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INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND POLICY

MASTER THESIS

DOES THE NATIONAL EU POLICY COORDINATION SYSTEM MATTER? REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL INTERESTS DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU

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SUMMARY

The aim of this master thesis is to analyse the influence of domestic EU policy coordination systems on the representation of national interests during the presidency of the Council of the EU. The research analyses and compares four small EU member countries, having established different national coordination systems according to Kassim's typology: Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania and Greece.

The study is based on historical institutionalism, more specifically, on its two key traits: a combination of rational and sociological aspects, and path-dependency. This theoretical approach contributes to the presidency studies, since it addresses changes the Treaty of Lisbon brought – the trio presidency. Four countries were selected following the rotating order of the office. Therefore, the analysis evaluates the impact of a successive element of the presidency, i.e. how much room for manoeuvre countries have for representing their national interests, simultaneously addressing inherited issues on the Council agenda.

The research, examining youth unemployment issue, claims that path-dependency has a great influence on both national coordination systems and the representation of domestic priorities during the presidency term. Regarding the former, countries adopt new changes to existing domestic networks, whereas the latter is related to the obligation for presidencies to follow each other's agenda and ensure the development of common policies.

Regarding Kassim's framework, the analysis proves that selective systems tend to be more efficient than comprehensive ones. The difference between centralized and decentralized systems is rather marginal, however, former ones are more effective than the latter.

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INTRODUCTION

Discussing policy-making within the European Union (EU), scholars tend to focus on various actors: from EU institutions, agencies and other political bodies to non-political agents such as interest groups. Different approaches applied in scholarly research help to evaluate these interactions and estimate actors' influence on final decisions. However, this network of institutions usually lacks one important actor – the presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Being a rotating office, the presidency is usually regarded as a component of the Council of Ministers, ensuring a smooth and thorough work of the institution. However, as Elgström (2003) argues, the presidency is not just a short-term duty – it is "one of the key players in the EU negotiation game" (p. 1) encompassing not only official obligations, but also certain powers.

Introduced in 1952 (Fernandez, 2008), the presidency had changed over decades. The Treaty of Lisbon (2007) brought the last reform that significantly altered the presidency's office. Clarifying its formal roles and duties, the Treaty diminished the informal power of the institute (Vilpišauskas et al., 2013) and greatly limited presidency's room for manoeuvre.

Nevertheless, institutional constrains do not always go hand in hand with real world politics. The Council is the only EU body that officially represents states of the Union and gives room for representation of national interests. Therefore, the presidency is often considered to be an advantageous opportunity for promoting national priorities at the EU level, and, thus, should not be underestimated while evaluating policy-making processes.

It should be notified, that the presidency itself does not guarantee a successful representation of national interests. National EU policy coordination systems, as domestic position formulation mechanisms, should also be taken into account. The EU membership and growing competences of the Union forced countries to implement effective coordination networks within existing domestic political and administrative systems (Sepos, 2005). This does not only provide member states with a possibility to deal with complex EU issues, but also allows formulating coherent national positions regarding each of them (Kassim, 2003).

As political systems and administrative capacities greatly differ across states, each national coordination system has its peculiarities in terms of resources and networking that may

facilitate or impede dealing with the half-year presidency duties. Despite these differences, all countries aim to utilize this office for representation of their national interests (Tallberg, 2004).

It is commonly agreed that small EU members usually have less resources and power for representing key domestic objectives. However, as some case studies had shown (Bengtsson et al., 2004; Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006), the presidency enables countries to put forward their national priorities. What is more, after the last three enlargements of the EU, small countries constitute the largest part of all EU members, which increases their influence during Council negotiations. Nevertheless, national interests are not solely factors shaping common EU policies. The EU is highly influenced by social norms and institutionalized structure, which also affect decision-making.

Therefore, by applying historical institutionalism approach, the thesis will link national coordination systems, distinguished by Kassim (2003), with the representation of national objectives during the presidency term, since this half-year term provides member states with certain duties and possibilities. The analysis will focus on four successive rotating Council presidencies held by small EU member states, i.e. Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania and Greece. As all these countries have different coordination structures, the analysis will examine their influence on the representation of national interests, while taking into account the successive element of the rotating presidency.

1. THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The main goal of this master thesis is to examine whether the arrangement of domestic coordination network has an impact on the representation of national interests during successive EU Council presidencies. Coordination systems, thus, will be examined by applying Kassim's framework, i.e. analysing two main cleavages: the division of powers among political actors and the coordination ambition.

In order to come up to the final position before the Council meetings, national actors interact with each other through different networks both at domestic and EU levels. Taking this into account, the expected conclusion of the research is to prove that the arrangement of the coordination system has an impact on the way national interests are represented. By carrying out an empirical analysis of Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania and Greece that held the rotating

Council presidency in a sequential order and set up four different coordination systems according to Kassim's (2003) typology, the study will name main factors, political actors and institutions that lead to main differences while representing national interests during the presidency term.

Taking into account the unconventional angle of analysis, this study will serve as a significant starting point for a broader research of the correlation between national coordination systems and interest representation while presiding the Council of the EU. To ensure a high internal, external validity and reliability, the study will pay due attention to possible impediments.

1.1. THEORETICAL RELEVANCE

The research has a few strong points that will provide an added value to the existing body of knowledge.

First of all, the presidency office still remains a niche in political science and public administration research. Considering the representation of national interests, scholars focus on general stance of the country within the EU, coalition building in the Council, influence of interest groups on EU-level bodies and interaction between three main EU institutions (the Commission, the Parliament and the Council) during decision-making procedures. The presidency, thus, is rarely involved in such studies, mostly due to its relatively limited power.

What is more, even though some scholars address the importance of the presidency institute, most of their studies were held before the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force (Bengtsson et al., 2004; Elgström, 2003; Elgström & Tallberg, 2003; Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006; Tallberg, 2003, 2004, etc.). Considering the main changes defined in the Treaty, more extensive studies are needed to evaluate whether informal powers of the presidency, such as representation of national interests, remain.

This master thesis is based on the historical institutionalism, encompassing both rationalistic and sociological institutionalism approaches. In other words, despite formal obligations, each presidency is eager to exploit the short-term office and to put forward its national priorities. However, the latter should not outbalance the brokerage role within the Council, particularly when sensitive issues are at stake (Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006). The presidency is expected to be a neutral mediator – pursue socially acceptable norms (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006).

Furthermore, as one of the core principles of the historical institutionalism is the path-dependency (Hall & Taylor, 1996), the examination of causal relationship between national coordination systems and national interest representation will also provide a broader perception of the current stance of the presidency in Council affairs: to what extent a country is able to represent its national position.

Finally, a causal linkage between national coordination models and interest representation during the presidency term will provide an added value for the existing body of knowledge in the field of public administration. Although this is not the central aim of the research, the study, analysing the arrangement of four different national coordination systems, will examine whether the classification of countries to particular coordination models is still valid and to what extent Kassim's framework can be applied in future research. The study will also contribute to the evaluation of factors leading to a successful Council presidency. The latter could be defined by the ability to combine official presidency roles (related to appropriate behaviour of a chair) with the representation of national priorities. In addition, the research will facilitate the forecast of implicit results of future presidencies and lay the groundwork for similar field studies that could lead to broader generalisations.

1.2. SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

The presidency of the Council of the EU, being a rare responsibility member states have to deal with, creates certain expectations regarding the national interest implementation. Therefore, results of the study will be important both for politicians and civil servants in national administrations of small EU member states, as they will help to set attainable goals and better assess possible outcomes of the presidency.

What is more, as the study will evaluate all four coordination systems, a more practical aspect for national administrations is going to be addressed: domestic political institutions and agencies will be able to accommodate certain changes in order to ensure more efficient information transmission and cooperation between political bodies while defining national positions, particularly on vital issues. This is especially important for countries preparing to hold the presidency, since the effective coordination system facilitates a burden the country has to bear and ensures the opportunity to address national interests.

For examined countries that already held the presidency, the study will name main alterations of the national EU policy coordination system that would lead to a better representation of

their national position at the EU level. Although the following presidency will be held only in 14 years (due to sequential rotation), adjustments (if needed) of the coordination networks would serve as a general means for a country to address its national interests at the EU level.

2. PROBLEM ANALYSIS

The bargaining process in the Council of Ministers is highly defined by the power countries hold or attain while forming coalitions with other EU member states on common national priorities. As Sepos (2005) states, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of a country's performance, one should look at the level of policy objectives achieved at the EU level.

Taking into account small EU member states, scholars agree that, due to the weaker power, they have fewer opportunities to put forward significant national issues. Limited capacities in terms of votes, financial means and administrative staff diminish their relative potential during the negotiations in the Council (Panke, 2010a). The small number of votes means that countries can be easily outvoted by big member states; limited administrative capacity impedes effective participation in negotiations while representing national position; and scarce financial resources do not allow a country to offer compensation for the adoption of any policy issue (Panke, 2010a). As empirical studies reveal, small EU members "are indeed often less successful in advocating their policy interests via direct bargaining or arguing in the Council" (Panke, 2010a, p. 801). Therefore, the presidency can be regarded as an opportunity and informal power to use the chair for promoting national preferences.

As Crum (2009) notes, the rotating presidency is particularly important for small EU member states as it "expresses the principle of equality" (p. 690). By rotating every half a year, presidencies share the power of the chair instead of being ruled by one single supranational body. This is an important merit for small EU members as all countries have an equal stance at the EU level at least for half a year (Crum, 2009).

Since the last developments of the presidency office, it is regarded as a rather technocratic position, responsible for smooth work in the Council and expressing the impartiality norm. Nevertheless, one cannot diminish the importance of the national interest representation. The presidency of the Council of Ministers does not have any formal accountability. Although countries' performance is evaluated according to the programme and final results, there are no

sanctions for misbehaviour of the country (Crum, 2009), meaning the presidency is more intended to pursue national interests than remain neutral.

However, in order to come up to a common strong national position that can be respectively represented in the Council, countries need to establish effective national coordination systems. Well-organized networking, formulation of precise objectives and flexibility given to national representatives provide country with possibilities to better advocate their national interests at the EU level (Panke, 2010b).

If the national coordination network does not work efficiently and instructions to the permanent representation in Brussels come late, it creates difficulties for successful interest advocacy. Position delays could be caused by various reasons, such as domestic disagreements or problems within the coordination network (e.g. between the capital and the permanent representation in Brussels) (Panke, 2010a). As the EU decision-making system is complex and encompass actors on different governance levels, particularly new EU member states suffer from ineffective coordination (Panke, 2010a). However, in general delays in position formulation are considered as a characteristic of small EU member states (Panke, 2010b).

Furthermore, the effective coordination system is particularly important for countries holding the presidency of the Council of the EU. As the short-term office places an additional administrative burden on states' political and administrative systems, in order to fulfil the presidency roles, smoothly deal with administrative tasks and simultaneously address national interests, the country should establish an efficient national EU policy coordination system (Kassim et al., 2000).

According to Kassim (2003), national EU policy coordination systems could be divided into four categories: comprehensive centralized, comprehensive decentralized, selective centralized and selective decentralized. However, not all small countries have established the same coordination networks. They differ in coordination ambitions (being comprehensive or selective) and the level of centralization (centralized or decentralized) (Kassim, 2003).

While the type of domestic networking and its influence on the national interest representation at the EU level is the core element of this research, historical institutionalism (path-dependency in particular) generates certain boundaries that need to be addressed. Countries assume the office of a presidency in a rotating order and are working in trios.

Hence the presidency agenda has a successive element, which may either facilitate or impede the representation of national objectives, depending on the number of overlapping issues. What is more, a country is expected to fulfil certain presidency duties, which may lead to a more inferior representation of domestic goals. Therefore, the central research question of the master thesis is the following:

To what extent can the arrangement of the national EU policy coordination system explain the representation of national interests during the presidency term?

In order to provide a comprehensive answer, four sub-questions can be distinguished:

1. How much room for manoeuvre do presidencies have for the representation of their national interests?
2. How does the Treaty of Lisbon influence the agenda setting powers and, thus, the representation of national interest during the presidency term?
3. How does the coordination ambition affect the representation of national interests?
4. How does the level of centralization of national administrative systems affect the representation of national interests?

The following chapters will elaborate on the examination of these questions, providing a theoretical framework, methodology of the research and, eventually, an empirical analysis of the link between national coordination systems and the domestic interest representation during the presidency term[1].

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The linkage between the representation of presidency priorities and the arrangement of domestic coordination systems provides a wide variety of theoretical frameworks for the empirical analysis. The presidency of the Council of Ministers could be regarded as one of the elements of the European integration. Thus, scholars usually tend to look at this process from two main theoretical approaches: neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism.

While the neofunctionalism focuses on spillover effects and the increasing discretion of EU-level actors, e.g. the entrepreneurial and brokering roles of the European Commission

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[1] For a more detailed presentation of the presidency institute and national coordination systems, please see Annexes 1 and 2.

(Pollack, 2005) or the strengthened stance of the European Parliament in the ordinary legislative procedure, intergovernmentalism emphasizes the bargaining process among member states. Final decisions, hence, reflect the relative power of EU members while implementing their national interests rather than a common decision among national and EU-level actors (Pollack, 2005).

However, in addition to these two conventional theories, scholars do analyse the interaction between EU actors from a more methodological perspective and utilize insights of institutionalism. Pollack (1996) argues that new institutionalism combines both conventional theories of European integration. On the one hand, institutions are created as a means for EU members to exert their influence. However, once they are established, they "take on a life of their own" (Pollack, 1996, p. 431) and may even produce unintended outcomes in the whole EU governance, giving more powers to the EU-level actors (Pollack, 1996).

New institutionalism, instead of examining who profit from the integration process, focuses on institutions (political structures), niches and constraints they make while shaping final decisions (Bulmer, 1997). Therefore, this approach will be applied in this research, focusing specifically on the historical institutionalism.

National EU policy coordination systems could be regarded as historically developed networks that shape the outcomes of current EU policies. What is more, the institute of the presidency has also undergone a few developments (see Annex 1), which gradually led to path-dependent consequences – defined roles of the chair. Hence, the historical institutionalism integrates both variables of the research, which at the end of the chapter will be cumulated into corresponding hypotheses.

3.1. THREE APPROACHES OF THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

The new institutionalism is not an integral theory, but comprises three branches: rationalist, sociological and historical approaches (Hall & Taylor, 1996). While rationalist and sociological institutionalisms could be regarded as two conventional angles applied in studies of the presidency's institute (Elgström & Tallberg, 2003), historical institutionalism is usually regarded as the fundamental one, combining both rational and sociological approaches and, thus, providing a broader picture of institutional developments of the presidency and national coordination systems.

3.1.1. RATIONALIST APPROACH

Rational choice institutionalism can be identified with the theory of intergovernmental bargaining as they both emphasize the realization of national priorities (Awesti, 2007). The rationalist approach is based on four main principles, distinguished by Hall and Taylor (1996):

1) Actors have a definite set of preferences, which they seek to maximize according to strategic calculations.

2) While pursuing their interests, actors usually face collective action dilemmas. Nevertheless, the individual goal attainment leads to a collectively suboptimal result (p. 945).

3) The institutional structure provides actors with information about the expected behaviour of others and, thus, reduces uncertainty.

4) The set up of new institutions could be considered as a cooperative act between significant actors. However, the main purpose of the institution formation is the maximization of individual gains (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

For the purpose of this study, the first feature of the rationalist approach will be applied.

The country holding the presidency is assumed to pursue its national priorities by following strategic calculations. In order to successfully implement their goals at the EU level, presidencies frame their priorities as European-wide issues that are likely to be achieved during the presidency term (Elgström & Tallberg, 2003). Moreover, as for the most issues in the Council the qualified-majority-voting rule applies, countries usually form voting coalitions (Elgström & Tallberg, 2003).

Nevertheless, the strategic behaviour and cost-benefit calculations do not necessarily lead to pure interest implementation. According to Elgström and Tallberg (2003) there are three main strategies a country may pursue: forcing, where national interests are the key priority compared to the reputation issue; accommodating – opposite to the forcing one; and problem-solving – trying to maximize gains for all member states. Therefore, the country may act as a neutral broker when it has major concerns about its reputation and want to maintain the image of a 'good European' (Bengtsson et al., 2004, p. 316).

The latter strategy is usually applied by small and new EU members, as they hold weaker voting power, maintain less developed contacts with other EU states and institutions and have rather constrained institutional capacities to represent their national position (Panke, 2008).

Concerning the establishment of national coordination systems within the Kassim's framework, the first feature of rationalist approach also applies. As Kassim (2003) argues, there is a convergence between coordination systems (e.g. disposition of expertise within the government, increasing role of prime ministers, special units for EU affairs management, etc.), which refers to effectiveness and resource optimization (Kassim, 2003). Countries perform as rational actors and set up coordination networks that ensure a better implementation of their national goals within the EU.

3.1.2. SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

The sociological institutionalism could be regarded as an opposite to the rational one, defined by three main features (Hall & Taylor, 1996):

1) Inclusion of both institutional rules and symbols, moral norms that influence and guide human behaviour.

2) Institutions are attached to specific roles that gradually develop into behavioural norms. By engaging in an institutional environment, actors internalize such perceptions and frame them as socially acceptable practices that shape their future behaviour, based on the logic of appropriateness.

3) Institution formation is based on the demand for higher social legitimacy rather than rational calculations, as the legitimate decisions produce more support from the public (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

With regard to the presidency, the second feature of the sociological approach – the logic of appropriateness – could be regarded as the main one while explaining the interest representation during the half-year term. The presidency is expected to act according to existing norms, deriving from institutional arrangements and official presidency duties, which also shape different perceptions about the role of the chair in each member state (Elgström & Tallberg, 2003).

According to Elgström (2003), the state accommodating the sociological approach may prioritize one of the following roles of the presidency: leader, initiating moves and policies for the future of Europe; negotiator, as representative of national interests; broker, trying to come up to common decisions and compromises; or bureaucrat, focusing on administrative concerns. The selection of a preferred role strongly depends not on rational calculations, but previous experiences a country possess. While being a member of the EU, engaging in a socially constructed environment and, in particular, holding the presidency, the state forms its perception about the appropriate stance of the chair (Elgström, 2003), which could even be a negotiator, pursuing national gains. Such interpretations then lead to certain expectations for other EU members presiding the Council.

With regard to the establishment of national coordination systems within Kassim's framework, sociological institutionalism proposes that countries adapt to institutional changes in different ways, mostly due to their diverging perceptions about EU policies and the Union's working mechanism (Kassim, 2003). Furthermore, the arrangement of the national coordination system usually resembles country's attitude towards EU issues and its willingness to respond to them (Kassim, 2003). Therefore, EU members exhibit diverging trends in their national coordination systems, which finally can lead to unlike outcomes of EU policies (Dimitrova & Maniokas, 2004).

3.1.3. HISTORICAL APPROACH

Historical institutionalism is known for being on of the first branches of the neo-institutionalism, comprising different disciplines, such as political science, history and sociology (Jenson & Me´rand, 2010). As Hall and Taylor (1996) argue, historical institutionalism has four traits:

1) Being regarded as the broadest approach, it comprises both the rational and sociological approaches, which Hall and Taylor (1996) named as "calculus" and "cultural" ones (p. 938). According to the calculus approach, actors are strategic players, trying to maximize their gains, whereas the cultural approach sees institutions as routines that form actors' behaviour, perceptions and patterns for interpretation.

2) Historical institutionalism sees the distribution of power between actors as an outcome of existing institutional arrangements, leading to unequal stance in a decision-making process.

3) One of the most prominent features of historical institutionalism is the path-dependency. Institutional developments are strongly influenced by former arrangements that determine the future path of the institution. However, previous decisions cannot always be fully forecasted and, thus, may lead to unintended consequences (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

4) The final feature of historical institutionalism is known as critical junctures – "moments when substantial institutional change takes place thereby creating a 'branching point' from which historical development moves onto a new path" (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 942).

These traits clearly show that historical institutionalism could be regarded as the fundamental approach towards EU-related developments, as it comprises rationalist and sociological angles of analysis. In addition, although scholars rarely apply it to the presidency studies, historical institutionalism can provide a broader perception to the arrangement of national coordination systems, as well as the behaviour of the chair. Therefore, this research will be based on historical institutionalism assumptions, thus, contributing to the existing body of knowledge in the presidency studies.

For the purpose of this research, the link between national coordination systems and interest representation during the presidency term will be examined according to two features of the historical institutionalism, i.e. the first, combining rationalist and sociological approaches, and the third, concerning path-dependent developments. However, it should be noted that these two features do not contradict each other. Path-dependency rather depicts the collocation of logic of consequence (rationalism) and logic of appropriateness (sociological approach) in a long term, providing certain paths for further institutional developments.

As the research is not aiming to compare the institute of the presidency with other EU bodies, the issue of power distribution is not relevant, whereas the critical junctures will not be addressed due to the selected time frame (only the post-Lisbon Treaty period will be analysed).

Regarding national coordination systems, these two particular features (combination of calculus and cultural approaches as well as the path-dependency) of historical institutionalism can best describe developments of domestic coordination networks according to Kassim's framework. The development of national coordination systems exhibits traits from both the rational and the sociological approaches, as there is no clear trend towards convergence or divergence between countries. Moreover, EU members built their coordination networks

according to existing political and administrative structures, which reflect the long-term country's vision towards the European integration (Kassim, 2003). Therefore, it could be assumed that path-dependency also has a great influence on EU coordination networks within the framework developed by Kassim.

3.2. HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM AS AN APPROACH TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU

According to Skocpol and Pierson (2002), institutional changes are usually adapted to the existing context rather than replacing previous practices. Hence, current institutions should be evaluated by taking previous rules and arrangements into account.

The institute of the presidency has undergone a few great developments that had significantly changed the role of the chair (see Annex 1). However, as scholars agree, we could notice the path-dependency in terms of presidency roles. As the historical institutionalism encompasses both the rationalist and sociological approaches, traits from each of them are apparent in the current stance of the chair.

The rationalist (or calculus) approach assumes that the presidency is a strategic actor, willing to pursue its goals. As Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006) argue, in addition to conventional presidency roles, i.e. organizer, broker and political leader, the presidency is also a representative of national interests. This role (or aim) originally comes from the countries' interest to implement national positions during the Council negotiations seeking to avoid high national costs of adopted policies, and focusing on short-term objectives (Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006).

The Treaty of Lisbon, however, had greatly constrained the presidency by subtracting roles of political leader and external representative (see Annex 1). Nevertheless, despite being discarded from the high-politics field, the presidency is still capable to use certain niches for national interest representation in low-politics areas, which are in the discretion of the Council of Ministers (see Annex 1).

Small EU member states, however, are usually expected to occupy a more neutral stance during the presidency term, as they have concerns regarding their reputation, institutional constraints or capacity. However, empirical studies show the opposite, since even small states are capable of maintaining a good reputation and representing their national goals while presiding the Council of Ministers (Bengtsson et al., 2004). As this research will examine four

small EU members, the reputation issue and the inheritance of a previous, more powerful position (being a political leader and an external representative) will be taken into account while drawing final conclusions.

With regard to the sociological approach and, more specifically, the logic of appropriateness, the presidency is expected to perform in an impartial way, work for the common good of the Council and the EU as a whole (Bengtsson et al., 2004). Neutrality could be regarded as the major socially constructed norm of the chair, as it is also stated in the Handbook of the Presidency (2011): "The Presidency must, by definition, be neutral and impartial. It is the moderator for discussions and cannot therefore favour either its own preferences or those of a particular Member State." (p. 10). According to Tallberg (2003), countries are willing to act in their own interest, however, the socialization of the impartiality norm makes them refrained from implementation of national goals and leads to a neutral brokerage. Moreover, even if countries are willing to pursue their national objectives, the logic of appropriateness dominates when countries face disagreements in the Council (e.g. on sensitive topics), since the presidency has to act as broker for the common good, thus, leaving national priorities aside (Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006).

Traits of path-dependency can be clearly observed while evaluating presidency's aim to pursue national goals, which comes from the former position of the chair as a political leader, having more influence. Regarding the sociological approach, the logic of appropriateness led to the internalization of neutrality norm, which now can be seen in the official roles of the presidency: administrator (preparing the meetings), moderator (seeking for consensus) and chairperson (leading the meetings) (Handbook of the Presidency, 2011).

In addition, the presidency is also constrained by the trio agenda, since the Treaty of Lisbon officially established the continuation of the long-term priorities and obliged trio presidencies to follow each other's programme (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). Therefore, it could be assumed that the country holding the chair is constrained by successive Council agenda, and is able to implement its national priorities only to a certain extent, since the agenda-shaping power has been greatly limited.

Hence, the application of historical institutionalism will provide a broader understanding of the current duties and capabilities the presidency posses. By examining four small EU member states, two of which belong to the group of old EU members (Ireland and Greece), whilst the others – to the group of relatively new countries (Lithuania and Cyprus), the

research will reveal whether the rational and sociological approaches could be equally applied. Lithuania and Cyprus, contrary to Ireland and Greece, held the Council presidency for the first time. Therefore, they may exhibit more rational traits than socially internalized norms. Nevertheless, all four countries were working in trios (Cyprus, however, being in a separate one from the rest of the countries), which will enable author to evaluate the path-dependency of the presidency programmes and the scope of national interest representation.

3.3. HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM AND KASSIM'S FRAMEWORK

There is considerable number of theoretical approaches for the analysis of national coordination systems (see Annex 2). Nevertheless, as it was stated previously, this research will utilize two-dimensional Kassim's framework. Such selection is based on a few reasons. First of all, the executive branch prevails over the legislative, as it disposes relevant information and technical expertise about the EU-related issues (Kassim, 2003). Hence, responsible ministers are enabled to represent the national position and, thus, national interests during the Council meetings.

Furthermore, Kassim gives an explicit allocation of member states according to two broad dimensions (coordination ambition and centralization), encompassing Panke's framework on power distribution among governments and permanent representations (Panke, 2010b). Gärtner with colleagues (2011) had extended Kassim's framework by adding new Central and Eastern European states. Therefore, for the purpose of this research the developed scheme will be utilized. Finally, Kassim's framework clusters small countries to different categories of national coordination systems, which will lead to more extensive conclusions of the research.

As it was already noted in previous sections, Kassim's framework can also be evaluated across theoretical lines, applying the historical institutionalism. There are some clear trends of convergence with regard to established common national coordination structures, related to the rationalist approach. However, distinct administrative arrangements determine apparent divergences across countries (Kassim, 2003), referring to sociological approach. Hence, the historical institutionalism encompasses both angles.

The application of Kassim's framework to four EU member states will evaluate two dimensions: the extent of the coordination, being either comprehensive or selective, and the level of centralization of the domestic system, being centralized or decentralized.

Comprehensive coordination systems aim to deal with all issues discussed at the EU level in order to better represent national position in each policy area. Selective systems, on the contrary, are focusing mainly on important policy areas in order to defend vital national interests (Kassim, 2003). Attribution of countries to one of these cleavages highly depends on their resources, administrative capacity (Gärtner et al., 2011). As comprehensive systems are aiming to deal with a wider range of policies, it is assumed they have more resources than states with selective systems.

The division between centralized and decentralized systems reflects the administrative division of the state – either being unitary with centralized policy mechanisms, or federal, giving freedom to political units (ministries). Centralized systems ensure an early involvement in decision-making procedures in order to provide enough time for all national actors to express their opinion and reach a common position. However, all coordination processes and technical expertise are concentrated at the central executive body – the government (Kassim, 2003). Decentralized systems, on the contrary, give political freedom to line ministries that are responsible for drafting the national position in their realm of activity and expertise. There is no central actor that may impose its position (Kassim, 2003).

With regard to the level of centralization, the role of permanent representatives will also be evaluated. As Kassim (2003) noted, in centralized systems the permanent representation preoccupies a more active role, being involved in the decision making processes and maintaining a constant contact with the national administration (both the government and line ministries). In decentralized systems the permanent representation serves more as an information channel, maintaining constant contact with the government. However, its role in decision-making processes is limited, as line ministries hold the decisive power (Kassim, 2003).

As coordination systems have been developed according to different national lines and policy perceptions, they might produce uneven policy outcomes (Dimitrova & Maniokas, 2004). In the case of this research, countries are expected to display different levels of interest representation during the presidency term.

However, it is important to note that Kassim's framework outlines the general pattern of national coordination systems. Notwithstanding, while preparing the presidency, countries usually establish additional networks, positions or systems in order to facilitate information transmission and to ensure a smooth work within the Council. Therefore, the research will

focus on the formal set-up of the national coordination network (according to Kassim), simultaneously paying due attention to the influence of additional arrangements.

3.4. HYPOTHESES

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned theoretical expectations and sub-questions of the research, following hypotheses can be raised:

H1: *The pursuit of national interests during the presidency term is constrained by the successive element of the Council agenda, i.e. path-dependency.*

Although the presidency of the Council of the EU is a rotating office, providing an equal stance for each country to chair the Council's work, countries have a rather limited room for manoeuvre. Path-dependency could be regarded as a key element that shapes actors' actions in an institutionalized environment: instead of radically changing established practices, actors adapt new decisions to existing rules and procedures. Therefore, it is argued that the pursuit of national interest during the presidency term is constrained by path-dependency, obliging countries to follow the existing agenda and preferences of other EU members.

H2: *After the Treaty of Lisbon presidencies are able to influence the Council agenda only by short-term policies that correspond to long-term EU goals.*

The second hypothesis refers to the path-dependency of presidency agendas. In order to ensure the continuation of long-term EU goals, the Treaty of Lisbon established presidency trios. Therefore, despite differences in their voting power or general stance within the Union, countries are obliged to follow each other's agenda, especially when preparing a common trio programme. This leads to the assumption that former chairs usually determine national priorities of their successors, despite the size of the country. Nevertheless, path-dependency does not eliminate the combination of rational and sociological elements. Countries are still able to shape the Council's agenda, however, only by short-term goals that correspond to long-term policies and objectives of previous presidencies.

As the focus of this thesis is the linkage between national coordination systems and interest representation during the presidency term, the next two hypotheses are raised accordingly. It is important to note, that the following expectations are also based on the historical institutionalism, assuming that countries follow long-term policies, defined in rotating trio programmes.

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H3: *During the presidency term, small EU member states with comprehensive national coordination systems implement less national interests in successive agenda than small EU member states with selective national coordination systems.*

Such expectation is raised due to limited resources small countries posses. As the presidency term is capacity consuming period, the ambition to address all issues the EU deals with could result in poorly advocated national priorities.

H4: *During the presidency term, small EU member states having centralized coordination systems better implement national interests in successive agenda than small member states having decentralized systems.*

The fourth hypothesis refers to the ability to come up with a common position. In centralized coordination systems political institutions evaluate EU policies at the early stage, which enables them to debate essential amendments and reach a consensus before the negotiations in the Council (Kassim, 2003). In decentralized systems, although the position-drafting process is facilitated by shared competences, ministries might apply different strategies on long-term EU policies that may cause inconsistency in representing national priorities.

Considering four hypotheses, main variables of the research are the following:

- *Independent* – national coordination systems according to Kassim's framework (comprehensive centralized, selective centralized, comprehensive decentralized, or selective decentralized). The examination of the independent variable will be based on three indicators: 1) the *established official network of interactions* (vertical and horizontal), 2) *formal powers of each actor* involved, and 3) *government composition during the presidency term*, since majoritarian governments lead to more efficient domestic coordination than coalitions (Kassim, 2003).
- *Intervening* – additional (usually temporary) networks or positions, established particularly for the presidency term. Besides ensuring a faster and smooth information transmission, supplementary arrangements may also play a role in national interest representation.
- *Dependent* – representation of national interests. National interests here refer to national priorities, aggregated at the domestic level and named in official documents and/or by responsible executives within the government, having a decision-making power and representing the country at the EU level. National interests, hence, include

cost-benefit calculations, institutional set up of the country and ideological interests of political parties in power (Miklin, 2009). By tracing the reference of domestic national positions in Council and European Council documents adopted during the presidency term, the *level of national interest representation* will be assessed.

- *Exogenous* – path-dependency. Taking into account the fact that national coordination systems are developed according to institutionalized practices and that the Council agenda has a successive element, path-dependency is considered as an exogenous variable that determines the institutional environment countries operate in. As the research is built upon historical institutionalism, path-dependency is assumed to have a substantial overall effect on the interrelation between independent and dependent variables.

The following Figure 1 shows the relation between independent, dependent and intervening variables, being constrained by the institutional environment (exogenous variable):
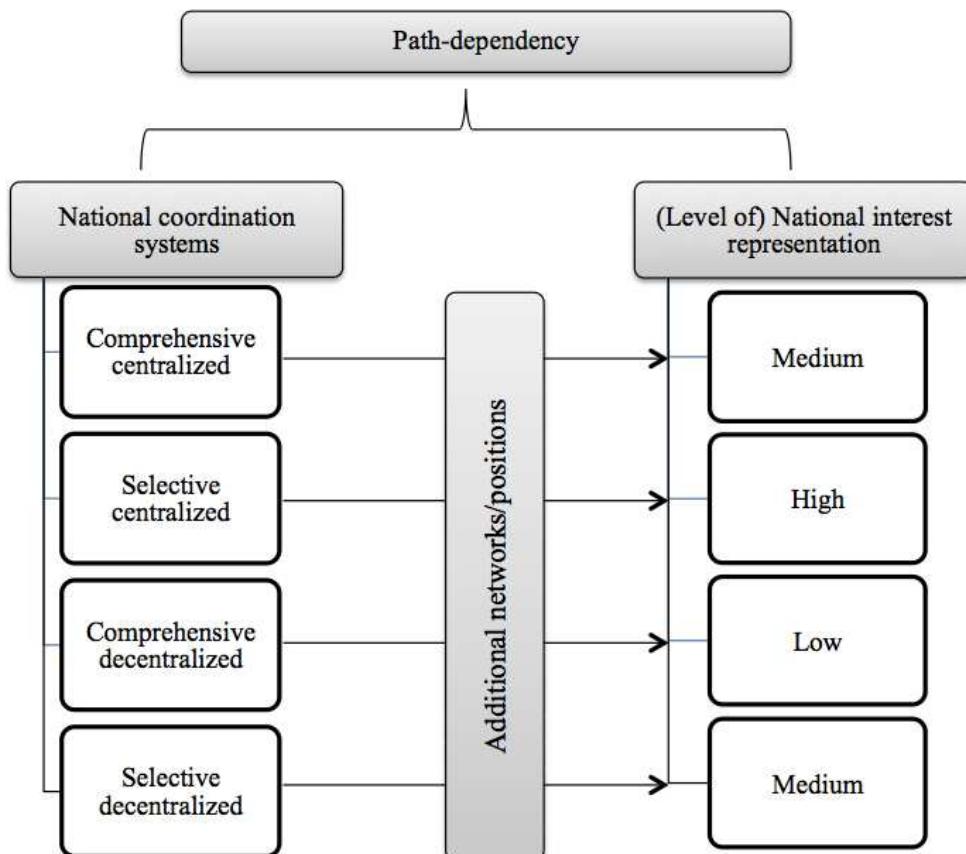
Figure 1: Flowchart of the linkage between variables

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

In the field of public administration, cross-country comparisons could be conducted by using both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry, particularly when analysing the co-variation between two variables. Nevertheless, as the aim of this master thesis is to examine the linkage between national coordination systems and the national interest representation during the presidency term, the qualitative analysis is the best method applicable.

First of all, since the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, countries have to hold the rotating office every 14 years, which makes a time-series research infeasible. In addition, the number of EU member states that held the presidency after Lisbon reforms is rather small, which also impedes the quantitative cross-country analysis. Despite these factors, the quantitative research design would not be able to provide an adequate explanation of the co-variation. Both national coordination systems and the representation of national priorities are complex variables that can hardly be defined and, furthermore, examined by quantitative indicators. An in-depth context analysis is needed for both of them. What is more, the interrelation examined could be regarded as a novelty in the field of political science and public administration. Therefore, the qualitative case study design is more appropriate to measure the co-variation between variables, which later on could be tested by more extensive qualitative or quantitative studies. Hence, this master thesis will utilize the qualitative research design.

The central research question of the thesis is factor-oriented (Gschwend & Schimmelfennig, 2007), i.e. *To what extent can the arrangement of the national EU policy coordination system explain the representation of national interests during the presidency term?* Therefore, two qualitative research approaches can be applied: co-variational analysis or process-tracing analysis.

Co-variational small-N analysis could be regarded as a first step towards larger scope studies: conclusions of case studies can be tested in large-N analysis, examining the relationship between independent and dependent variables and, thus, providing more reasonable generalisations (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). This type of research design is one of the most dominant approaches, since it provides a clear framework for testing the impact of certain variables, namely "which value of the independent variable causes a specific outcome at the dependent variable" (Blatter & Blume 2008, p. 320). However, the main drawback of the method is the narrow scope of observation, which leads to the limited external validity. Co-variational analysis usually applies one or few theoretical assumptions, raises hypotheses and

tests causal links between independent and dependent variables. However, more complex interrelations between them remain unexplored (Blatter & Blume, 2008).

Process tracing, although also examines causal links, provides a more extensive explanation of interrelation between independent and dependent variables. The method allows tracing the steps (including actions, events and motivations), leading from inputs to outcomes of the research (Blatter & Blume, 2008). As the analysis goes deeper into the correlation between tested variables, restricting or catalysing factors of these causal links can also be named (Blatter & Blume, 2008). Therefore, process tracing could produce a greater added value to the development of theoretical assumptions (George & Bennett, 2005) rather than co-variational analysis.

By examining how the arrangement of the national coordination system influences the representation of national interest during the presidency of the Council of the EU, the research focuses not only on systems as a given phenomenon, but their structure and interrelation mechanisms that either facilitate or impair the representation of national interests. What is more, as the main theoretical approach applied in the research is historical institutionalism, process tracing provides the best methodological framework for such analysis, since it contains a historical element (Skocpol & Pierson, 2002). Therefore, the following chapters will elaborate on the application of process tracing design in this study.

4.1. PROCESS TRACING ANALYSIS

As George and Bennett (2005) state, process tracing does not solely define the causality between independent and dependent variables, but rather reveals the chain of rational and sociological developments – a causal mechanism – that leads to particular outcomes. Process tracing, contrary to co-variational analysis, pays due attention to actors' incentives and behaviour that determine the decision-making process, institutional arrangements and other intervening effects that have an influence on final results (Falleti, 2006).

Nevertheless, process-tracing analysis varies in its explanatory power and forms of causality (George & Bennett, 2005). Regarding the former, this method could provide a detailed narrative, based mostly on historical records, but having limited theoretical explanation; it may also explain certain processes in an analytical way, providing more theoretical evidence; finally, a process tracing can give a general explanation, based on more abstract rather than

detailed process chain, usually due to limited access to relevant sources (George & Bennett, 2005).

This research will be based on the analytical process tracing analysis. Such form of a research method combines the historical narrative with causal analytical explanations focusing on the most important parts of the process (George & Bennett, 2005). Therefore, by tracing national coordination systems (i.e. actors, networks, positions and formal powers), the study will reveal the causality between these institutional arrangements and the representation of national interests.

With regard to forms of causality, the process tracing analysis can be divided across four lines: linear, converged, interacting, or sequenced causality (George & Bennett, 2005). As the formulation of national position in member states usually takes the path-dependent way (due to institutionalized coordination systems), the research will utilize the sequenced form of process tracing analysis, that mainly emphasizes the chain of events in an institutionalized cycle (George & Bennett, 2005). Path-dependent developments usually generate institutional constraints. Therefore, the application of such analytical perspective will reveal why actors engage in a particular set of choices while making a decision (Bennett & Elman, 2006).

The following steps in Figure 2 define the examination process of the linkage between national coordination systems and representation of national interests in a single policy area that is common for all four presidencies:
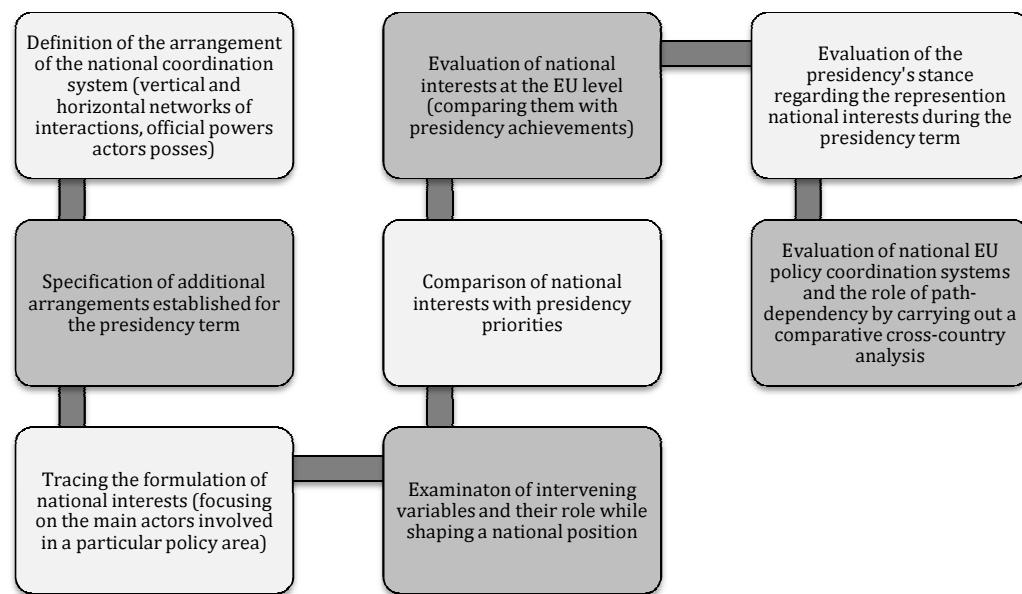
Figure 2: Steps of the process tracing analysis

4.2. MEASUREMENT

Process tracing is a rather complex research method, as the linkage between independent and dependent variables includes many steps that should be placed in a particular order (Bennett & George, 1997). What is more, each variable is not based just on "single observations", but has different dimensions. Hence, it is necessary to measure the magnitude of each of them in order to ensure accurate observations and provide sound conclusions (Bennett & George, 1997).

Table 1 represents the operationalization of each variable that will be evaluated in this research, naming main indicators, evaluation criteria, measurement technique and data sources.

Independent variable: national coordination systems			
Indicators	**Evaluation criteria (description)**	**Way of measurement**	**Data sources**
1) Official network of interactions.	Comprehensive centralized; comprehensive decentralized; selective centralized; selective decentralized.	The basis for evaluation – Kassim's framework (appended by L. Gärtner et al.). Taking into account current institutional arrangements, the author will re-examine the attribution of countries to these four clusters from a personal point of view.	Kassim's typology, including additions by Gärtner and colleagues, official documents from political bodies, legal acts, scientific (journal) articles, websites regarding sustainable governance indicators.
2) Formal powers of each actor involved.	Decision-making; position formulation; advisory; information channelling; coordinating; representative.	Formal powers will be assigned by the author according to the following descriptions: - Decision-making – actor has a decisive and/or veto power; - Position formulation – actor is involved in position formulation process, but its opinion is not necessarily decisive; - Advisory – actor is an advisor in decision-making that is consulted optionally; its opinion can be neglected; - Information channelling – actor serves as an information transferor, have no decision-making powers; - Coordinating – actor is responsible for coordinating EU issues; if necessary, serves as a conciliator; - Representative – actor is responsible for representing the national position at the EU level.	Kassim's framework, appended by Gärtner and colleagues; official documents from political bodies, legal acts, scientific (journal) articles, presidency websites and official presidency reports, news websites.
3) Government composition (during the presidency term).	Majoritarian or coalition government.	The evaluation will be based on official election data, scientific articles by respected scholars that define the government composition in each country.	Scientific articles, official websites of political and administrative bodies, political parties, other news websites presenting voting data.

Intervening variable: additional networks/positions			
Indicators	**Evaluation criteria (description)**	**Way of measurement**	**Data sources**
1) Additional networks of interactions.	The purpose of domestic and national networks between actors that do not belong to the regular EU policy coordination system.	Additional networks will be listed according to official data mentioning the establishment of them and by the author, considering Kassim's framework (naming those networks of interactions that supplement the regular coordination system).	Official documents (e.g. presidency reports), scientific (journal) articles, working papers.
2) Supplementary positions within the national administration.	The purpose/duties of positions that do not belong to the regular coordination system.	Positions will be listed according to official data mentioning the establishment of them and by the author, considering Kassim's framework (naming those positions that supplement the regular coordination system).	Official documents (e.g. presidency reports), scientific (journal) articles, working papers.
Dependent variable: representation of national priorities			
Indicators	**Evaluation criteria (description)**	**Way of measurement**	**Data sources**
Level of national interest representation.	High level, medium level; low level.	Author will assign the presidency's performance to the corresponding level of the national interest representation according to the following typology (made by the author): - High level – all or the most (i.e. 80-100%) national priorities in a selected policy area are named in official EU documents adopted during the presidency. - Medium level – 40-80% of national policy goals are named in official EU documents adopted during the presidency. - Low level – less than 40% of national priorities are mentioned in official EU documents adopted during the presidency.	For national position (domestic priorities): official documents from national administrative bodies (president offices, governments, parliaments, responsible ministries, agencies, permanent representations in Brussels, etc.); official domestic programmes (e.g. Action Plans), articles from news websites, personal politicians' websites, presidency websites, websites of EU institutions. For EU-level decisions: official EU documents, including press releases, COREPER and working groups meetings; recommendations of Council meetings, where relevant, European Council conclusions will be evaluated.

Table 1: Operationalization of variables

The operationalization of three variables depicted in Table 1 provides an outline of indicators that will be examined and techniques that will be used for the empirical analysis. The table does not include the fourth, exogenous, variable (path-dependency), as it will not be examined separately but considered to have an overall influence on the interrelation between independent and dependent variables. Being one of the key elements of historical institutionalism, path-dependency influences decision-making procedures within national EU policy coordination systems, as well as determines the successive Council agenda. Its influence on the interrelation between examined variables will be evaluated through cross-country analysis of four EU member states, having different coordination systems.

Most of the data that will be used for empirical findings contain secondary sources (official documents, scientific articles). Hence, the analysis will be based on a desk research.

Secondary data will ensure the plausibility of research results. National coordination systems operate according to formal, institutionalized rules. Therefore, official documents can best define the picture of the existing interrelations between actors. Representation of national interests can also be examined by official data, comparing national objectives with the documents adopted during the presidency term.

Nevertheless, a few issues regarding the reliability of official sources arise. Firstly, documents usually are briefly written and, thus, lack in-depth representation of the coordination processes or implementation of various policies. What is more, reports frequently contain evaluation bias. Therefore, the research will examine additional sources, such as scholarly articles and news reports, in order to provide more reasonable conclusions.

As representation of national interest at the EU level contains both formal and informal procedures, in order to provide a comprehensive picture, interviews with national officials will be conducted. Due to the time constraint, interviewees will be asked the same open questions by e-mail. This will give more freedom for them to interpret a question and respond respectively.

However, one of the major issues that arise while conducting interviews is the probability of socially desirable answers. It is a rather complicated task to check whether the respondent provided an honest or more pragmatic and thoughtful response. Hence, the research will integrate these responses with other research data. In other words, responses received will be considered as additional rather than main information for the research.

4.3. INTERNAL VALIDITY

National coordination systems, representation of national interest and the presidency of the Council of the EU are complex factors to examine, therefore it is important to address issues regarding the internal validity of the research.

The aforementioned process tracing steps (see Figure 2) and the operationalization of each variable could be regarded as the main tool for the higher internal validity, as the evaluation of the link between independent, intervening and dependent variables in each case will be based upon the distinguished criteria. Hence, the observations will avoid evaluation bias, i.e. unequal treatment and interpretation of data in four countries, and provide more credible generalizations.

As national priorities are formulated at the domestic level (following the steps of the national coordination system), the linkage between the coordination network and interest representation at the EU level can be easily explained by examining the sequence of three variables: national coordination systems, additional arrangements (positions, networks) and the representation of national interests at the EU level.

Nevertheless, some overlaps might arise between independent and intervening variables, i.e. between official (regular) national coordination systems and additional networks, established exclusively for the presidency term. As complementary networks and/ or positions are a part of the coordination network, they might cause complexity while evaluating their influence on the final outcome. Therefore, the further empirical research will pay due attention to the interrelation between regular coordination networks and temporary additional arrangements.

Another difficulty arising in a process tracing analysis is the limited information. If some parts of the process cannot be evaluated due to unavailable data, the research might lead to vague generalizations (George & Bennett, 2005). Furthermore, some official documents might be written in a national language, which might need translations and, hence, cause a language barrier. Therefore, in order to avoid fallacies while evaluating research results, the study will utilize a variety of data sources that will complement each other.

To increase the internal validity, scholars also examine alternative sequences of events that might be complementary or spurious to the process analysed (George & Bennett, 2005). However, as this master thesis is based on a historical institutionalism and, thus, path-dependency, the main assumption of the research is that the arrangement of the national

coordination system determines the way national interest are represented at the EU level. Hence, alternatives paths will not be considered.

4.4. EXTERNAL VALIDITY

The case study design is usually being criticized for its insignificance regarding the external validity of the research, as single or multiple, but still small-N cases cannot provide profound generalizations. Nevertheless, as Yin (2014) argues, the purpose of the case study is to expand theories and to provide more elaborated explanations of theoretical propositions rather than of universal phenomenon.

The examination of four presidencies by small EU member states will provide primary generalizations for the co-variation between national coordination systems and the implementation of national priorities. The research will utilize Kassim's framework, which is considered to be one of the most applicable approaches when analysing coordination networks. Moreover, the study will cover all four clusters distinguished by the scholar, providing more extensive generalizations regarding the influence of coordination systems on the representation of national priorities.

For consistency reasons all four presidencies will be examined by tracing the same steps and using the same data sources. This will serve not only as a means for a higher reliability and internal validity, but also as a pattern for similar future studies, since this research could be considered as a first attempt to measure the interrelation between coordination systems and representation of national interests.

Nevertheless, the external validity has its limitations. As the study will examine only small EU member states, different dynamics might be observed during the presidencies of large EU countries. What is more, despite being assigned to one of four Kassim's clusters, coordination systems vary across countries, which could lead to diverging outcomes even belonging to the same group of coordination systems. Therefore, more presidencies after the Lisbon changes should be examined in order to come up with more rigid generalizations.

Another common disadvantage in qualitative case studies is the individual fallacy (Lichbach & Zuckerman, 2009). As this research will examine a single policy area in four member states, generalizations made might not reflect the broader context. Countries have various national interests and political ambitions in different policy fields. Hence, this point will be

taken into account while evaluating the findings of the research, whereas the study itself will exhibit a scientific framework for similar future analysis rather than provide comprehensive conclusions in a selected policy area.

4.5. RELIABILITY

Previously specified steps of the process tracing analysis and the operationalization of each variable (depicted in Table 1) will ensure the reliability of the research. As the thesis aims to evaluate the link between domestic EU policy coordination systems and national interest representation at the EU level, all four countries will be examined by following the same process-tracing steps. For the consistency reasons, cross-country research will also invoke the same data sources, although the usage of them might vary across cases depending on the volume and the content of information provided. Nevertheless, while the data for representation of national priorities at the EU level will be provided for each case study, the final conclusions will address the content and variety of documents and sources analysed.

5. CASE SELECTION

As it was stated previously, the examination of the influence of national coordination systems on national interest representation will be built on the comparison across four small EU member states that held the rotating presidency after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force.

As the research is aiming to examine four different national coordination models distinguished by Kassim (2003), one country from each segment will be selected, using the scholar's scheme, complemented by Gärtner, Hörner and Obholzer (2011), and clustering EU countries as follows:
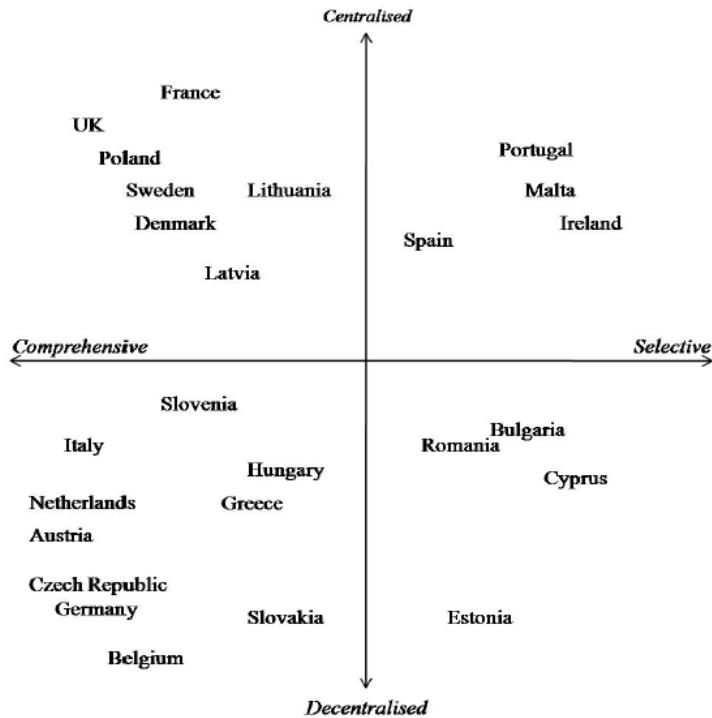
Figure 3: Clustering of countries to national coordination systems. Source: Gärtner et al., 2011.

It is important to address the validity of the scheme above. The allocation made by Gärtner et al., (2011) is the latest work assigning countries to four clusters. However, besides missing the newest EU member state – Croatia – the outline may be outdated, as countries might have established new arrangements that could have an influence on the whole system and its allocation to one of four clusters. This is particularly important for the presidencies that held the office after the 2011 (when the article was published). Although this issue is not at the core of the research, it will be addressed in findings of the cross-country study, as besides the given outline of the coordination system, the author will look at additional data and re-evaluate the allocation of countries examined.

Regarding the case selection, a short overview of all presidencies after the Treaty of Lisbon and their classification according to Kassim's typology is needed. Although the Treaty entered into force in 2009, the first trios were already formed in 2007, following the Council's decision (Council of the EU, 2007). Hence, it could be stated that up until now 17 countries chaired the Council meetings (Council of the EU, 2007). Looking at coordination systems these countries have gradually established while being members of the EU, most of them

(seven) have comprehensive decentralized coordination networks (Germany, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Belgium, Hungary, Greece and Italy). The second most prominent coordination system is comprehensive centralized, being present in 6 out of 17 countries (France, Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia). Selective centralized systems are less common, as only three countries established it (Portugal, Spain and Ireland), whereas Cyprus is the only EU member out of 17 mentioned having a selective decentralized coordination system.

Since this research aims to analyse all four clusters distinguished by Kassim and address the successive element of the Council presidency, the comprehensive centralized cluster will be represented by Lithuania, selective centralized – by Ireland, comprehensive decentralized – Greece, and selective decentralized – Cyprus.

The rotation of these presidencies proceeded as follows: Cyprus (July-December 2012), Ireland (January-June 2013), Lithuania (July-December 2013), and Greece (January-June 2014) (Council of the EU, 2007). Ireland, Lithuania and Greece were in the same trio and had the same presidency programme (Council of the EU, 2012), whereas Cyprus was a part of a former (Polish-Danish-Cypriot) trio (Council of the EU, 2011). Nevertheless, countries' presidency programmes were based on long-term objectives and, therefore, had crossovers in a number of policy areas. As a comparison between different presidencies (see Annex 3, Chapter 1) shows, path-dependency is an evident trait of the presidency, since there are successive policies and issues a country is obliged to address. Nevertheless, the presidency has certain room for manoeuvre, which enables it to put more emphasis on nationally relevant objectives during the half-year term.

5.1. SELECTION OF A SINGLE POLICY AREA

As institutional changes have incrementally diminished the power of the presidency, its agenda is now constrained to the field of low-politics (see Annex 1). Therefore, in order to trace the influence of national coordination systems and path-dependency, the thesis will examine a single EU policy area that is in the discretion of the Council.

The cross-presidency comparison (see Annex 3, Chapter 2) exhibits a number of policies that could be regarded as a common ground for all four countries. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this research youth unemployment as a coinciding issue is selected. A few reasons behind this choice can be listed. First of all, the recent economic and Eurozone crises had severely affected the EU economy and, hence, separate member states. As the Figure 4 depicts, despite

a few diverging fluctuations, all four selected countries had relatively high percentage of young people unable to enter the labour market in the past several years. Greece could be regarded as an exception, since from 2012 youth unemployment rates transcended the 40% level.
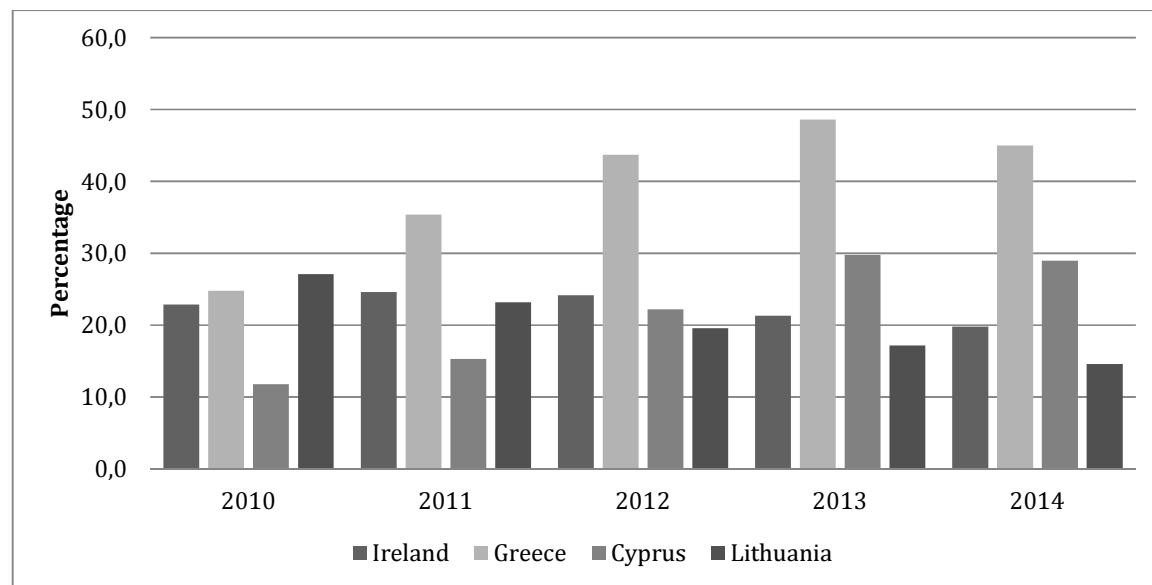
Figure 4: Youth (from 15 to 29 years) unemployment rate (%) by sex, age and country of birth in four EU member states 2010-2014. Source: Eurostat, 2015.

Furthermore, EU member states agreed that youth employment would ensure a higher social cohesion and provide new incentives for economic development (Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, 2012; Programme of the Irish Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Hellenic Presidency, 2014). Considering the fact that four selected countries represent different regions of the EU (Southern, Eastern and Western), their national responses (interests) to youth unemployment might be different, leading to diverging outcomes both at domestic and EU level. In this case it could be stated that despite facing the same issue on the European level, countries follow their domestic policy lines and are reluctant to implement common measures. Moreover, one could argue that it is not only national coordination systems that might cause a difference in position formulation, but also geographic and cultural differences between EU members. Therefore, four case studies, followed by the cross-country comparison will help to reveal overlaps and divergences between member states while evaluating the impact of path-dependency on youth unemployment, as one of the key issues for all EU member states.

6. CASE STUDIES

Since the whole research is based on historical institutionalism, underlining sequential policy developments, the empirical analysis will be conducted accordingly. The examination of four countries will follow the rotation of the Council presidency and be presented in a successive order: Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania and Greece.

To ensure a consistency of the research, each case study will follow the same steps, named in the previous chapter (see Figure 2). However, due to the rotating order, time frames applied to four countries will differ. Each case will be analysed 2 years before the start of the presidency (when most of the preparatory work is being done) until the end of the half-year term. These times frames are summarized in Table 2:

Country	Time frame of each case study
Cyprus	2010 July – 2012 December
Ireland	2011 January – 2013 June
Lithuania	2011 July – 2013 December
Greece	2012 January – 2014 June

Table 2: Time frames of the empirical analysis

The representation of national position with regard to youth unemployment will be examined while looking at the decisions/documents adopted in the Council of EU, i.e. the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO), related conferences, as well as responsible COREPER and working parties meetings during the half-year term of each country. Although the presiding member state has no duties in the European Council, relevant meetings will also be taken into consideration. Prime ministers, being key figures in most of domestic EU policy coordination systems, are able to represent a national position during these high-level meetings. In addition, the European Council draws political guidelines for the Union, which has certain implications on the Council agenda.

In addition, while evaluating the pursuit of national priorities, achievements of each presidency will also be taken into account. Hence, the analysis will include meetings/documents named in reports of presidency programmes under the section *Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)*, more specifically, under concrete subsections:

- *Employment and Social Policy* (Cyprus (Results of the Cyprus Presidency, 2013));

- *Greater Employment Opportunities – Focus on Youth* [in Lith. Didesnės užimtumo galimybės – dėmesys jaunimui] (Lithuania ("Programos įgyvendinimas", n.d.));
- *Youth Employment* (Greece (Results of the Hellenic Presidency, 2014)).

In case of Ireland the presidency achievements in the area of youth employment will be extracted from the chapter *Empowering Europe's Youth: tackling youth unemployment, promoting training & education* (Results of the Irish Presidency, 2013).

As a valuable source of information National Reform Programmes (NRP), addressing Europe 2020 goals at the domestic level (European Commission, 2015), could be considered. Nevertheless, it could be assumed that NRP include the same political priorities as named by key political actors. Therefore, these documents will not be examined separately.

Finally, in order to receive more detailed information, e-mails with queries for interviews were sent to four Cypriot, 7 Irish, 2 Lithuanian and 5 Greek representatives (according to the contacts provided online). As two responses – from Lithuanian and from Irish representatives – were received (see Annex 6), they will also be included in the empirical analysis. Although the Cypriot representative forwarded a query to a responsible officer, no response from Cyprus, as well as from Greece was received.

6.1. CYPRUS

Cyprus, although being a member of a former presidency trio than three remaining countries, put youth unemployment issue high on the domestic, as well as presidency agenda. Taking this into account, the following sub-chapters will provide an extensive analysis, whether the national priorities, and, in particular, certain policy measures, corresponded with presidency goals and if they were represented during the presidency term.

6.1.1. THE NATIONAL EU POLICY COORDINATION SYSTEM

The greatest EU enlargement in 2004 not only expanded EU borders further to the East, but also brought more diversity in the EU policy coordination area.

Cyprus, being one of the members that accessed the EU in 2004, was one of the first countries that established a selective decentralized national coordination system (Gärtner et al., 2011). Its core executive consists of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Planning

Bureau (later renamed as the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development (Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development, [DG EPCD], 2014-2015)), the Law Office, EU units in line ministries and the permanent representation in Brussels (Gärtner et al., 2011).

The current coordination structure in Cyprus was established in the pre-accession period. Nevertheless, the abolishment of a pillar system in the EU had an impact on the national coordination structure. The role of the Planning Bureau was slightly marginalized: from handling the main administrative work to managing EU structural funds and some horizontal policies (DG EPCD, 2014-2015)). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the other hand, became the central coordinating body of EU affairs. However, it does not have a decisive power but rather supervises technical coordination of EU issues (Gärtner et al., 2011). Political power is concentrated in the President's office and mainly executed throughout the President's Diplomatic Office, consisting of the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Finance, the Attorney General, the Head of the Planning Bureau, the Permanent Representative, responsible ministers and policy advisors (Passas & Katakalou, 2012). The president is the representative of Cyprus in European Council meetings, hence, the Office informs the president about ongoing political issues within the EU (Passas & Katakalou, 2012).

Since the coordinating role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is rather weak, the Cypriot national coordination system is regarded to be decentralized, with a selective coordination ambition, mostly based on the EU neighbourhood policy, financial, taxation, industry and maritime policies (Gärtner et al., 2011). Inter-ministerial coordination structure consisting of responsible committees is set up ad hoc, i.e. when specific issues are at stake. While officials from related ministries are the main participants of these meetings, exceptions are made when consultation from the outside is needed (SGI, 2014).

With regard to the EU level, the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the EU is one of the key actors within the Cypriot national EU policy coordination system. However, instructions from the capital usually reach representatives at a late stage and are weakly developed, since line ministries prioritize domestic issues over the EU ones (Panke, 2010b). What is more, as the whole coordination network is poorly established and the vertical (hierarchic) coordination is weak, veto players usually have a limited control over ministries, which does not oblige them to pay due attention to EU issues (Panke, 2010b).

Finally, while formulating the national position, ministers consult the Committee of European Affairs in the House of Representatives. However, its position is not binding. With regard to other stakeholders, there is no formal forum to hold the debate, but ministers tend to contact them on a regular basis (Gärtner et al., 2011).

The allocation of powers in the policy shaping process among actors in the executive branch in Cyprus is depicted in Table 3:

Actor in a coordination network	Formal powers (according to Table 1)
President's Office	Position formulation/representative
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Coordinating/representative (in GAC)
Planning Bureau	Position formulation/decision-making (regarding EU structural funds)
Inter-ministerial Committees	Position formulation/advisory
Line ministries	Position formulation/decision-making
Permanent Representation	Information channelling/representative (with limited decision-making powers in case no instructions from Nicosia are sent)

Table 3: Main actors within the Cypriot national coordination system

6.1.2. ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE NATIONAL COORDINATION SYSTEM

The preparation for the presidency term in Cyprus started already in 2008, when the newly elected president Christofias decided to establish a Secretariat of the Cyprus Presidency of the EU (Adamczyk, 2012). The main task of the office was to coordinate the work of all ministries, inter-departmental working groups and independent agencies, involved in the preparation and management of the presidency (Passas & Katakalou, 2012). The office was accountable for the President and the House of Representatives: the leader of the Secretariat was obliged to regularly inform these institutions about current affairs (Passas & Katakalou, 2012).

Another step in the preparation process was the formation of special EU units within all line ministries (Adamczyk, 2012). They were supposed to coordinate EU issues within the system and also with the permanent representation, while being supervised by the Secretariat of the Cyprus Presidency. However, as the head of the Secretariat was an administrative, but not a political coordinator, in 2011 the position of Deputy Minister to the President was established. The Minister was responsible for ensuring the political coordination of the Presidency (Passas & Katakalou, 2012). He was an official representative of the Republic of Cyprus in EU institutions and, thus, was allowed to attend cabinet meetings in Nicosia, however, without an

official right to vote (Passas & Katakalou, 2012). The Deputy Minister was directly accountable to the President, but also had to inform the House of Representatives about the presidency issues (Passas & Katakalou, 2012).

In order to ensure a better coordination at the political level, the Government of Cyprus also established a Ministerial Committee, composed of ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance and the Deputy Minister (Passas & Katakalou, 2012).

Finally, the permanent representation was also highly involved in the presidency processes. Due to the geographical distance, Cyprus set up a Brussels-based presidency, giving more room for manoeuvre for experienced Cypriot representatives (Adamczyk, 2012). Therefore, staff at the representation was increased four times (Passas & Katakalou, 2012).

All in all, Cyprus showed reasonable preparations for the term. The establishment of political and administrative coordinating bodies at the EU level and the power transfer to the permanent representation ensured that experienced officials would be in charge of managing EU issues.

6.1.3. ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL PRIORITIES WITH REGARD TO YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

In order to trace the formulation of Cyprus national position with regard to youth unemployment, three actors having a position formulation and/or decisive power within the national EU policy coordination system need to be examined, i.e.: the president (President's Office), inter-ministerial committees and a responsible ministry, which in this case is the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.

However, due to the fact that inter-ministerial committees tend to gather ad hoc and have no official website or other source of information, where discussed issues and adopted decisions or recommendations are published, positions of two main domestic representatives – the president and the minister of Labour and Social Insurance – will be analysed.

Although additional arrangements, established specifically for the presidency term, should also be evaluated, neither the Secretariat of the Cyprus Presidency, nor the Ministerial Committee and especially working groups had published their position papers or any other related information concerning youth unemployment. The Deputy Minister, as a political coordinator, only briefly addressed youth unemployment as an important issue (Committee of the Regions, 2012). However, he did not name any concrete policy measures. This leads to

the assumption that Cyprus represented its national position by following conventional coordination structure, whereas additional positions did not have a significant influence. Nevertheless, the presumed impact of temporary arrangements that cannot be examined will be taken into consideration while evaluating the representation of Cypriot interests at the EU level.

6.1.3.1. The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance

A year before the presidency Cyprus underwent a political change during the general election. However, since the coalition collapsed, a minority government, led by the AKEL party, remained in power (see Annex 4). Sotiroula Charalambous, a member of the AKEL (Cyprus Presidency, 2012), assumed and retained the office of the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance since 2008 (Cyprus Presidency, 2012). Hence, it could be stated that she shared the same ideological views with President Christofias, being a member of the same party (see Annex 4).

Despite an early occupation of the position as a minister, Charalambous made no clear statements about the national priorities regarding the youth unemployment in 2010. The first official position presented by her can be traced in 2011, when as official Cypriot priorities Charalambous mentioned the following (Ministry of Interior, 2011):

- Vocational training (in order to bring young people to the labour market);
- Advisory services;
- Creation of new jobs, especially in fast growing markets;
- Financial schemes fostering expansion of companies;
- Programmes fostering the employment of young graduates;
- Assurance of a quality of work environment, such as acceptable social protection;
- Assurance of labour mobility;
- Involvement of local authorities and social partners in order to cope with youth unemployment, particularly with regard to inequalities between regions (Ministry of Interior, 2011);
- Usage of ESF funds while supporting the entrepreneurship (Ministry of Interior, 2011b).

In the following year (2012), before the beginning of the presidency term, Charalambous often addressed the youth unemployment issue presenting the main goal of the ministry and,

hence, the government – to introduce a flexible scheme that could be easily adopted by businesses and used by unemployed youth for finding new jobs (Cyprus Chamber, 2012). In addition, to cope with high domestic unemployment levels, the minister also mentioned additional effort to be made:

- Prevention of redundancies;
- Facilitation of conditions for the youth to enter the labour market (Ministry of Interior, 2012);
- Vocational education, mainly directing young people to occupational education, in particular technical professions (Κυπριακή Οικονομία, 2012);
- Trainings for unemployed youth with tertiary education (Ministry of Interior, 2012);
- Apprenticeship scheme, co-funded by ESF;
- Flexible employment forms;
- Schemes enhancing entrepreneurship (Ministry of Interior, 2012);
- Creation of new businesses to provide new vacancies for the youth (ΚΥΠΕ/ΑΠΕ, 2012).

It could be assumed that the ministry had thought over different possibilities to promote youth employment, even though the issue was more emphasized a year before the presidency term.

6.1.3.2. The President of Cyprus

Despite Christofias became a president in 2008 (see Annex 4) he did not express any particular national Cypriot priorities with regard to youth unemployment, apart from defining it as an important issue.

A more precise position from the president for fighting youth unemployment on the national level was developed in 2012, when Christofias claimed that the issue should be managed by fostering economic growth and development, and not by austerity measures (Ministry of Interior, 2012b), that were adopted in most of EU members in order to cope with economic imbalances.

In addition, the president expressed a will of the government to develop a higher education system in Cyprus, i.e. university infrastructure, the quality of research and education in general, which should be done in cooperation with academics (SigmaLive, 2012).

Nevertheless, these president's statements were rather vague, proving the prevailing role of the ministry with regard to youth unemployment and national Cypriot priorities.

6.1.4. NATIONAL VS. PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES

Considering the fact that the research focuses on the formulation of Cypriot national priorities during the preparation period for the presidency term, overlaps between national and presidency goals might be observed. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to analyse whether congruence or divergence between national and presidency goals was followed.

6.1.4.1. Cypriot presidency priorities

The main priorities, noted in the official Cypriot presidency programme included "issues related to training opportunities, working conditions, quality employment, as well as matching of qualifications and expectations of young people with the needs of the economy and of the enterprises" (Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, 2012, p. 5). The latter include such measures as apprenticeships, traineeships that would help to address the needs of the labour market. The issue of youth unemployment was linked with the Youth Opportunities Initiative. As for expected results, Cyprus aimed for the Council conclusions to address youth unemployment issue (Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, 2012).

Aside from the official presidency programme, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance had also specified some presidency goals. For instance, minister Charalambous emphasized the retraining of young people while applying the dual system, popular in Germany (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, 2012). What is more, the minister expressed the necessity to discuss best practices across EU members for the promotion of youth entrepreneurship (ΚΥΠΕ/ΑΠΕ, 2012).

6.1.4.2. Comparison of national interests with presidency priorities

Looking at both national and presidency priorities of Cyprus, congruence could be noticed. Despite the fact that Cyprus's Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance did not mention the Youth Opportunities Initiative, which was named in the presidency programme, national interests and prioritized measures to fight youth unemployment were the same both at the domestic level and for EU-wide policies, i.e. for the presidency term.

Vocational education and trainings, frequently mentioned by the minister and also by the president, are of the utmost importance in the Youth Opportunities Initiative (European Commission 2, n.d.). In addition, the European Social Fund, as a financial source for various schemes and programmes, was distinguished not only at the national level, but named in the Initiative. The same could be said about job placements, traineeships, apprenticeship schemes, promotion of youth entrepreneurship, and inclusion of national, as well as local authorities to the mechanism fostering youth employment (European Commission 2, n.d.). What is more, as one of the methods to cope with the youth unemployment issue the European Commission included the facilitation of finding jobs abroad (European Commission 2, n.d.), which was also named by minister Charalambous as 'labour mobility'.

Nevertheless, there are some national priorities that were not addressed in the presidency programme. These are youth counselling, prevention of youth redundancies and easing of the conditions for youth to enter the labour market. Clearly, all these priorities suppose reforms in the domestic labour market, which other EU countries may already have introduced. Therefore, Cyprus, as a president of the Council of the EU, focused more on EU-wide issues in its presidency programme, though most of them were also framed as national interests.

6.1.5. REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL INTERESTS AT THE EU LEVEL DURING THE PRESIDENCY TERM

The main achievements of the Cypriot presidency regarding youth unemployment are the following:

- Council Conclusions on a job-rich recovery and giving a better chance to Europe's youth, October 5, 2012 (Council of the EU, 2012b);
- Presidency Conference on Youth Employment Issues, Lefkosia (Nicosia), 22-23 October 2012 (Presidency Conference, 2012);
- European Council 13/14 December 2012 Conclusions (European Council, 2012).

It is important to note that the Conference did not have any concluding remarks (apart from the disseminated press release), whereas the Conclusions of the European Council addressed national priorities rather indirectly, naming the urge for member states to take into account the Youth Employment Package (that addresses Cypriot Priorities (European Commission, 2012)) without a delay (European Council, 2012). Hence, the Council Conclusions was the only significant document adopted.

The comparison between domestic objectives, presidency priorities and the above-mentioned achievements (see Annex 5, Table 8) shows that Cyprus realized most of its national goals, with the exception of prevention/restriction of redundancies. All of the addressed national priorities were named in the Council Conclusions, whereas vocational education, apprenticeships, traineeships were discussed in both official documents, as well as during the Conference on Youth Employment.

In addition, despite not being included in the presidency programme, some Cypriot national priorities were addressed during the half-year term. These were youth counselling and the facilitation of conditions for youth to enter the labour market.

Therefore, it could be assumed that the level Cyprus reached while implementing national interests at the EU level is high, since 10 of 11 national priorities were realized in three main presidency achievements, accounting for 91% of national interest representation.

6.2. IRELAND

Ireland, being the first member of the trio presidency to assume the office, was one of the experienced countries in holding the Council presidency. The subsequent chapters will, therefore, provide an overview of the formulation of Irish national priorities before the presidency, followed by the analysis of their representation during the term of office.

6.2.1. THE NATIONAL EU POLICY COORDINATION SYSTEM

According to Kassim (2003), Ireland is assigned to the group of selective centralized coordination systems, as the whole EU policy coordination process is managed through the core executive: the Government, i.e. the Prime Minister (a.k.a. Taoiseach), line ministries (in the Irish system known as governmental departments) and the administration (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007).

Until the last decade of the 20th century the Irish national EU policy coordination system had a low formalization degree (Laffan, 2006). However, flexibility within the system, cohesive civil service and the enhanced power of the prime minister after Nice referendum in 2001 produced more formalized rules (Laffan, 2006). The prime minister became a major figure in mediating EU issues within the coalition government. In order to ensure a smooth management of EU affairs across different departments, the Interdepartmental Coordinating

Committee on European Union Affairs under the Prime Minister's office was set up, chaired by the Minister of State (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007). In other words, the Committee is under the vertical control of the Prime Minister's office.

Nevertheless, while the prime minister is the leading actor regarding political issues, the Department of Foreign Affairs is assigned the responsibility to manage everyday EU policy coordination across different governmental departments (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007). In addition, it is the main information channel for the prime minister, being responsible for the briefings and management of prime minister's international agenda. Nevertheless, the Taoiseach is considered to be a central figure compared to other ministers (Laffan, 2001).

Next to the two above-mentioned leading governmental bodies there is a third core figure – the Department of Finance. Its role grew significantly after the 1980s, when member countries were engaged in common policies, such as the Single Market, cohesion, Economic and Monetary Union, etc. (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007).

Nowadays the Taoiseach's office, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Finance are called the 'holy trinity' and form the core of the Irish EU policy coordination system (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007, p. 174).

On a vertical scale, the Irish national EU policy coordination system is divided into three main steps. While the three aforementioned bodies could be regarded as the highest level, on the middle one there are a few other departments, being frequently involved in EU issues, i.e. departments of Agriculture, Justice, Enterprise, Trade & Employment and Environment. As the EU had encountered different developments, these ministries greatly enhanced their competences and stance in the domestic coordination system (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007).

On the third (lowest) level there are eight Irish governmental departments, having a less significant role. Nevertheless, same as the ones on the second level, they have a certain level of autonomy: they are allowed to manage EU issues according to their own culture and are not obliged to consult other ministries in the inter-departmental body (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007). Departments trace developments of EU policies, however, they designate scarce resources only to important national issues (Laffan, 2001).

Weakly institutionalized communication and coordination of EU policies does not hinder the quality of policy management, as governmental sectors work in a cohesive way. Despite the fact that two departments are responsible for the preparation for the Council meetings, i.e. the

line department and the Department of Foreign Affairs, (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007), interdepartmental disagreements are rare or they are solved before consulting the prime minister (Laffan, 2001). The Irish system does not have a clear set of guidelines how to deal with EU issues. Notwithstanding, a high trust between officials, flexibility, extensive information sharing and informal consultations ensure the cohesion while drawing the national position (Laffan, 2001).

A cohesive national coordination system also ensures comprehensive and result-oriented instructions that are being distinguished and sent to the permanent representation in Brussels (Panke, 2010b).

The Irish permanent representation in Brussels is another important link in the national EU policy coordination chain. Since most of the domestic departments have their representatives in Brussels (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007), the representation is an important information channel for domestic executives, since it explores the EU arena in terms of possible coalitions or trade-offs to make (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007). The representation maintains an intense contact with the domestic departments and frequently consults them, particularly when important issues are at stake. The lobbying of EU institutions or private interests, on the contrary, is rather limited (Kassim, 2003). However, there are no formal meetings at the national level before COREPER sittings – positions are usually decided informally or ad hoc. Therefore, there is no official practice to send written instructions to Brussels (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007). While such coordination mechanism might seem flexible, it also gives a lot of responsibility to representatives in the permanent mission, since many issues remain uncoordinated or not completely addressed (Laffan, 2006).

Finally, the role of the national parliament (Oireachtas) should be briefly explained. Since Nice referendum, when the treaty was rejected, the government attempted to enhance the role of the parliament. Hence, the EU Scrutiny Sub-Committee of the Joint Oireachtas Committee for European Affairs was set up (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007). Although its opinion with regard to EU issues is not obligatory, ministers are advised to consider it while formulating the national position and negotiating in the Council. Notwithstanding, the overall role of the parliament regarding EU affairs is rather limited (Laffan & O'Mahony, 2007).

Therefore, regarding the official roles and powers of all domestic actors involved at the executive level, Table 4 depicts a summarized view:

Actor in a coordination network	Formal powers (according to Table 1)
Prime Minister (Taoiseach)	Decision-making/coordinating/representative
Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on European Union Affairs	Coordinating/position formulation
Department of Foreign Affairs	Coordinating/ information channelling/representative (in GAC)
Department of Finance	Advisory
Line departments	Advisory/position formulation/representative
Permanent Representation	Representative/information channelling

Table 4: Main actors within the Irish national coordination system

6.2.2 ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE NATIONAL COORDINATION SYSTEM

Considering Ireland's selective centralized system of EU policy coordination and former experience while holding the presidency, the country did not establish any specific offices, positions or networks for the half-year term in 2013.

The main governmental body, responsible for all preparation and coordination issues was the Taoiseach's office. The EU and the International Unit within the Department of the Taoiseach were in charge of all presidency-related issues and, thus, worked closely with all other governmental departments, particularly the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Irish EU Presidency, n.d.). Other governmental departments were in charge of particular meetings and events regarding their competence (Irish EU Presidency, n.d.).

As Ireland is a small EU member state, it also set up a Brussels-based presidency. While a significant number of temporary contracts were signed, the permanent representation had increased the staff, comprised of officials from domestic departments (Laffan, 2014). However, the capital also played an important role. The Taoiseach maintained close contacts with the permanent representation in Brussels while deciding on the final programme and priorities for the half-year office (Irish EU Presidency, n.d.).

6.2.3. ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL PRIORITIES WITH REGARD TO YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

As the Irish national EU policy coordination system is a centralized one, the Taoiseach is the key figure in policy formulation, having a major decisive power. Under its supervision the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on European Union Affairs could also be named, as a domestic body, responsible for the position formulation.

Since youth unemployment was one of highly prioritized issues in Ireland, two governmental departments were in charge of managing it: the Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department for Social Protection (EPSCO, n.d.).

However, since no official documents regarding youth unemployment from the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on EU Affairs were published, the further empirical analysis will focus on the Taoiseach's Office and responsible ministries (departments).

What is more, Ireland, being experienced in holding the presidency of the Council of the EU, did not establish any additional arrangements that might have an effect on representation of national priorities during the half-year office term. Hence, there is no intervening variable to be examined.

6.2.3.1. The Department of Social Protection

Due to the economic crisis and political unrest, Ireland, same as Cyprus, underwent the general election in 2011 (for more extensive explanation see Annex 4). Within the new coalition government, Joan Burton, a leader of the Labour Party, became the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and the Minister for Social Protection (Department of Social Protection, 2014).

While Burton's predecessor Éamon Ó Cuív had not named any Irish national priorities concerning youth unemployment in the last three months of his cadence, Burton showed a fair engagement with regard to the utmost importance national issue and presented new domestic priorities, that were distinguished in consultation with the National Youth Council:

- Providing young people with training, skills obtaining;
- Subsidizing employers in order to create new work places;
- Developing different education schemes and programmes, e.g. apprenticeships, internships, as well as work placements, etc. (Joan Burton, 2011).

Minister Burton also expressed the necessity to provide temporary employment programmes, giving more incentives for youth to work while guaranteeing income that exceeds unemployment benefits (Department of Social Protection, 2011).

In addition, as one of the interests of the government minister named the promotion of youth entrepreneurship with all the needed assistance (Department of Social Protection, 2011).

Regarding trainings and other skills development initiatives, Burton addressed the importance to meet the needs of the labour market and follow the German example of apprenticeship schemes and other employment programmes, as being one of the most effective across Europe (Department of Social Protection, 2011).

In the following year (2012) minister Burton presented the Action Plan for Jobs, including several programmes that fulfil the national Irish priorities, such as the creation of new jobs and provision of subsidies/allowances for businesses to hire young people (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2012). In addition to that, minister expressed the full government's support for the Youth Opportunities Initiative (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2012).

Although the beginning of 2013 was already market by the Irish presidency of the Council of the EU, Burton had also named additional policy priorities with regard to youth unemployment. They included the guidance for young people in a job search, expansion of education and training programmes, promotion of work experience by new work placements, leading to the increase in competitiveness and productivity of the EU (Irish Presidency, 2013).

6.2.3.2. The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

After the general election in 2011 the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation was entrusted to Richard Bruton, a member of the Fine Gael party (Richard Bruton, n.d.). Since his responsibilities were not directly involving youth unemployment, Bruton made only a few statements regarding this issue.

As the main national interest and priority of Ireland minister Bruton named the implementation of various programmes and schemes stated in the Youth Opportunities Initiative, as well as education, training programmes and creation of new jobs (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2012b). With regard to the latter, Bruton expressed his support for the Action Plan for Jobs 2013 (Irish Government News Service, 2013), which also emphasized the need to promote youth employment. The plan included such national goals as skills development, training schemes and other learning opportunities; as a part of national goals the promotion of youth entrepreneurship and volunteering were also addressed (Action Plan for Jobs, 2013).

6.2.3.3. The Taoiseach's Office

Brian Cowen, a former Ireland's Taoiseach (until March 2011), did not make any public statements regarding youth unemployment. Nevertheless, his successor Enda Kenny, a leader of Fine Gael (Department of the Taoiseach, 2013), showed a great concern.

As one of the first official statements of the new government regarding Irish national priorities to cope with youth unemployment was the Programme for the Government 2011-2016. According to the new coalition, the following objectives were raised:

- Development of various educative measures, e.g. apprenticeship, internship schemes, work placement programmes and other training and learning opportunities for young graduates and school leavers;
- Emphasis on literacy and basic workplace skills as a required asset for the labour market;
- Integration of employment and benefit support in order to ensure a single improved way to help people enter the labour market (Programme for Government, 2011).

Apart from the programme, already during the presidency term Taoiseach Kenny emphasized the need to implement the Youth Guarantee as one of the best schemes to promote youth employment in Ireland, as well as across Europe (Department of the Taoiseach, 2013b). In addition, he supported goals defined by minister Burton, such as schemes providing jobs, trainings, apprenticeships or traineeships after leaving education institutions (Department of the Taoiseach, 2013c).

Hence, it could be assumed that there was a high consensus between the Taoiseach and responsible ministers while defining Irish national interests and goals to fight youth unemployment.

6.2.4. NATIONAL VS. PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES

Previous chapters clearly showed that Irish executives were in favour of EU-level measures, presented by the European Commission. However, they were still formed as domestic interests. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to present Irish presidency priorities and compare them with the ones defined as national interests.

6.2.4.1. Irish presidency priorities

The official Irish presidency programme stated that during a half-year term the country would pay due attention to one priority – the Youth Guarantee (Programme of the Irish Presidency, 2013). More specifically, Ireland aimed to ensure that young people would be able to develop their skills either by receiving a traineeship or apprenticeship, engaging in further education and skills development programmes or receiving a job offer. With regard to this priority, the country was aiming to adopt a Council Recommendation (Programme of the Irish Presidency, 2013).

Minister of Social Protection Burton had also expressed her suggestion to absorb the European Social Fund in order to guarantee more schemes for European youth (Party of the European Socialists, 2012).

6.2.4.2. Comparison of national and presidency priorities

Although Ireland had only one clear priority for the presidency term – making a progress regarding the Youth Guarantee, it encompassed most of the Irish national interests to cope with high youth unemployment levels. As Irish official at the permanent representation in Brussels claimed (Interview 2), Ireland aimed to share a common concern with other countries regarding youth unemployment, which was related to the Youth Guarantee, as a EU-level project.

The Youth Guarantee includes not only employment opportunities, apprenticeship and traineeship schemes or other educative measures, but also cooperation between institutions, businesses, NGOs and other related bodies, reforms in education systems, sharing the best practices (European Commission, n.d.), etc. (Council of the EU, 2013a).

During the preparation for the presidency term minister of Social Protection Joan Burton openly expressed her will to use the presidency for the development of all these schemes that are targeted at youngsters under 25 (Party of the European Socialists, 2012). This objective was also included in the Youth Guarantee (European Commission, n.d.).

Nevertheless, two domestically distinguished Irish interests were not reflected in the presidency programme: temporary employment programmes (ensuring higher income than unemployment benefits) and volunteering.

Hence, in order to measure the level of Irish national interest representation at the EU level (more specifically – during the presidency term, which the minister of Social Protection called as an opportunity for Ireland), the following chapter will evaluate Ireland's achievements.

6.2.5. REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL INTERESTS AT THE EU LEVEL DURING THE PRESIDENCY TERM

Ireland, contrary to its predecessor Cyprus, managed to reach a consensus on a twice-higher number of official documents, namely:

- European Council 7/8 February 2013 Conclusions (Multiannual Financial Framework) (European Council, 2013);
- Proposal by Permanent Representatives Committee for a Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee, February 22, 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013);
- Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee, March 5, 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013a);
- Joint conclusions of the EU Youth Conference (Dublin, 11-13 March 2013) (Council of the EU, 2013b);
- Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy – Adoption of Council conclusions (May 3, 2013) (Council of the EU, 2013c);
- European Council 27/28 June 2013 Conclusions (European Council, 2013b).

Hence, all these achievements are regarded as the main parameters to evaluate the Irish influence while representing its national policy goals.

As the comparison between national objectives, presidency priorities and six official documents reveals (see Annex 5, Table 9), Ireland, being an experienced EU country in holding Council presidencies, managed to address all domestically important issues at the EU level despite the fact that not all of them were included in the presidency programme. This leads to the conclusion that whilst the presidency programme addressed EU-level goals, Irish representatives managed to incorporate other domestic objectives expressed by national politicians into official documents adopted at the EU level.

The first priority, concerning the provision and enhancement of various education measures, including internships, traineeships, as well as trainings, apprenticeships and work placements,

was named in four of the abovementioned presidency achievements. The same trend could be observed regarding the promotion of youth entrepreneurship, the emphasis on partnerships between institutions, businesses and trade unions at different levels, and the utilization of the European Social Fund, which were also noted in four out of six official documents. Labour mobility across Europe (as a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative that was supported by Irish representatives) was addressed in three documents.

Therefore, the level of national interest representation at the EU level for Ireland is high, since all the domestically distinguished priorities/goals were named in documents adopted during the presidency term. Such success can be partly explained by the close collaboration with the European Commission. As Irish representative stated (Interview 2), presidency was trying to foster proposals made by the Commission.

Although two national priorities were not included in the presidency programme, they were successfully implemented during the presidency term. Thus, Ireland could be regarded as the most efficient presidency in terms of implementing its domestic interests.

6.3. LITHUANIA

Lithuania, being a relatively new EU member state, assumed the presidency office for the first time. According to theoretical assumptions, small and new member states are reluctant to put forward their national goals. Hence, the subsequent sections will address the formulation of domestic priorities and their representation at the EU level during the presidency. They will confirm/discard theoretical assumptions about a country's willingness to represent significant domestic issues at the EU level.

6.3.1. THE NATIONAL EU POLICY COORDINATION SYSTEM

According to Gärtner, Hörner and Obholzer (2011), Lithuania could be assigned to the group of countries having the prevailing national coordination system – comprehensive centralizers. While centralization could be explained by the Lithuania's administrative structure, comprehensive approach represents state's ambition to address all issues the Union deals with.

The centralized EU policy coordination system with the prime minister being a core figure in Lithuania was embedded during the pre-accession to the EU (Dimitrova & Maniokas, 2004).

A new coordination system complemented the existing domestic networks, where the executive branch is responsible for the policy coordination and only consults legislative and judicial bodies when important issues are at stake (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė [LRV], 2003). The Government Office of Lithuania is the main body receiving documents from the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU and transferring them to the responsible domestic institution or agency, as well as to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (LRV, 2004).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also an important actor in the whole coordination process, particularly between EU departments in different ministries (Gärtner et al., 2011). The ministry should be informed about all EU issues and is responsible for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as well as related issues (LRV, 2004). In addition, it coordinates the representation of the national position with the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the European Union (Gärtner et al., 2011). In other words, the ministry is responsible for horizontal coordination of EU affairs at the domestic level.

The formulation and coordination of the national position is managed through an IT system LINESIS, facilitating the transfer of information to responsible and interested institutions and other governmental bodies (Gärtner et al., 2011). As Lithuania aims to address the full range of issues the Union deals with, the computer system facilitates the formulation of the national position.

Inter-institutional coordination of EU issues in Lithuania is organized at two levels: the working group (lower) and the vice-minister (upper) level. Working groups are usually comprised of specialists from line ministries, representatives from related institutions and agencies, interest groups and social, economic partners (Gärtner et al., 2011). Their negotiation results are forwarded to the upper level meetings, attended by ministry secretaries or even ministers (LRV, 2004). In 2009 Lithuania established the Governmental Commission on EU Affairs under the Prime Minister's office. Chaired by the minister of Foreign Affairs, the Commission consists of vice ministers and is responsible for key EU issues and the formulation of Lithuania's national position (LRV, 2009). The Commission was established during the country's preparation for the presidency term. However, its main purpose was to ensure a better EU policy coordination at the domestic level. Hence, the Commission serves as the permanent central inter-ministerial national position coordinating body ("Planavimas ir organizavimas", 2013).

Before the position is forwarded to the permanent representation in Brussels or the minister represents the country in Council meetings, the national position has to be presented to the Lithuanian parliament (Seimas). However, although the parliament (more precisely – the European Affairs or Foreign Affairs Committee) can issue its opinion or provide policy recommendations (discussed during the plenary session (Committee on European Affairs, n.d.), the government can ignore them (Gärtner et al., 2011). Officials within the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania sign formal position papers, which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs forwards to the permanent representation in Brussels (LRV, 2004).

The permanent representation, as in the case of all EU member states, is the main channel of information about policy developments at the EU level. Although the representatives are in charge of presenting Lithuania's opinion in COREPER meetings, their relative powers are rather limited, since they get instructions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (LRV, 2004), which need to be followed.

It could be assumed that the leading role in the whole national EU policy coordination system is concentrated in the government. Depending on the situation, the prime minister or responsible ministers are formally allowed to change Lithuania's position during negotiations (LRV, 2004). With regard to outcomes of these meetings representatives of the executive part are accountable only to the government (LRV, 2004). Therefore, the Lithuanian national EU policy coordination system has a high vertical power fragmentation and a strict hierarchical system enables central actors to exert their influence over domestically adopted decisions (Panke, 2010b).

Notwithstanding, it is important to note that the representation of Lithuania in European Council meetings is given to the president. Such division of powers is based on a bilateral agreement between the prime minister and the President (BNS, 2015). Hence, the president is also involved in the domestic EU policy coordination system, just on a political level.

The allocation of powers in the policy shaping process among the actors within the executive branch in Lithuania is depicted in Table 5:

Actor in a coordination network	Formal powers (according to Table 1)
President	Position formulation/representative
Prime Minister	Decision-making/position formulation
Government Office	Information channelling
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Coordinating/information channelling/representative and position formulation (in GAC)
Permanent Representation	Information channelling/representative
Governmental Commission on EU Affairs	Position formulation
Working groups	Advisory/position formulation
Line ministries	Position formulation

Table 5: Main actors within the Lithuanian national coordination system

6.3.2. ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE NATIONAL COORDINATION SYSTEM

Assuming the Council presidency for the first time, same as Cyprus, Lithuania dedicated a reasonable amount of resources and time for the preparation. Soon after the accession to the EU, first preparations had started, giving the main coordinating role to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whereas line ministries were responsible for position formulation ("Planavimas ir organizavimas", 2013). However, the establishment of the Governmental Commission on EU Affairs had slightly changed the role of the Ministry, since the Commission, comprised of vice ministers, became a central body of EU policy coordination issues, including the preparation for the presidency. Nevertheless, the final decision regarding EU policies was always left for the government, being at the top of the vertical coordination system ("Planavimas ir organizavimas", 2013).

To ensure a better inter-institutional communication during the preparations and also a half-year office, the coordinators' network was established. Its main purpose was to distribute information to responsible governmental institutions and agencies, and to deal with various issues regarding the presidency. The network consisted of representatives from the President's, Prime Minister's offices, the parliament, ministries and the permanent representation. Negotiated positions were forwarded to the Governmental Commission on EU Affairs ("Planavimas ir organizavimas", 2013).

In addition, a separate department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was set up – the Department of the EU Council Presidency. Being a temporary one, it was mostly in charge of administrative issues (planning, logistics), communication and trainings (Vilpišauskas et al., 2013).

Next to these new arrangements, the permanent representation in Brussels received more powers, since Lithuania decided to implement a Brussels-based presidency model ("Planavimas ir organizavimas", 2013). Officials in Brussels had more room for manoeuvre than other representatives (Vilpišauskas et al., 2013), which also ensured a faster and more efficient coordination and representation of EU issues.

6.3.3. ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL PRIORITIES WITH REGARD TO YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Despite the fact that Lithuania is a small EU member state, national position formulation with regard to EU issues involve a few actors: the president, the prime minister, the Governmental Commission on EU Affairs, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and related working groups. In respect to youth unemployment, the change of the government and, hence, political powers (see Annex 4) will be addressed. However, since the Governmental Commission did not publish any position papers or reports, its influence will not be evaluated.

Since Lithuania established additional arrangements to facilitate the presidency duties, they need to be addressed. The coordinators' network was the only arrangement that might have had influence on national position formulation and representation at the EU level. However, since there are no official sources or data available about issues discussed and positions adopted within it, the intervening variable will not be examined. Notwithstanding, its presumable impact will be considered while drawing final conclusions.

6.3.3.1. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Despite annually growing unemployment levels, the 15th Government of Lithuania (and, hence the Ministry of Social Security and Labour) was rather apathetic to this issue until 2012, when the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė expressed a major concern for the government due to its inactivity to combat youth unemployment (Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentė [LRP], 2012). Such criticism led to instant reactions of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, starting from consultations with responsible agencies: the Department of Youth Affairs, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange, the State Labour Inspectorate and the State Social Insurance Fund Board (Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerija [SADM], 2012). The main issues discussed were the effective utilization of EU structural funds (SADM, 2012), which were seen as key financial assets for various youth employment measures (SADM, 2012b).

In addition, the promotion of educative and economic means, such as internships, apprenticeships and vocational trainings that are relevant for the state (SADM, 2012c), were named. What is more, the ministry underlined a tax allowance for employers hiring young people, as well as labour mobility, entrepreneurship and allowance for youth to access private housing (SADM, 2012).

Furthermore, the minister of Social Security and Labour Donatas Jankauskas emphasized the need to ensure a close collaboration between institutions, NGOs and businesses in order to provide various measures to cope with youth unemployment. The latter included the re-regulation of employment laws and the promotion of active labour market measures in particular (SADM, 2012d).

Minister Jankauskas also paid due attention to the entrepreneurship schemes, such as allowances for youth to take a loan for new businesses (SADM, 2012e).

Nevertheless, as the end of 2012 in Lithuania was marked by a change in political power, the new minister of Social Security and Labour Algimanta Pabedinskienė criticized existing means, being insufficient for coping with youth unemployment. As additional ones she named voluntary work and special teams, involving youth into the labour market (ELTA, 2013). The latter refers to the government's priority to establish youth employment centres in regional areas, where qualified social employees would consult young people and help them to orientate in the labour market (SADM, 2013).

However, despite minister Pabedinskienė was a member of the Labour Party, being in a coalition with Social Democrats, i.e. the opposition party to the previously ruled Christian Democrats party (see Annex 4), the rest of Lithuanian national interests regarding youth unemployment were the same. Pabedinskienė strongly emphasized the need to ensure a better inclusion of early school leavers by promoting vocational trainings. The latter should be in accordance with current tendencies of skills development and match the needs of the labour market (SADM, 2013b, 2013c).

Finally, minister Pabedinskienė also named a tax allowance for first-time employed youth, as well as promotion for setting up new businesses that includes the allowance for getting a credit (SADM, 2013). These national priorities confirmed the continuation of Lithuanian interests with regard to youth unemployment, despite the shift of ruling political parties in the government.

6.3.3.2. The Prime Minister and the Government

The prime minister in Lithuania is the main figure in terms of national position formulation. Being the head of the government, he has the decisive political power.

As the previous government in Lithuania was elected in 2008, when the economic crisis had just hit the EU, youth unemployment was not regarded as a top priority. In its working programme for 2008-2012 the government had briefly addressed the youth unemployment issue, aiming mostly to promote youth entrepreneurship (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas [LRS], 2008b).

A non-ambitious programme presupposed a weak action. Until 2012 when President Grybauskaitė criticized the government (LRP, 2012), the issue was mostly neglected. Critical remarks from the head of the state fostered the government to conduct public consultations with social partners and other interested organizations. Their proposals (LRV, 2012) included the following:

- Tax exemptions;
- Education reforms, paying more attention to vocational trainings that correspond the needs of the labour market;
- Promotion of businesses;
- Development of employment conditions;
- Launch of the consultation system;
- Moral incentives, including the development of self-consciousness and communication of various schemes and measures available for the youth;
- Looking at the best practices abroad (LRV, 2012).

These measures became a relevant starting point for the government to address the youth unemployment issue in Lithuania. Taking them into account, the government established a working group that was obliged to analyse the given measures (LRV, 2012) and prepare a report of policies to fight youth unemployment. According to conclusions of this report, there should be a balanced match between the education and the labour market, guaranteeing more flexibility and focusing on youth skills development (LRV, 2012b). What is more, the working group expressed the urgency for the government to support youth entrepreneurship and active labour market measures while ensuring cooperation between institutions, NGOs

and private businesses. Furthermore, most of the measures should be financed from the EU structural funds (LRV, 2012b).

The 16th Government of Lithuania, led by Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius, paid more attention to youth unemployment. First of all, in its working programme for 2012-2016 the government raised several goals:

- Support various initiatives concerning youth unemployment that are developed by youth organizations;
- Provide internship placements within governmental institutions;
- Strengthen youth employment measures in Lithuanian regional areas;
- Promote youth education and trainings, as well as entrepreneurship schemes;
- Promote life-long learning programmes;
- Effectively utilize EU structural funds (LRS, 2012b).

Prime Minister Butkevičius also set up a special working group in order to prepare a plan for regional measures to fight youth unemployment. With regard to conclusions of this plan, the prime minister endorsed allowances for less developed regional enterprises aiming to set up new work places, as well as subsidies for new businesses (Verslo žinios, 2013).

6.3.3.3. The President

The president of Lithuania does not have a direct power in position formulation procedures with regard to EU issues. Nevertheless, she is a representative of the country in the European Council and, hence, is allowed to express opinion to the government with regard to policy management.

As is was already noted before, the main involvement of President Grybauskaitė in coping with youth unemployment was in 2012 when she expressed the urge to prepare a national programme to deal with high youth unemployment (LRP, 2012). What is more, Grybauskaitė also encouraged the government and responsible institutions to utilize EU structural funds more effectively and finance employability measures, such as the tax exemption for employers hiring youth without any work experience. Additional concern was given to the inclusion of municipalities while addressing youth unemployment and creating new work places (BNS, 2012).

In the following year (2013) the president endorsed an action plan for youth employment, prepared by the new government. However, Grybauskaitė also underlined the need to restructure the Lithuanian Labour Exchange[2] and while looking at the best practices abroad to set up a new employment model, including education, trainings and employability schemes (LRP, 2013). According to the president, training programmes should reflect the current needs of the labour market (LRP, 2013b).

6.3.4. NATIONAL VS. PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES

The following chapters will present Lithuanian presidency priorities and compare them with national ones.

6.3.4.1. Lithuanian presidency priorities

According to the Lithuanian representative (Interview 1), youth unemployment was named as one of the key priorities even before officially deciding upon presidency goals. Hence, such prominence was noticed in the half-year programme, leading to the following objectives:

- Implementation of the Youth Guarantee Initiative;
- Initiation of discussions with interested parties (business, social partners, member states) regarding the European Alliance for Apprenticeship; concerning these discussions, the presidency was aiming to adopt a Council declaration;
- Agreement between member states and, afterwards, between the Council and the European Parliament with regard to the improved cooperation of Public Employment Services while addressing youth unemployment across Europe (Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency, 2013).

Regarding the European Alliance for Apprenticeship, Lithuania aimed to pay due attention to vocational trainings and various apprenticeship schemes that meet the current needs of the labour market ("Dėmesys jaunimo nedarbui", 2013). As a part of Lithuanian presidency programme goals, the minister of Social Security and Labour also named the promotion of

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[2] Lithuanian Labour Exchange under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for execution of national employment plans and allocation of various benefits to unemployed population (Lithuanian Labour Exchange, 2008).

youth entrepreneurship in terms of consultations and youth-favourable loans for new start-ups ("Dėmesys jaunimo nedarbui", 2013).

President Grybauskaitė, while presenting Lithuanian presidency priorities, also addressed the need to finalize legal acts, ensuring a better social security of employees, as well as promoting equality in the labour market (LRP, 2013c). Certainly, the president also noted the creation of new work places, as one of the key aims of the country during the second half of 2013 (LRP, 2012d).

6.3.4.2. Comparison between national and presidency priorities

As youth unemployment in Lithuania was firstly respectively addressed a year before the presidency had begun, great similarities between national interests and presidency priorities could be noticed. The Youth Guarantee Initiative summarizes the main priorities distinguished by all political actors concerned, i.e. the importance to promote education, vocational training and apprenticeship schemes, meeting the needs of the labour market (European Commission, n.d.).

Youth entrepreneurship was also seen both as a domestic and the EU-level priority, including consultations and required subsidies for youth starting their businesses. In addition, the importance of involving social partners, businesses, NGOs and political institutions in order to fight youth unemployment was also addressed.

However, there were national policy priorities not reflected in the presidency programme. These include tax exemptions, effective utilization of EU structural funds, the set up of youth consultation services, volunteering, life-long learning programmes, restructuring of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange and a few others. While some of these priorities could be linked with EU-level goals, others reflect domestic-level issues. According to Lithuanian Prime Minister Butkevičius, the presidency programme and measures managing youth unemployment should be perceived as the EU, and not national objectives (ELTA, 2013b). The Lithuanian representative also supported such position (Interview 1), claiming that Lithuania, being a part of the EU, has interlinking objectives with other EU member states. Thus, national priorities greatly overlapped with the presidency ones.

Consequently, despite Lithuania encountered the general election and the change of political powers half a year before the presidency term (see Annex 4), the continuity of national

priorities was ensured. Such succession was highly influenced by the official agreement of Lithuanian political parties, reached in Seimas in 2011 to guarantee the consistency of the preparation for the presidency term despite the possible change of political powers (LRS, 2011). Therefore, Lithuania maintained political coherence with regard to the youth unemployment issue.

6.3.5. REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL INTERESTS AT THE EU LEVEL DURING THE PRESIDENCY TERM

During its presidency term, Lithuania achieved a common agreement in the Council regarding two decisions. In addition, the European Council Conclusions also addressed the issue:

- Joint conclusions of the EU Youth Conference, Vilnius, 9-12 September 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013d);
- European Alliance for Apprenticeships – Council Declaration, October 18, 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013e);
- European Council 24/25 October 2013 Conclusions (European Council, 2013c);
- European Council 19/20 December 2013 Conclusions (European Council, 2013d).

What is more, during the EPSCO Council meeting in October countries also addressed youth unemployment issue. Hence, the related press release (Council of the EU, 2013f), although was not an officially adopted document, will be considered as one of the presidency achievements.

Comparing Lithuanian national priorities with goals for fighting youth unemployment, distinguished in the country's presidency programme, and also with five aforementioned documents (see Annex 5, Table 10), Lithuania achieved the majority of its priorities.

The ones that were not named in any of the official documents were volunteering, provision of internships in national governmental institutions, the reform of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange and sponsoring of the initiatives developed by youth organizations.

The support for youth organizations' initiatives, however, might be considered as a semi-implemented priority, since the European Alliance for Apprenticeships addressed the cooperation between social partners, including youth organizations (Council of the EU, 2013e).

National priorities, that were addressed in all five presidency achievements were the promotion various education, training schemes and opportunities, e.g. internships, apprenticeships, vocational education, whereas the cooperation between different sectors (institutional, NGO and business) and the need for consultancy services were named in three out of five documents.

The agreement between the Council and the European Parliament regarding the improvements in cooperation of Public Employment Services that was named in the presidency programme (Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency, 2013) was not evaluated, since it was not raised as one of the national priorities.

Therefore, while implementing 13 out of 17 (76%) national priorities during the presidency term (six of which were not named in the presidency programme), Lithuania could be assigned only to a medium level of national interest representation.

According to the respondent from Lithuanian Permanent Representation (Interview 1), a lower level of interest representation could be influenced by the European Commission's willingness to implement its programme while using the presiding country, as well as due to disagreements between Council members. On the other hand, the national factor, i.e. a weak interaction with officials at the national administration, their resentment to contribute to the presidency or scarce competencies could also be regarded as significant factors (Interview 1).

6.4. GREECE

Being the last member of the trio presidency could be demanding in the way that the country is obliged to implement the remaining presidency goals, defined in the common programme. Greece, however, assumed the Council presidency for the fifth time (Hellenic Presidency, 2013), which could be regarded as an asset while managing EU-wide issues and emphasizing national ones.

The following sub-chapters will elaborate on Greece's capabilities to formulate its domestic priorities, which later on will be compared to achievements at the EU level.

6.4.1. THE NATIONAL EU POLICY COORDINATION SYSTEM

Kassim (2003) defines the Greek national EU policy coordination system as comprehensive decentralized, meaning that the country pursues ambitious policy goals and covers all issue

areas. However, there is no single actor, allowed to impose its opinion on different policies. Separate ministries are usually in charge of managing the coordination of EU policies and deciding on the national standpoint (Kassim, 2003).

The decentralization of the Greek system is notable in the share of coordination between two ministries: the Ministry of National Economy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kassim, 2003). In addition, the Prime Minister's office and the permanent representation in Brussels are also involved in the coordinating process, however, only to a certain extent.

Both ministries had divided tasks, i.e. the Ministry of National Economy was responsible for internal EU policies (mostly related to economics) and their adjustment to the national system, whereas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinated the external dimension, in particular the communication between line ministries and the permanent representation (Kassim, 2003). After accessing the EU, the latter ministry became the main coordinator of EU issues (Kassim et al., 2000).

The Prime Minister's (PM) office, although regarded as one of the central bodies in the EU coordination system (Valinakis, 2012; Laffan, 2006), had little interest in EU policies until the last decade of the 20th century. Since 1993 the new Inter-ministerial Committee for the coordination of Greece-EU relations was established, giving more coordinating powers to the government. The committee is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (as the main mediator between line ministries and the EU) and brings together representatives from line ministries (Kassim et al., 2000). The Committee discusses the COREPER agenda and decides upon national guidelines that are later on sent to the permanent office in Brussels (Kassim et al., 2000).

Nowadays the prime minister could be regarded as an arbiter between ministries, particularly when major disagreements over political issues occur (Valinakis, 2012).

With regard to the horizontal EU policy coordination, all line ministries established special EU units, serving as communication channels between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the permanent representation in Brussels (Kassim et al., 2000).

The Permanent Representation of Greece is a major channel of information exchange between Athens and Brussels. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the distribution of information received, due to a high overload, some ministries have a direct contact with the permanent representation (Kassim et al., 2000). As staff in Brussels is mainly

formed of experienced Greek representatives, they frequently try to influence the national administration and accelerate the formulation of domestic positions (Valinakis, 2012). Nevertheless, the general perception of the EU policy coordination in Greece is rather weak. Domestic preparations for Council meetings are usually inadequate (Laffan, 2005); separate ministries have little interest in addressing EU issues. Hence, instructions to the permanent representation arrive late and often are weakly developed, being either too vague or too specific, which also impedes the representation of national position (Panke, 2010b).

As Kassim argues, the Greek permanent representation has a limited role in terms of national EU policy coordination and interest representation. While representatives in Brussels' office are allowed to lobby EU institutions, there is no attempt to influence the EU agenda or private interests (Kassim, 2003).

Finally, the role of the national Greek parliament should also be addressed. As it has a special unit for EU issues – the Committee for European Affairs, the parliament is able to monitor all EU related issues. The Committee, thus, regularly issues and presents its opinion to the plenary session (Kassim et al., 2000). What is more, the government is responsible for informing the parliament about ongoing EU processes. Nevertheless, the overall stance of the legislative body in the Greek national EU policy coordination system is weak (Kassim et al., 2000).

In order to see a clear division of powers and responsibilities in the Greek EU policy coordination system at the executive branch, Table 6 provides a summarized view:

Actor in a coordination network	Formal powers (according to Table 1)
Prime Minister	Coordinating/representative
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Coordinating/information channelling/position formulation/decision-making/representative (in GAC)
Ministry of National Economy	Coordinating/position formulation/representative (regarding economic issues)
Inter-ministerial Committee	Position formulation
Line ministries	Position formulation/decision-making/representative
Permanent Representation	Information channelling/representative

Table 6: Main actors within the Greek national coordination system

6.4.2. ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE NATIONAL COORDINATION SYSTEM

Greece was one of a few Southern European countries that experienced severe economic crisis since 2008. Hence, its presidency term was marked by a frugal approach towards the EU issue management.

Since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main coordinating body of EU issues, it also had a responsibility to manage the Council presidency. Two main figures – the Deputy Foreign Minister and the Secretary General for European Affairs – were responsible for the coordination matters and, thus, accountable to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Chatzistavrou, 2014).

To ensure a smooth administering of EU issues during the half-year term, an additional inter-ministerial committee within the Government's office was established. The minister of Foreign Affairs was there a central figure, while the composition of the committee depended on the issue area and ministers invited (Chatzistavrou, 2014). In addition, line ministries decided upon contact persons and working groups in order to address EU issues during the presidency term (Chatzistavrou, 2014).

Despite additionally signed contracts, the general number of officials was lower than in other presidencies (150 compared to 250 employees) (Chatzistavrou, 2014). What is more, the presidency lacked a clear coordination centre, since the minister of Foreign Affairs had to handle a heavier workload than he was supposed to (Chatzistavrou, 2014).

Due to such institutional and coordination weakness and the diplomatic deficit, the permanent representation had a key role. National ministries send their civil servants to the office in Brussels. Hence, the representation was capable of dealing with EU policies more comprehensively and was better prepared for working groups and COREPER meetings (Chatzistavrou, 2014).

To sum up, the only new arrangement that was established for the Greek presidency was the inter-ministerial committee within the government, whereas most of the preparation for the presidency just strengthened the existing coordination structure without new networks or positions created.

Since the Greek national EU policy coordination system is regarded as comprehensive decentralized, line ministries are less accountable to the central government and can coordinate EU issues themselves. Hence, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security could be regarded as one of the key actors in the youth unemployment policy area.

The Inter-ministerial Committee was also involved in the position formulation processes. However, while no official documents from the Inter-ministerial Committee were public and available, its impact will not be evaluated.

The stance of the prime minister regarding youth unemployment is less relevant, since he is not directly involved in the position formulation. Nevertheless, the prime minister is the representative of Greece in European Council meetings. Hence, the analysis will address his position.

Finally, additional arrangements for the presidency term should also be taken into account. Notwithstanding, as Greece, same as Ireland, was experienced in holding the presidency of the Council of the EU, only an additional inter-ministerial committee was set up in order to ensure a smooth coordination of presidency issues. Since the work of the committee was not public, no official data or secondary sources were available. Hence, the intervening variable in the case of Greece will not be examined, but taken into account as a factor that might have influenced final results.

6.4.3.1. The Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare

The year 2012 in Greece was marked by a political uncertainty, since after the general election in May parties were unable to form a coalition (see Annex 4). This also explains why former ministers of Labour and Social Security Giorgos Koutroumanis and Antonis Roupakiotis did not make any political statements regarding youth unemployment in the first months of 2012, until the second election in this year (see Annex 4). Therefore, the main representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and Welfare (the name was slightly changed after the recent election) was Ioannis Vroutsis, a member of the New Democracy (World Public Library, 2015), appointed as a minister after the general election in June 2012.

According to the minister, one of the first priorities of Greece to combat youth unemployment was the increase of funds for National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) that should be directed to the youth, particularly to the promotion of entrepreneurship, internships, vocational training and other relevant programmes (Tovima, 2012). As the NSRF ensures the assistance to various cohesion policies (Ministry of Economy, Infrastructures, Shipping & Tourism, n.d.), local authorities should be involved, e.g. in providing community services (Tovima, 2012).

In the following year, together with the Ministry of Development, Competitiveness, Infrastructure, Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare presented the National Action Plan for Youth Employment, naming the main national interests and policy goals in order to reduce high youth unemployment levels (Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare, 2013). These objectives included the following:

- Subsidies for businesses in order to create new jobs corresponding to youth qualifications;
- Assurance of various education schemes, including training and apprenticeship programmes, aiming to provide more work experience and further work placements or internships for youngsters;
- Establishment of transition programmes from education to work, including trainings, counselling and other needs of young unemployed;
- Strengthening career and vocational guidance, mentoring services;
- Promotion of counselling of young entrepreneurs (especially in higher education institutions), with a particular focus on innovations;
- Development of entrepreneurship in local areas, including consultations about the business plans, management, resourcing and financing businesses;
- Other investment measures aiming to reduce the number of early school leavers (Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare, 2013).

In addition to these priorities, minister Vroutsis emphasized European initiatives, such as the Youth Guarantee (Mitaki, 2013), as well as some other domestic short-term public work programmes, targeting at exposed social groups, including the unemployed youth (European Platform for Investing in Children, 2015).

6.4.3.2. The Prime Minister

A former Greek Prime Minister Lucas Papademos, contrary to the minister of Labour and Social Security in his government, had emphasized the youth unemployment issue by raising the following Greek priorities:

- Sponsoring businesses in order to create more work places for unemployed youth and help them to develop skills relevant for the labour market;
- Develop programmes linked with the community service;
- Promote vocational training schemes, particularly in relevant sectors, such as green economy, tourism, as well as fast developing markets;
- Promote youth entrepreneurship;
- Collaborate with municipalities so that they would ensure the job creation for youth in different parts of the country (Prime Minister, 2012).

Papademos' successor Antonis Samaras, a leader of New Democracy, showed the continuity of national interests expressed, since he endorsed the reform of the vocational training system. According to the prime minister, a new system should be created according to the Germany's example, ensuring the cooperation between companies and schools of vocational education, which later on could lead to additional job placements (Marne, 2012).

In 2013 Samaras had also stressed the importance apprenticeship schemes, as a relevant tool for fighting youth unemployment. In addition, he referred to EU-level initiatives, such as the Youth Guarantee, which have to be implemented at the domestic level as the country is willing to utilize these measures (Megatv, 2013). According to Samaras, Greece had to make use of all financial assets the EU could provide (Tvxs, 2013).

Finally, despite the fact Greece had already assumed the presidency's office in 2014, Samaras introduced a three-pillar employment strategy, financed by the NSRF (Prime Minister, 2014). Regarding youth unemployment, the following national interests were distinguished:

- Subsidizing private companies in order to employ youth;
- Investing in youth entrepreneurship based on innovative strategies;
- Promoting trainings and apprenticeships for unemployed youth, granting relevant work experience and general skills required (Prime Minister, 2014).

What is more, the prime minister stressed the need to increase investments in the country, particular foreign investments, since it's not only a means for fighting youth unemployment, but also a stimulus for growth (Athens News Agency, 2014).

Therefore, it could be concluded that despite affiliation to different political parties, Greek ministers and prime ministers expressed common views and priorities towards youth unemployment.

6.4.4. NATIONAL VS. PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES

Since Greece was one of EU members, encountered severe consequences of the recent economic and Eurozone crises and received the financial support, it can be implied that most of Greek national interests regarding youth unemployment were based on EU initiatives and funds. Nevertheless, the following sub-chapters will provide an overview of Greek presidency priorities, as well as comparison between them and the ones distinguished at the national level and framed as domestic goals.

6.4.4.1. Greek presidency priorities

Looking at the official Greek presidency programme, three main priorities regarding youth unemployment were raised for the half-year term:

- Implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative;
- Monitoring the progress of the Youth Guarantee;
- Adoption of Recommendation to set the Quality Framework for Traineeships (Programme of the Hellenic Presidency, 2014).

Hence, the further sub-chapter will evaluate the congruence of them with the national interests.

6.4.4.2. Comparison between national and presidency priorities

While the monitoring of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee does not have any direct effect on the representation of national interests during the presidency term, domestic goals will be compared only to the first and third presidency priorities (as listed in the previous sub-chapter).

Despite the fact that Greece had only two priorities for the presidency term, they comprised most of the objectives the country framed as domestic ones. The Youth Employment Initiative basically serves as a financial grant to support unemployed youth, who do not take up any education activities (European Commission, 2013). The Initiative aims to provide additional finances for various programmes included in the Youth Guarantee, i.e. apprenticeships, traineeships, further education or employment (European Commission, 2013). The Youth Guarantee also emphasized the cooperation between education and training institutions (European Commission, n.d.). These are the goals that Greek minister of Labour and Social Security, as well as prime ministers frequently addressed while discussing domestic plans and policies.

The Youth Guarantee (and, therefore, the Youth Employment Initiative) also includes the utilization of the European Social Fund (European Commission, n.d.), which is also in accordance with Greek national priorities.

The second Greek presidency priority, related to the Quality Framework for Traineeships also reflects Greek national interests, since traineeships, internships, as well as transition programmes from education to work were highly emphasized by national representatives.

Nevertheless, a few national interests were neglected in the presidency programme, such as subsidising businesses for job creation, particularly in economically significant sectors (green economy, construction, tourism, fast developing markets). The presidency programme also left out the increase of NSRF funds, foreign investments, youth counselling, entrepreneurial initiatives, the promotion of community service programmes (including short-term public work), and the reduction of the percentage of young school leavers.

The comparison of national and presidency priorities confirms the assumption that Greece, being heavily affected by the economic crisis, framed most of its national priorities in a consistent way with EU-wide initiatives, anticipating to utilize the funds available. Some of domestic priorities were not included in the presidency programme. Nevertheless, the following chapter will address the representation of them through comparison with EU-adopted documents during the Greek presidency term.

Greece, contrary to other three countries, managed to ensure the adoption of the highest number of documents addressing youth unemployment issue. All presidency achievements are listed as follows:

- Note by the presidency on the Implementation issues of Youth Employment Initiative and Youth Guarantee. Lunch debate at the EPSCO Council - 10 March 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014);
- Proposal from Permanent Representatives Committee for a Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships, March 4, 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014b);
- Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships, March 10, 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014c);
- Council conclusions on the 2014 Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report: political guidance on employment and social policies, March 10, 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014d);
- Joint Conclusions of EU Youth Conference of the Hellenic Presidency, Thessaloniki, 10-12 March 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014e);
- Joint Recommendations of the EU Youth Conference of the Hellenic Presidency, Thessaloniki, 10-12 March 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014f);
- European Council 20/21 March 2014 Conclusions (European Council, 2014);
- European Semester 2014: Contribution to the European Council (Brussels, 26-27 June 2014) Implementation of the Youth Guarantee - Endorsement of the EMCO report (Council of the EU, 2014g).

Hence, the representation of Greek national priorities during the presidency term will be evaluated while taking the content of these documents into account.

Despite a larger number of presidency achievements, the representation of Greek national priorities was not fulfilled well (see Annex 5, Table 11). Three objectives were not addressed in any of the Council or the European Council documents. These issues include the raise of NSRF funds, prevention and reduction of early school leavers, and enhancement of foreign investment in domestic businesses. These Greek national interests were mainly targeting

domestic policies (apart from the reduction of early school leavers) and not the EU as a whole, which might be considered as the main reason for unsuccessful implementation.

Nevertheless, four out of eight priorities that were named in official documents were not a part of the presidency programme, which could be regarded as an achievement of Greek representatives. These include subsidies for businesses in order to create new vacancies, counselling services for new entrepreneurs, emphasis on innovative technologies and specific economic sectors, as well as the promotion of short-term public work and community programmes.

With regard to the most frequently addressed issues, the following can be named: the set up and promotion of various education schemes (internships, apprenticeships, vocational trainings, etc.), support for EU initiatives, such as the Youth Guarantee and the usage of EU provided funds for new measures promoting youth employability. All of these national interests were addressed in three Council documents, as well as in the European Council Conclusions.

Therefore, it could be concluded that Greece, although managed to reach a consensus among EU members with regard to the highest number of documents addressing youth unemployment, it achieved 8 out of 11 national objectives, which account for almost 73% and, thus, can be regarded as a medium level of national interest representation.

7. CROSS-COUNTRY ANALYSIS

Single case studies on youth unemployment policies provided an extensive analysis of the national position formulation and its representation at the EU level during the presidency of the Council of the EU. Notwithstanding, in order to answer the central research question and four sub-questions, this chapter will provide comprehensive cross-country comparisons.

Looking at the overlap of national priorities between four EU member states, four objectives were named as national interests in all countries and were successfully implemented during respective presidencies. The first and the most frequently addressed one is the promotion of various education opportunities, including internships, traineeships, vocational training, job placements and other programmes, contributing to the development of youth skills. A high emphasis on this priority could be explained by the establishment of EU-level initiatives, such as the Youth Guarantee, the Youth Employment Initiative, the European Alliance for

Apprenticeships (Youth Guarantee, 2015; European Commission, 2013; Council, 2013b) and others, naming these programmes as important measures for promoting youth employment. Hence, the common both national and presidency priority for all four countries could be linked with path-dependency, since these programmes are EU-level initiatives that need to be sustained and developed throughout years.

The other three common interests (although not all of them addressed in each presidency programme) were the promotion of youth entrepreneurship (emphasizing various measures – from financial support to counselling), provision of financial incentives for businesses to create new jobs for young people and the utilization of EU structural funds.

Cyprus, Ireland and Greece also emphasized the innovative approach towards the creation and development of businesses, for instance, focusing on fast developing sectors. A presidency trio – Ireland, Lithuania and Greece – had also paid attention to a close partnership between institutions, NGOs and businesses.

The least overlapping issues between countries were the set up of youth counselling initiatives, cooperation with local authorities in fighting youth unemployment and the development of working environment. All these objectives were promoted by Cyprus and Lithuania. In addition, Cyprus, together with Ireland, also emphasised the importance of labour mobility, whereas Ireland and Greece shared the common interest in promoting the Youth Guarantee (i.e. naming the implementation of the programme and its measures as a priority).

The ratio between shared and separately addressed priorities confirms the successive element of the Council's work, since the majority of implemented priorities in each country were common ones. Hence, it could be stated that countries pursued similar measures to fight youth unemployment, despite their geographical allocation and cultural peculiarities. In the case of youth unemployment, countries exhibited a rather cohesive way of addressing this issue.

Regarding path-dependency of the Council agenda, only education and training opportunities were included in all presidency programmes. Three remaining issues, common for all countries, were not addressed in all programmes, however, successfully implemented during official presidencies, confirming a strong impact of path-dependency across successive presidencies, their programmes and priorities.

One could argue that long-term EU programmes, strategies and measures proposed by the European Commission facilitated domestic discussions regarding youth unemployment and impelled countries to frame these means as national priorities. In the absence of path dependence, countries would focus more on real domestic objectives that would be in accordance with their policy lines and depend on political parties in power. Notwithstanding, such EU-level measures put a certain constraint on a real national interest representation, since countries are obliged to follow, implement and develop EU policies. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the research is confirmed:

H1: *The pursuit of national interests during the presidency term is constrained by the successive element of the Council agenda, i.e. path-dependency.*

The validation of the first hypothesis also confirms the influence of an exogenous variable, i.e. the overall impact of path-dependency on the interrelation between national coordination systems and interest representation during the presidency term, since most of national priorities in four countries were framed in the context of EU programmes and goals.

In reference with the impact of the Treaty of Lisbon on presidencies, as already noted in previous chapters, countries followed each other's programmes and raised similar national priorities. Youth unemployment was equally addressed by all four countries, leading to iterative presidency goals, mostly related to various education and training opportunities, proposed in the Commission's programmes, such as the Youth Opportunities Initiative, Youth Guarantee, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the Youth Employment Initiative, etc.

Nevertheless, while looking at national interests that were successfully represented during the presidency, but were not included in half-year programmes, significant policies can be noted. These include the preparation of life-long learning programmes, the alleviation of official barriers for the youth to enter the labour market, revision of employment laws, etc. In addition to these some short-term programmes were also named, in particular short-term public work or temporary employment programmes, providing higher income than unemployment benefits. Hence, it could be concluded that the Treaty of Lisbon does not limit presidencies' possibilities to address national priorities. Therefore the second hypothesis is denied:

H2: *After the Treaty of Lisbon presidencies are able to influence the Council agenda only by short-term policies that correspond to long-term EU goals.*

Finally, arrangements of national EU policy coordination systems and their impact on national interest representation should be discussed. Table 7 summarizes the examination of three variables of this research according to previously distinguished indicators (see Table 1):

		Cyprus	Ireland	Lithuania	Greece
Independent variable	Official network of interactions	Selective decentralized	Selective centralized	Comprehensive centralized	Comprehensive decentralized
	Actors involved in position shaping process (position formulation and/or decision making) and their formal powers	- President (position formulation/representative); - Inter-ministerial committees (position formulation/advisory); - Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (position formulation/decision-making).	- Prime Minister, a.k.a. Taoiseach (decision-making/coordinating/representative); - Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on European Union Affairs (coordinating/position formulation); -Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Department for Social Protection (advisory/position formulation/representative).	- President (position formulation/representative); - Prime Minister (decision-making/representative); - Governmental Commission on EU Affairs (position formulation); - Ministry of Social Security and Labour (advisory/position formulation); - Working groups (advisory/position formulation).	- Ministry of Labour and Social Security (position formulation/decision-making/representative); - Inter-ministerial Committee (position formulation); - Prime Minister (coordinating/representative) – included for measuring the stance of an actor.
	Government composition	Coalition → minority	Coalition	Coalition	Coalition
Intervening variable	Additional networks	EU units within line ministries	/	Network of coordinators	/
	Supplementary positions	Secretariat of the Cyprus Presidency of the EU; Deputy Minister to the President; Ministerial Committee	/	Department of the EU Council Presidency (within the MFA)	Inter-ministerial committee within the Government's office
Dependent variable	Level of national interest representation	High (91%)	High (100%)	Medium (76%)	Medium (73%)

Table 7: Outline of all indicators examined by country

Despite the fact that all four countries established different national coordination systems, they had a similar number of domestic actors involved in the national position formulation process. The only exception is Lithuania that had five institutions/representatives for the

formation of national interests, which could be explained by the comprehensive approach the country practices concerning EU issues.

Depending on the coordination ambition and the centralization level within the country, official powers of these actors vary. Notwithstanding, the political aspect, i.e. the composition of governments, had no direct effect on them, as well as on the implementation of national priorities, since all four countries had ruling coalitions during the examined time period (except the shift in Cyprus from coalition to a minority government after the Democratic Party stepped down).

Nevertheless, prior to the evaluation of national coordination systems and their impact on interest representation during the presidency, the intervening variable should be addressed. Three out of four countries established additional arrangements for their presidencies, i.e. Cyprus, Lithuania and Greece. While former two countries assumed the presidency for the first time, they established more supporting structures, however, mostly for the administrative rather than political purposes. Greece, as an experienced EU member, set up only the inter-ministerial committee, which could be regarded as a reinforcement of the Greek government. Nevertheless, in none of these countries official data of these new institutions and networks was available to evaluate their impact on national interest representation. On the other hand, new arrangements were adapted to existing structures and mostly ensured a better communication between governmental departments and permanent representations. Hence, since this research analysed a single policy area with well-defined networks between actors, the influence of additional arrangements is rather marginal. What is more, Lithuanian representative also claimed (Interview 1) that coordination systems and additional arrangements played a role during the preparation period, but not during the presidency term itself. Therefore, the influence of intervening variable is considered to be insignificant.

Regarding the dependent variable, i.e. the percentage of national interest representation during the presidency term, Ireland was the most efficient one, implementing 100% of its national objectives. Cyprus, although did not manage to fully accomplish its goals, represented 91% of them, which, according to the operationalization of indicators (see Table 1) is regarded as a high level. Lithuania managed to implement 76% of its national interests, whereas Greece, although having achieved consensus on the highest number of EU documents, represented 73% of domestic objectives.

Nevertheless, the percentage of national interest representation is highly dependent on the number and the content of documents adopted during respective presidencies. Ireland, being the most efficient in terms of domestic interest realization, managed to address its national issues in two Council conclusions and one recommendation, following the related proposal of permanent representatives. What is more, although not being directly an Irish presidency achievement, common ground on two European Council conclusions addressing youth unemployment issue was reached.

Cyprus, however, reached a consensus only on Council conclusions regarding a job-rich recovery, whereas the presidency conference on Youth Employment Issues did not have any official conclusions or recommendations apart from the press release listing topics discussed. European Council conclusions, that were also examined, named two Cypriot national priorities, but in a more indirect way. Hence, the high level of Cypriot national interest representation cannot be fully compared with Irish achievements.

Lithuania managed to achieve one of its major goals of the presidency term – adopt the Council declaration regarding the European Alliance for Apprenticeships. What is more, during the same EPSCO Council meeting countries also underlined youth unemployment issue. Although no additional official document was adopted, the disseminated press release is considered as a presidency achievement. Furthermore, joint conclusions of the youth conference were adopted during the Lithuanian presidency. And finally, even though the chair had no direct influence on European Council meetings (apart from the presumed influence of Lithuanian president as the main representative of the country), two conclusions addressed the youth unemployment issue.

Although the number of documents adopted during the Hellenic presidency was the highest, some of them had identical content: i.e. the proposal by the Permanent Representatives Committee regarding the Quality Framework for Traineeships and the final recommendation adopted in the Council; the same could be said about conclusions and recommendations of the youth conference. Therefore, these four documents could be regarded as two. In addition, Greece managed to reach consensus in the Council regarding the conclusions of the Annual Growth Survey and endorse the EMCO report concerning the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. European Council conclusions in March also addressed some essential issues for Greece, although the country, as a presidency, did not have a direct influence on it. Nevertheless, Greece held a lunch debate regarding two major EU initiatives – the Youth

Employment Initiative and Youth Guarantee. Although it was not an official statement or position paper, the country showed its great concern to the issue by gathering EPSCO members together.

Therefore, regarding the impact of national coordination systems on domestic interest representation, one could assume that the selective coordination ambition, represented by Ireland and Cyprus, cannot be claimed as more efficient than the comprehensive one, since Cyprus's achievements are less significant than Ireland's. Hence, the third hypothesis is just partly confirmed:

H3: *During the presidency term, small EU member states with comprehensive national coordination systems implement less national interests in successive agenda than small EU member states with selective national coordination systems.*

Concerning the level of centralization, no considerable difference was observed. While the average percentage of national interest representation in Greece and Cyprus, assigned to decentralized coordination systems, is 82%, Lithuania and Ireland, representing centralized coordination systems, reached 88%. 6% difference could be regarded as a marginal one, although Cyprus's level of national interest representation cannot be equally compared to other three countries. Hence, the fourth hypothesis is also partly confirmed:

H4: *During the presidency term, small EU member states having centralized coordination systems better implement national interests in successive agenda than small member states having decentralized systems.*

Looking at primary presumptions with regard to the linkage between coordination systems and the level of national interest representation (see Figure 1), the empirical analysis verified only half of them. The selective centralized (Irish) system proved to be the most efficient one, whereas the comprehensive centralized (Lithuanian) – the medium one. However, regarding the comprehensive decentralized (Greek) and the selective decentralized (Cypriot) systems, empirics revealed different trends than expected. While the former system, instead of exhibiting the lowest level of national interest representation achieved the medium one, the latter, predicted to show the medium level, proved to be one of the most efficient networks. Nevertheless, the number and the content of documents adopted during the Cyprus presidency questions such results and requires more extensive studies of this co-variation between variables, preferably examining more common policy areas.

What is more, as two of evaluated countries belong to old EU members (Ireland and Greece), whereas the others – to relatively new member states that held the presidency for the first time (Cyprus and Lithuania), it could be concluded that the time being an EU member state has no direct influence on the representation of national priorities. Greece, although assumed the presidency for the fifth time, exhibited almost the same percentage (medium level) of national interest representation as Lithuania, whereas Cyprus, being inexperienced country, managed to fulfil presidency duties and successfully pursue national gains. Yet, since the number of documents adopted during four presidencies varied, such conclusions need to be proved by respective future studies.

Although the research applied Kassim's framework, one of the secondary goals of the research was to examine the assignation of countries to particular coordination systems. The scope of this research is too narrow to provide extensive generalizations. Nevertheless, it could be assumed that three countries match the coordination type they were assigned to, only Greece being a questionable case.

Ireland exhibited a typical selective centralized coordination model. Responsible ministers and the Taoiseach equally addressed the issue of youth unemployment, demonstrating the selectivity of policies in a centralized system. Cyprus, also showing the policy selection and addressing youth unemployment as one of the essential issues, however, proved to have a decentralized system, since the president of the country did not express any concrete priorities in this policy area.

Lithuania and Greece cannot be fully evaluated, since more policies need to be taken into account while assessing the comprehensiveness of these systems. Nevertheless, Lithuania proved to have a centralized network, as apart from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the government and especially prime ministers expressed certain positions for fighting youth unemployment. What is more, the president of Lithuania was also highly involved in the domestic issue management.

Greece, on the other hand, although was assigned to the decentralized national coordination system, showed some traits of the centralized coordination model. Both prime ministers that were in power during the examined period, contrary to ministers of Labour and Social Security, showed a great concern regarding youth unemployment and stated Greek national objectives to cope with the issue respectively. Although the examination of a single policy area is insufficient for making generalizable statements, the assignation of Greece to the

comprehensive decentralized system should be revised, since before the presidency the government reinforced its stance by establishing an additional inter-ministerial committee, whereas prime ministers exhibited a stronger power over youth unemployment issues.

Finally, apart from the influence of national coordination systems, additional factor influencing the level of interest representation can be named – the cooperation with the European Commission. According to the respondent from Lithuanian permanent representation in Brussels (Interview 1), the interference from the Commission had a rather negative impact on the implementation of national goals, whilst the Irish representative claimed the opposite – a country's interest to cooperate with this EU institution and implement its proposals (Interview 2). Looking at the representation of national priorities in both countries, it could be concluded that the country needs to maintain close contacts with the Commission if it is pursing national goals at the EU level.

CONCLUSIONS

In the midst of the crisis, when both scholars and policy-makers re-evaluate roles of EU institutions and the stance of member states, it is important to pay attention to a frequently underestimated EU institution – the presidency of the Council of the EU.

Having undergone a number of developments, nowadays the presidency is usually seen as a part of the Council of Ministers, ensuring a chairmanship of Council meetings, managing administrative issues and mediating between countries when certain disagreements arise. In other words, it is often regarded as an administrative body.

On the other hand, half a year is also considered as an opportunity for member states to put forward their national interests, which could be explained by the relation with the Council, as the main EU institution, where countries can represent their national positions.

It is agreed and often proved that small EU member states have fewer resources for implementing their national priorities, which also weakens their stance in the Council, even during the presidency term. Taking this into account, the aim of this research was to examine a rather unconventional angle of analysis: the link between national EU policy coordination systems and the domestic interest representation during the presidency term. Hence, the following central research question of this master thesis was raised:

To what extent can the arrangement of the national EU policy coordination system explain the representation of national interests during the presidency term?

Realizing the width of a topic and aiming to provide a comprehensive answer, four sub-questions were distinguished:

1. How much room for manoeuvre do presidencies have for the representation of their national interests?
2. How does the Treaty of Lisbon influence the agenda setting powers and, thus, the representation of national interest during the presidency term?
3. How does the coordination ambition affect the representation of national interests?
4. How does the level of centralization of national administrative systems affect the representation of national interests?

To begin with the first one, the analysis showed that presidencies were successful in representing their national interests during the presidency term. However, their framing was highly influenced by the EU discourse, i.e. programmes, strategies and measures proposed. Domestic objectives that had a clear national element, on the contrary, were not addressed. Hence, it could be stated that countries are implicitly constrained by the successive element of the Council agenda, i.e. path-dependency, which leaves less room for manoeuvre for the representation of pure national priorities.

The Treaty of Lisbon brought some changes to the institute of the presidency, such as presiding trios, which oblige countries to present a common working programme and ensure the continuity of policy development. Hence, the agenda-setting power of the chair is greatly diminished. Nevertheless, the representation of national priorities also exhibited a possible room for domestic interest representation, even concerning long-term goals. This leads to the conclusion that the presidency could still be regarded as an opportunity for member states to represent their goals.

When it comes to national coordination systems, the research provided less generalizable results. Ireland and Cyprus exhibited a higher percentage of the national interest representation and proved that selective systems are more efficient than comprehensive ones. This can be mostly explained by the focus on key issues rather than aiming to address all policies, which guarantees better-implemented national priorities. Nevertheless, whilst

Cyprus's achievements in terms of number and content were marginal compared to other countries, the advantage of selective systems is still questionable.

The centralization of national coordination systems plays a rather insignificant role. Despite the fact that centralized coordination systems were more efficient than decentralized, the difference is regarded to be marginal (6%). Such results could be explained by the impact of historical institutionalism and, hence, path-dependency, which takes into account both rational and sociological aspects: countries implement those national coordination networks that can best adapt to their administrative structure and address domestic priorities at the EU level.

To summarize, it could be stated that only the coordination ambition has an impact on the representation of national interests during the presidency, since no significant difference was observed between centralized and decentralized systems. Small member states have limited resources, especially during the presidency term. Therefore, by focusing on important issues, they can better implement their priorities. Taking into account the fact that path-dependency was proved to have an impact on both examined variables it could be assumed that selective systems would tend to provide more efficient results than comprehensive ones.

Nevertheless, such conclusions cannot be regarded as overall generalizations. The study analysed only four small countries, which cannot be compared to large ones, being clustered in the same segment of Kassim's typology. What is more, such conclusions apply to a single policy area – youth unemployment, meaning that future studies on other common policies might reveal diverging trends.

What is more, as a secondary aim of the research, the analysis questioned the assignation of countries to particular clusters within Kassim's framework. Whilst three of examined states proved to have different coordination networks (as was distinguished by scholars), Greece, however, showed some traits of the centralization (regarding the reinforced office of the government before the presidency and a rather salient stance of prime ministers with regard to youth unemployment). Therefore, such observations might also have influenced the results of the effectiveness of centralized and decentralized systems.

In addition, while the reputation, the term of being an EU member state or political issues did not have any direct influence on the representation of national priorities, as interviews with Lithuanian and Irish representatives showed, networks maintained with the European

Commission, as well as congruence of national and Commission's priorities could be regarded as significant factors for successful interest implementation.

This leads to a conclusion that national coordination systems, being influenced by historical developments and path-dependency, have a certain impact on national interest representation at the EU level, since they exhibit a different coordination ambition and maintain diverse networks between actors. Nevertheless, there are additional factors that might have an impact on such goal achievement, which should be taken into account while conducting future studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The linkage between national coordination systems and the representation of domestic interests has implications both on theoretical and practical realms of public administration. Therefore, the following two sub-sections will address the main recommendations for each of them.

THEORETICAL REALM

This research could be regarded as an initial attempt to analyse the relation between domestic EU policy coordination structures and the national interest representation during the presidency term. As the empirical analysis showed, historical institutionalism, although being rarely applied in presidency studies, can provide broad explanations to such linkage.

Nevertheless, one should take into account a small number of cases examined. Since this master thesis evaluated only four member states in one common policy area, no rigid generalizations about national coordination systems and the interest representation during the presidency term could be done.

In order to come up to more reasonable statements about such interlink, additional qualitative and quantitative cross-country studies should be conducted, encompassing a higher number of common policy areas. What is more, small member states, representing respective clusters of Kassim's framework, cannot be equalised to large EU countries. Therefore, the inclusion of large states that held the presidency after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force would greatly enhance preliminary conclusions drawn in this research, particularly concerning the efficiency

of coordination systems across two divisions: the coordination ambition and the centralization of the system.

This master thesis can also be a starting point for scholars aiming to evaluate the stance of the presidency as such. Since there are different assumptions about the relation between a size or a term of being a member state and the representation of national priorities, this research could provide some insights for future qualitative analyses, particularly with regard to the theoretical framework and the methodology applied. As the historical institutionalism encompasses both rational and sociological approaches, a more frequent application of this theory would produce more profound results on the stance of the presidency.

Finally, since no information regarding additional arrangements established for respective presidencies was available, future research should take this point into account and, if possible, carry out more interviews with responsible officials in order to receive an expert explanation of the problem analysed.

PRACTICAL REALM

Each EU member state, despite being assigned to the same cluster of Kassim's typology, has its peculiarities regarding national coordination systems. Therefore, practical recommendations will be bounded to four examined countries.

Beginning from Cyprus, country's officials should pay due attention to the reinforcement of the inter-ministerial coordination of EU issues, since mechanisms that are adopted ad hoc in a long term might lead to worse implemented national priorities. In addition, since the country established specific arrangements for the presidency term, they should be re-examined considering the permanent adoption of some of them into the existing coordination network.

As Ireland exhibited well-represented national goals, no particular recommendations could be given. Nevertheless, since the study addressed a single policy area, additional ones should be evaluated – if the network, although being less formalized, ensures the same efficiency.

The Lithuanian national coordination system seems to be quite well organized. However, the efficiency of the national interest representation highly depends on politicians in power and their willingness to solve the problem. The country should ensure a better involvement of national officials in EU matters, particularly regarding COREPER meetings, where permanent

representatives in Brussels, having no official position shaping powers, are in charge of representation of the national position.

Greece, although considered to have a decentralized system, should reflect on the arrangement of its national coordination network, giving more powers to central bodies, e.g. the prime minister. Separate ministries show little interest in EU matters, hence, either a strengthened central body or more powers given for the permanent representation in Brussels would ensure a better implementation of national priorities at the EU level. What is more, since it was difficult to reach Greek representatives in Brussels due to limited contacts provided, the country should consider publishing direct contact details of each representative, which would facilitate the communication process.

Nevertheless, one should take into account that these recommendations are based on the single policy analysis. Therefore, additional studies should be conducted to provide more profound advices.

REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This master thesis employed an innovative angle of analysis to presidency studies, which gives an added value to both theoretical and practical fields of public administration. It is a first attempt to examine the interrelation between national coordination systems and the representation of domestic interest at the EU level. Therefore, the process tracing analysis could be regarded as an appropriate method for empirical evaluations.

What is more, since the study is based on historical institutionalism, it provides a broader picture regarding the examined linkage of variables and gives an impetus for the application of this theory in future studies. Nevertheless, certain aspects of this study need to be addressed.

Despite the fact that additional arrangements for the presidency term were considered to have a rather marginal influence, due to the lack of information, no actual evaluation of the intervening variable was done. Hence, in order to come up with more generalizable conclusions, the intervening variable should be examined. Therefore, more interviews with officials who occupied additional positions or participated in supporting networks should be conducted. Since interviewees are reluctant to elaborate on each question by e-mail, phone or face-to-face interviews would be preferable.

Another issue that arose while carrying out the research was the language barrier. Since Greece and Cyprus provided the majority of information in Greek, translations were needed. The study examined different sources of information, which ensured the validity of empirical findings. Nevertheless, for the accuracy reasons, it would be advisable if in similar future field studies native speakers were involved.

Finally, looking at the scope of the research, more exogenous variables could be included, i.e. relations with the European Commission, unexpected events during the presidency, voting coalitions in the Council, etc. Due to the limited scope of analysis, this master thesis did not examine these factors. Nevertheless, they would give a more comprehensive picture of the relation between national coordination systems and the representation of domestic interests during the presidency term.

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ANNEX 1

THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU

1.DEVELOPMENTS OF THE PRESIDENCY OFFICE

Looking at the origins of the presidency of the Council of the EU, the institute has evolved and changed significantly. At the beginning of the 1950s the presidency was seen as a symbolic position, symbolizing the equality of member states but having no official administrative or representative role (Fernandez, 2008). The main changes occurred in the beginning of the 6th decade of the previous century. Countries agreed to expand office's powers not only in an administrative, but also in a political realm (Fernandez, 2008). Political powers of the presidency were even more broadened after the establishment of the European Council in 1974. The presidency was given a mandate to represent the European Council outside the EU, thus acting as an intergovernmental counterbalance to the European Commission (Fernandez, 2008).

However, since the middle of the 8th decade, the chair had faced significant changes. As the Commission gained more supranational powers, the presidency was obliged to cooperate with it. Thus, in 1989 the formal semesters of the presidency were introduced also defining results-based obligations for each country (Fernandez, 2008). Council's new Rules of Procedure that came into force in 2002 had even defined the mechanisms for cooperation between successive presidencies (Fernandez, 2008). Such changes, although constrained the power of the chair, made the office more communitarized and expanded the role of it as a coordinator, mediator, political leader and representative at the same time (Fernandez, 2008). However, the latest developments of the EU, i.e. the Treaty of Lisbon, diminished the power of the chair.

The Lisbon Treaty (2007) officially established presidency trios – groups of three member states holding the presidency office for 18 months and equally rotating. They are obliged to prepare a common presidency programme that would ensure consistent, smooth and continuous work of the Council; simultaneously countries are required to collaborate with the European Commission, particularly while developing multiannual programmes (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). However, the political role of the presidency was greatly weakened, as two new positions within the EU were established, i.e. the European Council President and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The main reason lying behind such changes is the prevention of interruptions or political instability the rotating office might create. Therefore, the Council President is seen as a mediator in political negotiations among heads of member states while drawing long-term political objectives, whereas the High Representative has the power to represent the Union outside (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). Hence, the presidency became a broker, mediator and the chair only in the Council of Ministers.

2. High *versus* low politics within the EU

Issues within the EU are divided across two main lines: high politics and low politics. The European Council, or political leaders of EU member states, is responsible for the high politics route. During the European Council meetings they decide upon long-term EU goals and policies, in other words, place certain political issues on the agenda "from above" (Princen & Rhinard, 2006, p. 1121).

Low politics issues, contrarily, are those stemming "from below" (Princen & Rhinard, 2006, p. 1121), being proposed by experts from the European Commission or the Council of Ministers (Princen & Rhinard, 2006). Unlike high politics issues, those are focused more on single policies, economic sectors; they are more technocratic, expertise-based (Princen & Rhinard, 2006).

As Hix and Hoyland (2011) pointed out, high politics is also related to intergovernmentalism, giving discretion to national governments (e.g. regarding immigration, internal policies), whereas low politics issues (e.g. free movement of goods, services, etc.), are managed on the EU-level.

Hence, regarding the institutional adjustments in the Treaty of Lisbon, the current role of the presidency is limited to the low politics agenda. As the European Council is presided by the elected President, he is responsible for discussions and consensus between member states on the high political level. The presidency, thus, being a part of the Council of the EU, deals with more regular, rather technocratic issues.

3. National interest representation during the presidency term

As it was already noted in the previous chapter, manager, mediator, political leader, and internal and external representative were always distinguished as the main roles of the presidency (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006), particularly before the Treaty of Lisbon. However, Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006) argue that in order to see a more realistic picture of the presidency, national interest representation, as an additional role taken by the presidency, should be included. According to scholars, even though this role seems controversial to official presidency's obligations, it originally comes from the country's interest to implement national positions during the Council negotiations. The role of the national representative could be seen as an aim to avoid high national costs of adopted policies, and focus on short-term objectives, which could be done by adding or removing topics from the agenda (Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006).

Tallberg, examining niches of the presidency for exerting influence, also stated that a chair has a room for manoeuvre in the agenda-shaping stage (Tallberg, 2003). Despite the size of the country or its relative power, each presidency is able to affect decisions by three steps: agenda setting, structuring and exclusion (Tallberg, 2003). Agenda setting here refers to raising the awareness of the issue, developing proposals and collaborating with the European Commission in order to place the topic on the Council's desk. Arranging formal and informal meetings in the Council could influence agenda structuring, whereas the agenda exclusion

could be twofold: remaining silent on an issue or excluding item from the list (Tallberg, 2003). Tallberg (2004) argues that presidencies have an access to privileged information, which enables them to use it for their own good, for instance, while leading negotiations in the Council.

The presidency's influence on the national interest implementation also strongly depends on the decision-making stage. According to quantitative empirical studies, the adoption (voting) stage provides presidencies with more possibilities to pull the final outcome closer to the point of their national preference (Schalk et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008).

ANNEX 2

NATIONAL COORDINATION SYSTEMS

The establishment of national EU policy coordination systems in member states reflects the growing competence of the Union (Sepos, 2005). In order to address issues discussed at the EU level, countries are impelled to established domestic networks among main institutions involved in the decision-making process. While ministers are main representatives of EU members in the Council, executive bodies perform most of the preparatory work. However, as the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) has increased the power of national parliaments, the legislative branch is also a part of coordination systems. Hence, the following sections will address the variety of frameworks for examining national coordination systems.

1. COORDINATION WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Classifications of national coordination systems within the executive branch greatly vary across EU countries. Panke (2010b), for instance, classifies EU countries according to the division of duties between national administrations and permanent representations in Brussels. The scholar distinguishes three main clusters: capital based, Brussels-based and balanced systems (Panke, 2010b). In capital based systems the permanent representation has a limited role, as it is mainly responsible for the information transmission to the capital, but cannot influence the content of positions formulated. In Brussels-based systems permanent representations hold the main responsibility for the representation of national position, as they maintain contacts with representatives from other member states and are able to build winning coalitions (Panke, 2010b). However, both systems lack efficiency. The former has a strong focus on domestic issues that usually leads to over-detailed positions which might be unacceptable for other member states, whereas the latter, on the contrary, is characterized as focusing too much on consensus based decisions rather than vital technical issues that are of the utmost importance for their country. Therefore, balanced systems, ensuring a smooth cooperation between the capital and the permanent representation, usually serve as the most effective coordination networks (Panke, 2010b).

Metcalfe classified countries according to their coordination capacity, which is based on several levels: "1) independent decision making by ministries; 2) communication to other ministries (information exchange); 3) consultation with other ministries (feedback); 4)

avoiding divergences among ministries; 5) search for agreement among ministries; 6) arbitration of policy differences; 7) setting limits on ministerial action; 8) establishing central priorities; 9) government strategy" (Sepos, 2005, p. 171). Taking these criteria into account, federal EU member states have less capacity for thorough policy coordination than small countries (Sepos, 2005), as a decentralization of a political system (greater powers given to ministries) impede federal countries from coming up to a consensual position regarding EU issues.

Kassim (2003) defined the third and one of the most prominent classifications. Considering the established national coordination system, countries may be categorized according to two main lines: the coordination ambition and the level of domestic centralization (Kassim, 2003). Taken these two dimensions into account, four coordination models can be distinguished: comprehensive centralized, selective centralized, comprehensive decentralized, and selective decentralized (Kassim, 2003), as visualised in Figure 5:
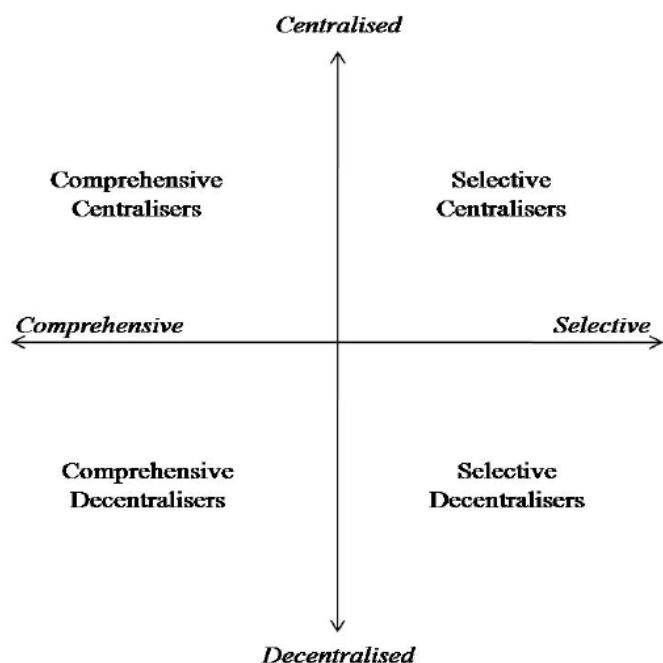

Figure 5: National coordination systems according to H. Kassim. Source: Gärtner et al., 2011.

2. COORDINATION WITHIN THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

With regard to new provisions in the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), scholars pay more attention to the scrutiny of national positions exercised by national parliaments.

Maurer (2002) distinguished a three-fold typology of parliamentary involvement in EU affairs: 1) the parliament's working style, being focused on either the EU Committee, involving Specialised Standing Committees, or focusing on plenary sessions; 2) nature of scrutiny process, being supportive or formulating, including voting instructions; 3) consideration of legislative phases, being anticipative (ex-ante) or reactive (ex-post) (p. 20). What is more, according to the author, with regard to the scrutiny of EU processes, national parliaments usually preoccupy the position of national player, European player, multi-level player or slow adapter (Maurer, 2002, p. 25).

In addition, since 1989 national parliaments cooperate and try to strengthen the parliamentary control of EU issues through the EU-wide inter-parliamentary body – COSAC (Conference of bodies specialised in European Affairs) (COSAC, 2015). Today there are four basic scrutiny models developed: documents-based, mandating, mixed and other systems (COSAC, 2015). In documents-based systems parliaments mainly focus on EU legislation rather than single ministerial positions before Council meetings, whereas the mandating system, on the contrary, obliges national representatives to present their positions to members of the parliament before negotiations in the Council (COSAC, 2015). Mixed systems contain features of both methods, whereas the others do not hold a systematic approach to EU issues (COSAC, 2015).

The variety of frameworks for the coordination system analysis presents an increasing importance of the domestic position formulation before Council meetings. A strong national opinion ensures a better interest representation at the EU level, as the general stance of the Council within the Union is incrementally decreasing, whereas other EU bodies, interest groups and regional actors gain a more solid position.

ANNEX 3

1. INHERITED AGENDA OF SUCCESSIVE PRESIDENCIES

By establishing the presidency trio, obliged to prepare a common 18-month programme, the Council of the EU (Council of the EU, 2007), and later on – the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) had implicitly institutionalized path-dependency in a Council's work. Countries were expected to follow the same agenda and to cover the major topics in order to ensure a continuity of policies the institution deals with. Such inheritance now could be observed not only within trios, but also across them, meaning the preservation of the successive element of the Council agenda, also known as path-dependency.

Looking at presidency programmes from the first trio (Germany-Portugal-Slovenia), one could notice two clear parts: the strategic framework and the organizational (comprehensive) programme (Council of the EU, 2006; Council of the EU, 2008; Council of the EU, 2011; Council of the EU, 2012). The former defines the trio's performance in a broader context, taking into account long-term objectives and, thus, consulting the future presidency that will take over the chair (Council of the EU, 2006). The latter, covering main policy areas the

Council of the EU has to deal with (low-politics issues), sets concrete objectives the trio will aim to realize during its 18-month term (Council of the EU, 2006).

Two presidency trios, however, organized their programmes in a slightly different way. While Germany, Portugal and Slovenia had also distinguished their four priorities (Council of the EU, 2006), Spain, Belgium and Hungary did not cover all policy areas (and did not have two main parts in their programme), but rather focused on their prioritized ones, such as immigration, border management, fight against crime, etc. (Council of the EU, 2010). In the former case, it could be assumed that priorities underlined did not undermine other policy areas, as countries acted in all fields, giving more emphasis on the distinguished ones. The latter case, although being the first operated under the new Lisbon rules (Hungarian Presidency, 2011), creates doubts about path-dependency in different policy fields, as not all of them were addressed in the programme. Nevertheless, this trio (Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian) is not the core of this research; therefore, no assumptions or evaluations will further be made regarding the preservation of the inherited agenda. The following focus will be based on two trios, in which four selected countries were included.

Although Polish-Danish-Cypriot and Irish-Lithuanian-Greek trios were successive ones, the context in which countries operated was slightly different. As Poland took the presidency on July 1, 2011 (Council of the EU, 2007), the period was still marked by the economic crisis and, in particular, the eruption of the Eurozone crisis. Therefore, the main focus of the trio presidency was the pursuit of budget consolidation and the return to the sound macro-economic balance by ensuring sustainable growth and employment (Council of the EU, 2011).

The Irish-Lithuanian-Greek trio, that began the presidency on January 1, 2013, also emphasized the adequate response to economic and social challenges, meaning the consequences of the recent crises (Council of the EU, 2012). However, the trio was put under time pressure, as the European legislative cycle was coming to an end. Countries focused on productive negotiations and effective implementation of proposals made in different policy areas (Council of the EU, 2012).

Looking at the "Strategic framework" in programmes of both trios, the Irish-Lithuanian-Greek presidency had fewer items to cover than the Polish-Danish-Cypriot. Nevertheless, most of issues were overlapping. For instance, as the first and the main priorities in both programmes the Multiannual Financial Framework, the Europe 2020 strategy and effective economic governance were underlined (Council of the EU, 2011; Council of the EU, 2012). Both trios strongly stressed the importance of smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, which should be combined with corresponding social investment strategies, producing employability, life-long learning, and leading to a higher competitiveness of the Union (Council of the EU, 2011; Council of the EU, 2012).

Another issue that was of high importance for both trio presidencies was the implementation of the Stockholm programme in the Freedom, Security and Justice sector, allowing EU citizens to use their social rights and simultaneously protecting them from external hazards

(Council of the EU, 2011; Council of the EU, 2012). Other policies, although being mentioned, were not equally addressed. In energy sector the Polish-Danish-Cypriot presidency highlighted energy efficiency and environmental issues, whereas the Irish-Lithuanian-Greek presidency, although also addressed the resource efficiency, put more emphasis on the development of the internal energy market (Council of the EU, 2011; Council of the EU, 2012).

The former presidency also stronger underlined the issue of the climate change, as the Union was preparing for related worldwide conferences (Rio + 20 Summit, UNFCCC Conference in Durban (Council of the EU, 2011)). The opposite could be said about the neighbourhood policy: the Irish-Lithuania-Greek presidency had extensively developed the issue of the Eastern Partnership compared to rather modest problem coverage by the former trio (Council of the EU, 2011; Council of the EU, 2012).

Regarding foreign relations and the Union's stance in worldwide affairs, both presidencies had covered the issue rather briefly, following the long-term Council agenda and corresponding priorities rather than initiating new goals (Council of the EU, 2011; Council of the EU, 2012).

2. COMPARISON OF PRESIDENCY PROGRAMMES ACCORDING TO SINGLE POLICY AREAS

Unlike the trio programme, national presidency programmes usually begin with three-four national priorities that will be underlined during the half-year term, in addition to comprehensive outline of all EU policies. Although these priorities are formulated as European, countries tend to emphasize issues that are important for their national welfare.

Looking at programmes of four selected EU states (Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania and Greece), a few priorities overlapped. A recent economic crisis had severely affected the EU economy. Therefore, effective and sustainable economic governance (particularly within the EMU) was regarded as one of the major goals. Countries underlined the importance of macroeconomic budgetary surveillance and named measures they will focus on in order to achieve fiscal stability and further integration of the monetary Union (Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, 2012; Programme of the Irish Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Hellenic Presidency, 2014).

Another major issue underscored by all successive presidencies was the promotion of growth and jobs within the Union. Besides long-term EU strategies, such as the Europe 2020, Compact for Growth and Jobs; a few other common issues for all countries were deepening of the Single Market, promotion of competitiveness through various policies for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and, as one of the most important – reduction of youth unemployment (Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, 2012; Programme of the Irish Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Hellenic Presidency, 2014).

While the further integration of the Single Market referred to Single Market Act I and II and the Services Directive, SMEs policies promoted favourable environment for businesses, such

as the access to research funding, external markets, as SMEs were seen as a backbone of the EU economy (Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, 2012; Programme of the Irish Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Hellenic Presidency, 2014).

Youth unemployment was underlined as a major issue across the majority of EU members, having a significant impact on the growth of the EU economy. Policies and programmes providing new employment possibilities for youth were regarded as goals for higher social cohesion, bringing European citizens closer to the Union and developing the economy (Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, 2012; Programme of the Irish Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency, 2013; Programme of the Hellenic Presidency, 2014).

In addition to internal EU policies, countries addressed the external dimension, in particular the EU Neighbourhood policy. Ireland, however, paid the least attention to this issue, equally naming the economic and social support for Eastern and Southern neighbourhood policies (Programme of the Irish Presidency, 2013). Cyprus, Lithuania and Greece, being border-countries of the EU, on the contrary, paid due attention to the external dimension and named it as one of the major priorities. Cyprus and Greece emphasized the Southern part and the importance to maintain the democratic, socio-economic development with Southern neighbour countries, as this does not only cover the economic (e.g. trade) area, but also concerns the security of EU citizens, e.g. regarding the migration flows (Programme of the Cyprus Presidency, 2012; Programme of the Hellenic Presidency, 2014). Lithuania, respectively, underlined the Eastern dimension, as the country was meant to hold the third Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, aiming to make a significant progress in political partnership and economic integration with Eastern countries (Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency, 2013).

ANNEX 4

COMPOSITION OF MEMBER STATE GOVERNMENTS

1. CYPRUS

During the examined two-year preparation period for the presidency of the Council of the EU Cyprus underwent a change of the government. After the general election in 2006 the Cypriot government was formed of three parties: AKEL (Progressive Party of Working People), DIKO (Democratic Party) and EDEK (Movement for Social Democracy) (The Commonwealth, 2015). However, during the presidential election in 2008 the coalition had diverging views, where DIKO and EDEK supported T. Papadopoulos and AKEL – D. Christofias. Although there was a third candidate running for the election, the AKEL candidate won the majority of votes during the second round and, as a head of the government, invited the two other parties to join his cabinet (The Commonwealth, 2015). Hence, until the 2011 the AKEL – communist party, following the Marxism ideology (AKEL, 2015), was the ruling one within the government.

In May 2011, a year before the presidency, the following general election in Cyprus was held. AKEL and DIKO became two ruling parties. However, due to internal disagreements the coalition collapsed in August. Hence, the communist party retained its rule as a minority government (The Commonwealth, 2015) with the head of the country and of the government – D. Christofias.

2. IRELAND

Ireland, being one of the countries severely hit by the economic crisis in 2008, inevitably had to undergo political instability periods. The ruling coalition of Fianna Fáil (Republican Party) and the Green Party, led by B. Cowen, the leader of the Fianna Fáil, had to adopt the economic rescue package, which imposed certain austerity measures (Álvarez-Rivera, 2014). Being unpopular among the Irish population, the austerity package created severe political imbalances within the country, followed by the resignation of the Green Party from the government coalition (Álvarez-Rivera, 2014).

Nevertheless, as the new general election in March 2011 was announced, it brought Ireland a new coalition, consisting of two main parties: a centre-right Fine Gael and the Labour Party (Álvarez-Rivera, 2014), both receiving the largest percentage of votes ever. Since the Fine Gael was a leading one, its leader Enda Kenny was elected as a new Taoiseach of Ireland (Álvarez-Rivera, 2014), who also remained in the office during the Irish presidency of the Council of the EU in 2013.

3. LITHUANIA

During the preparation for the presidency term Lithuania had also undergone the election period. However, contrary to other countries (Cyprus, Ireland), the election took place according to the regular schedule, since the office term of the 15th Government expired.

After the general election in 2008, governmental coalition was formed of four parties: the Homeland Union (Christian Democratic Party), the newly formed National Resurrection Party, considered as a populist centre-right party (Auers & Kasekamp, 2015), the Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania and the Liberal and Centre Union (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas [LRS], 2008). Since the Christian Democratic party won the largest number of votes, their party leader Andrius Kubilius led the government coalition and became a prime minister.

Although the government managed to cope with the economic crisis, the following election in 2012 had shown that the population did not welcome austerity measures, as the opposition won the majority of votes. After the latter election again four parties formed the governmental coalition, i.e. the Social Democratic Party, the Labour Party, the Oder and Justice (considering itself as a right of the centre political party (Party Order and Justice, 2003-2015)) and the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (LRS, 2012). Since the Social Democratic Party won the majority of votes, Algirdas Butkevičius, a party leader, became the prime minister of Lithuania and a leader of the coalition.

4. GREECE

Due to the consequences of the economic crisis, the change of political powers in Greece was inevitable. PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) being the leading party in Greece had always formed its single-party governments (Lowen, 2013). Nevertheless, two general elections held in May and June 2012 shifted the balance of power in Greece.

During the general election in May 2012 a centre-right party New Democracy won the largest number of votes, the leftist coalition Syriza was the second, while the previously leading PASOK became a third party to get the most of the votes. However, due to the economic crisis and continuing unrest within the country, parties could not form a coalition (Smith, 2012), which led to the following election in June. After the latter one, despite the historical rivalry between political parties, the New Democracy finally agreed to form a governing coalition with PASOK, also inviting a third political party – the Democratic Left. The leader of the New Democracy Antonis Samaras, hence, became a new prime minister of the Greek government (BBC, 2012).

Although the PASOK was in favour of traditional social democratic ideology, in the midst of the crisis it expressed more conservative positions with regard to austerity measures. The Democratic Left also had economic attitude that was in accordance with the support of the New Democracy for the economic bailout programme (Bollier, 2012).

ANNEX 5

COMPARISON BETWEEN NATIONAL INTERESTS, PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES AND PRESIDENCY ACHIEVEMENTS IN FOUR EU MEMBER STATES[3]

1. CYPRUS

The analysis between national, presidency priorities and representation of them at the EU level is based on three documents:

- Council Conclusions on a job-rich recovery and giving a better chance to Europe's youth [cited as "Council Conclusions" in Table 8], October 5, 2012 (Council of the EU, 2012);
- Press Release from the Presidency Conference on Youth Employment Issues, Lefkosia (Nicosia) [cited as "Presidency Conference" in Table 8], 22-23 October 2012 (Presidency Conference, 2012);
- European Council 13/14 December 2012 Conclusions [cited as "European Council Conclusions" in Table 8] (European Council, 2012).

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[3] National and presidency priorities are taken from the empirical part of the analysis, whereas presidency achievements are extracted from relevant documents. In order to simplify the referencing of each document in respective tables, shorter citations are being used, as indicated in case of each document.

National priority	Presidency Priority	Document/event and statement
Promotion of various education and training measures: - vocational education, directing people to technical professions; - apprenticeship schemes; - trainings for young people with tertiary education.	Vocational education; Apprenticeships and trainings addressing the needs of the labour market.	Council Conclusions: - Member States should combine vocational education with employers-based apprenticeship schemes, support vocational counselling and ensure skills matching to the needs of the labour market; - Traineeship schemes should be regarded as a measure to develop skills needed for the labour market; - Skills and labour market needs should be matched.
		Presidency Conference: - Vocational training could ensure an inclusion of vulnerable young people; - Apprenticeships are a tool to link education with work opportunities; - Traineeships are a means to link education with work opportunities.
		European Council Conclusions: - Countries were encouraged to consider proposals regarding the Youth Employment Package (including traineeships, apprenticeships, job or education opportunities, starting consultations regarding a Quality Framework for Traineeships and considering the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (European Commission, 2012)).
Youth counselling		Council Conclusions: - Active labour market policies, including job counselling, career-guidance, employment search assistance are essential; - Promotion of expert vocational counselling should be promoted while linking it with market forecasting tools.
Creation of new jobs through financial incentives for businesses, especially in fast growing markets	Application of innovative approaches (*note*: creation of new jobs was not mentioned).	Council Conclusions: - Hiring subsidies can be regarded as an encouragement to create new jobs; - Focus on green, low-carbon, efficient resources and fast-developing technologies, ICT sectors is essential.
		Presidency Conference: - A due attention was paid to green economy, ICT sector.
Ensuring a quality of work environment (e.g. adequate social protection, flexible employment)	Quality employment and working conditions.	Council Conclusions: - Preservation of decent work conditions and prevention from hazardous employment for young people and prevention from unfair competition need to be ensured.
		Presidency Conference: - The best practices in Member States can provide a stimulus to re-evaluate the quality of employment and social protection of the youth.
Labour mobility	Facilitation of employment in other countries (as a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative)	Council Conclusions: - Facilitation of the free movement of workers, implementation of the Youth Opportunities Initiative and the enhanced communication and transparency of the EU labour market need to be addressed.

Involvement of local authorities	Stronger partnerships between institutions, NGOs, businesses at national, regional, local levels (as a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative)	Council Conclusions: - NGOs, local authorities and other partners should play a significant role in promotion of youth employment programmes and measures; - Partnerships between employers at different levels (national, regional and local authorities) are needed.
		Presidency Conference: - Cooperation between local authorities and civil society, as well as public, private and non-profit sectors should be ensured.
Promotion of youth entrepreneurship	Promotion of youth entrepreneurship, including various subsidies	Council Conclusions: - Promotion of entrepreneurship and advantageous business environment, including start-up support service: microfinances, review of the regulatory entry barriers, etc. should be ensured.
		Presidency Conference: - Participants underlined the importance of youth entrepreneurship.
Utilization of ESF and other EU funds	Utilization of ESF (as a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative)	Council Conclusions: - Efficient utilization of the ESF and the maximization of Structural Funds should be considered.
		European Council Conclusions: - Countries were encouraged to consider proposals regarding the Youth Employment Package (including making a use of European structural funds, such as the European Social Fund (European Commission, 2012)).
Prevention/restriction of redundancies		
Facilitation of the conditions for the youth to enter the labour market		Council Conclusions: - The tax systems should be reformed to be more in favour for new participants in the labour market.
Development of higher education (university infrastructure, research quality, etc.)	Creation of a dual education system (applying German methods)	Council Conclusions: - Measures that should be implemented: cooperation between education institutions and employers, development of a dual education systems, reforms of the education system preventing from early school leaving, enhancement of formal and informal education in order to provide youth with relevant skills.

Table 8: Comparison of Cypriot priorities with presidency achievements

2. IRELAND

The analysis between national, presidency priorities and representation of them at the EU level is based on the following documents:

- European Council 7/8 February 2013 Conclusions (Multiannual Financial Framework) [cited as "European Council Conclusions MFF" in Table 9] (European Council, 2013);
- Proposal by Permanent Representatives Committee for a Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee [cited as "Proposal by Permanent Representatives" in Table 9], February 22, 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013);
- Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee [cited as "Council Recommendation" in Table 9], March 5, 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013a);
- Joint conclusions of the EU Youth Conference [cited as "EU Youth Conference" in Table 9], Dublin, 11-13 March 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013b);
- Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy – Adoption of Council conclusions [cited as "Council Conclusions on Europe 2020" in Table 9] (May 3, 2013) (Council of the EU, 2013c);
- European Council 27/28 June 2013 Conclusions [cited as "European Council Conclusions" in Table 9] (European Council, 2013b).

National Priority	Presidency Priority	Document/event and statement
Provision and expansion of various education and training opportunities (apprenticeships, internships, traineeships, trainings, skill development and work placement programmes)	Development of skills by further education, traineeship or apprenticeship schemes and other education programmes or jobs (also a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative and the Youth Guarantee)	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Assurance of good-quality offers of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship for people under 25 years; offer should be provided within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education; - Strengthening of partnerships between employers and relevant labour market players; - Assurance of involvement of social partners and promotion of their initiatives for apprenticeships and traineeships; - Provision of re-entering education for early school leavers and low-skilled persons; - Development of skills that address the mismatch issue in the labour market.
		EU Youth Conference: - Provision of paid internships and apprenticeships in order to ensure smooth transition from education to employment.
		Council Conclusions on Europe 2020: - Formal and informal learning and jobs should serve as a tool to pursue EU-level strategies for youth employment; - Invitation for Member States and the Commission to strengthen youth education, training and employment programmes; - Emphasising new policy measures (schemes, programmes) aiming to provide education and trainings, particularly for those with fewer access possibilities.
		European Council Conclusions: - Provision of education, trainings and other measures to bring young people to education or employment within four months should be ensured (reference to the Youth Guarantee); - Member States should modernise education systems (including vocational trainings), ensure integration of low-skilled youth, address the skills mismatch issue, support apprenticeships and traineeships; - The European Alliance for Apprenticeships should ensure work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeships.
Subsidies for employers in order to create new work places/hire young people	Reducing non-wage labour costs and encouraging employers to hire young people (as a part of the Youth Guarantee)	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Reduction of non-wage labour costs; - Application of well-designed wage; - Provision of recruitment subsidies.
Temporary employment programmes, ensuring higher income than unemployment benefits		European Council Conclusions: - Member States should shift away taxation from labour and reduce social contributions.

Promotion of youth entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurship courses and guidance should be provided (as a part of the Youth Guarantee)	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Schools, vocational training and employment institutions should provide entrepreneurship courses and guidance for the youth; - Promotion of start-up skills.
		EU Youth Conference: - All necessary support (including finances and administrative matters) for youth entrepreneurship should be ensured.
		Council Conclusions on Europe 2020: - EU members and the Commission should assist young people in acquiring entrepreneurship skills.
		European Council Conclusions: - Member States should support entrepreneurship and start-ups at the national level.
Promotion of volunteering activities		Council Conclusions on Europe 2020: - EU structural and investment funds should promote volunteering initiatives as a possibility for youth to develop their skills; - EU members should provide more opportunities for youth to engage in volunteering.
Emphasis of literacy and basic workplace skills	Boost of skills and competences needed for the labour market (as a part of the Youth Guarantee)	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Addressing the skills mismatch problem while focusing on the needs of the labour market.
Integration of employment and benefit support	Reactivation of youth dropped out from activation schemes and are unable to get benefits (as a part of the Youth Guarantee)	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Reactivation of young people who precipitate from activation schemes and do not access benefits.
Increase the use of the European Social Fund (as a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative, to which the full support was expressed)	Absorption of the European Social Fund	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Utilization of EU Cohesion funds, the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative, where it is appropriate.
		Council Conclusions on Europe 2020: - EU structural and investment funds should be directed to initiatives promoting youth skills development and employability.
		European Council Conclusions: - Implementation of EU structural funds including the utilization of the European Social Fund; - Allowance of disbursements for EU regions experiencing the highest unemployment levels in order to operationalize the Youth Employment Initiative; additional 6 billion euros will be allocated for this initiative in the first two years of the new Multiannual Financial Framework.

		European Council Conclusions MFF: - Additional 3000 million euros (to existing 3000 million in the ESF) will be given to youth employment programmes under the Youth Employment Initiative.
Promotion of innovative approaches (as a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative)	Enhancement of ICT/digital skills should be ensured (as a part of the Youth Guarantee)	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Skill development should include competences related to ICT.
		EU Youth Conference: - Emphasis on green and social youth entrepreneurship should be put.
Promotion of labour mobility across Europe (as a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative)	Promotion of labour mobility (as a part of the Youth Guarantee)	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Promotion of labour mobility, especially within the EU.
		Council Conclusions on Europe 2020: - EU structural and investment funds should promote youth mobility.
		European Council Conclusions: - Promotion of youth mobility, particularly focusing on the programme Your First EURES Job; - More cross-border vocational training opportunities should be created.
Strengthening of partnerships between institutions, businesses, trade unions at different levels (as a part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative and the Youth Guarantee)	Strengthening of partnerships between institutions, businesses, trade unions at different levels (as a part of the Youth Guarantee)	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Coordination of partnerships across all levels and sectors while implementing the Youth Guarantee; - Strengthening of partnerships between employers and relevant labour market players; - Development of partnerships between employers (public and private) and education institutions; - Promotion of mutual learning activities at all levels (national, regional, local).
		European Council Conclusions: - Involvement of social partners should be ensured.
		EU Youth Conference: - Development of collaboration between formal and informal education institutions.
		Council Conclusions on Europe 2020: - Assurance of cross-sectoral and inter-institutional coordination to address youth policy goals.
Implementation of the Youth Guarantee	Implementation of the Youth Guarantee	Proposal by Permanent Representatives and the Council Recommendation: - Identification of public body responsible for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee; - Implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes as soon as possible.
		European Council Conclusions: - Speeding the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Table 9: Comparison of Irish priorities with presidency achievements

3. LITHUANIA

The analysis between national, presidency priorities and representation of them at the EU level is based on the following documents:

- Joint conclusions of the EU Youth Conference [cited as "EU Youth Conference" in Table 10], Vilnius, 9-12 September 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013d);
- European Alliance for Apprenticeships – Council Declaration [cited as "European Alliance for Apprenticeships" in Table 10], October 18, 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013e);
- Press Release of the 3263rd Council meeting of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs [cited as "EPSCO meeting" in Table 10], October 15, 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013f);
- European Council 24/25 October 2013 Conclusions [cited as "European Council Conclusions" in Table 10] (European Council, 2013c);
- European Council 19/20 December 2013 Conclusions [cited as "European Council Conclusions 2" in Table 10] (European Council, 2013d).

National priority	Presidency priority	Document/event and statement
Tax exemptions (for employers hiring young people and for youth)		EU Youth Conference: - EU countries should ensure tax or other incentives to provide paid internships for young people; - EU members should provide tax relief for employers in order to create new jobs in accordance with the ILO Decent Work Agenda.
		European Council Conclusions 2: - A support for tax and other allowances is needed in order to promote the creation of work places.
Reforms and promotion of various education opportunities: internships, apprenticeships and vocational trainings that corresponds to the needs of the labour market	Implementation of the Youth Guarantee (including these education opportunities); Initiation of discussions with interested parties (business, social partners, Member States) regarding to the European Alliance for Apprenticeship; Ensuring of any labour market activity, such as internship, traineeship, apprenticeship or job for young people under 25 (after graduation).	EU Youth Conference: - Member States should ensure that education would provide general knowledge and professional skills; - Diversity of trainings should be ensured; - Internships within the EU should be remunerated
		European Alliance for Apprenticeships: - High-quality apprenticeships are a effective tool ensuring a smooth transition from education to the labour market; - Apprenticeships should be encouraged at the national level, in cooperation with social partners (stakeholders, education and training providers, youth organizations and authorities at all levels); - Integration of apprenticeships into education and training systems should be ensured; - Implementation of vocational education and training reforms in order to ensure a higher quality of apprenticeships provided; - Provision of remuneration for actors, especially SMEs, creating new apprenticeship places.
		EPSCO meeting: - Member states addressed the necessity to ensure a decent education that meets the needs of the labour market; - Apprenticeship and traineeship schemes were named as a valuable tool for fighting youth unemployment.
		European Council Conclusions: - Countries should utilize the ESF in order to promote vocational education and trainings, particularly in the ICT sector; - A fast implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the declaration regarding the European Alliance for Apprenticeships was required.
		European Council Conclusions 2: - The development of education and training (including the vocational training) systems is needed to address the skills mismatch issue.
Support for new businesses (entrepreneurship),	Promotion of youth entrepreneurship in terms of consultations	EU Youth Conference: - EU members should promote youth entrepreneurship by facilitating administrative procedures, ensuring consultancy services, financial support and tax exemptions.

including exemptions to take credit for a new business	and youth-favourable loans for new start-ups	EPSCO meeting: - Member states endorsed youth entrepreneurship.
Development of work conditions	Ensuring the social security and equality in the labour market	EU Youth Conference: - Member States should ensure equal employment conditions, remuneration and rights of workers.
Sharing of best practices	Exchange of best practices (as a part of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee)	European Alliance for Apprenticeships: - Continuation of exchange of best practices with regard to apprenticeships.
		European Council Conclusions: - A fast implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the declaration regarding the European Alliance for Apprenticeships was required.
Utilization of EU structural funds for financing employment programmes		European Alliance for Apprenticeships: - Utilization of the EU investment funds and the European Social Fund in order to finance apprenticeship schemes.
		European Council Conclusions: - Vocational education, trainings should be ensured from the ESF money.
Tax allowance for young people willing to access real estate		EU Youth Conference: - Member States should implement national policies, allowing young people to purchase housing.
Collaboration between governmental institutions, NGOs and businesses in different schemes enhancing youth employment	Implementation of the Youth Guarantee (focusing on the partnership between different sectors); Initiation of discussions with interested parties (business, social partners, Member States) regarding to the European Alliance for Apprenticeship.	EU Youth Conference: - Provision of partnerships between formal and informal education institutions and employers to offer more opportunities for youth should be ensured; - EU Governments should ensure the inter-sectoral collaboration to exchange information and develop future policies for youth.
		European Alliance for Apprenticeships: - Apprenticeships should be encouraged at the national level, in cooperation with social partners (stakeholders, education and training providers, youth organizations and authorities at all levels); - Multiple sectors and occupations should be included in creating new apprenticeships.
		European Council Conclusions: - A fast implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the declaration regarding the European Alliance for Apprenticeships was required.
Revision of employment laws		EU Youth Conference: - Member States should ensure that their legal acts prevent from all kinds of discrimination.

Promotion of active labour market measures	Implementation of the Youth Guarantee (promoting early intervention and activation (European Commission, n.d.))	European Council Conclusions: - Countries should utilize the ESF in order to promote vocational education and trainings, particularly in the ICT sector; - A fast implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the declaration regarding the European Alliance for Apprenticeships was required.
		European Council Conclusions 2: - Acceleration of the active labour market measures should be ensured.
Promotion of volunteering work		
Establishment of consultancy services (social employees groups) in order to help people orientate in the labour market		EU Youth Conference: - Member States should provide and coordinate information and guidance services at all levels (national, regional and local); - Cooperation between families, education institutions and information services in order to provide youth with better information about education and training possibilities.
		European Alliance for Apprenticeships: - Provision of career guidance for youth.
		EPSCO meeting: - The requirement for counselling and guidance was named as a means of prevention from youth unemployment.
Support for initiatives developed by youth organizations		
Provision of internship places within governmental institutions		
Strengthening the cooperation with regions in order to provide more employment measures	Strong cooperation between relevant stakeholders (as a part of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee)	European Alliance for Apprenticeships: - Apprenticeships should be encouraged at the national level, in cooperation with social partners (stakeholders, education and training providers, youth organizations and authorities at national, regional and local levels).
		European Council Conclusions: - A fast implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the declaration regarding the European Alliance for Apprenticeships was required.
Restructuring of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange		

Promotion of life-long learning programmes		European Alliance for Apprenticeships: - Development of apprenticeships would ensure the access to higher education and life-long learning.
		European Council Conclusions 2: - Life-long learning programmes should be understood as a means to improve education and training systems.
	Agreement between Member States and, afterwards, between the Council and the European Parliament with regard to the improved cooperation of Public Employment Services while addressing the youth unemployment	

Table 10: Comparison of Lithuanian priorities with presidency achievements

4. GREECE

The analysis between national, presidency priorities and representation of them at the EU level is based on the following documents:

- Note by the presidency on the Implementation issues of Youth Employment Initiative and Youth Guarantee. Lunch debate at the EPSCO Council - 10 March 2014 [cited as "Note by the presidency" in Table 11] (Council of the EU, 2014);
- Proposal from Permanent Representatives Committee for a Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships [cited as "Proposal from Permanent Representatives" in Table 11], March 4, 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014b);
- Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships [cited as "Council Recommendation" in Table 11], March 10, 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014c);
- Council conclusions on the 2014 Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report: political guidance on employment and social policies [cited as "Council conclusions on the 2014 Annual Growth Survey" in Table 11], March 10, 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014d);
- Joint Conclusions of EU Youth Conference of the Hellenic Presidency, Thessaloniki, 10-12 March 2014 (Council of the EU, 2014e);
- Joint Recommendations of the EU Youth Conference of the Hellenic Presidency, Thessaloniki, 10-12 March 2014 [the latter two documents are cited as "Joint Conclusions and Recommendations of EU Youth Conference" in Table 11] (Council of the EU, 2014f);
- European Council 20/21 March 2014 Conclusions [cited as "European Council Conclusions" in Table 11] (European Council, 2014);
- European Semester 2014: Contribution to the European Council (Brussels, 26-27 June 2014) Implementation of the Youth Guarantee - Endorsement of the EMCO report [cited as "European Semester 2014: Contribution to the European Council" in Table 11] (Council of the EU, 2014g).

National priority	Presidency priority	Document/event and statement
Increase of funds for National Strategic Reference Framework, targeting at youth employment		
Subsidies for businesses in order to create new jobs corresponding to youth qualifications		Council conclusions on the 2014 Annual Growth Survey: - Implementation of tax relief or other measures for businesses are needed in order to foster job creation.
Establishment and development of various education schemes: internships, vocational trainings and apprenticeship programmes	Adoption of Recommendation to set the Quality Framework for Traineeships; Implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative, addressing these education and training schemes and measures.	Note by the presidency: - Member States were encouraged to name the role of apprenticeships in the Youth Guarantee and would it be possible to establish links with other programmes aiming to increase youth employment.
		Proposal from Permanent Representatives and a Council Recommendation: - Improving the quality of traineeships in order to facilitate the transition from education to employment; - Requirement that traineeship agreements would be written and include programme objectives, working conditions, allowances (if applicable), responsibilities of both parties and the duration term (with a extension possibility); - Ensuring of supervisor for trainees that would monitor their progress; - Ensuring the recognition of skills and competences acquired during the traineeship.
		Joint Conclusions and Recommendations of EU Youth Conference: - Education institutions, in cooperation with relevant social partners, should provide more experiential learning in formal education programmes; - EU members should implement the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training; - Member States should respect the guidelines outlined in the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, and develop their policies accordingly.
		European Council Conclusions: - Further education and vocational training should be promoted, mostly by employing EU-wide programmes: the Youth Employment Initiative, the Youth Guarantee and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.
Linking various education programmes with green economy, construction, tourism and fast developing technological as well as innovation based sectors		Joint Conclusions and Recommendations of EU Youth Conference: - EU members should implement the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training, having a major focus on innovative technologies and teaching methods.

Setting up of transition programmes from education to work (promotion of cooperation between businesses and education institutions)	Adoption of Recommendation to set the Quality Framework for Traineeships; Promotion of cooperation between relevant stakeholders (as a part of the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative).	Proposal from Permanent Representatives and a Council Recommendation: - Close cooperation with social partners should be ensured in order to apply the Quality Framework for Traineeships.
		Joint Conclusions and Recommendations of EU Youth Conference: - Member States should enhance possibilities for youth (particularly disadvantaged) to validate their skills gained through informal education in order to increase their employment possibilities.
		European Semester 2014: Contribution to the European Council: - Engagement of the private sector is important in order to provide more apprenticeship, trainings and vocational education possibilities.
Counselling of young entrepreneurs (especially in higher education institutions and regional areas in general) with a focus on innovations		Joint Conclusions and Recommendations of EU Youth Conference: - EU members should provide relevant education and trainings for the youth in order to promote entrepreneurial skills; - Countries should support start-ups set up by young people (e.g. by financial incentives, partnerships between education institutions, youth organizations and businesses); - EU states should establish one-stop-shop – services where all information needed to start a new business would be provided; - EU members should invest in social entrepreneurship and create national and EU networks of social entrepreneurs.
Reduction of early school leavers		
Promotion of short-term public work and community service programmes		Council conclusions on the 2014 Annual Growth Survey: - Member States should ensure short-term measures (linked with long-term ones) in order to help young people.
Support for the EU-level initiatives (Youth Guarantee)	Implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative; Monitoring of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.	Note by the presidency: - Greece gives a priority to the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee; - The presidency invited Member States to express their opinions what are the main constraints and incentives to implement the Initiative.
		Council conclusions on the 2014 Annual Growth Survey: - Member States should continue the implementation of measures defined in the Youth Guarantee.
		Joint Conclusions and Recommendations of EU Youth Conference: - EU members should make the Youth Guarantee more long-term strategy.

		European Council Conclusions: - Countries should use all the designed programmes for promoting education and vocational trainings: the Youth Employment Initiative, the Youth Guarantee and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.
Utilization of EU-provided financial funds (e.g. European Social Fund)	Implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative, supporting the utilization of the European structural funds	Note by the presidency: - Member States were encouraged to specify what moves were done and what were needed to optimize the utilization of financial resources.
		Proposal from Permanent Representatives and a Council Recommendation: - Utilization of EU structural, investment funds, i.e. the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund for increasing the number of traineeships offered.
		Joint Conclusions and Recommendations of EU Youth Conference: - EU countries and the Commission should increase current funding.
		European Council Conclusions: - For fostering further education and vocational training, the European funds should be utilized.
Assurance of foreign investment in Greek businesses		

Table 11: Comparison of Greek priorities with presidency achievements

INTERVIEW 1

RESPONDENT: LITHUANIAN REPRESENTATIVE AT THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION IN BRUSSELS

RESPONSE RECEIVED BY E-MAIL ON JUNE 10, 2015

1. *Kokie buvo pagrindiniai Lietuvos prioritetai jaunimo nedarbo/užimtumo klausimu, apibrėžti nacionaliniu lygiu dar prieš pirmininkavimo pusmetį?*

Bendras LT prioritetas vadinosi „Geresnės darbo galimybės – susitelkimas į jaunimą".

Šio prioriteto buvo siekiama įgyvendinant šiuos uždavinius(prioritetus):

1) Pameistrystės stiprinimas;
2) Tarybos rekomendacijų dėl Jaunimo garantijų įgyvendinimo užtikrinimas;
3) Jaunimo užimtumo iniciatyvos patvirtinimas;
4) Geresnis Valstybinių užimtumo tarnybų bendradarbiavimas;
5) Jaunimo, ypač NEET's, socialinė įtrauktis.

2. *Jūsų manumu, ar šie prioritetai buvo išskirti vadovaujantis nacionaline ES reikalų koordinavimo sistema, t.y. įtraukiant visas suinteresuotas puses? Kurios valstybės institucijos dalyvavo nacionalinių prioritetų svarstyme bei kas turėjo lemiamą balsą?*

Dėl visų LT prioritetų buvo sprendžiama bendrai, tačiau iniciatyvos teisė priklausė kiekvienai ministerijai atskirai pagal kuruojamą politikos sritį.

Dar prieš apsisprendžiant dėl konkrečių prioritetų formuluočių, aukščiausiu politiniu lygiu (prezidentūra ir vyriausybė) buvo apsispręsta, kad jaunimo užimtumo tema privalo būti vienas iš pagrindinių LT viso pirmininkavimo prioritetų.

Konkretūs prioritetai ir jų uždaviniai buvo siūlomi atitinkamą sritį kuruojančių ministerijų. Pvz., 1, 2, 4 ir 5 uždavinius pasiūlė Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerija (toliau SADM). Dėl 3 – Finansų ministerijos (toliau FM). Visi siūlymai buvo teikiami bendroms visų ministerijų, Prezidentūros ir vėliau Seimo diskusijoms. Žinoma, daugiausia diskusijų vyko tarp tų ministerijų, kurių sritys labiausiai susijusios. Pvz. dėl pameistrystės stiprinimo konkrečių įgyvendinimo žingsnių daugiausia diskusijų vyko tarp SADM bei Švietimo ministerijos (toliau ŠMM). Šiuo atveju lemiamas balsas priklausė SADM, kadangi bendrai pagal nacionalinę kompetenciją, šiai ministerijai priskiriamas jaunimo užimtumo gerinimas.

3. *Kokie, Jūsų nuomone, buvo pagrindiniai Lietuvos pirmininkavimo prioritetai jaunimo užimtumo klausimu? Kam buvo skiriama daugiausiai dėmesio?*

Visi minėti uždaviniai (prioritetai) paminėti prie pirmo klausimo buvo labai smarkiai tarpusavyje susiję. Todėl jiems visiems buvo skiriamas vienodas dėmesys siekiant garantuoti 100 proc. išpildymą. Reikia pažymėti, kad kiekvienas uždavinys (prioritetas) buvo skirtingų

formų, tiek turinio prasme, tiek įgyvendinimo prasme. Taip pat skyrėsi politiniai lygiai kur jie buvo diskutuojami. Todėl apie juos visus reiktų kalbėti atskirai.

4. *Jūsų manymu, kaip nacionaliniai Lietuvos prioritetai sutampa su šalies pirminkavimo prioritetais jaunimo nedarbo srity?*

Kadangi esame dalis EU, tai pirmininkavimo prioritetai sutapo ir su LT prioritetais, ypač jaunimo nedarbo srityje.

5. *Kaip šiuos prioritetus Lietuvai pavyko įgyvendinti?*

Visi išsikelti uždaviniai/prioritetai buvo įgyvendinti:

-        Geresnės darbo galimybės – susitelkimas į jaunimą. Šis prioritetas buvo atspindėtas Europos Vadovų spalio ir gruodžio išvadose (https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/139197.pdf ir https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/140245.pdf).

1) Pameistrystės stiprinimas:

a) 2013 m. liepos mėnesį, kartu su Europos Socialiniais partneriais, Europos Komisija ir Europos Sąjungos Tarybos pirmininke Lietuva pasirašė deklaraciją įsteigiančią Europos pameistrystės aljansą (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/joint-declaration_en.pdf);

b) 2013 m. liepos mėnesį Vilniuje buvo organizuojama neformali EPSCO Taryba, kurios metu su Europos socialiniais partneriais ir ministrais rengtos diskusijos dėl Europos pameistrystės aljanso (diskusiniai dokumentai pridedami). Šių diskusijų pagrindu buvo rengiama Tarybos deklaracija;

c) Lietuvos iniciatyva 2013 m. spalio 15 d. Europos Sąjungos EPSCO tarybos metu buvo priimta Tarybos deklaracija dėl Europos pameistrystės aljanso (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139011.pdf).

2) Tarybos rekomendacijų dėl Jaunimo garantijų įgyvendinimo užtikrinimas:

a) 2013 m. spalio 15 d. ir gruodžio 9 d. Europos Sąjungos EPSCO tarybų metu inicijuota ministrų nuomonių pasikeitimas dėl Jaunimo garantijų įgyvendinimo;

b)   Daugiau   info   apie   šias   dvi   Tarybas: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139022.pdf   ir http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139998.pdf

3) Jaunimo užimtumo iniciatyvos patvirtinimas:

a) 2013 m. gruodžio 17 d. buvo sutarta dėl Europos Socialinio fondo reglamento, kuriame kartu buvo reglamentuojamas ir Jaunimo užimtumo iniciatyvos finansavimas, padedantis įgyvendinti Jaunimo garantijas (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1304&from=EN).

4) Geresnis Valstybinių užimtumo tarnybų (PES) bendradarbiavimas

a) 2013 m. gruodžio 9 d. EPSCO Tarybos metu ministrai pasiekė bendrą sutarimą dėl Tarybos ir EP sprendimo dėl Geresnio PES bendradarbiavimo. Kaip žinia, PES yra viena iš pagrindinių institucijų įgyvendinant Jaunimo garantijas nacionaliniu lygiu. Todėl jų bendro tinklo įsteigimas EU lygiu, taip prisidedant prie bendros jaunimo užimtumo problemos sprendimo, ir buvo viena esminių priežasčių dar LT pirmininkavimo metu siekti bendro sutarimo Taryboje dėl šio dokumento. (http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2017071%202013%20INIT).

5) Jaunimo, ypač NEET's, socialinė įtrauktis:

a) 2013 m. spalio 25 d. buvo priimtos Tarybos išvados dėl Jaunimo socialinės įtraukties. Nors tai nebuvo tiesiogiai susijusios su Jaunimo užimtumu, tačiau jos yra svarbi dalis kovojant su jaunimo nedarbu (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/139721.pdf)

6. *Kas, Jūsų nuomone, lėmė Lietuvos sėkmę/kokie buvo neigiami veiksniai įgyvendinant šiuos prioritetus?*

LT sėkmę garantavo: išankstinis planavimas ir pasirengimas pirmininkavimui; aktualių prioritetų visai EU pasirinkimas ir bendrų tikslų siekimas; profesionalių valstybės tarnautojų atranka darbui Pirmininkavimo komandoje, ypač dirbusių Lietuvos nuolatinėje atstovybėje prie Europos Sąjungos; nuoseklus ir darbo valandų neskaičiuojantis tikslo siekimas. Neigiami veiksniai: Europos Komisijos noras Pirmininkaujančiosios valstybės rankomis įgyvendinti savo programą; skirtingas valstybių narių požiūris į politikos įgyvendinimą ar savo prioritetų brukimas; menka pagalba iš „sostinės" kolegų (Vilniuje esančių valstybės tarnautojų nenoras/negeba visapusiškai įsitraukti į Pirmininkavimo reiklaus; nekompetencija).

7. *Ką galėtumėte įvardinti kaip svarbiausius Lietuvos atstovus, turėjusius įtakos šalies nacionalinių prioritetų realizavimui europiniu mastu, t.y. pirmininkaujant ES Tarybai?*

Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad LT pirmininkavimo metu buvo pasirinktas principas „Brussels based presidency", todėl pagrindinis krūvis įgyvendinant prioritetus teko asmenims tuo metu dirbusiems Lietuvos nuolatinėje atstovybėje prie EU.

8. *Kokią įtaką nacionalinių prioritetų atstovavimui pirmininkavimo metu turėjo papildomi, specialiai pirmininkavimui sukurti koordinavimo tinklai bei pozicijos?*

Koordinavimo tinklai didesnę įtaką turėjo pasirengimo stadijoje. Pirmininkavimo metu veikė principas „Brussels based presidency". Todėl šioje srityje gana menką.

9. *Kokią įtaką, Jūsų manymu, Lietuva turėjo sudarydama ES Tarybos darbotvarkę bei siekdama įtraukti savo nacionalinius prioritetus jaunimo užimtumo klausimu? Ką galėtumėte įvardinti kaip pagrindinius apribojimus nustatant Lietuvos pirmininkavimo darbotvarkę?*

Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad jaunimo nedarbas visoje EU, įskaitant ir LT, buvo labai didelis, todėl prioritetai sutapo.

10. *Kaip vertinate Lietuvos pirmininkavimą ES Tarybai?*

 Puikiai (95 iš 100).

INTERVIEW 2

RESPONDENT: IRISH REPRESENTATIVE AT THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION IN BRUSSELS

RESPONSE RECEIVED BY E-MAIL ON JUNE 19, 2015

1. *Could you name the main Irish national priorities regarding the youth unemployment that were aggregated at the national level in the past 2 years before the presidency term?*

Irish policies and priorities on the labour market are published in the Action Plan for Jobs (annual iterations available on the DJEI website) and Pathways to work (annual iterations available on the DSP website) http://www.djei.ie/index.htm

2. *In your opinion, were these national priorities aggregated through the institutionalized national coordination system?*

These priorities/policies have been developed through the normal policy-making processes.

3. *What, in your opinion, were the main priorities of Irish presidency with regard to youth unemployment? To which issues did the country pay due attention during the office term?*

The Youth Guarantee was a Commission initiative, which the Tánaiste agreed to take on as a priority in our Presidency.

4. *How did the presidency priorities correlate with national Irish interests in the youth unemployment area?*

Ireland shared the wider European concern about the high level of youth unemployment.

5. *How these priorities were achieved?*

During its Presidency, Ireland helped expedite the processing of the Commission proposals through the Council and the ultimate adoption of the Recommendation.

6. *What, in your opinion, were the main factors that led to successful/ineffectual implementation of these priorities?*

Not in position to identify precisely why the YG moved so speedily through Council -- most likely due to the shared political priority for the issue across MS.

7. *Who were the main actors that had a major influence on the representation/implementation of national goals in the youth unemployment field (e.g. officials at the Permanent Representation, ministers)?*

Processing of the YG by the Presidency was handled in the normal way, with involvement of officials in the PR, officials from relevant ministries, and finally of Ministers at Council.

8. *Did Ireland establish new arrangements (offices/positions/networks) within the national coordination network specifically for the presidency term? If yes, what influence did they have for the representation of national priorities regarding youth unemployment?*

Not in relation to labour market issues.

9. *How much room for manoeuvre did Ireland have for drafting the presidency agenda and incorporating national interests regarding youth unemployment into it? What were the main constraints for the presidency?*

As is normal for any Presidency.

10. *How do you evaluate Irish presidency in general?*

Not really for us to say but the response from our colleagues across the various working groups and committees seemed to be very positive and it was felt that Ireland brought a renewed energy to all activities undertaken over the course of the 6 months.