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The Council presidency and European Foreign Policy – Challenges for Poland in 2011

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The subject of the presidency of the Council of the EU has so far been widely covered in the literature. However, a thorough analysis of the presidency in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is still missing, especially in the light of the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. This article attempts to fill this gap and approaches the subject from two perspectives. On the one hand, it identifies the different roles of the presidency and pinpoints the challenges of chairmanship in the foreign policy field. On the other hand, it focuses on the challenges that are specific to the Polish presidency in the second half of 2011. Among these are the lack of presidency experience and institutional memory as well as the new type of presidency, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009. Drawing on secondary and on original fieldwork, the article offers new insights into how challenges were tackled by previous presidencies and whether there are any important lessons to be learnt by the Poles from these past experiences.

KEYWORDS
Presidency, CFSP, Lisbon Treaty, High Representative, leadership, European Union;

Introduction

Being at the helm of the Council of the European Union (EU) is a challenge for every member state. A country holding the presidency has to organise and chair a wide range of meetings at different levels, broker agreements, provide leadership in the Council and represent the Union vis-à-vis third countries. For a period of six months it is the centre of attention of peers, citizens and the international press. As the period in office is short, there is little room for learning on the spot. Therefore, timely and intense preparations are indispensable. For the new member states, in particular, who cannot rely on earlier experiences, it is essential to decide well in advance on their strategic priorities and to invest in supporting instruments such as human resources, financial means and coordination mechanisms.

After Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary, the Polish presidency is the fourth new member state in the chair.[1] Taking place in the second half of 2011, it will fall under the 'reformed' presidency model introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. According to this new formula, the six-monthly rotating presidency (whereby each country in turn is at the helm of the Council) no longer has the monopoly. Both the European Council and the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC)[2] are now chaired by a longer-term chair, respectively nominated for a period of 2.5 and 5 years.

Rather than risking superficiality by dealing with the Polish presidency in its entirety, this article limits its scope to Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), an area where the system is still in flux. While many observers speculated that the Lisbon Treaty would lift the burden of being the chair from the rotating presidency in the area of CFSP, a careful analysis of the treaty text and subsequently agreed documents show that such a straight-forward conclusion is misleading. Some tasks will in the future be fulfilled by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), but the rotating presidency will, nevertheless, still play an important role. Preparations by Warsaw should therefore include a careful reflection about the implementation of the new

[1] Slovenia held the presidency in the first half of 2008; the Czech Republic in the first half of 2009 and Hungary in the first half of 2011.
[2] Under the Lisbon Treaty, the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) is split into the General Affairs Council (GAC) and the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC).

modalities and its interaction with the chairs of the Foreign Affairs Council (i.e. the High Representative), the European Council and their supporting bodies. As the rotating presidency is no longer the *primus inter pares* in the field of foreign policy, it will become much more difficult to push national foreign policy priorities. If Poland still wants to use its six months in the chair to promote some of its national foreign policy objectives, it will have to carefully and strategically plan about how to realise this in practice.

Taking as a starting point the afore-mentioned challenges, this article starts with an analysis of the traditional roles of the presidency in the field of CFSP and briefly describes the formal changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaty. A distinction is made between the roles of organiser, broker and political leader (Schout and Vanhoonacker 2006). The different roles are also the starting point for the definition of a successful presidency. Secondly, it looks into the challenges these different roles bring for the upcoming Polish presidency and addresses the potential effects of the chairmanship role of the High Representative. The emphasis in the sections on the organiser and broker role lays more with the managerial challenges and the handling of the group process, whereas the section on the political role also addresses the question of how the Polish presidency can make a difference content-wise in terms of European foreign policy cooperation. By drawing on positive as well as negative examples from past presidencies certain policy recommendations are offered in the final part of the paper.

The Multiple Roles of the presidency

The system of the rotating presidency is as old as the European Communities (EC) itself. Rather than opting for a chairmanship by a Secretary General, the member states chose for a system whereby each of them in turn presides over the meetings. This choice had a double advantage. It avoided a heavy secretarial structure and made it possible that all member states, whether they were small or big, could be at the helm. The relatively short term in office - initially three months under the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and extended to six

months under the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom - guaranteed that none of the member states could dominate (Wallace 1985; Kirchner 1992). In the early years the tasks of the presidency were primarily **organisational.** The country prepared and convened the meetings, guaranteed that the required documents were translated and available in time and chaired the sessions at different Council levels, from working groups to the ministerial meetings. It was assisted by the Council Secretariat, established at the first Council meeting in 1952 (Mangenot 2003). The brokerage role was primarily left to the European Commission (Wallace 1985).

In the 1960s, a major clash between French President de Gaulle and Commission President Hallstein put the supranational Commission on the defensive. Its brokerage role came under pressure and gradually the task of mediating amongst diverging positions and forging agreements shifted towards the country in the chair (Kirchner 1992, Fernández 2007). With increasing diversity in the Communities as a result of enlargement and the expanding scope of Community competencies the **broker role** furthermore increased in importance. A good broker is able to listen to the various national positions and can formulate compromise proposals reflecting more than the lowest common denominator. For the member states, which have their own interests to defend, it requires a delicate balance of devising solutions acceptable to all delegations without alienating the public at home. In the case of very sensitive national dossiers, the chair sometimes opts to pass on a dossier to the next country holding the presidency. Traditionally smaller countries with fewer high interests at stake tend to be more effective brokers than larger member states (for example the recent Swedish presidency during the second half of 2009 was perceived by many observers as a very good and neutral broker).

A third role associated with the presidency is that of **political leader**. Providing leadership means that the county at the helm is able to act in the general European interest and steers the debates in the direction of well-defined objectives that further the European integration process. The Commission can therefore be an important ally, but it is of course also important to have identified a

number of supporting delegations around the table. Not every dossier lends itself to such an approach and to be successful, careful preparation is required. Six months is, admittedly, very short time to reach concrete results. It is therefore important to take a long-term approach through close cooperation with previous Presidencies and the Council Secretariat. Only the most ambitious Presidencies take the opportunity to play this role, for it requires both strategic thinking and excellent negotiation skills (Schout and Vanhoonacker 2006).

The three roles of **organiser, broker and political leader** overlap and are mutually dependant. The type of dossier and the stage of the negotiations often determine what is required (Schout & Vanhoonacker 2006). The organiser role is mainly technical and may seem mundane but it is indispensable for a smooth fulfilment of the other roles and is required in all circumstances. The late arrival of documents, sloppy room arrangements and chaotic time management lead to irritation and may prevent the creation of an atmosphere allowing all parties to reach consensus. It helps if the chair heavily relies on the experienced Council Secretariat though some countries seek to 'reinvent the wheel' and organise the meetings from the national capital, often with catastrophic results. Being a neutral broker and giving political direction may conflict with each other and which role is required depends on the stage of the negotiations. While in the early phase political leadership may be more appropriate, later onwards it may be more important to work on the formulation of compromise proposals. Many dossiers, such as those related to the division of funds, do not require a leadership approach. In that case there will be a predominant demand for mediation. In other words, while good organization is always needed, the stage of negotiations and the type of dossier will determine the other two roles.

The above introduction into the different presidency roles of organiser, broker and political leader provides us with a starting point to define the criteria for evaluating a presidency and what may ultimately be the ingredients for a successful Polish term of office. Starting from the premise that different types of roles will be required depending on the situation, we define a successful presidency in the first place as one that is able to provide what is needed in a particular situation (Schout

& Vanhoonacker 2006). This does not mean however that countries should approach the period at the helm in an *ad hoc* way. On the contrary, for the implementation of each role there are a number of golden rules to be respected. Before going into these rules and their implications for the Polish preparations, we first examine the characteristics of the presidency in the area of CFSP, which differ in several aspects from those related to community policies, and which, has changed considerably in the light of the Lisbon Treaty.

The presidency in the Area of CFSP

The Lisbon Treaty broke with a fundamental principle with regard to chairmanship in the Council of the EU by introducing multiple "presidents" at the same time: the rotating six-monthly presidency, the President of the European Council, as well as the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy who is at the same time vice-President of the Commission. Before Lisbon, the Union had only one presidency, and in every single policy area it was the same country who chaired all the meetings (at any moment in time). Still, the scope of action differed according to the pillars. Firstly, in the intergovernmental second and third pillar, the position of the chair was stronger because the Commission did not have the exclusive right of initiative but shared it with the member states. Although every national capital could come forward with proposals, in practice the role of initiator was primarily fulfilled by the country in the chair. It was therefore very tempting for countries at the helm to try to exploit their six months to promote their own hobby-horses. Typical examples are Spain pushing for Latin America, France and Belgium putting Africa on the agenda and Slovenia promoting the Balkan region. While each chair gave new impulses to the European foreign policy agenda and brought in special expertise, the system of rotation also led to discontinuity. Six months is a very short period in foreign policy-making and a new presidency did not necessarily follow-up on what the predecessor had started. For third countries, unfamiliar with the intricacies of EU policy-making, the constant change in interlocutor and policy priorities proved very disruptive. A second important

difference with the first pillar was that CFSP is much more crisis-driven. Presidencies may have well-elaborated plans but they can never be sure to have the possibility to put them into practice. A sudden international crisis may highjack the agenda and sweep their own priorities off the table. A clear case in point was the Belgian presidency in the second half of 2001, which was confronted with the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States or the Lebanon conflict during the Finnish presidency in the second half of 2006.

All of the above made the presidency in the CFSP area an extremely heavy task. When, in the late 1990s, the reform debate took off (Trumpf Piris Report 1999), several voices questioned the continuing feasibility of the system. The British Prime Minister Tony Blair, for example, referred to it as “a fatal handicap in the development of an effective CFSP” and heavily criticised the fact that every presidency sets its own distinctive agenda (Blair 2002). The creation of the position of High Representative for CFSP, foreseen in the Amsterdam Treaty, had already been a first attempt to create more continuity amongst different chairs. During the Convention on the Future of Europe, however, a majority of countries wanted to go further and pleaded for the establishment of a long-term chair in the area of CFSP. The Constitutional Draft Treaty foresaw the establishment of a minister of foreign affairs appointed for a period of five years by the European Council with the agreement of the President of the Commission. The Lisbon Treaty maintained this provision but changed the politically sensitive denomination of foreign minister into that of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. This new chair of the Foreign Affairs Council, who also has the co-right of initiative, implements European foreign policy, represents the Union in this area and is supported by its own administration, known as the European External Action Service (EEAS). As Vice President of the European Commission the HR also contributes to the consistency of EU external action. In the field of external representation the Treaty also foresees a role for the chair of the European Council (Art. 15). This has led to fears that the former rivalry between the HR and the Commissioner for External Relations may be replaced by new turf battles (Duke 2008). At this moment, however, relations between Catherine

Ashton in her position of HR and Herman van Rompuy as chair of the European Council seem to be rather good. The competition appears to lay more between Van Rompuy and Commission President José Barroso.

Even though the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty remove some of the burden from the rotating presidency in foreign policy, **careful preparation by Poland, both in terms of content and organisation, continues to be important for at least three reasons**.

Firstly, there are a number of bodies in CFSP which will continue to be chaired by the country at the helm and where it will be imperative to play the different roles described in the first part of this contribution (see Table 1). At the higher level this includes Coreper II, which will continue to play an important bridging function in guaranteeing coherence between CFSP issues and external economic relations. At the working group level, the general rule is that geographic preparatory bodies, CFSP horizontal bodies and CSDP-related bodies will be chaired by a representative of the HR. There are, however, a couple of exceptions where the rotating presidency will continue to be in charge. This includes the Working Party of Foreign Relations Counsellors (RELEX), the Working Party on Terrorism (COTER), the Working Party on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism (COCOP), the Working Party on Consular Affairs (COCON), the Working Party on Public International Law (COJUR, and the Working Party on the Law of the Sea (COMAR) (see Annex II of Council Decision on the exercise of the presidency, 16517/09). Furthermore the Council Decision on the exercise of the presidency (2009a) foresees a number of transitional arrangements. Horizontal and CSDP preparatory bodies will continue to be chaired by the rotating presidency up to six months after the adoption of the Council Decision on the EEAS (for geographic bodies it may be up to 12 months). If the EEAS is only to be operational in late 2010 or even early 2011, this may imply Poland still being responsible for chairing the geographical working groups. For all these bodies it will be necessary to invest sufficient human and material resources to carry out the tasks successfully.

Secondly, one should not underestimate the new coordination demands resulting from this 'split' presidency in the area of CFSP. Before Lisbon, coordination was primarily a question of close communication and consultation with the national capital and, particularly, the ministry of foreign affairs. Since the arrival of the HR and her staff, it is also crucial to closely interact with the EEAS. Especially the chair of Coreper may have to fulfil an important role in this respect. A further challenge is coordination among the different dimensions of EU external action (trade, development, CFSP). In the areas of trade the rotating presidency remains in charge at all levels. The Council rules of procedure (Council 2009b) have even specified that when trade is on the FAC agenda, the HR will ask to be replaced by the rotating chair. In the area of development, the rotating presidency is only in charge at the level of the working parties and Coreper. At ministerial level, it is the HR which takes the lead. According to the Treaty it is first and foremost the task of the HR to take care of the coherence in EU external action, but it is clear that this objective cannot be realised without close cooperation with the country at the helm.

A third reason why Poland should not underestimate the extent of preparations in the area of CFSP is that it will hold the presidency at a time when the role of the new HR and its EEAS will not yet have been fully institutionalised. Keeping in mind the controversy around the HR's draft proposal on the organisation and functioning of the EEAS in March 2010 (High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 2010) it is expected that this new body will not be operational before late 2010. Once in place, it will take some time before it starts running fully and can take up all its roles. By 2011, an informal 'code of conduct' determining the future cooperation and coordination of EU foreign policy actors will still be in development. This means that by introducing certain practices and setting precedents, Poland may have a long-lasting impact on the future rules and procedures underpinning the interaction between the HR and the rotating chair. This will not be an easy process. European integration history has shown that new institutional set-ups are often accompanied with

conflict and distortion, and that it takes time before various actors are socialised into their role.

Table 1: The Council presidency in CFSP under the Lisbon Treaty (Council 2009)

	High Representative, or Representative of High Representative	Six-months rotating presidency	President of the European Council
European Council			X
General Affairs Council (GAC)		X	
Foreign Affairs Council (including CFSP, CSDPand Development Cooperation)	X		
Foreign Affairs Council - Trade*		X	
COREPER II		X	
ANTICI		X	
PSC	X		
NICOLAIDIS	X		
Preparatory bodies – trade and development**		X	
Preparatory bodies – geographic***	X		
Preparatory bodies – horizontal (mainly CFSP) ****	X		
Preparatory bodies – CSDP*****	X		

Transitional Arrangement for preparatory bodies

- horizontal and CDSP: up to six months after the adoption of Council Decision on organisation and functioning of European External Action Service (EEAS), six-monthly presidency shall continue to chair
- geographic: up to 12 months

* Although the Lisbon Treaty stipulates that the Foreign Affairs Council is chaired by the High Representative, it has been agreed that when trade issues are on the agenda, the HR will ask to be replaced by the rotating presidency. See 'Council Decision of 1 December 2009 adopting the Council's Rules of Procedure' 2009/938/EU', Official Journal L 325, Vol.52, 11 December 2009, 35-61.

** Article 207 Committee, ACP Working Party, Working Party on Development Cooperation (DEVGEN), Working Party on EFTA, Working Party on Dual-Use Goods, Working Party on Trade Questions, Working Party on Commodities, Working Party on the Generalised System of Preferences, Working Party on Preparation for International Development Conferences/UNCCD Desertification/UNCTAD, Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid, Export Credits Group;

*** Mashreq/Maghreb Working Party (COMAG/MaMA), Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST), Working Party on the Western Balkans Region (COWEB), Middle East/Gulf Working Party (COMEM/MOG), Asia-Oceania Working Party (COASI), Working Party on Latin America (COLAT), Working Party on Transatlantic Relations (COTRA), Africa Working Party (COAFR);

**** Working Party on Global Disarmament and Arms Control (CODUN), Working Party on Non-Poliferation (CONOP), Working Party on Conventional Arms Export (COARM), Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), Working Party on OSCE and the Council of Europe (COSCE), United Nations Working Party (CONUN), Ad hoc Working Party on the Middle East Peace Process (COMEP), Working Party on CFSP Administrative Affairs and Protocol (COADM);
However, following working parties stay with rotating presidency: Foreign Relations Counsellors (RELEX Counsellors), Working Parties on: Terrorism (COTER), the application of specific measures to combat terrorism (COCOP), Consular Affairs (COCON), Public International Law (COJUR), the Law of the Sea (COMAR);

***** Military Committee (EUMC), Military Committee Working Group (EUMCWG), Politico-Military Working Party (PMG), Committee for Civilian Aspets of Crisis Management (CIVCOM), Working Party on European Arms Policy;

Challenges for the Polish presidency

Following this general introduction, the second part of this article focuses specifically on the challenges for the Polish presidency in the second half of 2011. It will successively discuss how Poland can best prepare for the three different roles of organiser, broker and political leader, and refer to examples from past presidencies. Furthermore it will pay attention to how Poland can best prepare for the new situation created by the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty.

The record of Polish performance when it comes to CFSP is so far mixed. Polish diplomacy played an important role in involving the EU in the events of the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine at the end of 2004 and managed to promote the idea of creating an Eastern Partnership by 2009. However, Poland was also disillusioned by the lack of influence regarding the possible Ukrainian accession to the EU and lost much of its credibility as a consensus-oriented player when exercising its veto over the negotiation mandate for the Commission on the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia at the end of 2006. Therefore, the presidency in CFSP is as much an opportunity as it is a challenge for the Polish government. What may make the Polish presidency particular is that in the area of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) the period at the helm may not last six months but a full year. As the succeeding country, Denmark, has an opt-out from ESDP, there is a strong chance that Poland will continue to chair these meetings even after its term in office.

Organiser Role

The organiser role of the presidency has traditionally included preparing the agenda and meetings, communicating realistic timetables and circulating respective documents well in advance.[3] As argued in the first part of this article, the role of organiser is primarily supportive and secretarial. It is the most traditional role of the presidency, which for this technical task, can to a large extent rely on the services of the Council General Secretariat (CGS) and more particularly on the

[3] For an extensive overview see Schout & Vanhoonacker 2006, p. 1055.

relevant departments in DG E (External Relations). It is therefore important for future chairs to get to know their counterparts in the Secretariat well in advance and to familiarise themselves with existing practices.

With the Lisbon Treaty however, several directorates of DG E currently supporting the rotating presidency in its daily work will be re-allocated to the EEAS (see High Representative 2010b). In addition, the FAC, PSC and most of the working groups (see above) will be chaired by the HR and her staff. Although it is to be expected that the organisation of the meetings will continue to be in the hands of the Secretariat, it is not yet clear how exactly the organisational tasks between the CGS and the EEAS will be divided. This will probably only become clear once the EEAS is fully operational in the course of 2011.

In addition to close cooperation with the Council Secretariat and the EEAS, it is also important for the country in the chair 'to have its own house in order'. This means, firstly, a clear division of tasks between the various actors and well-functioning mechanisms of co-ordination. Ensuring this not only relates to the players at home but also to the chain of command between the capital and Brussels, i.e. the Permanent Representation (PermRep). While it is important that the work and directions taken by the PermRep are backed up at home, it is also important to allow a certain degree of leeway for the players in Brussels, who are themselves the best placed to assess the situation on the ground, and respond to changing circumstances, being those most socialised into general practices of EU policy making.

Furthermore, it is also crucial for the country at the helm to dispose of sufficient human resources, both in the capital and the Permanent Representation.[4] This requires the recruitment of additional staff well in advance so that they have sufficient time to get used to the environment, prepare dossiers and get to know their colleagues in the relevant institutional bodies. For staff already in place, strict rules are needed with regard to the planning of holidays or other forms of absence.

[4] The Hungarian PermRep for example will expand its staff from currently 100 members to at least 180 members (Interview Permanent Representation of the Republic of Hungary to the EU, 18 February 2009)

However important a careful organisation may be, it is impossible to foresee everything. Each presidency will at different levels and in various ways be confronted with the unexpected. This might be in the framework of the domestic context, within the EU but also due to unforeseen international events. It is therefore important to leave some room for flexibility and change and not to overburden the political agenda.

Lessons from other presidencies

Experience and evaluations from previous presidencies show that the organizing role is a key element of achieving success. Good organisational skills might not be a sufficient condition for success but without them, Presidencies can never aspire for a positive evaluation. This became clear after the Italian presidency in 2003 which was perceived unsuccessful for its "limitedness of intangible resources available in performing the multifaceted presidency's role" (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006: 363).

The Slovenian presidency in 2008 serves as a recent example of sound preparation and good organization. Although it concerned a new EU member state and indeed one of the smallest, Slovenian diplomats were able to adapt to the Brussels environment and convince through a smooth running at different levels. In preparing the Slovenian presidency 80% of staff had already been in Brussels one year in advance, with the team in the Permanent Representation complete four months before the presidency-term began.[5] For the Slovenian presidency the Permanent Representation was the "presidency's eyes and ears" (Kajnc 2009: 17), it provided formal and informal contacts with the EU institutions and with other member states, and at the same time was the focal point for the national ministries. Slovenia also highly relied on the support of the Council Secretariat:

> "The Council Secretariat's staff was the presidency's best ally. It guided it through the procedures and it provided most often the most useful information. It performed these formal roles to a much greater

[5] Interview Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU, 13 February 2009.

satisfaction than it did in providing guidance on running the dossier and negotiations" (Kajnc 2009: 17).

As any experienced presidency will confirm, it is never possible to plan for everything. Nonetheless, at the domestic level it may be possible to take measures to reduce the risk of being distracted by internal political problems. The British government, for example, during its presidency in 2006 removed the ratification process of the Constitutional Treaty from the agenda to prevent any distractions by internal discussions at home (Whitman 2006: 58). The Hungarian government negotiated a cross-party memorandum that will guarantee consensus between the political forces in Hungary during the presidency in 2010.

However there are limits to what governments can anticipate and there will always be situations that cannot be controlled, especially in an area like CFSP that is largely driven by external events. As is illustrated below by the quote by an official of the Slovenian Permanent Representation, it is important in such cases to be flexible, adapt to new circumstances and allow a certain degree of improvisation.

"We really did not hesitate to ask, we tried to prepare as good as possible the first two months. You, of course, prepare six months and plan strategically, but through study of experience of previous presidencies we realized that there was not a single one who presided as they had planned. So there are unexpected and unplanned developments coming, especially in foreign policy, crises to which you have to react and you have to adopt. But we thought that it would be important for us in the beginning not to wait for things to happen but at the beginning to have a solidly prepared agenda for the first two months. We established a rolling schedule and we used it from our first meeting to our last one. And we tried to adopt it to requirements. In

> average I would say from our prepared calendar we were be able to cover about 25%, and 75% would be things which we had to change."[6]

The Finnish presidency in 2006 assessed this need for flexibility in a similar fashion. They concluded that 35% of their agenda items were anticipated and prepared beforehand, but that 65% of their agenda had to be changed due to unforeseen events (Ojanan & Vuohula 2007: 17). This does not negate the need to prepare for the whole term in office, but implies that it is absolutely crucial to combine this with a high degree of flexibility. The crisis in Lebanon and the sound reaction of the Finnish presidency was said to have saved the leaderless presidency (Ojanan & Vuohula 2007: 17).

Challenges for Poland

The main challenges for Poland as an organiser during the presidency stem from the lack of experience, the possible unclarity of division of organisational tasks between the Council Secretariat and the EEAS, the need for effective national coordination systems and the crisis-driven character of CFSP. Even though in this mostly technical role Poland will be able to rely heavily on the Council Secretariat and possibly also the EEAS, holding the presidency is always a huge logistic effort and member states need to provide substantial human and financial resources. This, in turn, requires providing the officials with know-how and skills trainings well in advance. This is a considerable challenge, since after Polish accession, a high number of civil servants familiar with the "ways-of doing-things" in Brussels left to work for the EU institutions. Furthermore, some of those with experience at the Polish Permanent Representation have already been sent to other posts abroad jeopardizing institutional knowledge transfer. The lessons those officials learnt in Brussels, especially about the informal 'rules of the game', need to be passed on to those that will be involved in the presidency. As Poland is a new member state, there is also no institutional memory on previous Presidencies.

[6] Interview Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU, 13 February 2009.

The fact that under Lisbon the majority of meetings in the area of CFSP will be chaired by the HR and her staff should in principle reduce the organisational workload of the Polish presidency. Nevertheless, there are a number of exceptions, and even more importantly, at the level of Coreper the country at the helm remains in the chair. Depending on when the EEAS becomes operational there may be a number of working groups which still fall under the transitional regime, whereby the rotating presidency remains in charge for a period of twelve months (see section 2). In addition to relying on the logistical expertise of the Council Secretariat, organising meetings in close cooperation with the HR and the EEAS will be required. Polish chairs at working group level will have to closely coordinate with the respective (EEAS) chair of the PSC and the latter will have to interact with the Polish chair of Coreper. In other words, even if the organisational workload diminishes, the challenges in terms of coordination will increase. An additional challenge may be that, at the time of the Polish presidency, the exact division of organisational tasks between the CGS and EEAS are not entirely settled.

A third potential challenge is to provide effective coordination mechanisms both in the capital and between the capital and Permanent Representation in Brussels. There have been misunderstandings in the past and internal turf-wars in the CFSP area, especially between UKIE (the Office of the Committee for European Integration) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Although UKIE has now been integrated into the MFA under the leadership of the Foreign Minister, the latter has jealously guarded foreign and security policies and did not wish for interference from other ministries. In addition, the Permanent Representation, while handling the whole spectrum of EU affairs with many officials delegated by various ministries, is headed by an Ambassador from the MFA, who reports to this ministry. This further complicates the role of UKIE, which should co-ordinate Polish European policy, but has had trouble in the past with the CFSP-dossier (Pomorska 2007).

Finally, CFSP is a very dynamic policy that requires swift responses to the crisis situations worldwide. In the past, Poland has had trouble with fast

coordination, largely due to unprepared systems of safe electronic networks and a very centralised system of decision-making (for more on the MFA's experience with the accession see: Pomorska, 2007). Others have also mentioned problems like intra- and inter-institutional rivalry, the duplication of functions, faulty cooperation, a lack of analysis of failures (Stemplowski, 2001: 18), and reluctance to share information with others.

Broker Role

One of the biggest challenges for the presidency when fulfilling the broker role is to switch the mindset from that of being a "national champion" to a neutral broker. The chairing position is entirely different from what countries are normally used to during the Council meetings, i.e. representing their national interests. It is also more difficult to prepare or receive training for and some personalities are more adept at chairing than others. The official in the chair has to know the preferences and positions of the other delegations very well; be familiar with the formal but, even more importantly, the informal rules of the decision-making process and should know the development of respective policies at EU level over time. In addition, the chair has to build trust among his colleagues by proposing consensus solutions that go beyond the national interest (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006: 362). To be able to fulfil this task, close cooperation with previous Presidencies, the Council Secretariat and the Commission is indispensable. Furthermore, Presidencies may strategically use other delegations in the process of forging an agreement. This means that while the presidency as chair of the meetings is in a privileged position to formulate compromises, it is not necessarily the sole broker and can also invoke the support of others.

The criteria for being a good broker are well illustrated by the following quote from a Slovenian official of the Permanent Representation who was involved in the country's presidency in 2008:

> "You have to know very well the content. You have to be very polite and very flexible. And you have to find an overview about the situation in the room, to know the national agendas, and you have to be very practical,

> and you should have the ability to make shortcuts for long discussions."[7]

The Lisbon Treaty has important implications for the broker role of rotating Presidencies in the foreign policy area. Given that the Foreign Affairs Council, the PSC and many of the preparatory bodies of the Council will be chaired by the HR and his/her representative, the possibility for the rotating chair to act as a broker is reduced. If national delegations have specific requests or pursue certain objectives, they may first address the HR and her staff, rather than the rotating presidency. At the same time, it is unclear whether the HR will be in an optimal position to serve as broker. It is uncertain whether the national delegations will trust the double-hatted HR who also represents the European Commission[8]; they may well be happy to see a continuing role for the rotating chair in forging compromises.

Lessons from the other Presidencies

Being perceived as an honest and trustworthy partner is the most important asset of a successful broker. These qualities not only facilitate reaching an agreement, but they also make member states more willing to share sensitive information (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006: 364). Past experiences have shown that smaller member states are often able to fulfil this task better than bigger ones (see e.g. Bengtsson & Elgström & Tallberg 2004: 315). The Irish presidency in 2004 is a good illustration of this:

> "The success of the Irish presidency can be attributed to the good relations it enjoyed with other Member States. These relationships were not always equally harmonious but Ireland's small size as a country made it less difficult for it to be accused of having an aggressive agenda and facilitated relations with the other small sized countries" (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne 2006: 360)

[7] Interview Permanent Representation of Slovenia, 13 February 2009
[8] Even within the first months of term of Lady Ashton as HR sparked comments on her close cooperation with the British Foreign Office.

The Luxembourg presidency of 2005 was perceived in a similar vein. Nobody expected it to push forcefully for its vital national interests, and at the same time its Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker had already gained a reputation as an "effective EU 'fixer' combining linguistic and negotiation skills with dogged Europeanism" (Hearl 2006: 52) during earlier presidencies.[9]

Another interesting example is the success of the German presidency to broker an agreement in police cooperation in 2007, an area where unanimity was required. While the German assertiveness initially alienated certain member states, they also agreed that there would have seen an agreement had the confident style of the presidency not kept long debates short and, at the same time, encouraged good performance (Maurer 2008: 53).

Challenges for Poland

For Poland, the main challenges in playing the broker role are both related to the new role of the HR and her staff, as well as to the need to build up trust due to its clearly stated and advocated national interests.

Poland will no longer be at the helm of the Foreign Affairs Council and many of its supporting bodies, what will inevitably have a strong impact on its potential brokerage role. Contrary to the past, the rotating presidency will no longer be at the centre of the negotiation process, and delegations will primarily interact with the HR and the EEAS. At the same time this does not necessarily imply that the rotating chair will merely be 'one of the delegations'. As chair of Coreper, Poland may still have a central role in the so-called horizontal dossiers affecting other dimensions of external relations. Furthermore, negotiations in the Union leave scope for multiple brokers. By closely cooperating with the HR and her services there may still be a privileged role for Poland in trying to formulate compromises or mediating between 'difficult' delegations. Such a continued role as broker can, however, only be successful if it happens in close coordination with the HR and if it is not used as a strategy to realise own national interests.

[9] It was the 11th presidency for the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the 4th presidency for its Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker.

As regards another challenge, Poland voiced its wish to be a strong player in CFSP even before EU membership, lobbying for the creation of the Eastern Dimension and expressing its opinions on ESDP. The policy under Kaczynski's government, especially concerning Russia, was strongly based on defending national interests and playing the role of the "national champion" rather than negotiator. Some interviewed diplomats perceived going as far as blocking the mandate for the EU-Russia negotiations as a proof of the capital's complete misunderstanding of 'how things really work' in Brussels. It was perceived as a breach of an informal 'code of conduct', based predominantly on a culture of consensus and 'keeping everyone on-board'. It is often emphasized that the Permanent Representation in Brussels does not have sufficient room for manoeuvre to have any impact on the evolving negotiation process, and there are strong tensions between the diplomats in Warsaw and those based in Brussels. The former are often not socialised into how Brussels operates and do not always keep in touch with the developments on the Brussels scene. This has led to losing credibility among European partners, many of whom admitted that Poland's internal isolation is a "nightmare scenario" for any member state. If Poland wants to be a successful broker, it is important for it to start building its credibility as a constructive actor as soon as possible, since such a reputation cannot be gained 'overnight'.

Next to the policy towards the new Eastern neighbours, also transatlantic relations are among the Polish "hobby-horses" inside the Union. Poland has been long perceived as a member state very close to Washington, a view only confirmed with its engagement in Iraq and, later, the agreement to install an American anti-missile defence system in Poland. Hence, the rotating presidency needs to be careful to keep its neutral position and not to push to openly for its own national interests. However, the real complication emerges with relation to the third role of providing political leadership that at first sight might seem in conflict with the mediating role.

Political Leadership Role

The role of political leader, whereby the chair fulfils a 'communitarian function' and acts as a defender of the broader general European interest, is undoubtedly the most challenging presidency role. Taking into account that six months is a very short period and that there is a rolling agenda inherited from the previous period, it calls for thorough preparation and strategic thinking about how to reach the objectives. It is hereby also crucial to closely interact with other like-minded players and previous and next presidencies. The system of so-called trio presidencies, whereby since 2007 three succeeding presidencies submit a joint programme, offers new chances for such enhanced co-ordination.[10]

The political leadership role is intensive both in terms of human resources and time and can therefore never be taken lightly. An important factor for its success is clear communication about the motivation underlying the choice for the priority dossier and the ability to highlight the advantages for the EU as a whole, i.e. to frame it as an EU issue that is interesting for all member states. Past examples of cases where countries have tried to provide political leadership are Spain putting the Mediterranean Policy on the agenda, Finland trying to realise progress on the Northern dimension, and Sweden prioritising conflict prevention (Tallberg 2003: 7).

An extra challenge for the political leadership role in CFSP is the need for unanimity and its crisis-driven nature, requiring a high amount of flexibility. The chairmanship of the FAC by the HR since Lisbon will further complicate this role. Nominated for a period of five years, the HR is in a much better position to steer European foreign policy in a particular direction. In fact the position of High Representative was created to address the leadership vacuum in CFSP. If a presidency country wants to be successful in realising long-term EU foreign policy objectives, it can therefore only do so through close cooperation with the HR and

[10] The Lisbon Treaty maintains this practice of closer cooperation between pre-established groups of three Presidencies. Poland is part of the group consisting of Denmark and Cyprus holding the presidency in 2012.

the HR's staff. Goals and design strategies should be discussed well in advance, possibly also with the other members of the trio presidency.

Lessons from other Presidencies

Examples from previous presidencies show that finding the right balance between providing political leadership while remaining a credible broker is delicate. It is quite reasonable that Presidencies try to provide political leadership in their areas of national expertise. It is, however, important to justify the priorities in a European discourse and to publicize the expertise of the presidency in this particular topic. In 2007 for instance, Portugal very well managed to "sell" its priority to establish stronger political dialogue with Africa and Brazil to its fellow EU member countries, by emphasising the strategic interest for the EU, and by presenting itself as the most suited mediator for these negotiations due to its expertise. Portugal was able to communicate clearly and in a credible manner that these issues were not being emphasised during its presidency purely due to national interest, but that Portugal was acting for the wider EU interest of forging a strong relationship with these partners (Ferreira-Pereira 2008: 65-69).

Similar to the broker role, the perception of other member states about the intention of the presiding country is crucial. As soon as member states perceive the presidency as using the EU term in office for pushing their national interests, they may block proposals. Taking into account that decisions in CFSP require unanimity, this is highly counterproductive; it even harms the reputation and trustworthiness of the presidency in office. The Nordic EU members seem to have succeeded quite well in linking their own priorities to the broader general EU interest:

> "As opposed to a number of Presidencies in the past, none of the Nordic Presidencies has come to be remembered among policy makers or the wider public for the prioritization of national over European concerns. Yet, when scrutinized systematically, the Nordic governments' performance lends more support to the image of the EU

> presidency as an amplifier than to the description of it as a silencer." (Bengtsson & Elgström & Tallberg 2004: 330)

Presidencies can also show political leadership by their effective and quick reaction to external events. The sound crisis management of the Finnish presidency in 2006 during the Lebanon crisis is said to have saved a rather unspectacular presidency (Ojanan & Vuohula 2007: 21-22).

Challenges for Poland

Poland's track record with political leadership and coalition building in the field of European foreign policy is so far modest. Its engagement during the orange revolution in Ukraine in 2004 could only partially be considered as leadership in action as soon afterwards there were complaints from other, smaller member states in the region that they were not properly 'kept on-board' during the events. Nonetheless, it is in the area of Eastern Europe where Poland has most potential to exert its leadership role, especially after its initiative, together with Sweden, that led to the establishment of the Eastern Partnership. In order to be successful, preparations should start well in advance, i.e. at least 1,5 year before the start of the presidency. As previously argued it is required to cooperate closely with the High Representative and with the other members of the trio, namely Denmark and Cyprus (first and second half of 2012). Preceding Poland in the rotating presidency, also Hungary may be an attractive partner. In addition, Poland also has to make sure that the Southern member states are well-informed to avoid the feeling of competitiveness between the Eastern and the Southern Dimensions. Other potential policy areas could include transatlantic relations or the Baltic Sea cooperation.

Finally, an issue of crucial importance not only for the political leadership role but also for the other two roles discussed in this article, is the question of Poland's electoral calendar. The next parliamentary elections are foreseen for October 2011. A stable national context is indispensable for the conduct of a successful presidency; the Czech example of the first half of 2009 serves as a warning for the future of what may happen in the case of domestic political turmoil, where

politicians and officials lose their focus on European politics and engage instead in the national political battles.

Concluding Remarks

The appointment of the High Representative (2010-2014) and the creation of a European External Action Service radically affect the role of the rotating presidency in the area of CFSP. As chair of the Foreign Affairs Council, the HR now occupies a central place in the foreign policy making process and is a privileged point of contact both for the member states as well as for third countries. This does not mean, however, that the Polish presidency in the second half of 2011 no longer has any role to play and that preparations can simply be ignored. On the contrary, as chair of Coreper and a number of other CFSP working groups, Poland will continue to be in charge of the preparation and smooth running of a couple of important preparatory bodies. Depending on the starting date of the EEAS, it may even remain at the helm of the geographical working groups. As chair of Coreper and the group of Relex counsellors, it will furthermore be pivotal in the coordination between CFSP and the other dimensions of external relations. Secondly, there may still be some scope for a brokerage and leadership role in areas where the HR and her staff are in the chair. Especially in dossiers where Poland has specific expertise, the HR may be interested to make use of this specialised knowledge for forging of compromises or realising long-term EU objectives. Such a role will, however, not come automatically but has to be carefully prepared. A third factor requiring serious attention is the new coordination challenge created by the post-Lisbon system. The variation among chairmanships across levels means that in addition to close communication lines between Warsaw and the PermRep, it will also be crucial to continuously interact with the HR and the EEAS.

The realisation of the Polish ambition to be a player and not just a follower under the new CFSP institutional architecture cannot be taken for granted. It will depend on its capacity to clearly define its priorities and careful prepare them, not

in isolation but in cooperation with its partners, and in the first place the HR. If successful, the period at the helm is an excellent opportunity to improve Poland's European image and show its partners that it is a consensus-oriented player in the Union.

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