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The First Leadership Test: What to Expect from the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU

Abstract

On 1 July 2013 Lithuania assumed the rotating presidency of the EU Council for the first time. It is a great challenge for a small state, which now counts only its twenty-third year of independence. At the same time it is an opportunity for Lithuania to rebuild its image on the European level from that of a newcomer to that of an experienced member of the EU. This paper analyses the main aspects of the preparations and challenges for the Lithuanian Presidency. It starts with an account of how Lithuania has returned to the 'European family' and then concentrates on the context in which the presidency will take place. The paper also looks at the general and specific priorities of the presidency and concludes with an analysis of the expectations of Lithuania and its main challenges. The main conclusions are that Lithuania has the necessary preconditions to turn its presidency into a successful one, but potential internal domestic challenges should not be neglected.

Introduction

On 1 July 2013 Lithuania assumed the rotating presidency of the EU Council for the first time. It is a great challenge for a small state with a population of around 3 million people, which now counts only its ninth year as an EU member and its twenty-third year as an independent state. During the last two decades Lithuania has managed to transform its political system, economy and society and has become a relatively energetic member of the Euro-Atlantic community. In the first years after the restoration of independence, Lithuania strived to be an active member of the international community, viewing a dynamic international role as a vital precondition for survival in a turbulent geopolitical environment. Between 1991 and 1993 Lithuania became a member of the OSCE, the UN, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Council of Europe. A decade later, in 2004, as part of the 'big bang' enlargement, Lithuania joined the EU and NATO. Currently Lithuania participates in the activities of more than 48 different international and

regional organisations. Its participation in international organisations includes the Lithuanian Presidency of the Community of Democracies in 2009–2011 and the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2011.

Since the 1990s the international image of Lithuania has been gradually changing from a post-Soviet, post-communist, poor, badly governed state towards a more positive label of a 'Baltic tiger', marking fast economic growth during the pre-crisis years. Despite the many labels that Lithuania has been given in academic research as well as in the foreign press, the image of Lithuania and Lithuanians on the European level is still a puzzling one. Thus, in times when the EU urgently needs smart, timely and decisive actions, the anxiety of the EU member states regarding what to expect from Lithuania in leading the EU is well founded.

The global financial crisis has gravely hit all the Baltic states, but strict austerity measures alongside timely reforms have resulted in economic recovery.

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Introducing the Government's annual report of 2009, former Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius (2010) noted: 'handbooks and dissertations will be written in the future about our efforts to survive 15 per cent recession, reduce public deficit by 9 per cent and not to fall apart – to preserve political and social stability, stable currency, stable and timely pensions and salaries'.¹ The Lithuanian economy already started growing in 2010, at the beginning by 1.5 per cent, then gaining speed in 2011 with 5.9 per cent. According to Eurostat, Lithuania was among the fastest-growing economies in the EU in the first quarter of 2013 (3.1 per cent)² and optimism persists in economic forecasts.

The presidency is a big challenge for Lithuania, but at the same time it offers an opportunity to prove itself as a credible manager and an honest broker, to make Lithuania more visible in the EU and to advance the image of the state. It is also considered as a chance to make use of the knowledge Lithuanians have developed as a result of its domestic economic crisis. In her annual speech in 2013, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė noted: 'We will have to search for the best solutions not only for Lithuania but already for the 28 EU members. This responsibility is posed on us in a very difficult time – the EU is facing historical challenges. The presidency will demand smart coordination of activities and mediation searching for the best solutions to fight global challenges. The consequences of delay and not timely necessary decisions will be felt by the whole EU and its 500 million EU citizens.'³ However the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU, Raimundas Karoblis, suggests that the presidency, first of all, has to be considered as an important obligation to the EU, and Lithuania has to fulfil this duty in a credible way.⁴ In this respect the presidency marks a change in Lithuania's EU membership history, as the country is departing from the role of being an ardent 'pupil' and shouldering the position of a full member of the union entrusted with an important task.

This paper analyses the preparations and the challenges for the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council. First of all, it outlines the historical path of Lithuania towards EU membership and the considerations that made Lithuania choose this path. The European context within which the presidency will take place and the internal context are discussed later. The paper then examines the general and specific priorities of the presidency and concludes with an analysis of the expectations of the presidency and the main challenges facing Lithuania.

A return to the 'European family'

After the restoration of independence Lithuania set three main foreign policy goals for itself: membership of the EU, membership of NATO and good relations with its neighbours.⁵ While NATO at that time had been thought of as the principal security guarantor, the EU was more associated with economic reforms and prosperity. Membership of both organisations, though, had a geopolitical rationale and was considered as the just return of Lithuania to the European family, which had been prevented for years by Soviet occupation. For Lithuanians, coming back to the European family meant not only complete liberation from occupation, but also belonging to another geopolitical region as well as abiding by a different set of values.

At the beginning of the 1990's geopolitical considerations also influenced the EU's attitudes towards Lithuania and the region in general. It might be argued that this was among the decisive factors redetermining the revision of Lithuanian–EU relations, from cooperation to possible accession.⁶ The official relations between Lithuania and the European Communities (EC) started on 27 August 1991, when the EC recognised the independence of Lithuania. In 1992 Lithuania signed the Agreement on Trade and Commercial and Economic Cooperation and in the following year adopted a Declaration on Political

¹ Kubilius, A. (2010) *Ministro Pirmininko A. Kubiliaus kalba Seime pristatant Vyriausybės 2009 metų veiklos ataskaitą*.

² Real GDP growth rate – volume. Eurostat, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115> [accessed 22 July 2013].

³ Grybauskaitė, D. (2013) *Lietuvos respublikos prezidentės Dalios Grybauskaitės metinis pranešimas*. 2013 m. Birželio 11 d.

⁴ Telephone interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 7 May 2013.

⁵ Nekrašas, E. (2009) Kritiniai pamąstymai apie Lietuvos užsienio politiką. *Politologija*, 2(54) Vilnius, Vilniaus Universitetas, Tarptautinių santykių ir politikos mokslų institutas, p. 123.

⁶ Maniokas, K. (2004) Kelias iki derybų: plėtros instrumentai ir Lietuvos statuso raida in Klaudijus Maniokas, Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Darius Žeruolis (eds.) *Lietuvos kelias į Europos Sąjungą: Europos susivienijimas ir Lietuvos derybos dėl narystės Europos Sąjungoje*, Vilnius, Eugrimas, p. 22.

Dialogue with the EC. Thereby Lithuania, together with other post-Soviet republics, was 'assigned' to the group of states that were offered political cooperation instead of possible accession. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the Russian elections of 1993, where extremist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy gained a successful result,⁷ the EU changed its position towards the three Baltic states. Free trade agreements were offered to Lithuania and the other Baltic states in 1994, which subsequently in 1995 were upgraded to Association Agreements. The negotiations started in 1999 and officially concluded in 2002. On 16 April 2003 the Lithuanian Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs signed the Accession Treaty and on 1 May 2004, after the conclusion of the ratification process and a successful referendum regarding Lithuanian membership of the EU (the voter turnout in the referendum 2003 was 63.4 per cent and 91.1 per cent of those voted 'yes'), Lithuania became a fully fledged member of the EU.

Since the first years of membership Lithuania has demonstrated itself to be a relatively active and pro-European EU member, supporting a deeper integration of the EU; for example, Lithuania was the first member state to ratify the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. The support for the EU within the Lithuanian political elite is also reflected in the society, which is more pro-European than the average European. Surveys conducted in 2012 show that 61.2 per cent of respondents are in favour of Lithuanian membership of the EU⁸ and 64 per cent 'feel like citizens of the EU' (EU average – 63 per cent).⁹ The relatively strong support for the EU in Lithuania might be explained to a

certain extent by still-valid geopolitical considerations, as Lithuanians tend to consider participation in both the EU and NATO as a guarantee against the gravitation of Lithuania towards the other geopolitical region. Secondly, Lithuania ranks among the biggest recipients of EU funds per GDP per capita.¹⁰ In 2012 EU funds made up around a quarter of the Lithuanian national budget;¹¹ they have reached all the domains of the state and are strongly appreciated by the society. Finally, Lithuanians are among the most active beneficiaries and supporters of the freedom of movement within the EU; 60 per cent of Lithuanians have indicated that they have benefited from the lack of border controls when travelling abroad,¹² which eventually transforms into general support for the EU, even though freedom of movement also has a negative impact on the emigration rate in Lithuania.¹³ Euroscepticism is not common in Lithuania, and when it is voiced, it is mainly in discussions regarding what is perceived by some as threats to the national identity and 'traditional' values.

Lithuanians are also in general supportive of the Lithuanian EU presidency. In a survey conducted in 2013 by the consultancy firm Hill + Knowlton, 36.8 per cent of the respondents supported the opinion that the EU presidency is useful for Lithuania (12.9 percent answered 'no'). In another survey, conducted by Vilmorius, 40.8 percent of the respondents said they believed that the presidency will increase the general knowledge of Lithuania in the EU, while 36 per cent supported the view that it will provide 'an opportunity to present itself as an attractive country for investment and tourism' and 31.7 per cent thought that

⁷ Vladimir Zhirinovskiy at the time made several declarations regarding the interests and rights of Russia in the 'near abroad', which raised concerns regarding potential Russian activities against the Baltic states.

⁸ *Lietuvos gyventojų nuomonų apie Lietuvos narystę Europos Sąjungoje: reprezentatyvi Lietuvos gyventojų apklausa 2012 m. balandžio 13-23 d., N=1004*, Visuomenės nuomonės ir rinkos tyrimų centras Vilmorius, Vilnius, 2012.

⁹ European Citizenship – Autumn 2012, *Standard Eurobarometer*, Vol. 78.

¹⁰ EU budget 2010: what does the European Union spend and where does the money come from? <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/jan/26/eu-budget-european-union-spending> [accessed 16 July 2013].

¹¹ Official website of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, <http://www.finmin.lt/web/finmin/2012pajamos> [accessed 9 July 2013].

¹² Public Opinion in the European Union, Autumn 2012, *Standard Eurobarometer*, Vol. 78.

¹³ The emigration rate in 2012 was the highest in the EU, with the peak in 2010 reaching 83 157. Europos migracijos tinklas. Migracija. 10 metų apžvalga. <http://123.emn.lt/t/bendros-tendencijos/migracija-10-metu-apzvalga>.

the presidency 'will positively influence the Lithuanian economy'.¹⁴ Echoing the official narrative, 47.8 per cent of the respondents agreed that the presidency is an important obligation that Lithuania has to fulfil credibly.¹⁵ It is important to emphasise that although general awareness about the presidency in the society is not very high, it does not have negative connotations.

Post-crisis Europe, MFF 2014–2020 and the changes in the EU institutions

Lithuania is holding the chair of the EU Council at a very demanding time for the EU. Many member states have been severely hit by the financial crisis and the economic recovery of the EU is still stalling. Although the GDP in the 17 eurozone countries grew by 0.3 percent in the second quarter of 2013, this was the first modest sign of growth since the third quarter of 2011.¹⁶ Moreover, harsh austerity measures have deeply affected the societies of the member states, leading to societal problems. In this context the EU is in serious need of reforms, which has been recently acknowledged by the Commission. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, while presenting the Commission's recommendations for the economic policies of the EU members, particularly stressed the need for reforms: 'The fact that more than 120 million people are now at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe is a real worry. We need to reform and reform now. The cost of inaction will be high.'¹⁷ These recommendations could have binding powers over imbalances of public finances as of 2014. The urge for reforms, together with the steps to balance public finances at the EU level, creates pressure for the Lithuanian Presidency to address those issues.

The Lithuanian Presidency will also be facing the end of the old budgetary cycle of the EU. By the end of 2013 there will be a need to have all the necessary legislation in place to allow the launch of a new MFF.

However, the main agreements on MFF 2014–2020 have already been reached, despite diverging opinions of the member states and the European Parliament over budgetary cuts. This has lowered the risk of the Lithuanian Presidency having to face a forthcoming crisis during its presidency, but the pressure will still be high to move forward in this field. In case this is not achieved, certain financial programmes will cease as of 1 January 2014. As the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU has noted, the quantity of the legal acts to be adopted during the Lithuanian Presidency will be higher than the average EU presidency,¹⁸ and this is a challenge for a small country with no presidency experience such as Lithuania.

The end of the budgetary cycle in the EU during the Lithuanian Presidency will coincide with the end of the current composition of the European Parliament and the European Commission. A challenge for the presidency is that the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament in the spring of 2014 will slow down the legislative process in the EU and this in turn will increase the pressure to process more legal acts before the end of 2013.

The forthcoming general elections in Germany and Austria might pose yet another challenge for the Lithuanian Presidency at the EU level. The Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU, in his interview, remarked that it is possible that due to the elections in Germany and Austria relatively few decisions on certain issues will be taken until September, and then the presidency will have to speed up after the elections.¹⁹

Other trends that might be taken into consideration are the declining support for the EU in certain states, which can weaken national politicians' mandate, and the still-fluctuating inter-institutional balance in the

¹⁴ *Lietuvos gyventojų nuomonių apie Lietuvos narystę Europos Sąjungoje: reprezentatyvi Lietuvos gyventojų apklausa 2012 m. balandžio 13-23 d., N=1004*, Visuomenės nuomonės ir rinkos tyrimų centras Vilnius, Vilnius, 2012.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Eurostat newsrelease, 14 August 2013.

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/2-14082013-AP/EN/2-14082013-AP-EN.PDF

¹⁷ Strupczewski, J. (2013) EU Shifts Policy Focus in Quest of Growth, 2013.05.29, <http://www.reuters.com/assets/print?aid=USBRE94S0OM20130529> [accessed on 28 June 2013].

¹⁸ Telephone interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 7 May 2013.

¹⁹ Ibid.

post-Lisbon EU. Disintegration challenges have been brought to the EU's attention once again by the speech by David Cameron at the end of January 2013. The position of the United Kingdom is to some extent shaping the attitudes of certain EU countries. The UK is considered as a very important partner in some domains in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Presidency will have to consider those issues especially dealing with the Single Market, financial services and justice and home affairs.

Although seven member states have already held presidencies since the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the inter-institutional balance within the EU is still fluctuating, i.e. the power balance between the Council, the Commission and the Parliament is yet to be set. Presidencies still have to be cautious regarding the potential frictions to ensure the efficient inter-institutional cooperation necessary for the smooth functioning of the legislative process. In the post-Lisbon context the rotating EU presidency only plays a minor role within the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. On the one hand this is a favourable situation for a country with limited resources and no presidency experience. On the other hand it reduces the visibility of the presidency and might cause a mismatch of the expectations of the politicians and society with those of the EU. Finally, it is worth noting that Lithuania will be the first member state to hold the presidency in the EU of 28 states.

Internal context and preparations for the forthcoming presidency

Academic research demonstrate that the fate of the presidency is largely determined by domestic politics – domestic structures can be expected to impose constraints on the freedom of action of governments and

their leaders, and by extension on the EU presidencies.²⁰ It is argued by David Král et al that a typical example of the domestic context hampering the success of the EU presidency could be considered the Czech case. They maintain that 'the fall of the government caused the political death of the Presidency.'²¹ However, the main lesson that might be drawn from the Czech experience is never to let domestic politics interfere with presidency activities. Apart from that potential challenge, others include: disagreements at the national level over the level of ambitions, ambitions that are too great,²² poor coordination between the institutions²³ and inadequately prepared personnel²⁴.

It might be argued that the turbulent external environment of the Lithuanian Presidency is counterbalanced by a relatively calm internal context. There will be no elections either to the Parliament (Seimas) or to the other elected state institutions during the term of the presidency. The previous election to the Seimas was in the fall of 2012 and the new Government commenced its duties in December. The ruling coalition is composed of four parties: the Social Democrats, the Labour Party, Order and Justice and the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania. These are not newcomers to the Parliament and have good experience in politics. A potential challenge, however, is their lack of international experience and poor English language skills.²⁵

Taking after other member states, for example Hungary in 2011, the Lithuanian political parties have signed an agreement expressing their solidarity with the presidency.²⁶ The agreement declares that all Parliamentary political parties will abide by certain provisions of the Lithuanian Presidency and provide

²⁰ Král, D., Bartovic, V., Rihacková, V. (2009) *The 2009 Czech EU Presidency: Contested Leadership at a Time of Crisis*, Stockholm, SIEPS, p. 29.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Interview with a representative of Belgium in Šešelgytė, M. (2012) The Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council and Common Security and Defence Policy: Opportunities and Challenges, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2011–2012*, Vol. 10, Military Academy of Lithuania, p. 116.

²³ Interview with a representative of the EU institutions (I), in Šešelgytė, M. (2012) The Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council and Common Security and Defence Policy: Opportunities and Challenges, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2011–2012*, Vol. 10, Military Academy of Lithuania, p. 116.

²⁴ Šešelgytė, M. (2012) The Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council and Common Security and Defence Policy: Opportunities and Challenges, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2011–2012*, Vol. 10, Military Academy of Lithuania, p. 115.

²⁵ Vilpišauskas, R., Vandecasteele, B., Vaznonytė, A. (2013) The Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union Advancing Energy Policy and Eastern Partnership Goals: Conditions for Exerting Influence, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, p. 12.

²⁶ Lietuvos Respublikos Seime atstovaujamų politinių partijų susitarimas 'Dėl Lietuvos pirmininkavimo Europos Sąjungos Tarybai 2013 m. II pusmetį', 2011.10.14.

a certain background for stability. Despite general unity concerning EU-related issues in Lithuania, the most significant challenge for the politicians during the presidency might be their inability to distinguish and separate internal topics from the topics of the presidency.

Lithuania started its preparations for the presidency relatively early, immediately after the member states approved the schedule of the forthcoming presidencies in 2004. The first meetings regarding the upcoming presidency were conducted at the beginning of 2005 and the first Action Plan for preparation for the presidency was adopted in 2006.²⁷ The early preparation for the presidency was very important considering the limited resources, which had to be planned and distributed very attentively. As the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU noted, Lithuania will preside over the EU Council with the smallest presidency budget ever (60 million EUR).²⁸ Lithuania has chosen, as common for small states, a 'Brussels-based' presidency organisation model. In the 'Brussels-based' model, the chairs of the working groups are relatively independent and have flexible mandates and most of the events take place in Brussels. The main advantage of this model is that it makes better use of the resources by giving more responsibility to the representatives based in Brussels.

During the preparation for the presidency the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU has been reinforced by more than 100 people (from 85 to 188), consisting of experts in various fields who have already been working on EU issues for at least 3 years and those who already have experience in the EU institutions. The presidency structure in the capital is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs as the chief organiser. The Governmental Commission for EU Affairs, consisting of the Vice Ministers of all the Ministries and chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, works in parallel

with the presidency structure in the Ministry. It is agreed that the Governmental Commission of the EU and the EU Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will jointly coordinate the content of the presidency, whereas all the logistics are left to the European Union Council Presidency Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁹

The clear presidency structure should leave little room for conflicts. However, the possible competition or miscommunication between the various departments responsible for the presidency should not be overlooked. Another possible challenge might arise on the domestic political level. There is no clear regulation regarding who is representing the presidency at the highest level. Lithuania is a semi-presidential state, where the President has a strong role. Representation during the presidency is usually undertaken by the President and the Prime Minister. It is likely that due to her rich experience in the EU, President Grybauskaitė will try to seize the representational role. The smooth representation will also depend on the ambitions of the Prime Minister and the ability of the President to agree with him on their respective roles during the presidency.

Properly selected and prepared staff is a very important asset of the presidency, which to some extent might compensate for the lack of sufficient human or financial resources. Apart from chairmanship skills and language skills, members of the presidency team, as it is argued by a representative of the EU institutions, must have considerable knowledge of the post-Lisbon structure and the main issues on the legislative agenda.³⁰ It appears that those needs have been timely realised by the Lithuanian decision makers. The early planning of the presidency has created favourable conditions for the preparation of the personnel.³¹ Lithuania managed to connect its presidency needs with the negotiation on the new MFF 2007–2013 and this provided opportunities

²⁷ Lietuvos Respublikos Nutarimas dėl Lietuvos pasirengimo pirmininkauti Europos Sąjungoje 2006–2009 veiksmų plano patvirtinimo, LRV, 2006.04.12.

²⁸ Telephone interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 7 May 2013.

²⁹ Vilpišauskas, R., Vandecasteele, B., Vaznonytė, A. (2013) The Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union Advancing Energy Policy and Eastern Partnership Goals: Conditions for Exerting Influence, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, p. 10.

³⁰ An interview with a representative of EU institutions (I), in Šešelgytė, M. (2012) The Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council and Common Security and Defence Policy: Opportunities and Challenges, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2011–2012*, Vol. 10, Military Academy of Lithuania, p. 116.

³¹ Interview with Neringa Čiakienė, Head of the Planning and Coordination Division, European Union Council Presidency Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 June 2103.

to apply for EU funds meant for the preparation for the presidency. In total 13.9 million euro coming from EU funds were directed to that purpose.³² Although the primary aim of applying for the EU funding was to train civil servants better for the presidency, the whole endeavour included several projects: training of the personnel for the presidency, general training of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs personnel, a networking project³³ and the LESSED project.³⁴ Lithuania considered the preparations for the presidency as an opportunity to improve the representation of Lithuania in the EU institutions and to strengthen its general administrative capacities; 5.2 million euro were allotted for the training of personnel.³⁵ It might be argued that well prepared and experienced personnel will be one of the strongest pillars of the Lithuanian Presidency.

General priorities: For a credible, growing and open Europe

The agenda setting role, albeit significantly reduced, remains one of the presidency's roles even in the post-Lisbon environment. However, it does not guarantee an automatic transfer of the presidency priorities to the EU level. A great number of issues that reach the EU agenda are inherited from previous presidencies, part of which are dictated by the external environment, and only 5–10 per cent of the agenda could be set by the presidency.³⁶ In the post-Lisbon environment the possibilities to influence the EU agenda during the presidency have decreased even more. Besides that, the Lithuanian Presidency will be challenged by a busy legislative agenda, which may force Lithuania to concentrate only on the most urgent and most necessary EU legal acts and not leave much ground for improvisation.

Despite a smaller agenda-setting role, all the presidencies formulate their priorities and bundle them into well-sounding slogans. Priorities help to send the message, form or strengthen certain images of the presidency, aim to respond to the EU's demands and maintain the theme of the Council trio programme. On 28 June President Grybauskaitė presented the Lithuanian Presidency Priorities to the European Council. The main message tells that the Lithuanian Presidency is aiming to convey 'for a credible, growing and open Europe'.³⁷ In the words of Grybauskaitė, the Presidency will strive to 'rebuild a Europe worthy of its citizens' confidence, employees' commitment and investors' vision'.³⁸ The Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU emphasised that 'the Lithuanian Presidency will focus on ensuring credible fiscal policies, steps that would result in economic growth and measures to ensure that the EU remains open to the world and secure to its citizens'.³⁹ It might be argued that the main focus of the Lithuanian Presidency was to a large extent determined by the EU's needs and the pressing issues on the EU agenda were incorporated into the Lithuanian Presidency programme.

According to the presidency programme, Lithuania will attempt to restore the credibility of the EU. In this respect, the presidency will try to push for progress on the banking union and to move forward with regard to other legislative proposals in the area of financial market reforms and those related to the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union. Special attention will be paid to better management of public finances in the EU.⁴⁰ Although Lithuania is very determined to make progress in this area during its presidency, it might be a challenging task as Lithuania is not yet a member of the EMU.

³² Ibid.

³³ The project aimed to encourage Lithuanian networking in the EU. Lietuvos įsitiklinimo Europos Sąjungoje skatinimas, VP1-4.2-VRM-05-V-03-001.

³⁴ The project aimed to enhance the effectiveness of the EU system in Lithuania. Projektas 'Lietuvos Europos Sąjungos reikalų sistemos efektyvumo didinimas', Nr. VP1-4.2-VRM-05-V-02-001.

³⁵ Telephone interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 07 May 2013.

³⁶ Tallberg, J. (2003) The Agenda-Shaping Powers of the EU Council Presidency, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 10, No. 1, February, p. 3.

³⁷ Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, http://static.eu2013.lt/uploads/documents/Programos/Programa_EN.pdf [accessed on 10 July 2013].

³⁸ Grybauskaitė, D. (2013) Keynote article. Economic Growth, Competitiveness and Financial Sustainability, *Guide to the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council*, p. 6.

³⁹ Karoblis, R. (2013) Foreword. What to Expect from the Lithuanian Presidency, *Guide to the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, http://static.eu2013.lt/uploads/documents/Programos/Programa_EN.pdf [accessed on 10 July 2013].

The necessity to restore growth in the EU has dictated the second priority of the Lithuanian Presidency – ‘a growing Europe’ – which focuses on further deepening and integration of the Single Market. The presidency will aim for progress on the Single Market Acts and reinforcement of the Services Directive, and it will prioritise measures for the Digital Single Market and completion of the internal energy market.⁴¹ ‘An Open Europe’ – the third general priority of the Lithuanian Presidency – provides the context for the efforts aimed to ‘strengthen the EU as a global model of openness and security’⁴² and to move the EU’s relations with its partners to a new level, especially in the Eastern neighbourhood of the EU.⁴³

The keywords of the Lithuanian Presidency build upon the Irish priorities ‘stability, jobs and growth’ and the trio programme that has been agreed jointly by Ireland, Lithuania and Greece.⁴⁴ The main emphasis of the trio programme presented on 11 December 2012 in Brussels was on the measures necessary to restore confidence in the European Union economy, to foster economic growth and employment, to deepen the Single Market further, to ensure financial stability and to strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union.⁴⁵ Cooperation with the trio partners is very important in aiming to ensure coherence in the functioning of the EU; therefore, Lithuania has cooperated closely with the Irish presidency, not only in coordinating priorities, but also in day-to-day activities. Members of the Lithuanian Presidency participated in meetings within the Irish delegation during the last months of the Irish presidency.

This paper argues that although the Lithuanian Presidency’s priorities were dictated first of all by the EU agenda and coordinated with the trio partners, they also echo national political debates. Economic reforms have been high on the national political agenda for several years in the aftermath of the economic crisis in Lithuania; therefore, they are quite familiar to both the politicians and the society. Moreover, the presidency is expected to provide an arena for Lithuania to share with other EU states the so-called ‘Baltic recipe’⁴⁶ for economic recovery and thereby contribute to the strengthening of the image of Lithuania.

Specific priorities: Eastern Partnership, energy policy and Baltic Sea Strategy

In addition to the general presidency priorities Lithuania has distinguished four specific issues that will be emphasised during its term.⁴⁷ At the end of 2011 the Seimas approved the priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency. It outlined four priority fields: energy security, the Baltic Sea Strategy, the Eastern Partnership and the effective management of the EU’s external borders.⁴⁸ Although some of these issues are not directly related to the main topics on the current EU agenda, they reflect the national Lithuanian interest. Academic research shows that small or medium-sized presidencies sometimes aspire to ‘punch above their weight’, trying to exercise more power on specific issues than a mere assessment of their aggregate structural resources would suggest and thereby to increase their visibility and influence.⁴⁹ The primary aim of the Lithuanian Presidency is at least to draw the attention of the EU to the prioritised issues, but

⁴¹ Karoblis, R. (2013) Foreword. What to Expect from the Lithuanian Presidency, *Guide to the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council*, p. 4.

⁴² Official website of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en> [accessed on 1 July 2013].

⁴³ Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, http://static.eu2013.lt/uploads/documents/Programos/Programa_EN.pdf [accessed on 10 July 2013].

⁴⁴ Trio Programme: Ireland, Lithuania and Greece, <http://eu2013.ie/media/eupresidency/content/documents/Trio-Programme.pdf> [accessed on 22 July 2013].

⁴⁵ Lithuanian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Vytautas Leškevičius interview when presenting the 18-month programme at the General Affairs Council, <http://www.eu2013.lt/en/news/speeches/we-will-work-for-a-credible-growing-and-open-europe-says-vice-minister-leskevicius> [accessed on 1 July 2013].

⁴⁶ As argued by A. Ažubalis, U. Paet, E. Rinkevics and G. Westerwelle, the ‘Baltic recipe’ aims at ‘complementing the monetary union with closer collaboration on economic and fiscal policy, ensuring the democratic accountability of the EU’s institutions, and enforcing Europe to become a truly global player’. Ažubalis, A., Paet, U., Rinkevics, E., Westerwelle, G. (2012) For a European Culture of Trust. Joint article by German Foreign Minister and the three Baltic Foreign Ministers on the occasion of their 3+1 Consultations in Riga, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 23 August 2012.

⁴⁷ Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo nutarimas dėl Lietuvos Respublikos pirmininkavimo ES Tarybai 2013 m. LRS. 10 November 2011.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Tallberg, J. (2008) Bargaining Power in the European Council, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, p. 693.

it is also hoped that due to the knowledge Lithuania possesses in the given areas the presidency might achieve a certain amount of progress there and that it would generate certain political revenues for Lithuania both internationally and internally.

The Eastern Partnership policy has been on the foreign policy priority list of Lithuania since the country's accession to the EU. In fact, after joining the EU and NATO, Lithuania was searching for a new foreign policy and developed a new foreign policy vision. The new vision described Lithuania as the 'regional leader' and aspired to a special responsibility of Lithuania in Eastern Europe.⁵⁰ Although this vision was reformulated in 2009, putting the emphasis on closer integration in the Nordic-Baltic region, good relations with the Eastern Partnership countries and their eventual integration into the EU remain among the foreign policy goals of Lithuania. The Lithuanian support for the countries of the Eastern Partnership, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, is first of all related to the feeling of shared destiny and history. It is also considered a responsibility for Lithuania to assist those countries in reform. Due to similar historical developments Lithuania has an understanding not only of the cultural and societal issues but also of the transformational challenges that those countries are facing. Finally, support for the better development of those countries is also related to security considerations.

It might be argued that the Eastern Partnership is the specific priority where the chances to achieve something tangible are the highest for Lithuania, first of all because Lithuania will be hosting the EU Eastern Partnership Summit that is expected to take place in Vilnius in November 2013. The summit provides opportunities to draw attention to the pressing issues of the Eastern Partnership countries. Moreover, the ultimate goal of the Lithuanian Presidency is to sign 'the Association Agreement, including its DCFTA part

(Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement) with Ukraine'.⁵¹ If this is achieved, the presidency will already have made its mark on the EU level and be considered as successful at home, as this issue is spoken of domestically. Lithuania will also make efforts in order to see that similar agreements will be finalised with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia and that progress will be achieved with Azerbaijan. Although the expectations to sign the Association Agreement are very high in Lithuania, the stalling of certain reforms in Ukraine (namely the electoral process, judicial reform and the question of selective justice) might challenge this ambitious goal. While diplomats and political leaders argue that the primary goal of specific priorities during the presidency will be 'to draw attention of the EU to the issues, which are very important to Lithuania'⁵², the failure to sign an Association Agreement would be considered a disappointment in Lithuania that may overshadow the possible achievements of the presidency.

Energy security is the second specific priority of the Lithuanian Presidency. Due to its own negative experience Lithuania has developed quite a good understanding of the energy security challenges. Since the closure of the Ignalina Nuclear Plant in 2010, Lithuania has become 80 per cent dependent on a single provider of energy resources. Dependence on a single supplier makes Lithuania vulnerable to the disruption of the flow of energy resources. Moreover, due to the monopoly of Gazprom in the Lithuanian gas market, Lithuania is forced to pay a higher price for gas than the EU average. The Lithuanian Minister of Energy, in his interview, emphasised that Lithuania pays 500 USD for 1000 cubic metres of natural gas, which is 100 USD more than, for example, Germany.⁵³ Although the Baltic states as of 2009 participate in the BEMIP (Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan), they still remain the EU's 'energy islands'. Unable to address energy challenges on its own, Lithuania has been attempting to introduce those issues to the EU

⁵⁰ Naujoji Lietuvos užsienio politika [New foreign policy of Lithuania], Laikinojo prezidento A. Paulausko kalba Vilniaus universitete 2004 m. gegužės 24 d., 2004.
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=5045&p_d=62167&p_k=1 [accessed on 22 July 2013].

⁵¹ Linkevičius, L. (2013) Insights. Eastern Partnership – the Lithuanian Perspective, Guide to the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council, p. 14.

⁵² Telephone interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 7 May 2013.

⁵³ 'Gazprom': 2013 ir 2014 metų dujų kainos Lietuvai nesikeičia, lrytas.lt, 10 July 2013,
<http://www.lrytas.lt/verslas/energetika/gazprom-2013-ir-2014-metu-duju-kainos-lietuvai-nesikeicia.htm> [accessed 11 July 2013].

agenda for years. Consequently, it is no surprise that Lithuania chose energy security as the priority for its presidency.

The presidency's aim to emphasise energy issues coincides with the current EU agenda, which states that 'Member States have to take the necessary steps to ensure that the internal energy market can be completed by 2014, as demanded in February 2011 by heads of state and government in the European Council'.⁵⁴ This provides Lithuania, which is an ardent supporter of the EU common energy market and better interconnectedness of the EU energy infrastructure in general, with opportunities to address the preferred energy topics in the EU format. The aim to eliminate 'energy islands' within the EU by 2015 is included in the general priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency and coincides with the general EU policy. Nevertheless, it will not be easy to achieve tangible results or to make significant progress within the energy security field during the Lithuanian Presidency. The EU legislative agenda during the Lithuanian Presidency contains only two energy-related legal acts, which are not of primary significance for Lithuania. Thus, Lithuania has to find other ways to achieve progress in the field. The Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU argues that energy policy issues during the Lithuanian Presidency will most likely have a different focus from what Lithuanians would have expected.⁵⁵ One of the ways to address energy issues would be to place emphasis on the Internal Energy Market completion and implementation of the third energy packet, which is currently on the EU agenda. The other way to achieve progress would be to try to raise the issues on the EU Council level. A report on the current situation in the energy security field at the end of the presidency might serve as a tangible deliverable increasing the

visibility of the issue in the EU.⁵⁶ As in the case of the Eastern Partnership in the field of energy security, in order to succeed it will be important to manage the expectations. However, it will be even more essential to be able to maintain neutrality and to separate the national interests from the EU interests.

Initiated by the European Parliament and approved by the European Council in 2009, the Baltic Sea Strategy is the third specific priority of the Lithuanian Presidency. The strategy aims to save the sea, connect the region and increase prosperity.⁵⁷ Closer regional cooperation and integration with the countries around the Baltic Sea, first of all, corresponds to the strategic priorities of Lithuania stated in the strategic vision of the state development in the report 'Lithuania 2030'.⁵⁸ This underlines that Lithuania will 'strive to become an integral, successful politically and economically consolidated part of the Nordic-Baltic region'. Secondly, the review of all the EU macro-regional strategies conducted during the Danish Presidency allows progress with the Baltic Sea Strategy.⁵⁹ Vice Minister Vytautas Leškevičius assures that during the presidency Lithuania will emphasise all the EU macro-regional strategies and will put the 'best effort in finding out how the EU macro-regional strategies can be used to promote deeper integration for the benefit of the whole European Union and its citizens'.⁶⁰ The highlight of the presidency in this respect will be the 4th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, to be held in Vilnius on 11–12 November 2013. The main challenges related to the implementation of the strategy will be discussed in this forum. The goal of the presidency is to include the value added by the macro-regional strategies and guidelines for further work in the conclusions of the European Council.

⁵⁴ Lowe, P. Insights. Energy Security in the European Union, Guide to the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council, p. 17.

⁵⁵ Telephone interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 7 May 2013.

⁵⁶ Interview with Romas Švedas, former Vice Minister of the Ministry of Energy of Lithuania, lecturer at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University, 27 June 2013

⁵⁷ Baltic Sea Region Strategy, http://eu.baltic.net/Baltic_Sea_Region_Strategy.7428.html [accessed 29 June 2013].

⁵⁸ Lithuania's Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030' (2012), <http://lietuva2030.lt/images/stories/lithuania2030.pdf> [accessed 20 June 2013].

⁵⁹ Telephone Interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 7 May 2013.

⁶⁰ Leškevičius, V. (2013) Insights. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – working together towards sustainable and smart growth. Guide to the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council, p.16.

The fourth specific priority of the Lithuanian Presidency is effective external border management. This priority reflects the general priority of an open Europe and focuses attention on the issues essential to the member states containing the EU's external borders. Lithuania shares its borders with two non-EU states, Russia and Belarus; thus, the issue of effective border management is essential for Lithuanian security and by extension for the security of the EU. The Lithuanian Presidency aims to draw the EU's attention to the concept of smart borders,⁶¹ to achieve progress on the preparation of the necessary documents to implement them.

The specific priorities are very important at the national level, but achieving substantial results on any of them at the EU level might be challenging. The most promising and tangible might be the Association Agreement with Ukraine, though the final outcome will not depend totally on the attempts of the Lithuanian Presidency. It will rather be a combination of joint efforts of Ukrainian politicians and the EU's negotiations with Ukraine regarding proceeding with reforms.

The way ahead – Expectations and challenges

There is no uniform formula for the evaluation of the EU presidencies and most of the presidencies at the end of the term are announced to have been rather successful. Researchers tend to agree that to be considered effective, the presidency should be able to end negotiations fruitfully on the issues on the agenda, guarantee positive negotiation results, create a good negotiation atmosphere and achieve the goals set for the period of the presidency.⁶² A successful performance on one hand should produce tangible results: it must end with a legal act, resolution, guidelines, etc. On the other hand, it might be enough to push forward certain issues or to draw attention to pressing EU needs. Schout and Vanhoonacker sum up a successful presidency as one that above all is in compliance with the demands

(generated by the EU) of certain presidency tasks and successfully fulfils those commitments.⁶³ It appears that during the Lithuanian Presidency the demand on the EU side will be dominated by the effective management of the existing agenda, thus the primary goal of Lithuania should be to ensure a smooth and fruitful legislative process. The Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU emphasises that the Lithuanian Presidency first of all will be practical and not conceptual; it 'will mark the peak of legislative activity in the current cycle' and therefore the main goal will be to 'write already existing agreements into legislation'.⁶⁴ Therefore, it appears that less attention will be drawn to the roles of political leaders and the agenda-setting function.⁶⁵ If Lithuania manages to cope successfully with the busy EU agenda and reach the necessary agreements on time, on the EU side the Lithuanian Presidency will probably be considered successful.

It is not a minor challenge in itself, as the amount of legal acts to be processed is large. Before 31 December 56 documents should be adopted, otherwise the financial programmes will stop on 1 January. This is more than the EU average. In addition, 19 other legal acts have to be adopted, otherwise certain derogations should be made. There are 45 more that are prioritised according to decisions of the European Council and 171 others.⁶⁶ The relatively limited resources (both financial and human) and lack of experience therefore might downplay the performance of the presidency. A recent article on the Lithuanian Presidency argues that 'one of the challenges for Lithuania will be to turn its small size into leadership capacities while at the same time effectively performing its tasks'.⁶⁷ Unexpected external or internal challenges (e.g. informational or cyber-attacks by third countries) might also pose a challenge diverting the energy and resources necessary for the agenda management.

⁶¹ A system for travel and travel control facilitation.

⁶² Schout, A., Vanhoonacker, S. (2006) Evaluating Presidencies of the Council of the EU; Revisiting Nice, *JCMS*, Vol. 44, No. 5, p. 1056.

⁶³ Ibid p.1057.

⁶⁴ Karoblis, R. (2013) Foreword. What to Expect from the Lithuanian Presidency. Guide to the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council, p. 4.

⁶⁵ For more on the roles of Presidency see Quaglia, L., Moxon – Browne, E. (2006) What Makes a Good EU Presidency? Italy and Ireland Compared, *JCMS*, Vol. 44, No. 2, p. 349 – 368. and Schout, A., Vanhoonacker, S. (2006) Evaluating Presidencies of the Council of the EU: Revisiting Nice, *JCMS*, Vol. 44, No. 5, p.1053-1056.

⁶⁶ Telephone Interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 7 May 2013.

⁶⁷ Vilpišauskas, R., Vandecasteele, B., Vaznonytė, A. (2013) The Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union Advancing Energy Policy and Eastern Partnership Goals: Conditions for Exerting Influence, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, p.9.

As it is the first Lithuanian Presidency and it has been extensively advertised at the national level, the expectations of politicians and society in Lithuania towards the presidency are high. The presidency is expected to increase the visibility of Lithuania, to improve its image, to draw attention to the issues that are interesting for Lithuania and sometimes even to bring investors and tourists to Lithuania. There is a mismatch between the expectations of a successful presidency in Brussels and those in Vilnius. A survey carried out by consultancy firm Hill + Knowlton in both Brussels and Lithuania demonstrates that 70 per cent of respondents in Brussels expect that the best achievement of the Lithuanian Presidency would be to make further progress towards the EU's economic recovery; 22 per cent believe that it instead should be the promotion of energy security in the EU and the increase of Lithuania's visibility in Europe. The respondents in Lithuania, however, tend to put more emphasis on the promotion of energy security in the EU (22 per cent) and the increase of Lithuania's visibility (14 per cent). Only 9 per cent of the respondents in Lithuania believe that making further progress on the EU's economic recovery would be the best accomplishment of the presidency.⁶⁸ It might be said that the expectations in Brussels are related more to the management of the current EU agenda, whereas the national expectations reflect the national interests.

In fact, presidencies provide member states with opportunities to attract the EU's attention to certain issues and to promote their ideas and norms at the EU level. These tools are especially well suited to smaller states – which lack traditional power resources.⁶⁹ Thus, the expectations at the national level are not entirely unfounded. The presidency power especially increases

during the time when a legislative proposal is adopted as law.⁷⁰ Lithuania will have those opportunities within the broad range of issues related to the implementation of MFF 2014–2020, the creation of the Banking Union, encouraging growth and employment. As previously shown, these issues are not the ones that will satisfy the demand at the national level. Furthermore, the visibility of the presidency has been exceedingly reduced since the Lisbon Treaty came into force. Most of the presidency activities will not be noticeable for the society, which in turn might lead to dissatisfaction on the national level. Andreas Mauer argues that management of the expectations may become a key function of the presidency.⁷¹ Ambitions that are too high and inadequate expectations may hamper its success.⁷² The Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU during the interview expressed his fears that apart from a busy legislative agenda 'expectations management will be the biggest challenge for the Lithuanian Presidency'.⁷³ A good communication strategy at the national level will therefore be of the utmost importance in order to cope with this challenge.

Conclusions

The first Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council will be marked by a very busy agenda and demanding albeit important tasks, which will be reinforced by limited resources and a lack of experience. This paper argues, though, that Lithuania has the necessary preconditions to turn this challenge into an opportunity and to make its presidency successful. First of all, the Lithuanian Presidency team started preparations for the presidency relatively early and invested a large amount of efforts and resources in this process. An effective presidency structure established both in Brussels and in Vilnius, alongside well-prepared personnel, contributes to the

⁶⁸ Survey carried out ahead of the Presidency by the Hill+Knowlton teams in Brussels and Lithuania. A total 242 responses were collected during March and April 2013 in both Brussels and Vilnius, 168 responses from Brussels and 74 from Lithuania. Responses came from nationals of 17 EU MS, and a mix of private sector (35 per cent), trade associations (8 per cent), EU institutions (22 per cent), national public institutions (11 per cent), students (5 per cent), and NGOs (6 per cent).

⁶⁹ Bengtsson, R. (2003) 'The Council Presidency and External Representation', in Elgström O., ed. *European Union Council Presidencies. A Comparative Perspective*. London: Routledge.

⁷⁰ Thomson, R. (2008) 'The Council Presidency in the European Union: Responsibility with Power', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 46:3 (2008), p.611.

⁷¹ Maurer, A. (2007) 'Managing Expectations and Hidden Demands: Options for the German EU Presidency', *Perspectives*, 27/2007, p. 100.

⁷² Interview with a representative of Belgium, in Šešelgytė, M. (2012) *The Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council and Common Security and Defence Policy: Opportunities and Challenges*, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2011-2012*, Vol. 10, 2012, Military Academy of Lithuania, p.116.

⁷³ Telephone Interview with the Representative of Lithuania to the European Union Raimundas Karoblis conducted by Margarita Šešelgytė, 7 May 2013.

likelihood that Lithuania will be able to provide good managerial skills and that the EU legal process, as far as the presidency can influence it, should run smoothly. Second, the political situation in Lithuania is quite stable and it should not hinder the presidency. Third, there is a high degree of support for the presidency at the highest political level.

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that there might be several challenges that may undercut the success of the presidency. First of all, significant progress on the specific priorities identified by the Seimas is not very likely, or to be more precise, does not depend much on the Lithuanian Presidency. Therefore, the presidency team as well as the political leaders will have to invest a great deal of energy in the management of expectations and also in explaining at the national level that the success of the presidency should be judged as a whole and not reduced to the achievement of certain priorities. Secondly, the management of the agenda will require not only good managerial skills but also an ability to look at the issues from an EU perspective rather than from a national perspective. The aim to ensure a smooth presidency and at the same time to remain a neutral honest broker might be a serious challenge for Lithuania's first presidency term.

As a final point, it is important to note that the outcome of the presidency cannot be judged simply by six months' performance in leading the Council. It has more significant consequences for the presiding country, especially if the country holds the presidency for the first time. Presidencies serve as an effective image-making tool. The image of the state created during the presidency is strong and widely spread; it is also enduring. A successful and credible Lithuanian Presidency would send positive messages to potential investors and economic and political partners. Strong managerial skills and the ability to preserve the image of an honest broker might also increase the future political influence of Lithuania internationally. In the corridors of Brussels Lithuania would no longer be looked upon as a 'student', but rather as a 'partner'. The presidency will also have internal consequences. Although Lithuanians are in general pro-European, their knowledge is limited to certain areas to which they have direct connections. The presidency will present an opportunity to raise awareness about the EU in general and about specific EU policies. Finally, the presidency will have a great impact on the strengthening of Lithuanian administrative capacities in general and the representational capacities in Brussels.

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