level. The second would comprise the impact and implications of holding the Council presidency on the Member States, an area that is still remarkably less researched than the former. Most of it focuses on a single aspect such as administrative consequences or impact on public opinion, and uses limited case selections of a single or a few cases. This thesis provides an important contribution to the second group by assessing the impact of the Council presidency on the Member States on three levels, comparing between six and 28 cases. This comprehensive comparison allows for generalisation of the findings and the establishment of a difference between "old" and "new" (as well as big and small Member States to an extent), which has not been available to date. Furthermore, many of the studies of the domestic impact of the Council presidency are atheoretical, and here I attempt to bring all the three levels under a single theoretical framework.

Considering the separate chapters, firstly, the main contribution of Chapters 3 and 4 is a comprehensive comparison of six cases, three countries that recently held the Council presidency for the first time and three "experienced" Member States. This comparison is a new contribution to existing literature that has analysed a single (Kajnc & Svetlicic, 2010; Kaniok & Gergelova Štegirova, 2014), or a limited number of cases including only one "old" MS (Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017), or only "new" Member States (Galušková, 2017). The studies to date did not permit structured comparison of both groups and did not allow conclusions to be drawn about the role of institutional memory in the preparation, conduct and long-term impact of the Council presidency. Furthermore, my thesis provides a thorough account of the presidency preparation period, which has so far received very limited academic attention (Jensen & Nedergaard, 2017), despite being frequently identified as busier and more demanding than the

Council presidency itself. Chapter 5 adds a somewhat obvious and significant variable, namely the Council presidency, to the similar study of ministerial attendance at Council meetings by Gron and Salomonsen (2015). Aside from providing a novel assessment of the impact of the Council presidency on national politicians, it also contributes to the broader literature on comitology decision-making in the Council of the EU and the legitimacy and accountability thereof (Häge, 2012; Hayes-Renshaw & Wallace, 2006; Schendelen, 1996). Chapter 6 offers a more in-depth assessment of the impact of the Council presidency on public opinion than has been developed in research to date by studying a longer time span, more Council presidencies, and including a set of independent variables to control for similar events (Fraussen & Dejaeghere, 2011; Kaniok, 2012).

7.3. Theoretical implications

The main theoretical contribution of this thesis lies in exploring whether a temporary event such as a Council presidency, can be considered a sufficient adaptational pressure leading to Europeanisation in the Member States holding the position. At least in the case of national administrations I find that this is the case. Holding the Council presidency for a period of six months and preparing for about one to three years does lead to an at least temporary strengthening of administrative capacity and Europeanisation of the civil service of the Member States.

Furthermore, I show how combining and juxtaposing different new institutionalist approaches can be an insightful approach to studying the impact of the Council presidency on the Member States. While not claiming that one approach is better than the other, I find that a combination of rational choice and sociological institutionalisms is well-suited to explaining changes in administrative capacity during the presidency and the preparation period, while the long-term impact is much better explained by sociological institutionalism alone. From a historical institutionalist perspective, the findings of Chapters 3 and 4 also provide support for the conditions for international socialisation outlined by Checkel (2001b): actors exposed to a novel environment, that is, the "new" Member States holding the presidency for the first time, are more likely to be affected by the socialising institution. The theoretical framework is admittedly

also somewhat broad and potentially too general but it serves as a common umbrella to bring the different parts of primarily empirical work together.

7.4. Policy implications and concluding remarks

The main practical message of this research project is that the Council presidency makes a difference for the Member States, especially for the ones that never held the position before, and especially for national administrations. It does, at least to an extent, fulfill the function of bringing the European Union closer to the Member States. The mechanism of the rotating presidency has been criticised for several reasons. One of the main points is that changing the meeting chairs every six months disrupts the continuity of policy-making in the Council of the EU. Furthermore, it has been criticised as a costly burden for the Member States, especially the small ones with limited human and financial resources. However, while the criticism is not unfounded, the rotating presidency also provides an unprecedented opportunity for national administrations to re-engage with EU affairs, to network and to learn ways, especially for the small MS, to make their voices heard better on the EU level. It creates a sense of ownership of EU affairs in national administrations, even if temporarily, and brings out an understanding of the centrality of EU policies and decisions to national policy-making, especially in the Member States without previous presidency experience. It also expands the circles of civil servants with thorough understanding of EU policy-making processes. If EU affairs departments at the ministries, especially in the "new" Member States could be referred to as "islands of excellence" with a good knowledge of EU issues, broader groups in the entire ministries gained such expertise through the Council presidency.

Furthermore, while the project started with the premise that the distinction between "old" and "new" Member States should have faded by now, over a decade after the Eastern Enlargement in 2004, a persisting difference was a surprising result. Multiple respondents from MS holding the presidency for the first time identified it as akin to becoming full members of the EU, or EU membership coming of age. Only after the presidency did many experts from "new" MS feel that they were on an equal footing with their counterparts from "older" and bigger EU Member States and that they knew how policy-making in Brussels really worked. As a result, even though the rotating presidency only repeats every 14 years and the learning effects diminish, it is still

an essential experience for national administrations, especially those of first-time presidencies. More importantly, considering how smoothly the new MS planned and conducted their Council presidencies and how no difference in the quality of the presidencies of "old" and "new" Member States can be observed, the fears that were voiced after the Eastern Enlargement about how the newcomers might not be ready to handle their EU membership obligations, including the rotating presidency, appear unfounded. Even if "new" MS faced more structural disadvantages through lack of experience previous presidency, greater investments in preparation and training as well as learning from more experienced Member States allowed to overcome them successfully.

Looking at public opinion, knowledge the Council presidency was found to have a small positive impact on understanding how the European Union works in small and "new" Member States. Looking at the six countries discussed in the case studies, no clear positive impact on public knowledge of the EU was only found in the Netherlands (see Appendix 4), while it increased in the other five Member States. Considering that the Dutch presidency was comparably "low key" when it came to promotion and information campaigns, as confirmed by the interviewees, unlike the other presidencies analysed which organised more or less extensive campaigns, it can be concluded that it serves as an opportunity to promote the European Union among the national populations. The results hint that the Member States should continue investing in the promotion of their respective Council presidencies.

The critics of the rotating Council presidency suggest replacing it with permanent chairs of all Council formations, as is the case with the European Council and the Foreign Affairs Council since the Lisbon Treaty came into force, to ensure more continuity in the policy-making process and to remove the costly administrative burden from the Member States. However, even though the impact of the rotating Council presidency on national ministers and public opinion in the Member States is negligible and not as strong or lasting as I initially expected, this thesis still provides strong support for the persistence of the institution based on the positive impact it has on national administrations of small Member States.

7.5. Limitations and further research

Despite being based on a significant number of interviews and novel data, this research project faced numerous limitations, which also open up paths for further research. First of all, with regard to national administrations, using interviews with a comparatively narrow range of respondents as data always involves a certain bias. In this case, since I spoke to people who were actively involved in the conduct of their respective Council presidencies, a strong positive bias should be expected. Evidently, experts would not be eager to criticise their own work on what was frequently described as the highest point of their careers in the civil service. I attempted to counter this bias by interviewing multiple respondents from each group of institutions across the countries, but there would clearly be space for further improvement. This could be addressed by a different research project collecting presidency evaluations and administrative implications by conducting a survey with more strictly structured questions. It would allow for an inclusion of an even wider range of cases and respondents, and perspectives like those of key EU institutions such as the European Commission and the Council General Secretariat, as well as national civil servants that were not involved in the process directly and who might therefore provide more critical views. Such research design would also allow for a possibility to rank the Member States rather than just focusing on the difference between the "old" and the "new" MS. Furthermore, the claim I make that the quality of EU policy coordination improves after the Council presidency is based on the subjective evaluations of the civil servants. Further research would be needed to find more solid support for that, such as a thorough analysis of government positions on EU legislation, Council documents or minutes of the Council meetings to determine whether the presidency actually leads to improvement of national positions and the ability to voice them and better obtain national preferences in the Council.

As to the national ministers and the rotating presidency, measuring the impact of the presidency through mere attendance at the meetings of the Council of the EU constitutes a somewhat narrow approach. The inquiry could be expanded by looking at minister's statements at the Council meetings or scrutinising the national level for their change of attitudes and positions towards EU affairs. This could be accomplished with elite interviews with ministers or state secretaries from Member States that recently held the position.

Furthermore, the chapter could be expanded into a more general inquiry into why ministers choose to attend or skip Council meetings, tying into the debate about legitimacy of decision-making in the Council of the EU. For that reason, additional variables that were excluded here for feasibility reasons, such as political affiliation of the ministers and their position towards the EU, Euroscepticism, more detailed information about administrative systems, national EU policy coordination mechanisms, and others, should complement the dataset. The research should also be complemented with expert interviews with permanent representatives and representatives of national ministries.

The chapter on public opinion and the rotating presidency is the one that probably faces the most limitations due to inconsistencies in, and the limited availability of Eurobarometer data, which greatly shaped the argument. To take this research further, I would like to return to individual level analysis, which was the initial idea for the chapter but proved to be too ambitious. Furthermore, better insights into the potential impact of the rotating presidency on public attitudes towards the EU could be achieved by changing the dependent variable from knowledge about, to support for the EU. I have not done this because the question of whether respondents think that their country's EU membership is a good thing was not asked during the economic crisis (for several years from 2009 onwards), which constitutes a key period in my current analysis, but has now been returned. Aggregating recent Eurobarometer surveys, using support for the EU as a dependent variable and switching to an individual level analysis could provide further, and arguably better insights into whether the rotating presidency has an impact on public perceptions of the EU across Europe. Another idea which was beyond the scope of this thesis would be using national survey data, although it might lead to comparability issues.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of interviews

to Chapters 3 and 4

Abbreviations:
Resp. # - Respondent number.
Int. # - Number of interview (file/transcript) – used in references.
Country: LT – Lithuania, LV – Latvia, IE – Ireland, LU – Luxembourg, NL – Netherlands, SK – Slovakia.
Institution: Coordination – Presidency coordinating institution; Ministry – National (Line) Ministry, Perm. Rep. – Permanent Representation in Brussels.
Date – date of the interview.
Place/Format: Location for interviews in person, (Telephone) for interviews conducted over telephone or skype, (Written response) for questionnaires filled out in writing.
Duration: duration of interview, hh:mm.

Resp.#	Int. #	Country	Instititution	Date	Place/(Format)	Duration
1	1	LT	Coordination	15.03.16	(Telephone)	0:48
2	2	LT	Ministry	29.03.16	Vilnius	0:20
3	3	LT	Ministry	30.03.16	Vilnius	0:32
4	4	LT	Ministry	30.03.16	Vilnius	0:36
5	5	LT	Perm. Rep.	31.03.16	Vilnius	0:50
6	6	LT	Ministry	31.03.16	Vilnius	1:24
7		LT				
8		LT				
9	7	LT	Perm. Rep.	01.04.16	Vilnius	0:32
10	8	LT	Perm. Rep.	01.04.16	Vilnius	0:39
11	9	LT	Ministry/ Perm. Rep	01.04.16	Vilnius	0:38
12	10	LT	Ministry	01.04.16	Vilnius	0:20
13	11	LT	Ministry	03.04.16	Vilnius	0:30
14	12	LT	Perm. Rep.	04.04.16	Vilnius	1:06
15	13	LT	Ministry	04.04.16	Vilnius	0:31
16	14	LT	Perm. Rep.	06.04.16	Vilnius	0:52
17	15	LT	Ministry	06.04.16	Vilnius	0:37
18	16	LT	Perm. Rep.	08.04.16	Vilnius	1:07
19	17	LV	Ministry	11.04.16	Riga	0:40
20	18	LV	Coordination	11.04.16	Riga	1:00
21		LV	Ministry			
22	19	LV	Ministry	11.04.16	Riga	0:23

Resp.#	Int. #	Country	Instititution	Date	Place/(Format)	Duration
23	20	LV	Ministry	12.04.16	Riga	0:45
24	21	LV	Ministry	12.04.16	Riga	0:30
25	22	LV	Coordination	13.04.16	Riga	0:53
26		LV	Ministry			
27	23	LV	Ministry	13.04.16	Riga	0:35
28	24	LV	Coordination	13.04.16	Riga	0:33
29	25	LV	Ministry	13.04.16	Riga	0:28
30	26	LV	Ministry/ Coordination	14.04.16	Riga	0:33
31	27	LV	Perm. Rep.	14.04.16	Riga	0:42
32	28	LV	Coordination	14.04.16	Riga	0:47
33	29	LV	Perm. Rep.	15.04.16	Riga	0:47
34		LV	Ministry			
35	30	LV	Ministry	15.04.16	Riga	0:28
36	31	LT	Parliament	18.04.16	Vilnius	0:30
37	32	LT	Coordination	21.04.16	(Telephone)	0:32
38	33	IE	Coordination	01.12.16	(Telephone)	0:36
39	34	LU	Coordination	29.12.16	(Written Response)	
40	35	NL	Perm. Rep.	06.01.17	(Telephone)	0:30
41	36	LU	Ministry	06.01.17	(Telephone)	0:33
42	37	IE	Ministry	11.01.17	Dublin	0:48
43	38	IE	Ministry	11.01.17	Dublin	0:39
44	39	IE	Perm. Rep.	12.01.17	Dublin	0:45
45	40	IE	Perm. Rep.	12.01.17	Dublin	0:30
46	41	LU	Ministry	13.01.17	(Telephone)	0:47
47	42	IE	Ministry/ Perm. Rep.	13.01.17	Dublin	0:35
48	43	IE	Perm. Rep.	13.01.17	Dublin	0:46
49	44	IE	Ministry	16.01.17	Dublin	
50	45	IE	Perm. Rep.	16.01.17	Dublin	0:51
51	46	IE	Perm. Rep.	18.01.17	Dublin	0:36
52	47	IE	Coordination	19.01.17	Dublin	0:36
53	48	IE	Perm. Rep.	19.01.17	Dublin	0:37
54	49	IE	Ministry	20.01.17	Dublin	0:53
55	50	IE	Perm. Rep.	20.01.17	Dublin	0:58
56	51	LU	Coordination	23.01.17	Luxembourg	0:40
57	52	LU	Ministry	23.01.17	Luxembourg	0:52
58	53	LU	Ministry	24.01.17	Luxembourg	0:26
59		LU				
60	54	LU	Ministry	26.01.17	Luxembourg	1:08
61	55	LU	Coordination	27.01.17	Luxembourg	0:41

Resp.#	Int. #	Country	Instititution	Date	Place/(Format)	Duration
62	56	NL	Perm. Rep.	30.01.17	Brussels	0:48
63	57	SK	Perm. Rep.	30.01.17	Brussels	0:50
64	58	LU	Perm. Rep.	30.01.17	Brussels	0:44
65	59	NL	Perm. Rep.	31.01.17	Brussels	0:36
66	60	SK	Perm. Rep.	31.01.17	Brussels	0:30
67	61	LU	Perm. Rep.	31.01.17	Brussels	0:28
68	62	NL	Perm. Rep.	01.02.17	Brussels	1:20
69		NL	Perm. Rep.			
70	63	NL	Perm. Rep.	02.02.17	Brussels	0:50
71	64	SK	Perm. Rep.	02.02.17	Brussels	0:29
72	65	NL	Ministry	06.01.17	(Telephone)	0:26
73	66	NL	Ministry	08.02.17	(Telephone)	0:46
74	67	NL	Ministry	09.02.17	(Telephone)	0:20
75	68	SK	Perm. Rep.	23.02.17	(Telephone)	0:44
76	69	NL	Coordination	23.02.17	(Telephone)	0:32
77	70	LU	Perm. Rep.	27.02.17	(Telephone)	0:41
78	71	NL	Ministry	01.03.17	(Telephone)	0:50
79	72	NL	Ministry	09.03.17	(Telephone)	0:40
80	73	SK	Coordination	04.05.17	(Telephone)	0:50
81	74	SK	Perm. Rep.	05.05.17	(Telephone)	0:44
82		SK	Ministry			
83	75	SK	Perm. Rep.	15.05.17	Bratislava	0:45
84	76	SK	Coordination	16.05.17	Bratislava	0:48
85		SK	Ministry	16.05.17	Bratislava	
86	77	SK	Perm. Rep.?	16.05.17	Bratislava	0:54
87		SK	Ministry			
88		SK	Ministry			
89	78	SK	Perm. Rep.	16.05.17	Bratislava	0:44
90	79	SK	Ministry	17.05.17	Bratislava	0:58
91	80	SK	Ministry	18.05.17	Bratislava	0:57
92	81	SK	Ministry	18.05.17	Bratislava	0:50
93	82	SK	Ministry		(Written response)	

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And several anonymous respondents.

Appendix 2: Interview questionnaire
to Chapters 3 and 4

(Adjusted based on the role of the interviewee)

Introduction:
How would you briefly summarise the period of the (country) Council Presidency?
- To what extent do you think the Presidency goals were reached?
- What were the biggest challenges of the Presidency?

Main questions:

Staff and workflow at the ministries/Perm. Reps.
Were there any changes in the workflow of the Ministry/Perm. Rep?
- How did the Ministry/Perm. Rep deal with the increased workload?
- Were there any additional people hired/additional staff trainings?
- What happened to the additional staff after the Presidency?
- Were any of the structures/people retained?
  - Do you know what happened to the people who left the ministry/Perm. Rep.?
- Were there any burdens or frustrations? How were they dealt with?
- Was the workload managed successfully?
  - Were national issues put aside for the presidency period?

Logistics
How were the presidency activities (informal Council meetings, mainly) organised in the capital?
- What were the biggest challenges?
- How were the meetings organised (central location and planning?)
- Did you learn from other MS? Did you try to introduce any innovations?
- Do you think the informal meetings were a success?
  - What could be done differently?

Long term impact/Participation
Would you say that the presidency had any long-term impact?
- Has anything changed in the national-EU policy coordination?
  - Does the (institution) participate in EU policy making processes more actively after the presidency?
  - Has anything changed in the communication between the national institutions and Perm. Rep.?
  - Has anything changed in the communication between the national and EU institutions?
    - Has the image of the (country) on the EU level changed?
    - Were any new contact networks built? Are they still used?
- Have you noticed any change in skills or attitudes among the people who were working for the presidency?

Presidency as an opportunity

Would you say that Presidency presented the (institution) with an opportunity for achievements that would have otherwise not been possible?

- If so, what were they?
- Were there any national political goals that the presidency attempted to achieve/has achieved?

Do you think that the institution/country is taken "more seriously" by the EU bodies and other Member States after the Presidency?

Do you think that Council Presidency has any political power?

- Has (Presidency) exercised it?

Evaluation:

What makes a good Council Presidency according to you?

How would you evaluate the performance of the (country)?

Can you compare the performance of (country) to (other MS)?

- Could you name a good/bad example of a Council Presidency?
- Is there a difference between old and new MS presidencies?

Trio presidency

What about the cooperation within the Presidency Trio?

- Was the exchange between the three countries frequent?
    - Was it useful?

Can you compare the Council Presidency to any other similar event when it comes to workload, experience, learning effects?

Conclusion:

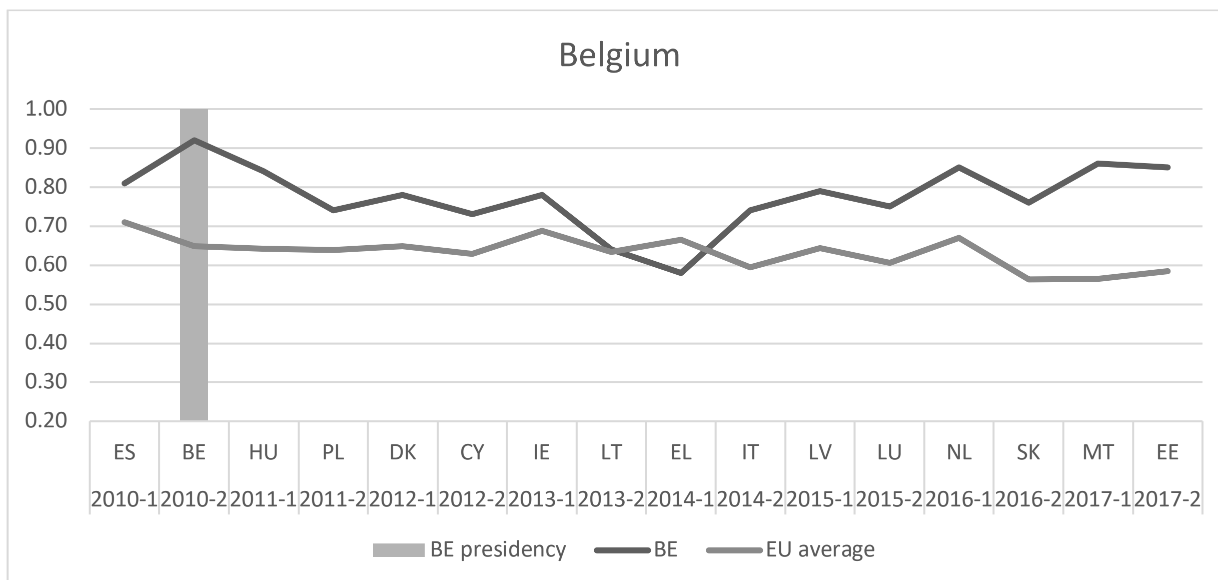
Would you say, all factors considered, that the Presidency was a burden or an opportunity for the (ministry/perm.rep.)? What about for (country)?

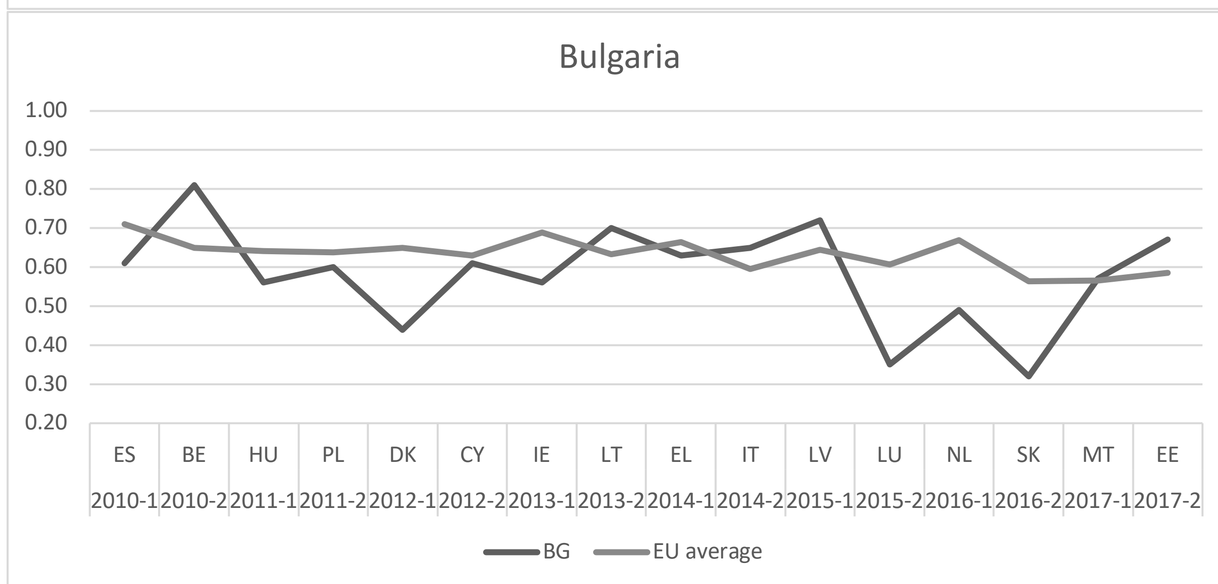
Appendix 3: Country-level graphs of ministerial attendance to Council meetings to Chapter 5

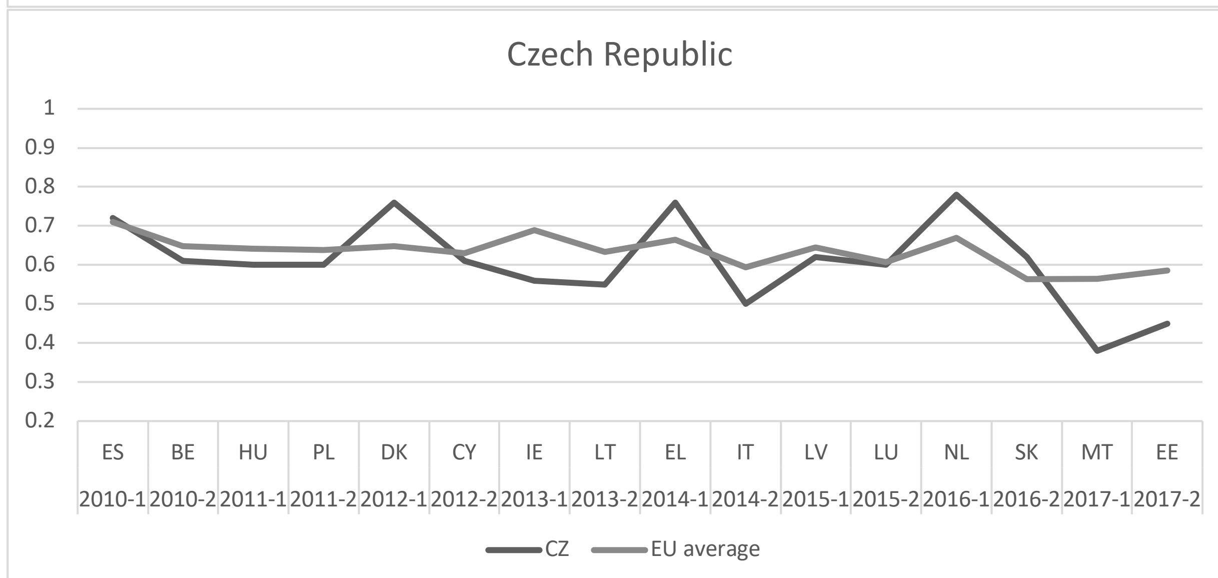
The following graphs further illustrate and complement the data reported in Table 5.2. They are not an integral part of the analysis in Chapter 5, rather an additional visualisation of the data.

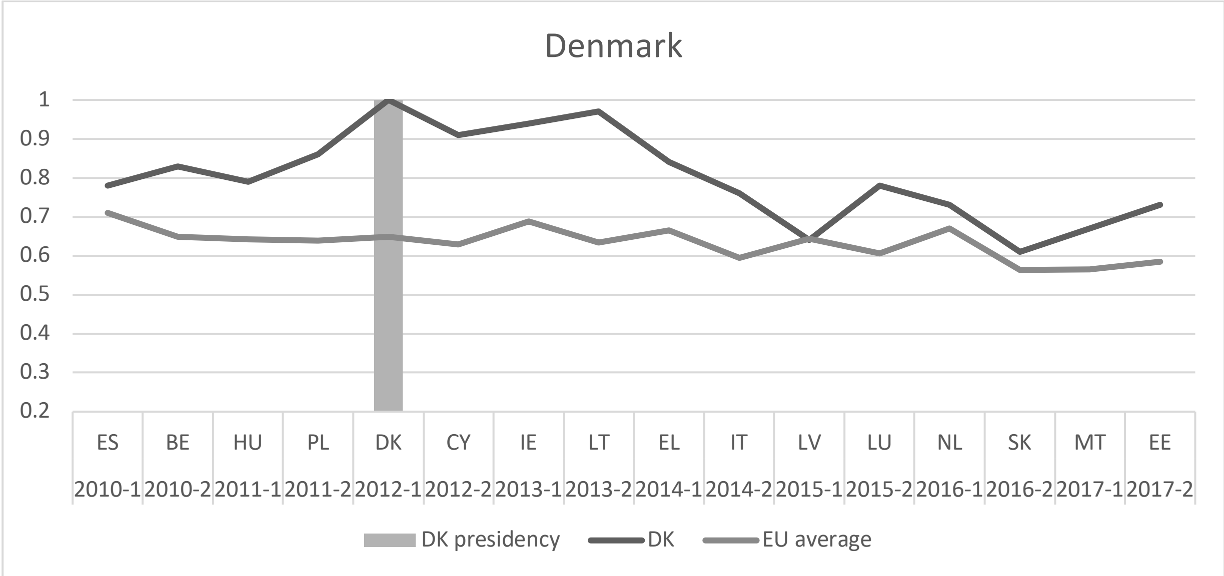
The graphs plot attendance rates at ministerial Council meetings on the country level over a period of 8 years (1 = 100%, or minister always present). The lines depict country rates and EU average as a point of comparison. The bars mark the Council presidency of the respective Member State (in case there is no bar, the Member State did not hold a Council presidency between 2010 and 2017).

As the graphs show, in almost all the cases the peak in ministerial attendance rates coincides with the Council presidency for the countries that have held the position between 2010 and 2017. They also show that the rates tend to fall soon after the Council presidency is over. However, there are additional fluctuations and variance in attendance rates, which I attempt to explain by conducting logistic regression analysis in Chapter 5.


Belgium
1.00
0.90
0.80
0.70
0.60
0.50
0.40
0.30
0.20
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
BE presidency
BE
EU average


Bulgaria
1.00
0.90
0.80
0.70
0.60
0.50
0.40
0.30
0.20
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
BG
EU average


Czech Republic
1
0.9
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
CZ
EU average


Denmark
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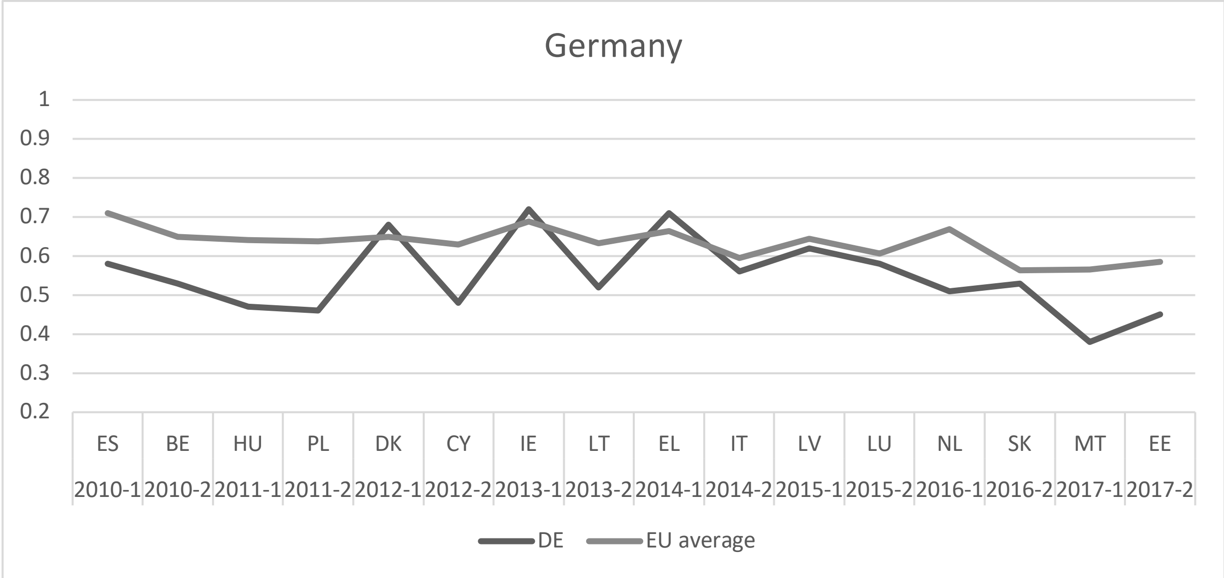
0.9
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
DK presidency
DK
EU average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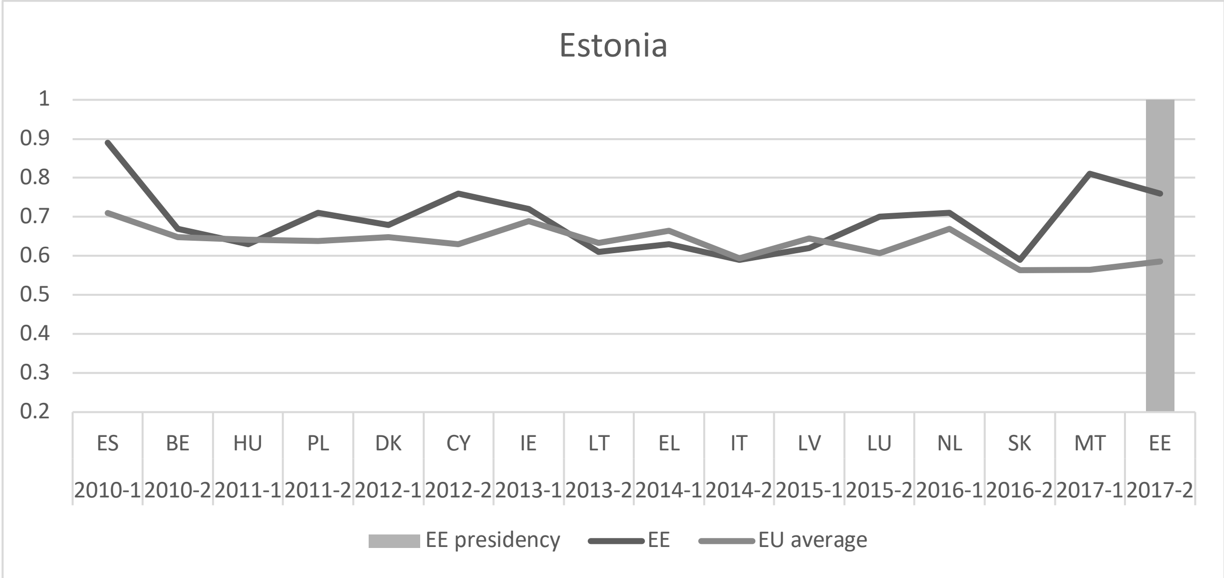
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
DE
EU average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0.8
0.7
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0.4
0.3
0.2
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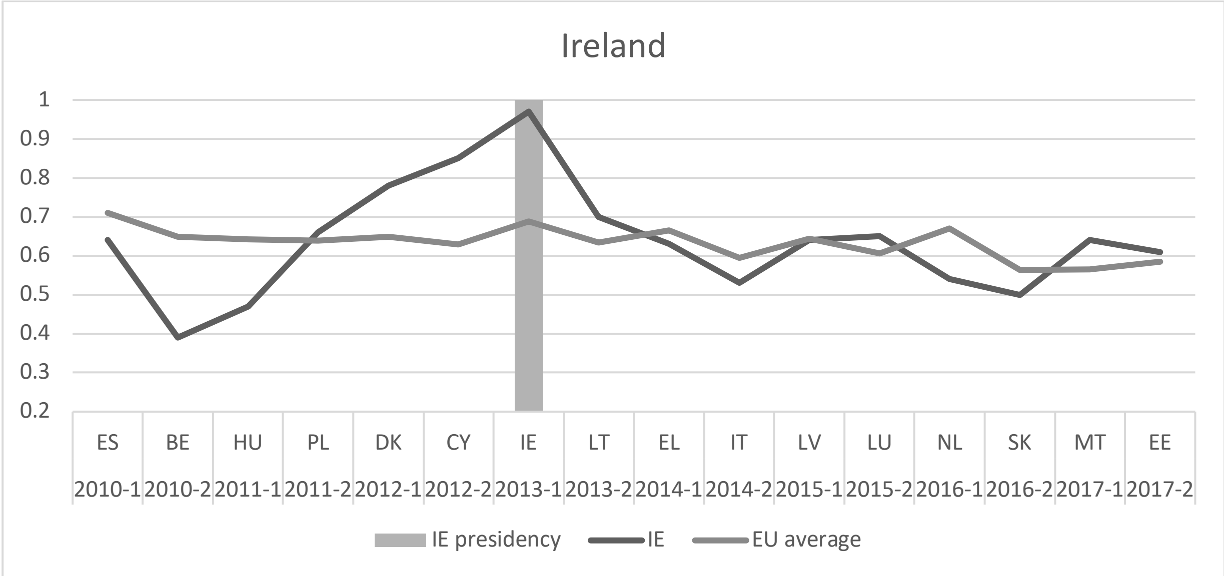
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
EE presidency
EE
EU average


Ireland
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0.9
0.8
0.7
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0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
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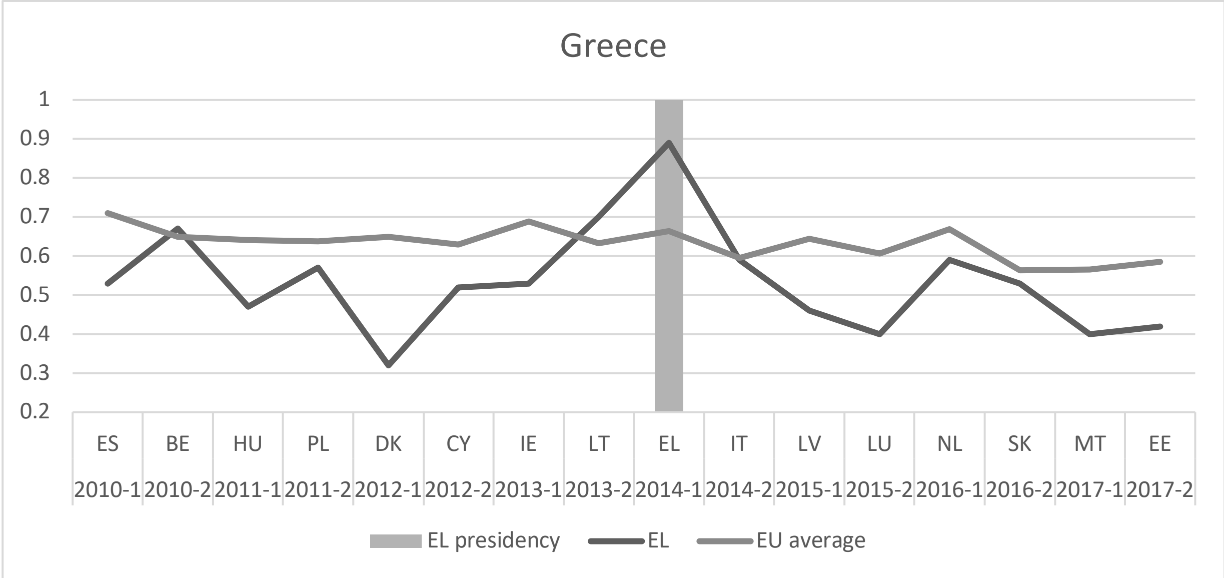
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
IE presidency
IE
EU average


Greece
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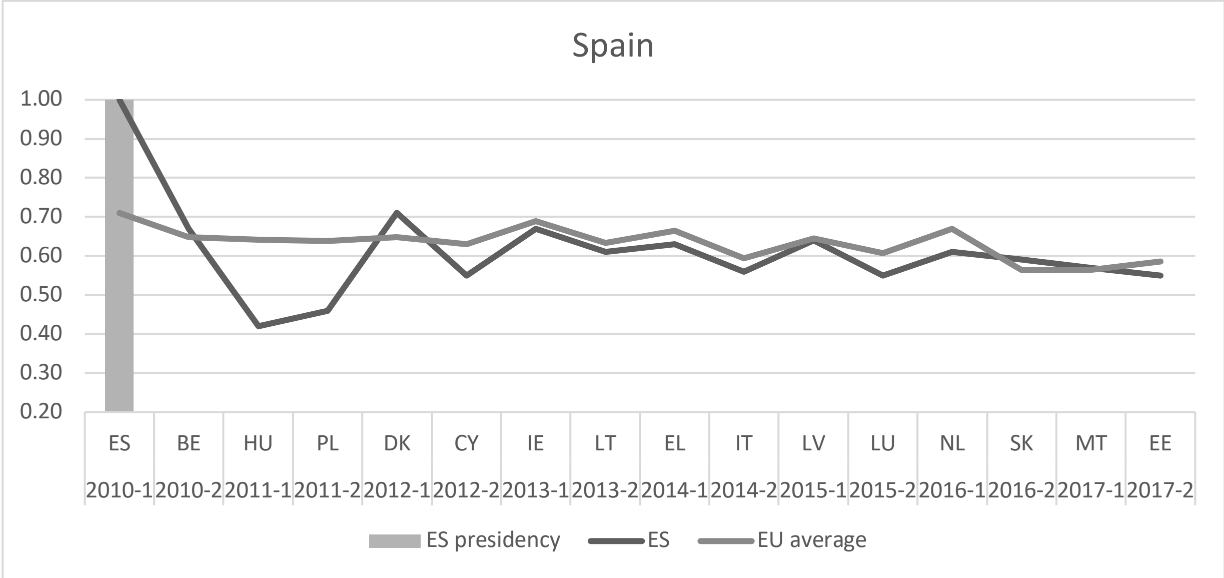
0.9
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
EL presidency
EL
EU average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0.90
0.80
0.70
0.60
0.50
0.40
0.30
0.20
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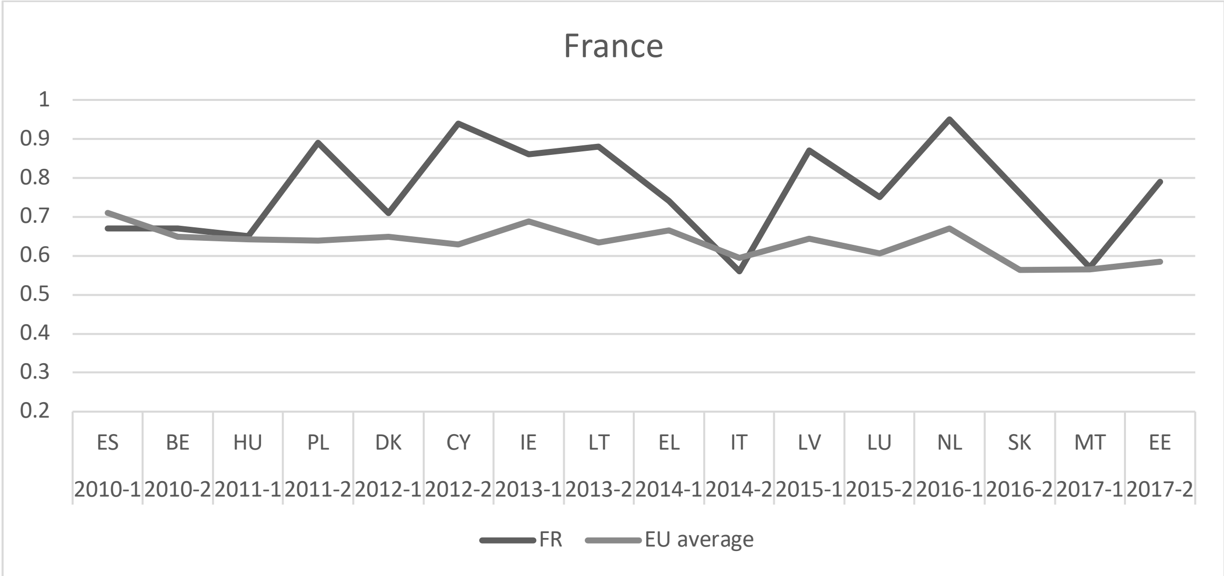
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
ES presidency
ES
EU average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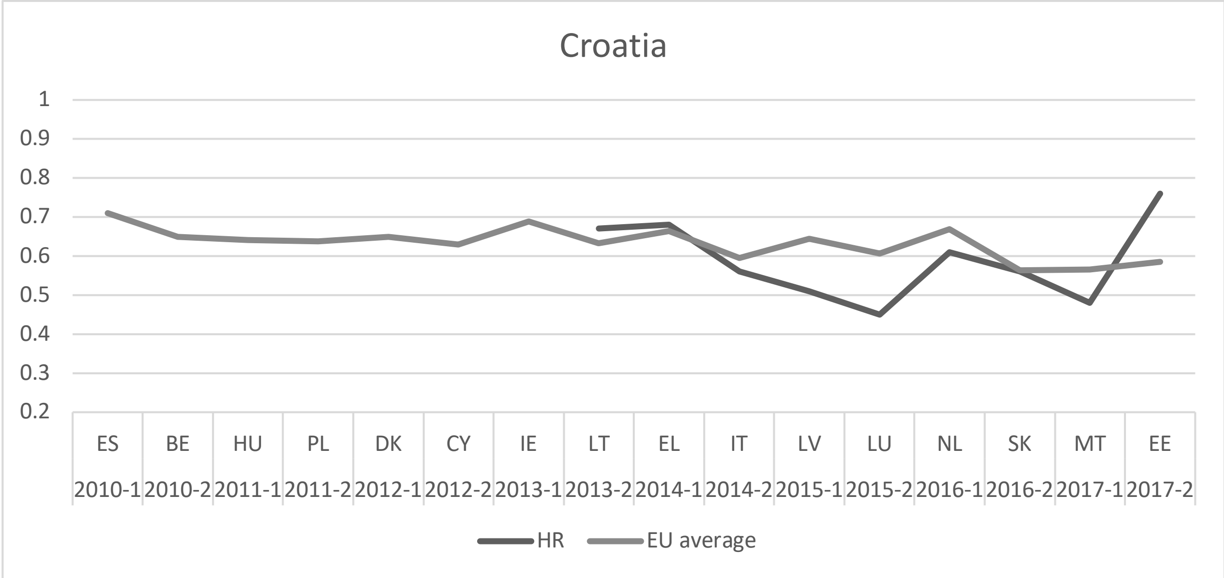
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
FR
EU average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0.5
0.4
0.3
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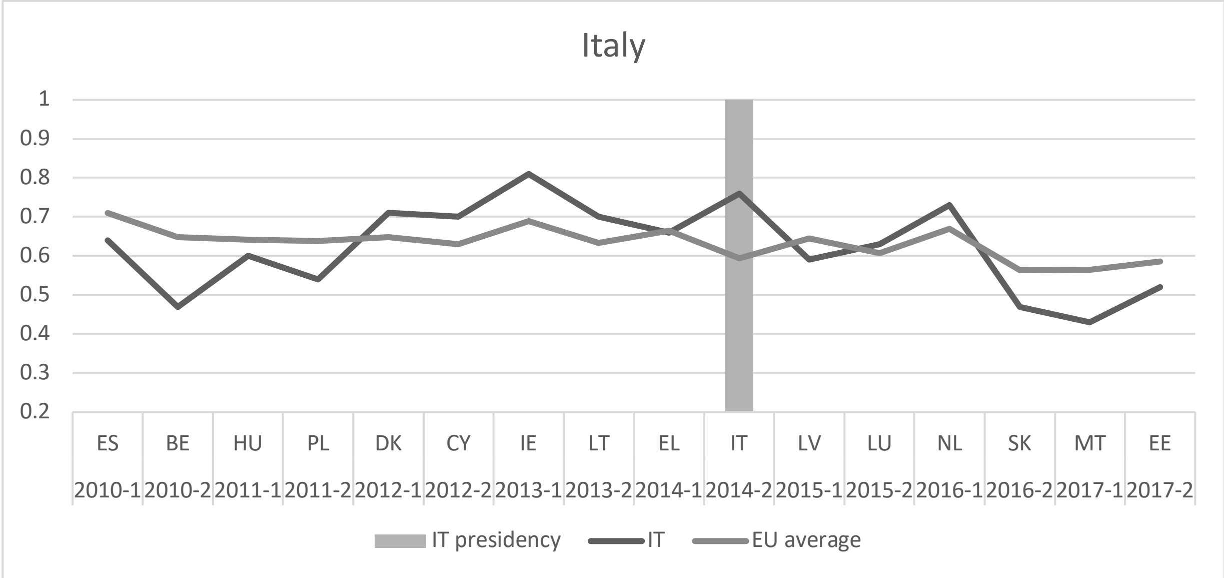
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
HR
EU average


Italy
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0.8
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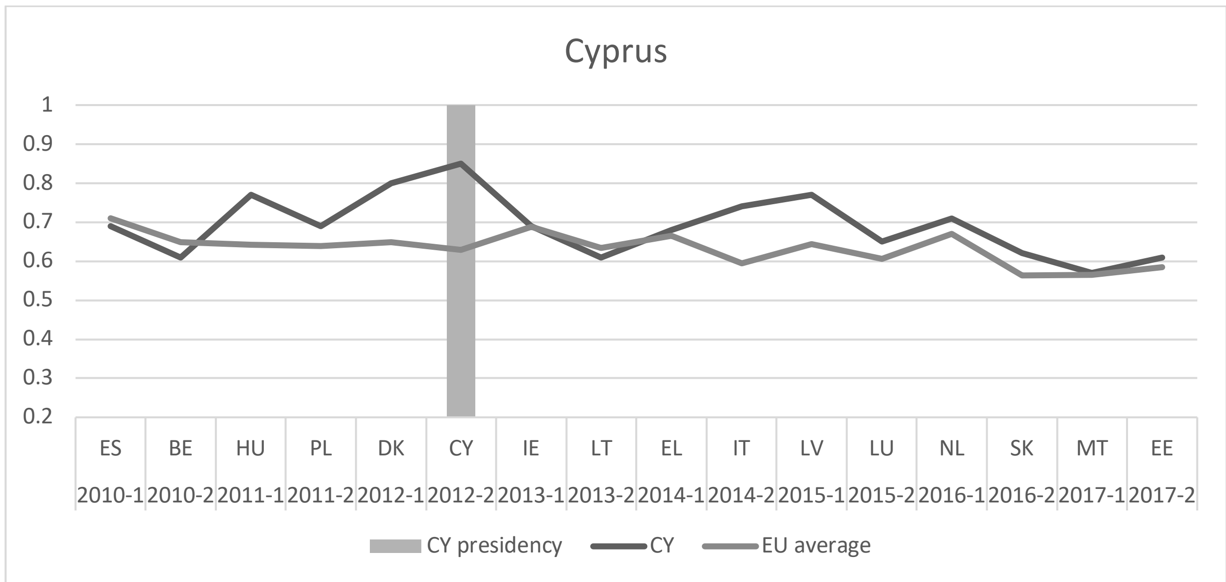
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
IT presidency
IT
EU average


Cyprus
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0.8
0.7
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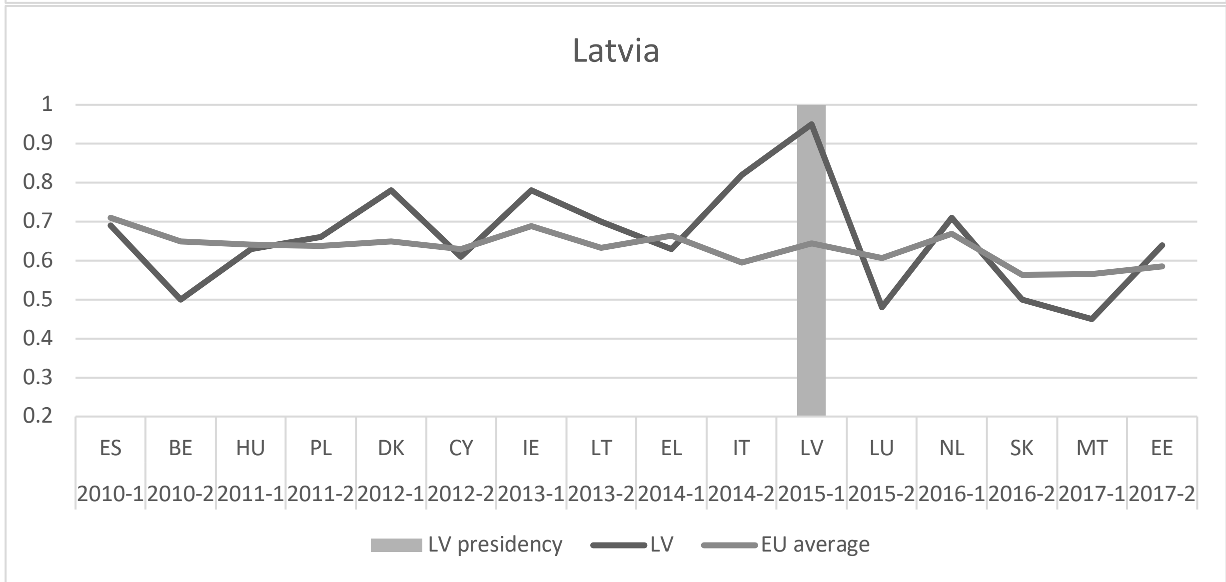
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
CY presidency
CY
EU average


Latvia
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0.8
0.7
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0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
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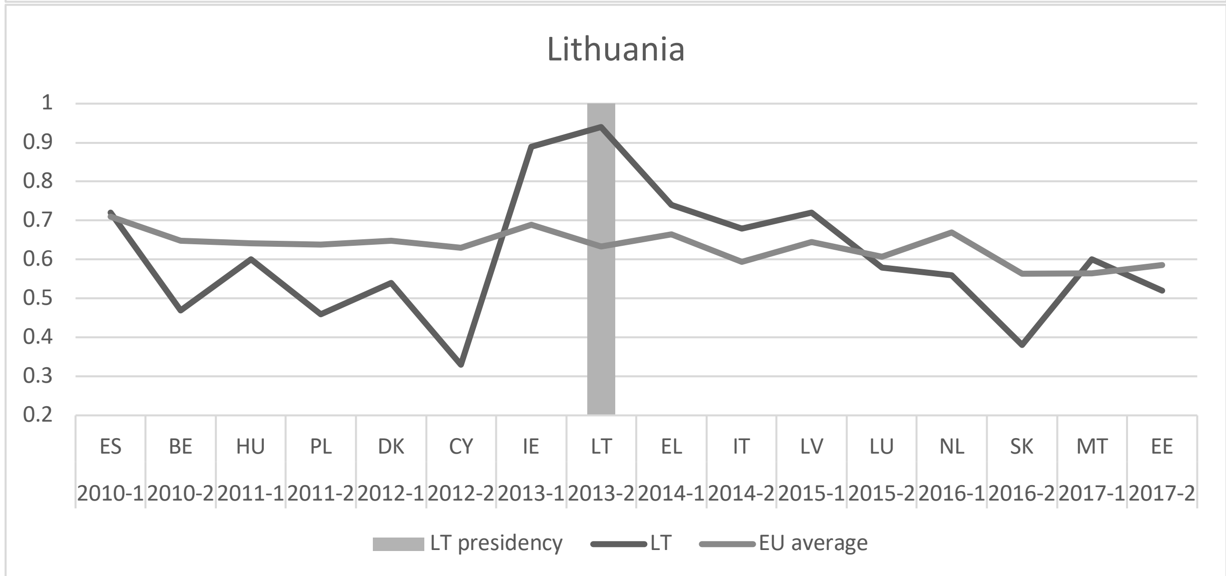
LV presidency
LV
EU average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0.6
0.5
0.4
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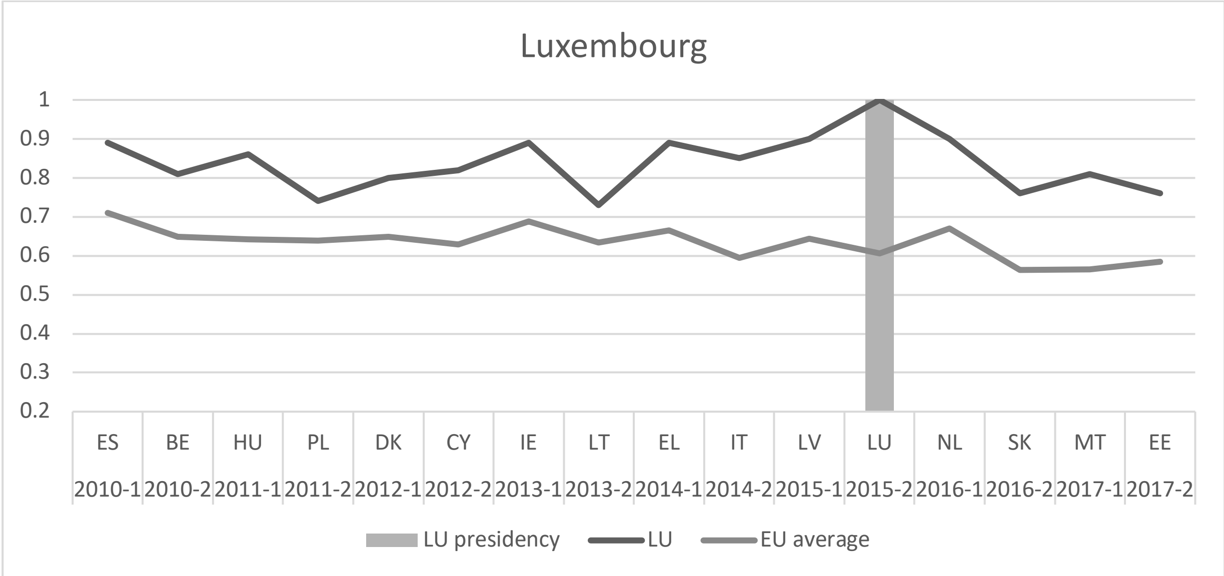
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
LT presidency
LT
EU average


Luxembourg
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0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
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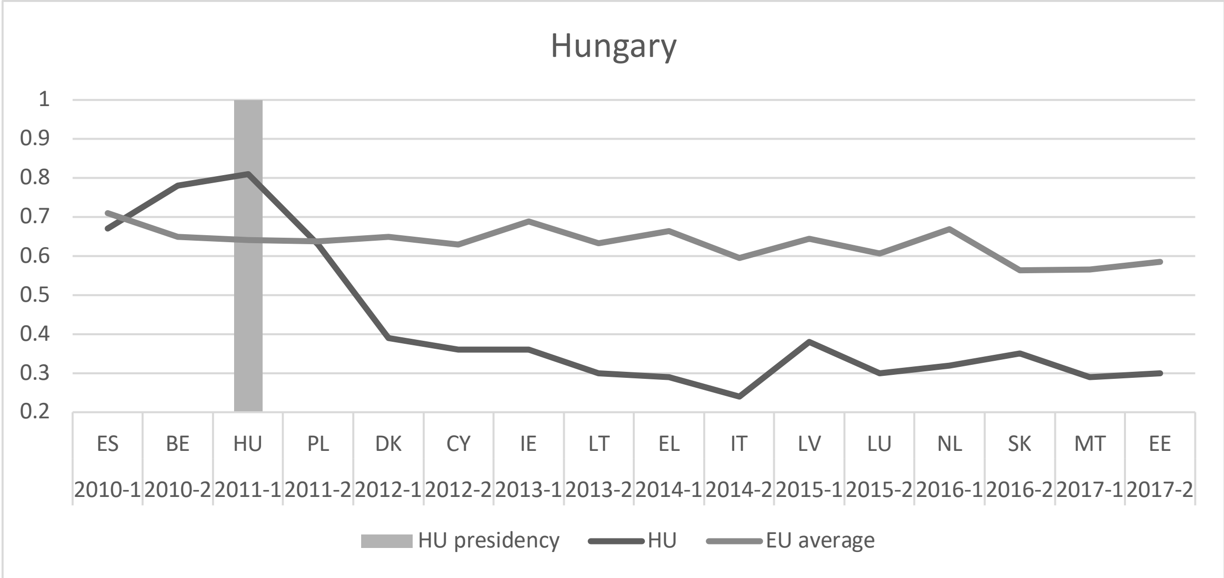
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
LU presidency
LU
EU average


Hungary
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0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
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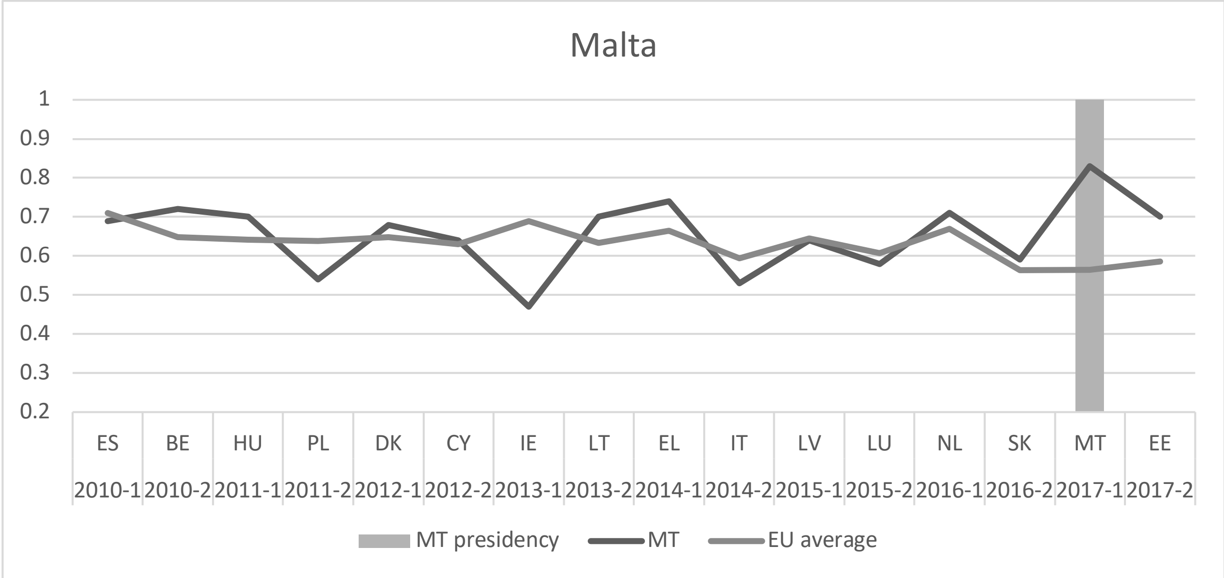
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
HU presidency
HU
EU average


Malta
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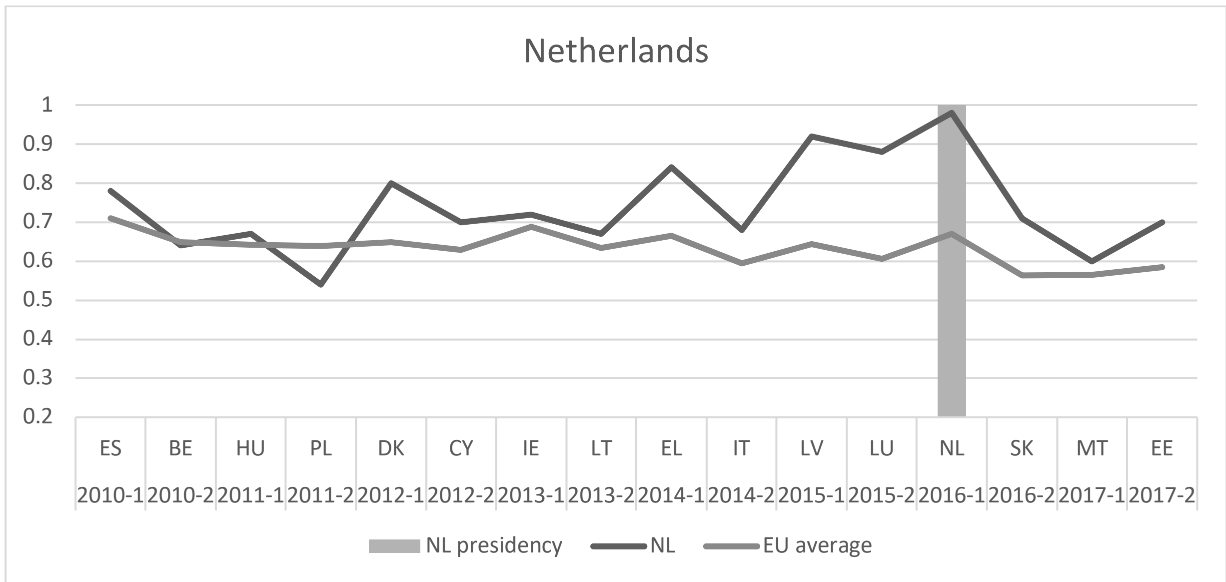
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
MT presidency
MT
EU average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0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
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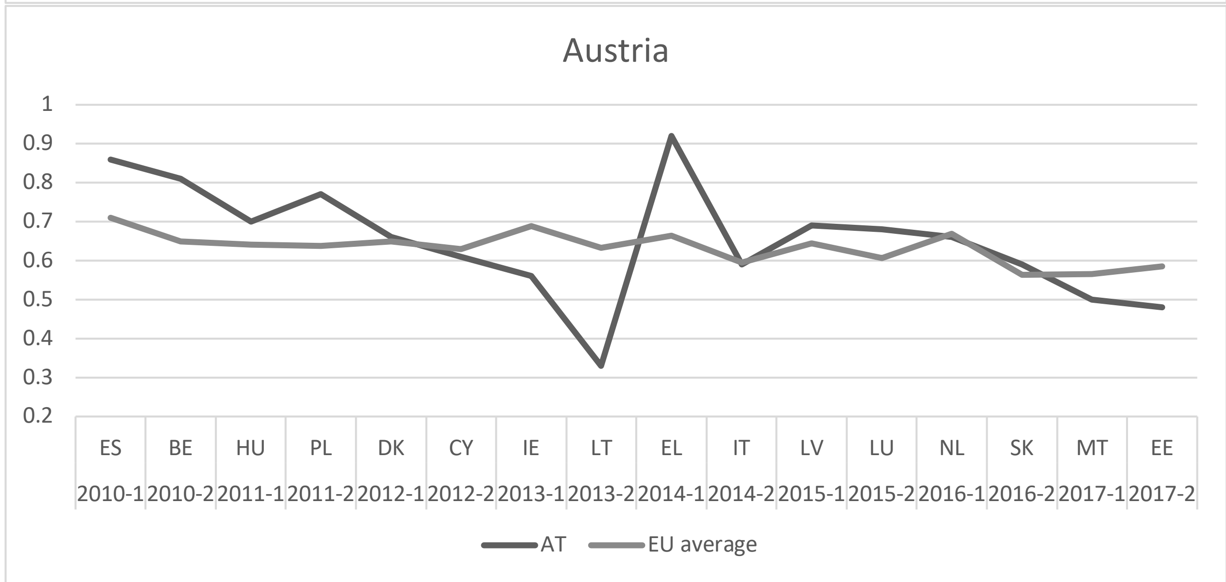
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
NL presidency
NL
EU average


Austria
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0.8
0.7
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0.4
0.3
0.2
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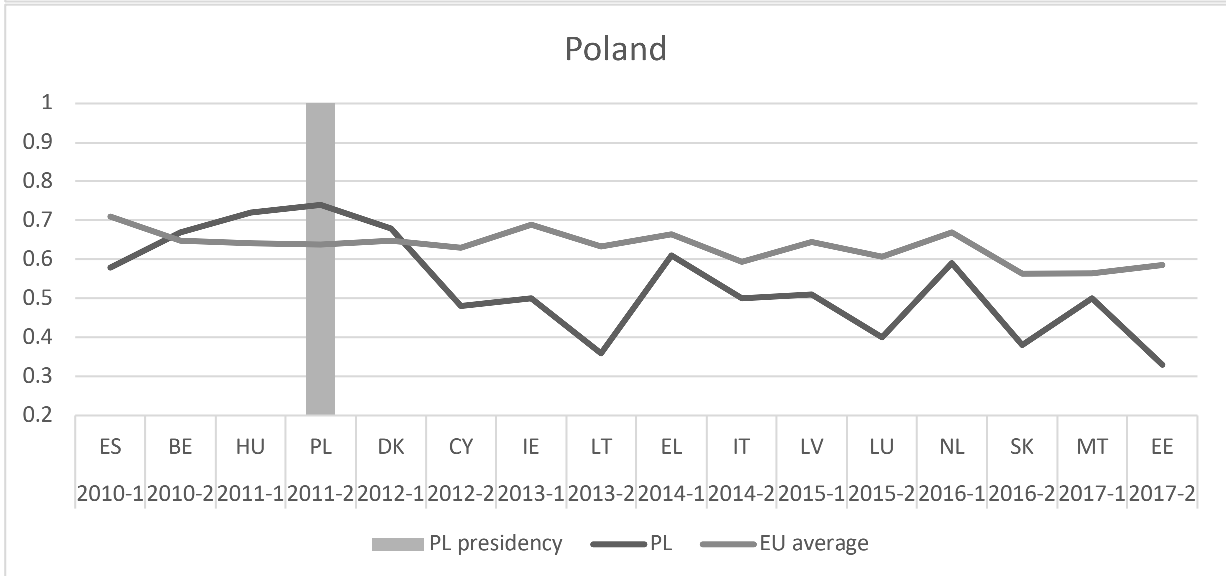
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
AT
EU average


Poland
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0.8
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0.6
0.5
0.4
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0.2
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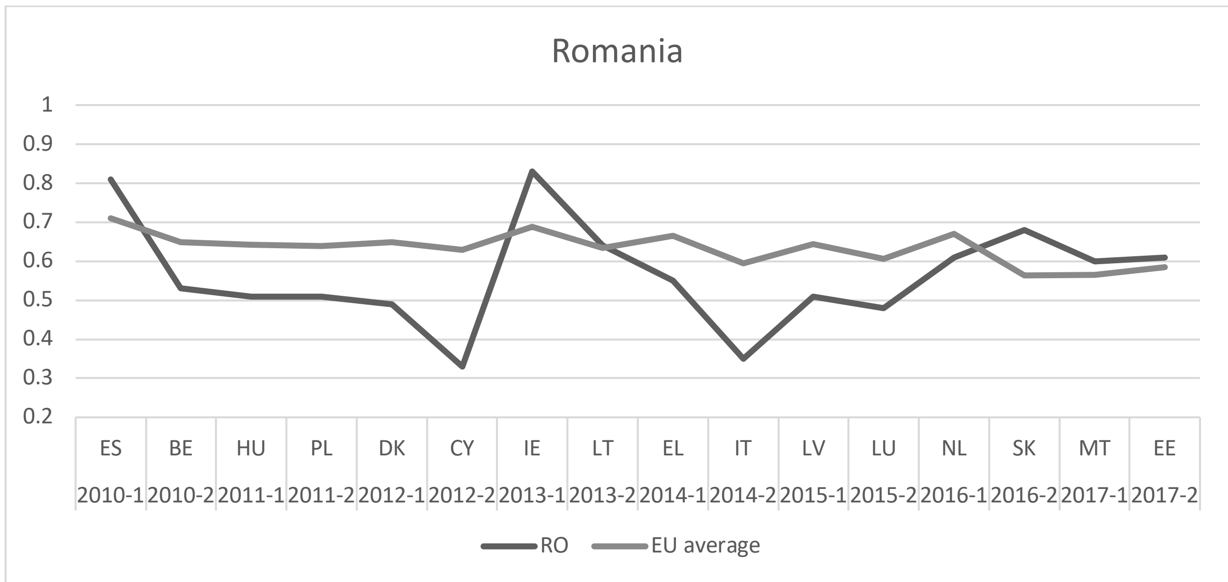
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
PL presidency
PL
EU average


Romania
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0.8
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0.5
0.4
0.3
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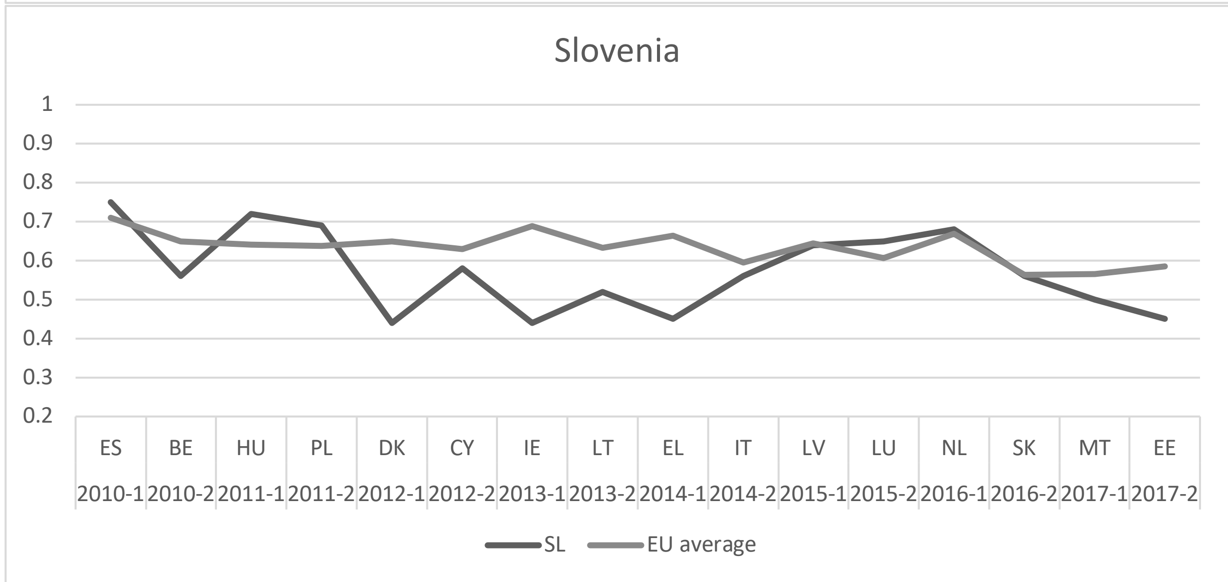
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
RO
EU average


Slovenia
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0.8
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0.6
0.5
0.4
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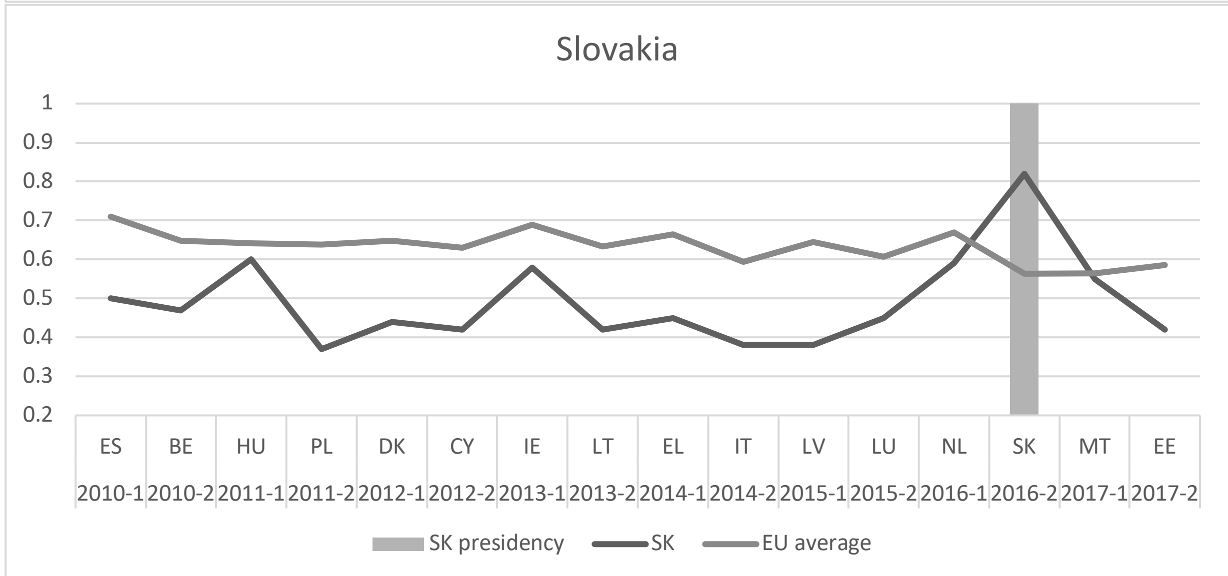
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
SL
EU average


Slovakia
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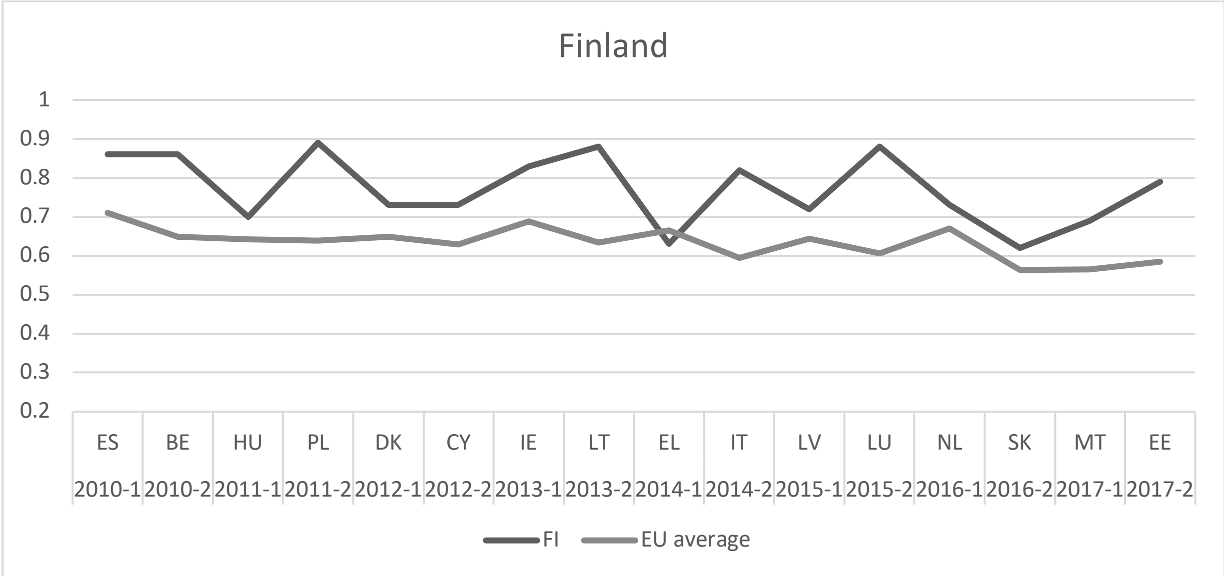
0.2
ES BE HU PL DK CY IE LT EL IT LV LU NL SK MT EE
2010-1 2010-2 2011-1 2011-2 2012-1 2012-2 2013-1 2013-2 2014-1 2014-2 2015-1 2015-2 2016-1 2016-2 2017-1 2017-2
SK presidency
SK
EU average


Finland
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0.8
0.7
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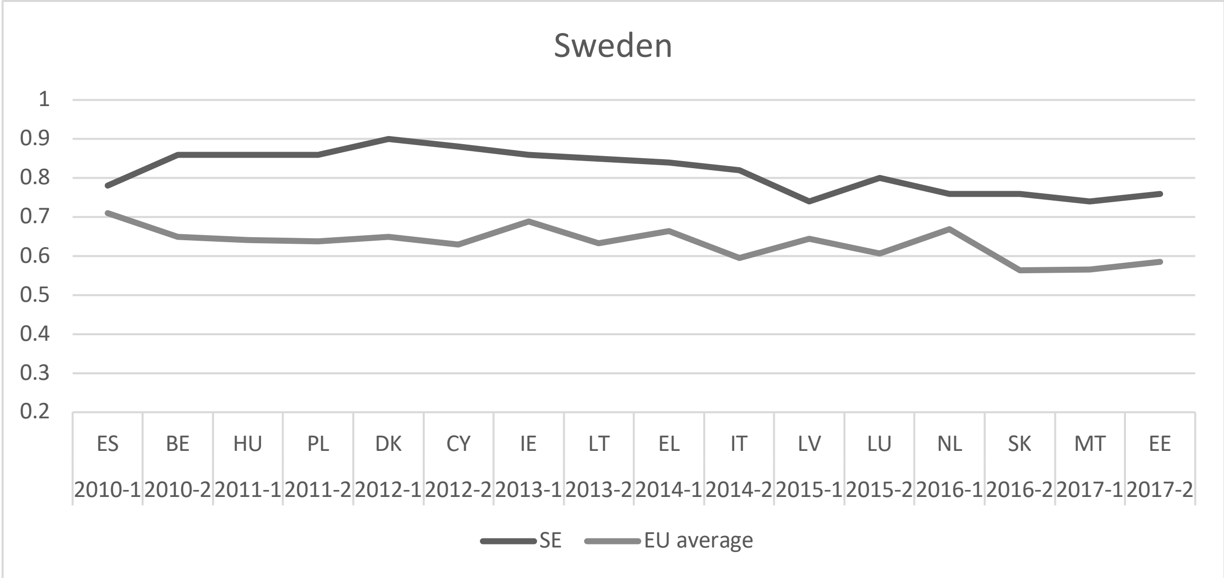
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES 2010-1
BE 2010-2
HU 2011-1
PL 2011-2
DK 2012-1
CY 2012-2
IE 2013-1
LT 2013-2
EL 2014-1
IT 2014-2
LV 2015-1
LU 2015-2
NL 2016-1
SK 2016-2
MT 2017-1
EE 2017-2
FI
EU average


Sweden
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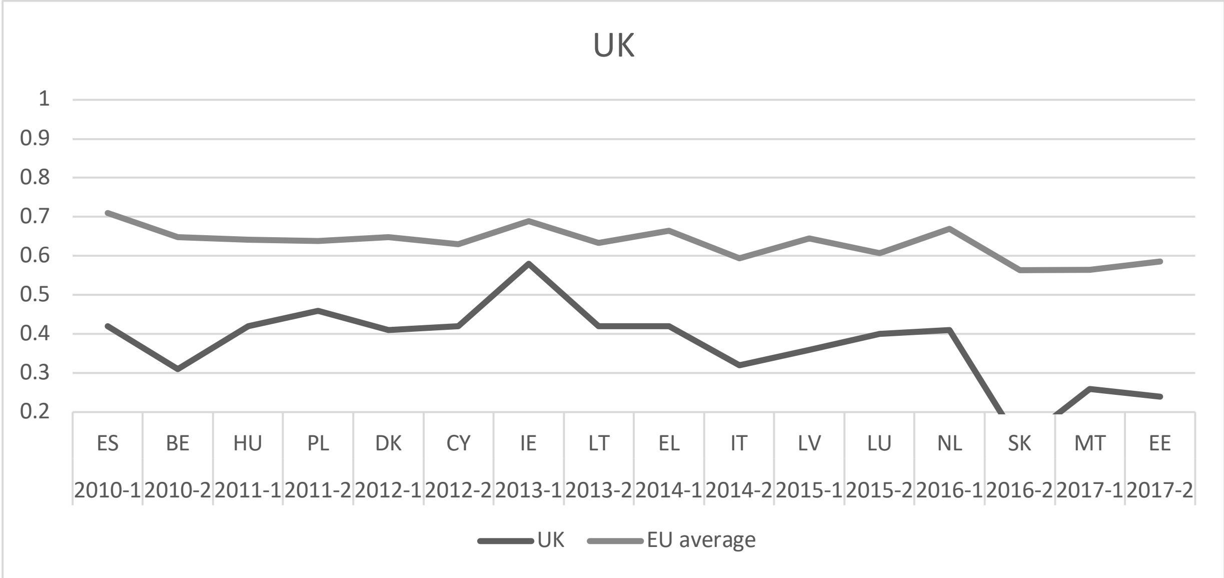
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES 2010-1
BE 2010-2
HU 2011-1
PL 2011-2
DK 2012-1
CY 2012-2
IE 2013-1
LT 2013-2
EL 2014-1
IT 2014-2
LV 2015-1
LU 2015-2
NL 2016-1
SK 2016-2
MT 2017-1
EE 2017-2
SE
EU average


UK
1
0.9
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
ES 2010-1
BE 2010-2
HU 2011-1
PL 2011-2
DK 2012-1
CY 2012-2
IE 2013-1
LT 2013-2
EL 2014-1
IT 2014-2
LV 2015-1
LU 2015-2
NL 2016-1
SK 2016-2
MT 2017-1
EE 2017-2
UK
EU average

Appendix 4: Country-level graphs of public knowledge of the EU

to Chapter 6

This appendix serves as an intermediate step in the analysis of Chapter 6. Based on data from Eurobarometer surveys 62 to 85, I plot country-level changes in positive response rates to the question on understanding how the European Union works from 2004 to 2016, and relate them to the periods of the Council presidency. I group the graphs by the trends of change. The results are somewhat inconclusive. In some countries, the positive change can be attributed to the Council presidency, while in the others the pattern is rather unclear. These results call for an estimation of a regression analysis (see Chapter 6) controlling for other similar events that could explain the variation.

The share of positive responses to the statement “I understand how the European Union works” is aggregated on the country level, and changes over time are displayed in six-month intervals for each member state or region in the following graphs. As in the Eurobarometer surveys, East and West Germany, as well as Great Britain and Northern Ireland are treated separately. The “new” member states that have not held the Council presidency by mid-2016 (Estonia, Malta, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia) are excluded. The dark line in the graphs depicts the dynamics of understanding how the EU works in the respective MS or region and the light grey line stands for the EU average, which allows for easy comparison of country level data with EU-wide trends. The period of the Council presidency is marked by a solid dark grey bar, while the light grey bars mark the beginning of the one-year period before the presidency and the end of the period of half a year after.

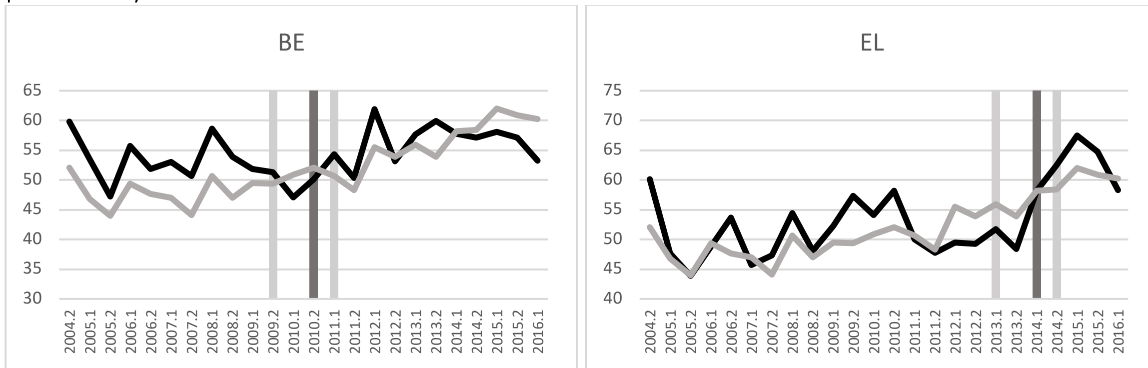
As seen in the graphs, the share of positive responses to the statement, “I understand how the European Union works”, do not show a clear pattern across the Member States over time and during the Council presidency period. However, in the majority of the cases (19 out of 24) the increases and decreases could possibly be attributed to the presidency. The countries can be divided into several groups. The first group of 19 countries consists of Member States with a positive change in understanding how the EU works in the Council presidency period. These can be divided into several subgroups. First, the two countries where positive change in understanding how the EU works has occurred both before and after the presidency period, Belgium and Greece, whereas the increasing slope for Greece is particularly notable. Second,

the ten countries where positive change in understanding how the EU works occurred in the time before the Council presidency: West Germany, Luxembourg, Denmark Ireland, Spain, Finland, Latvia, Austria and France. The increase is particularly notable in Denmark, and while in some countries, such as Austria or France, the changes seem rather unremarkable, they do appear to nevertheless be positive if compared with the EU average. The third group consists of eight countries where positive change in the dependent variable occurred after the Council presidency: Italy, United Kingdom, Portugal, Cyprus, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Czech Republic. While in many of the cases the increase follows the dynamics of the EU average, the slopes showing the increase are sharper in all of them. The second group provides puzzling results. It consists of five Member States in which, contrary to the theoretical expectations, no increase, but rather a decrease, or no clear change in the understanding how the EU works can be observed.

In some cases (see Slovenia, Spain, Denmark, Portugal, Latvia, Lithuania, Greece, Luxembourg), the highest observed shares of positive responses to the statement regarding understanding how the EU works in the period between 2004 and 2015 can possibly be attributed to the Council presidency. Finally, the cases cannot be grouped by size or membership duration: there do not seem to be notable difference between big and small or old and new member states here.

Group 1: Positive change in understanding how the EU works around the period of the Council presidency:

Group 1a: Increase in understanding how the EU works before and after the Council presidency:



Group 1b: Increase in understanding how the EU works before the Council presidency:

DE-W

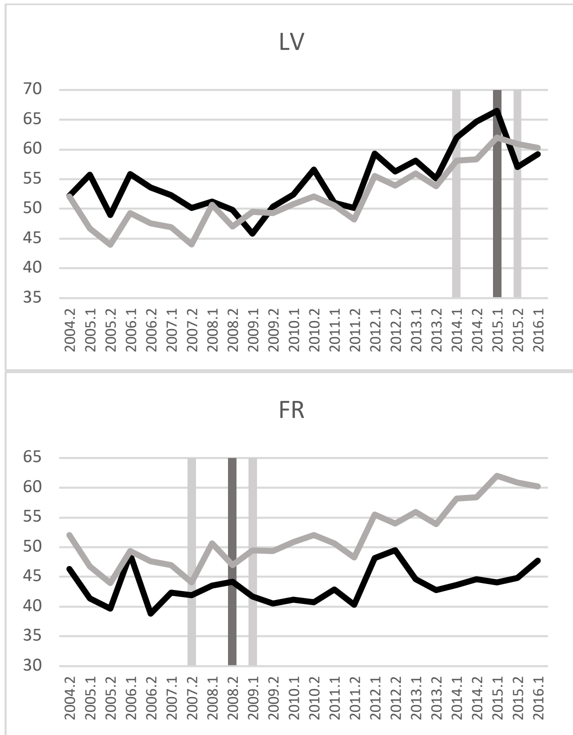
LU

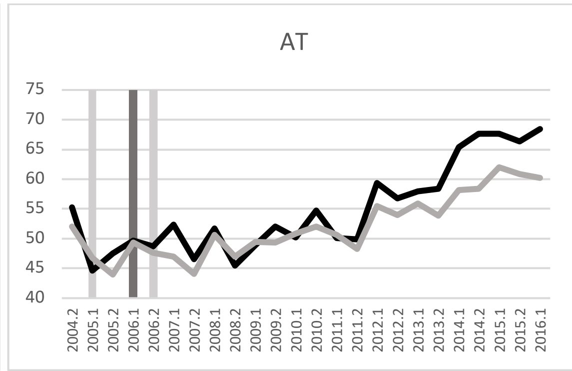
DK

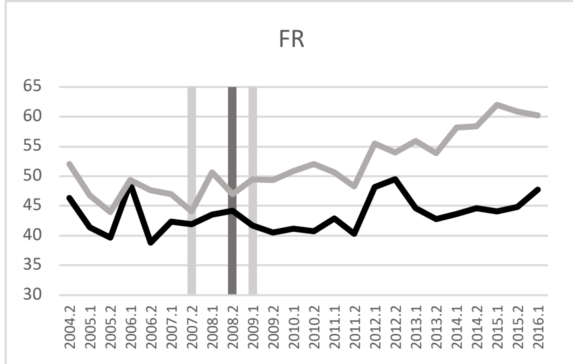
IE

ES

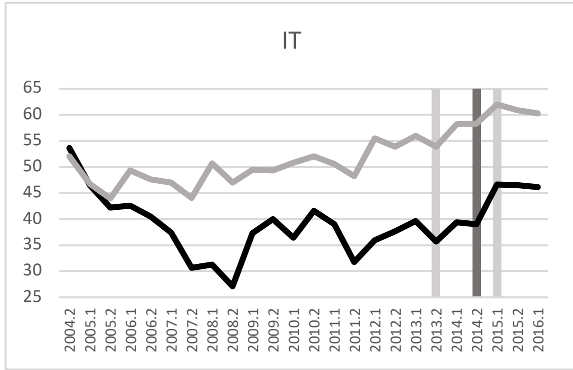
FI

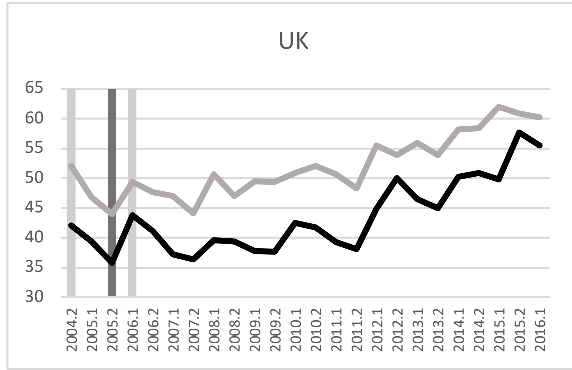


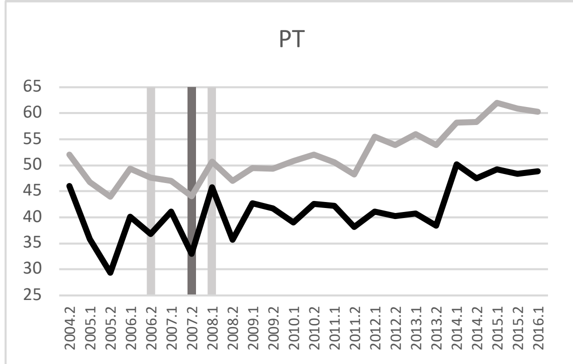


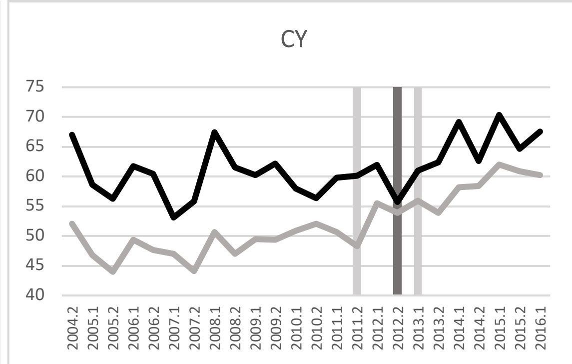


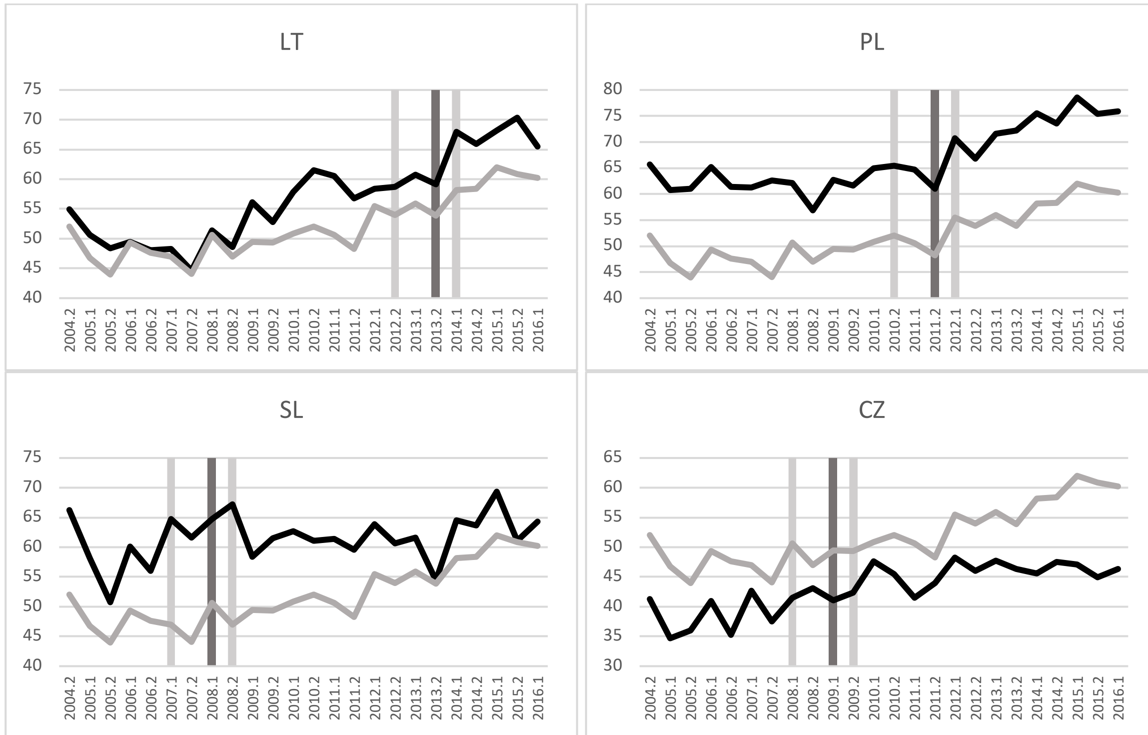
Group 1c: Increase in understanding how the EU works after the Council presidency:



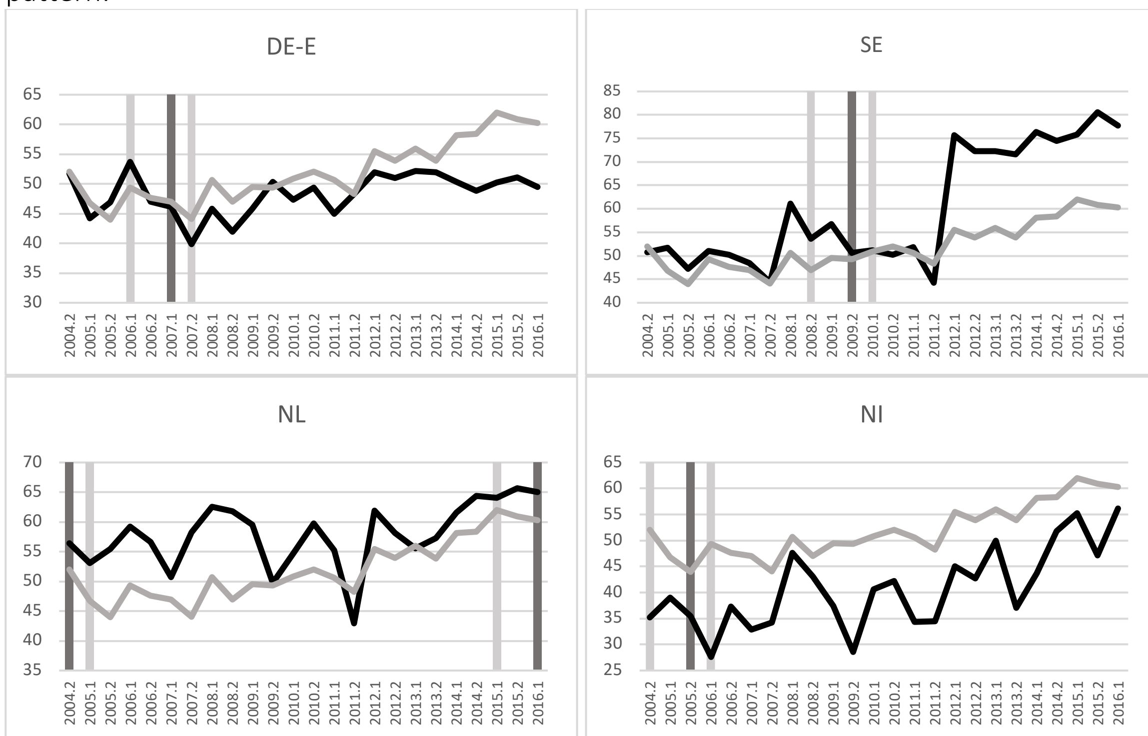


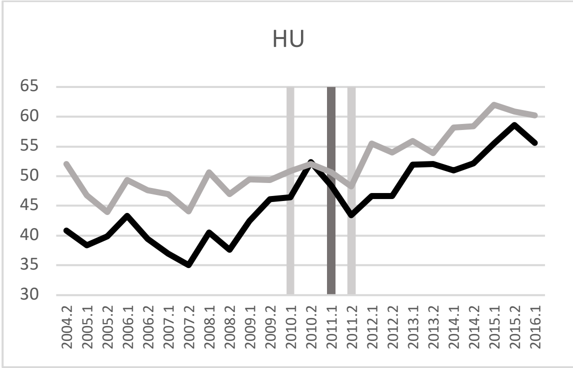






Group 2: Fall in understanding how the EU works in the Council presidency period, or no clear pattern:

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