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**MANY POLICIES, LITTLE TIME: REVISITING
THE POWERS OF THE ROTATING PRESIDENCY
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU**

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The PhD programme Political Studies (POLS) (31st cohort) stems from the collaboration of three Universities, namely Università degli Studi di Genova, Università degli Studi di Milano, Università degli Studi di Pavia. The University of Milan serves as the administrative headquarters and provides the facilities for most teaching activities.

Abstract

The rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, once a key actor in the European decision-making process, was substantially weakened after the Treaty of Lisbon. Nonetheless, it maintains important competences, characterising the Presidency's stance in the Council of the EU. Against this background, while focusing on one of the main responsibilities granted to the rotating chair – agenda control of the Council – this dissertation evaluates the extent to which the rotating Presidency is able to leave an imprint on the institution's agenda, as well as the legislative outputs of the EU. In doing so, the research applies a widespread methodological approach, ranging from statistical analyses, quantitative text-analyses to qualitative comparative case studies.

Throughout its four chapters, this dissertation addresses the key institutional assets possessed by the rotating Presidency: agenda-setting, agenda-structuring and agenda-exclusion powers, as presented by Tallberg (2003). Taking into consideration the lack of longitudinal analyses of rotating Presidency agendas, especially after the Treaty of Lisbon, this dissertation provides several contributions.

First, it presents a novel, hand-coded dataset of 40 rotating Presidency programmes in 1997-2017. Throughout the dissertation, this dataset is employed as a proxy of their manifested agendas. By measuring issue salience across different rotating Presidency programmes, this research reveals attention shifts across different policies, and examines the main determinants (both at the national and supranational levels) influencing such punctuations.

Furthermore, in order to measure the extent to which introducing issues on the agenda or changing their prioritisation can actually influence the legislative outputs, Chapter III explores the legislation adopted throughout the 20 years period under study. By employing a novel text analysis approach – a dynamic topic model – the study looks at the legislative outputs from a punctuated equilibrium perspective. In this regard, the research paves the way for future analyses of the EU legislation, especially aiming to establish a link between the input and output EU agendas, beyond the analysis of the Council Presidency.

Finally, Chapter IV deals with often neglected *negative* face of power, i.e. agenda-exclusion. The chapter provides a step-by-step analysis of the legislative process to detect strategic delays and explores possible strategic explanations for such rotating Presidency behaviour in the post-Lisbon period.

Overall, the dissertation shows that, despite the Treaty of Lisbon, the rotating Council Presidency has retained a degree of influence. This is expressed both in agenda management powers and chair's leverage on the legislative outputs. Hereby, this thesis opens up trajectories for new research in the field of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU.

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Introduction

The changes the European Union (EU) has been going through in the past two decades have greatly influenced its *modus operandi*. Whilst Eastern enlargements and treaty changes have gradually contributed to the incremental amendments of the institutional structure of the Union, the eruption of several crises left a more abrupt imprint. The latter transformations inevitably generated discussions about the roles and powers of the EU institutions, the quality of policies being implemented and the general responsiveness of the Union to public demands. These, in turn, led to several important institutional changes, some of which are of great relevance for this dissertation.

Among the changes, the increased powers of the European Parliament (EP) in the decision-making process (manifestly aimed to shrink the alleged democratic deficit of the Union) stand out. The second legislative branch of the Union – the Council of the EU – underwent institutional changes as well. In order to ensure a leadership stability in high-politics areas, the chairmanship of the European Council and the Council of Foreign Affairs were granted to the appointed representatives, separating them from the roles of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. While in order to ensure a better (informal) coordination of monetary policies, the Eurogroup was established.

In this regard, scholars' attention granted to the evaluations of new positions, such as the President of the European Council, often out-shadows institutions from which these roles were transferred. This leads to the fact that the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU is comparatively one of the less-studied institutions in the European Union. Following an early establishment, the rotating chair has gone through several changes, which, accordingly, led to the main alternations in its roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, considering its main duties in the Council agenda-setting process, as well as the legislative negotiations in the EU, the Presidency occupies a rather prominent role in the Council negotiations. Given a frequent rotation (every six months), the extent to which a single Presidency can influence the formal decision-making process has been neglected in the academic research, especially in the post-Lisbon era. Therefore, this dissertation tackles this gap in the literature by bringing the

rotating Presidency institute into the forefront of the EU. More specifically, this dissertation assesses the role of the Presidency in the Council working mechanism, with a focus on the agenda management powers and the extent to which its preferences can be reflected in the final outputs, i.e. EU legislation.

There are several reasons to investigate the agenda management powers of the rotating Presidency. Firstly, as opposed to a rather well-examined rotating Presidency before the Treaty of Lisbon, the latter amendments, circumscribing the role of the chair, coincided with a decreased interest in the policy developments at the ministerial level. This could be explained by the fact that the rotating chair is perceived as a rather administrative body, with a greatly limited influence in the negotiations and, even more, final outcomes. As a result, the role of the European Council, as the actual intergovernmental body representing member states' interests, has overtaken the attention, previously concentrated on the rotating Presidency.

Secondly, the majority of scholarly work dedicated to the rotating Council Presidencies in the post-Lisbon era is focused on single Presidencies and their key achievements. Whereas these studies provide rich background information about different interpretations of the main roles granted to the chair (i.e. considering that each member state may perceive this responsibility in slightly different ways), systemic studies, required to evaluate the trends of the development of the rotating Presidency, are missing.

Finally, given the establishment of the Trio Presidency, single Presidencies are considered to have only a secondary role in the agenda-setting process, as they can manoeuvre mainly within the 18-month agenda boundaries. While this perception may justify the lack of interest in the Presidency, it requires an empirical judgement. Although the Trio does set the general framework for three successive Presidencies, it is mainly agreed by the three member states themselves. Therefore, the main idea raised in this dissertation rests behind the rationale that even in a constrained environment, the rotating Presidency retains several institutional assets that enable it to play a significant role. This leads to the main research question: *to what*

extent does the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU influence the Council agenda and the EU legislation?

With respect to the extent of the influence, this dissertation provides a sequential analysis of the main agenda control strategies: agenda-setting, agenda-structuring and agenda-exclusion (Tallberg, 2003). It must be noted that agenda-setting concept has a dual meaning in this research. Considering the extensive literature on the process (see Chapter I), agenda-setting is regarded as an overarching term to denote activities linked with it. Nevertheless, according to Tallberg (2003), especially when speaking of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, agenda-setting has a more nuanced interpretation and is associated with introducing new issues on the agenda, or, in other words, policy entrepreneurship. While this issue is further discussed in Chapter I of the dissertation, for the purpose of the clarity of the content, when referred in general terms, agenda-setting is considered as a synonym for agenda management or agenda control. On the other hand, when referring to Tallberg's (2003) work, which also guides the structure of this dissertation, agenda-setting is interpreted as policy entrepreneurship, and, thus, is specified in order to prevent misunderstandings.

The control of the Council agenda, of which the rotating Presidency is directly in charge, is approximated as a combination of inherited items and new or previously overlooked issues, which mostly reflect the national interest to be put forward. In this regard, the study considers the rotating Presidency to act within the set margins and to utilise its agenda powers in order to pursue specific Presidency goals.

Agenda-setting inevitably influences negotiations and, thus, decision-making in the EU. Considering that agenda items translate into the final outputs, i.e. legislation adopted at the EU level, importance attached to specific topics may also be reflected therein. In this regard, a part of this analysis is dedicated to the examination of the topic dynamics in the EU legislation. Consequently, it allows to draw the lines between the policies emphasised by the rotating Presidencies (measuring their salience in the work programmes) and the ones addressed in the adopted legislation. Hereby, the study aims to evaluate the actual Presidency influence during the half-year term on the legislation adopted.

A closer look at the long-term rotating Presidency agendas, including pre- and post-Lisbon periods greatly contributes to the scholarship in this field. Through a variety of methods utilised in this research (combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches), the dissertation provides additional evidence for evaluating the performance of the rotating Presidencies, especially with regard to its agenda-setting powers and the extent to which member states use them.

By presenting an extensive longitudinal analysis of 40 rotating Presidencies in 20 years period, this research aims to demonstrate that even after the amendments of the Lisbon Treaty, the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU remains empowered with particular institutional tools. Employing them with caution, i.e. without disregarding the key roles assigned to the rotating chair, the Council Presidency is able not only to change the order of priorities at the Council level, but also to foster the adoption of the legislation or, on the contrary, prevent certain dossiers from reaching the decision table during the Presidency semester.

Considering all of the above, the following sections in this general introduction address the main developments of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, including the key changes in its roles and responsibilities over the years. Such presentation of the state of the art is then followed by a more elaborated presentation of the contributions of this study to the existing literature, especially given the remaining gaps. As a result, a brief introduction to the key four chapters is provided.

1. The rotating Presidency in the state of the art

The following parts of this chapter provide a general overview of the main historical developments of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, including treaty changes and other common agreements, which incrementally altered the main roles and responsibilities of the rotating chair. By presenting the key works in the field (some of which are later on elaborated in the main chapters), this overview addresses the remaining gaps in the literature, hereby, presenting the added value and importance of this dissertation.

1.1. Developments of the rotating chair of the Council

The establishment of the rotating Council Presidency can be traced back already in 1952. Although at that time its role was rather informal and highly administrative (Fernández, 2008), gradually the functions of the chair were institutionalised (Kollman, 2003).

Since the end of the 1950s, the rotating chair was often perceived as a counterbalance to the supranational institutions, in particular to the European Commission. It was considered as an EU body, being capable of preserving national interests of the member states (Fernández, 2008). In respect to this, Charles de Gaulle, proponent of intergovernmental governance, was strongly in favour of increasing the Presidency roles (Fernández, 2008). As a consequence, in the 1970s the rotating chair was granted more powers not only in an administrative, but also in a political field. Thus, it resembled the Commission on the intergovernmental level (Fernández, 2008).

However, in light of several enlargements, starting from the eighth decade of the last century, the Presidency started to shift towards a supranational direction. First of all, soft accountability measures were introduced, obliging the chair to issue a half-year programme and, at the end of the term, to present its results (Fernández, 2008). Furthermore, with the Luxembourg Compromise, the rotating Presidency re-established its relationship with the European Commission (Fernández, 2008). As both institutions became responsible for implementing the Internal Market and working on the European Monetary Union, the Presidency was gradually involved in the integration processes. Consequently, they shifted rotating Presidency roles from purely intergovernmental to more supranational ones (Fernández, 2008).

Certainly, the rotating Presidency remains the chairman of the Council of the EU. Therefore, claiming that it has become a supranational body would be misleading. Nevertheless, it did become communitarised over time (Fernández, 2008). This especially can be seen after the establishment of a multi-annual Presidency programme idea during the Seville European

Council in 2002 and its extension to the Trio Presidency with the amendment Council rules of procedure in 2006, as well as in the Treaty of Lisbon.

The Treaty of Lisbon, which was adopted in 2007, yet, came into force in 2009, is perceived as one of the key moments in the development of the Presidency institute. The establishment of two permanent positions (the President of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) has greatly circumscribed the functions of the rotating Council Presidency, shifting them to a more supranational level (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). In addition, the Treaty has formally institutionalised the Trio Presidency idea, obliging countries to issue a common 18-month rotating Presidency programme (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). Nevertheless, to what extent this and other institutional developments had an effect on the rotating Presidency, is discussed in the main chapters.

1.2. Roles and functions of the Presidency in the pre-Lisbon period

Throughout the years, scholars paid considerable attention to the development of Presidency roles (Wallace & Edwards, 1976; Wallace, 1986; Schout, 1998; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2003; Tallberg, 2004; Bengtsson et al., 2004; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006; Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006; Schalk et al., 2007; Crum, 2007; Fernández, 2008; Dür & Mateo, 2008; Thomson, 2008).

Focusing on the historical account of the Presidency, Wallace and Edwards (1976) stated that the functions of the chair were extended from a rather constrained chairmanship to the Presidency with multiple responsibilities. The latter comprised leading the COREPER meetings, managing the agenda and related Council documentation, organising events, serving as a contact point for member states, as well as representing the Council in front of the European Parliament and the European Commission (Wallace, 1986). Furthermore, the Presidency gradually gained a political role, since it started to bring up political initiatives and to represent the EU on the international arena (Wallace & Edwards, 1976; Wallace, 1986).

In the past decades, the Presidency duties were summarised as four key responsibilities: manager, organiser, political leader, and internal as well as external representative (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006). According to the scholars, these responsibilities represent an integration of intergovernmental and supranational approaches, which, respectively, raises a dilemma between impartiality and representation of national interests (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006). Impartiality, in this regard, is perceived as an opportunity to ensure good results, which is granted through the collaboration with the EU institutions and other member states (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006).

A number of scholars, instead, underlined the importance of national interests. Schout (1998) together with Vanhoonacker (Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2003, 2006) argued that in addition to the above-mentioned roles, one should take into account the representation of national interests. Although national interests are often considered with caution, they cannot be neglected: some domestic priorities can be framed in broader terms and yield benefits to the EU as a whole (Schout, 1998). In this respect, the rotating Presidency was considered as a ‘juggler’, balancing between the neutral brokerage, political leadership and representation of national priorities (Schout, 1998). Later on, such approach was elaborated by Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006), who presented a contingency model to evaluate the chair in terms of achieved results, while reconciling the formal roles with the domestic interests.

Even though the combination of two diverging priorities seems an ideal solution, a study of three Nordic countries – Denmark, Sweden and Finland – proved that it is possible to reconcile national interests at the EU level without raising any doubts about the European credentials of these member states (Bengtsson et al., 2004). This example is in line with the argument put forward by Elgström and Tallberg (2003) that two conventional approaches, i.e. rational and sociological, are not rival *per se*. Rather, they reflect different goals: whilst the rational account better defines short-term strategies, a sociological one is more suited to explain long-term processes (Elgström & Tallberg, 2003). As a result, they can be considered as complements and remain compatible in terms of roles and duties assigned to the rotating Presidency.

1.3. Roles and functions of the Presidency in the post-Lisbon period

When addressing the roles of the Presidency after the major changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon, scholars still tend to distinguish four of them: administrator, representative, leader and broker, admitting that a representative of national interests could be counted in (Niemann & Mak, 2010; Vieira & Lange, 2012; Karolewski et al., 2015).

Even in the post-Lisbon arrangements, the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU remains the main coordinator of the working groups, COREPER and ministerial-level meetings (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2015). To what extent the rotating chair can represent its national interests, however, remains an open question. Leconte (2012) argues that officials participating in working group or COREPER negotiations are rather neutral to the domestic issues, therefore, less biased. Vandecasteele, Bossuyt, and Orbie (2013), on the contrary, claim that during the negotiation process, civil servants are more influential than ministers. Although such conclusions come from the analysis of external EU policies the authors examined (Vandecasteele et al., 2013), Vieira and Lange (2012) have also underlined the working group level as a possible niche for the Presidency to exert its power, especially by prioritising certain dossiers.

Another core responsibility that remained even after the main Lisbon changes, is the negotiating mandate of the Council position with the European Parliament and the European Commission (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2015). Hereby, acting as a broker in the Council, the rotating Presidency simultaneously operates on behalf of the member states in front of the supranational institutions. While the rotating chair has a substantial role in negotiating the legislation in trilogue meetings (Vieira & Lange, 2012), the Presidency does not only need to address the common position of the Council, but also to find an agreement with the representatives of the European Parliament. In this regard, Pomorska and Vanhoonacker (2012) pointed out that after increasing the Parliament's role in the co-decision (nowadays – ordinary legislative procedure (OLP)) process, the Presidency has even more stimulus to cooperate with this institution. Close ties with the Parliament can ensure a better representation of Presidency's goals in the final decision (Cross, 2012; Golub, 2012).

The emphasis given on the above-mentioned roles can be perceived as an additional evidence that the political leadership and the external representation functions were transferred to the supranational positions (Pomorska & Vanhoonacker, 2012; Carbone, 2015). Hereby, from the institutional advantages they became institutional constraints, which each member state should take into consideration. The following section discusses them more in detail.

1.4. Institutional environment of the rotating Presidency

The gradual increase of the Presidency roles did not, however, specify the accountability of the chair in the EU law. The collaboration between the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission, as well as the European Parliament was fostered already back in the 1980s (Wallace & Edwards, 1976). Nevertheless, until today, the obligation of the chair to design its programme in cooperation with the European Commission or to present the programme and the final results to the European Parliament lies within the Handbook of the Rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2015).

Despite being a formal rule of procedure rather than a legislative obligation, the duty of the rotating Presidency to present its programme in front of the Parliament can be regarded as an informal accountability mechanism. The Presidency not only presents its programme to the plenary, but also in front of separate committees, which may ask questions related to specific issues (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2015). A similar procedure in the European Parliament can also be held during the mid-term of the Presidency, aiming to evaluate the progress of the chair (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2015). However, the overall results of the rotating Presidency are presented in the plenary, usually by the Prime Minister of the country (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2015). Such formalisation of the rotating Presidency period provides a more institutionalised interpretation of the rotating post.

In addition to the mediation of relations between the Council and the other EU institutions, the rotating Presidency may face external crises or unexpected events. Whilst such

disturbances can have a great impact on the agenda of the rotating chair (to be discussed in Chapter II), they also require substantial resources in order to provide a prompt and adequate response to the unexpected situations (Schout, 1998). Nevertheless, the General Secretariat of the Council and the European Commission can support the Presidency given their limited resources (Wallace & Edwards, 1976).

On the Council level, the main institutional restrictions can be defined in terms of agenda-setting capabilities. This mainly concerns the actual room for the Presidency to shape the Council agenda. With respect to this point, Häge (2016) carried out the most recent study on Presidency's agenda-scheduling powers. While looking at the working party meetings, the author presented a cross-policy analysis, demonstrating that the rotating chair can have up to 30% of room for manoeuvre, which is expressed by the deviations in the length of the meetings (Häge, 2016). Considering that the four chapters of this dissertation are mainly based on the agenda-setting powers of the rotating chair, this section does not elaborate more on the related literature. Instead, it continues with the discussion of the Trio Presidency, being one of the key institutional constraints of the current rotating Council chair.

Although official Trio Presidencies were institutionalised in the Treaty of Lisbon, the long-term Presidency agenda and cooperation between successive chairs was implemented already in Seville in 2002 (Raik, 2015). During the European Council meeting, the multi-annual programming was defined as a) the strategic three-year programme, linked with a medium-term policy agenda, as well as b) the annual operational programme was supposed to address short-term goals (Raik, 2015). The Presidency cooperation idea was extended from two up to three semesters with the establishment of the 18-month Presidency programme idea, put forward in the Council rules of Procedure in 2006 (Council of the EU, 2006) and later on embedded in the Treaty of Lisbon.

Trios reflect the geographical diversity of the EU, differences in size, diplomatic traditions and sensitivities of member states, which also enhance cooperation among countries (Vieira & Lange, 2012). Dinan (2013), although questioning effectiveness of the Trio format, acknowledged the fact that Trio facilitates cooperation between states.

Aiming to ensure continuity in the Council and the EU in general, the Trio programme was considered as an appropriate tool. Nevertheless, while defining the Trio cooperation, the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) provided countries some room for manoeuvre: they are allowed to decide organisational arrangements and divide tasks among themselves. In addition, although the Trio programme has to be prepared in cooperation with the European Commission, there are no official obligations to ensure a continuity between separate 18-month programmes (Raik, 2015). Hereby, it remains a rather loose mechanism, which provides more room for manoeuvre to single rotating Presidencies.

1.5. Performance evaluation of the rotating chair

While analysing the Presidency institute, scholars often refer to the term of ‘success’. Although it has multiple interpretations, in terms of the rotating Presidency, success is often linked with efficiency. According to Schout (1998), member states assuming the half-year office are assessed based on their organisational skills, chairmanship, impartiality, agenda-setting and crisis management capacities, promotion of European integration, and, to some extent, representation of national interests. Having developed the Presidency evaluation model based on the contingency theory, Schout and Vanhoonacker (2006) addressed the assessment issue more thoroughly. Scholars admitted that there is a number of measures to define an efficient Presidency, such as clarity of legal acts, achievement of the Presidency objectives or even a good atmosphere (Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006). Scholars combined both internal and external factors, which were expected to produce a balanced position of the chair (Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2006). However, they did not elaborate on necessary and sufficient conditions, which may determine the performance of the rotating chair.

A similar account of the ‘good’ Presidency was developed by Wurzel (2000), who claimed that countries try to keep their credentials as ‘good Europeans’ and tend to downplay the national positions in order to ensure compromise within the Council. Such neutrality-driven evaluation of success was also endorsed by Dür and Mateo (2008): to be efficient, the chair needs to step out of national bias and provide good mediation of Council business.

Quaglia and Moxon-Browne (2006) added to the previous account that successful Presidencies need to maintain good relations with the EU institutions: the European Commission, the European Parliament and especially the General Secretariat, which is the main supporting body for the chair. Furthermore, by comparing Italy and Ireland, authors agreed that political credibility, expertise and positive attitude towards the EU integration can grant a favourable evaluation at the end of the term (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006). In other words, fulfilling the main functions/roles assigned to the Presidency is considered as a success (Maurer, 2008).

The classical approach towards the rotating chair additionally takes into account the size of the country. Hereby, the smaller member states are expected to take a neutral path during the Presidency term, whereas the larger ones – to pursue their domestic goals (Bengtsson et al., 2004). Whilst one may detect cases supporting this assumption, a study of the Nordic Presidencies by Bengtsson, Elgström and Tallberg (2004) presented the opposite results. Even smaller member states were found to be capable of addressing their priorities during the rotating term (Bengtsson et al., 2004). In this case, competencies and expertise of the rotating chairs should be taken into account, instead of relying solely on the size of the country (Tallberg, 2008). Furthermore, small member states usually have less national issues to address, therefore, they tend to hold a bargaining advantage (Arregui & Thomson, 2009). Thus, resources and size alone may be important aspects to consider, however, they are not sufficient to ensure a successful performance during the half-year term.

Since 2009, the successful Presidency is mostly related with an effective implementation of the domestic goals. As Smeets and Vennix (2014) put it: “Success is generally defined by the amount of progress a Presidency manages to achieve in those issue area(s) on which it chooses to focus its attention.” (p. 1437). Hence, having clear goals, the Presidency can achieve desirable results even without having a good EU-wide reputation (Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Jan Orbie, 2015). On the contrary, good credentials within the Union impose norm-based behaviour. Therefore, countries with good reputation should ensure a balance between national priorities and community interests (Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Jan Orbie, 2015).

Cross (2012) correctly pointed out that success of a member state is determined not only by an individual performance of a Presidency, but also by its relations with the other EU institutions, namely the European Commission and the European Parliament. However, since this dissertation does not aim to analyse the success of the rotating chair, it is not further discussed. Instead, the following sections present the remaining gaps in the state of the art and outline the structure of the four key chapters of this dissertation.

2. Remaining puzzles addressed in this volume

Given the main research trajectories to evaluate the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, the majority of studies have relied on single-Presidency investigations (Ágh, 2012; Bilčík, 2017; Carbone, 2015; Drieskens, 2011; Dür & Mateo, 2008; Ferreira-Pereira, 2008; Heywood, 2011; Högenauer, 2016; Kajňč, 2009; Karolewski et al., 2015; Kyrís, 2015; Manners, 2013; Maurer, 2008; Pomorska & Vanhoonacker, 2012; Schout, 2017; Vilpišauskas, 2014). These studies mainly address the post-Lisbon Presidencies, evaluating their agendas, the main achievements and institutional conditions (e.g. domestic situations, EU crises or unexpected events) the Presidencies had to deal with.

One of the main shortcomings in this scholarship is the absence of a systematic analysis of the rotating Presidency performance. A structured comparison of the Presidencies after 2009 would not only provide new insights regarding the latest institutional changes, but would also reveal the diversity across member states, especially comparing pre- and post-Lisbon periods. After transferring the chairmanship of the European Council and the Council of Foreign Affairs to the supranational positions, the rotating Presidency has been neglected in the scholarly work. Nevertheless, the key roles still being possessed by the Council chair require a closer look, especially considering the stance and performance of the institution.

In relation to the previous point, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship by investigating the agenda-setting activities of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU over time. First of all, agenda-setting covers several functions of the rotating chair, such as managing the Council agenda, leading the discussions and acting as a mediator during the

negotiations. While resembling more administrative duties, these responsibilities allow the rotating Presidency to shape the Council agenda by emphasising or excluding certain issues from the agenda. Consequently, a member state in office is capable not only of stressing domestically salient topics, but also of fostering the legislative acts to the adoption phase.

Whereas a number of studies have addressed the issue salience on the European Council agenda (Alexandrova et al., 2012; Alexandrova & Timmermans, 2013; Alexandrova et al., 2014; Alexandrova, 2015; Carammia et al., 2016), the ministerial level remains largely under-researched, especially after the Treaty of Lisbon. Such lack of empirical evidence greatly limits generalisations towards the influence of the rotating Presidency institute in the EU decision-making process: both from the agenda-management perspective, as well as regarding the legislative outputs. Therefore, this dissertation aims to investigate the extent to which the rotating chair holds agenda-setting powers, especially given the latest institutional restrictions introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon. Taking into account Häge's (2016) study of the Council agenda, this research provides corroborating evidence to the results presented by the scholar.

Yet another gap in the state of the art is defined by the lack of studies linking the EU agendas with legislative outputs. In respect to this point, this study analyses and relates the agendas of the rotating Presidency with the binding legislation adopted in the EU. Hereby, the research reveals the extent to which the Presidency agendas can lead to the adoption of the legislative acts, especially considering their ambitions and commitments expressed in the Presidency work programmes.

As an alternative way to measure Presidency influence, this dissertation sheds more light on the third agenda-setting power – the delay of the legislative process. Considering a limited number of studies in this area, the investigation of agenda-exclusion (i.e. delay in the legislative process) after the Treaty of Lisbon grants relevant empirical evidence for the interpretation of the powers possessed by the rotating Presidency.

Finally, the large part of the empirical analysis relies on the punctuated equilibrium approach. While the theory is extensively used for the domestic-level agenda studies, the European account is limited to the European Council and the European Parliament agenda research. Therefore, by analysing the rotating Presidency institute, this dissertation contributes to the extended application of the punctuated equilibrium approach, as well as agenda studies at the EU level. The following section provides a brief outline of each of the four chapters, composing the main part of this dissertation.

3. Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is based on four core chapters, the order of which reflects a logical sequence of the analysis of the rotating Presidency agenda control powers, as distinguished by Tallberg (2003).

Chapter I provides a general introduction to the agenda-setting studies, including a more specific research on the EU agendas and the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU in particular, being at the core of this dissertation. The chapter introduces a novel hand-coded dataset of 40 rotating Presidency programmes in 1997-2017, which are approximated as their working agendas. While demonstrating variations in issue salience across different chairs, the study presents longitudinal trends across policies and the extent to which the rotating Presidency can shape the Council's work. The study relies on the punctuated equilibrium approach and, for validity purposes, employs the codebook of the European Policy Agendas Project, which was utilised for a similar analysis of the European Council. Following the well-established coding template and the main indices to measure the agenda dynamics over time, this chapter brings a substantial added value to the scholarship of agenda-setting, and especially agenda-structuring activities of the rotating Presidency, covering both pre- and post-Lisbon periods.

Building on the findings of Chapter I, Chapter II is dedicated to the evaluation of the main factors deemed to influence the rotating Presidency agendas. Given the main punctuations over the long-term across policy areas, this chapter examines six possible explanatory factors derived from previous literature: government issue salience, government ideology, public

opinion, contributions to the EU budget, geographical position and the agenda of the European Council. The ensuing empirical analysis is based on bivariate and multiple regression analyses, which shed light on the factors expected to explain the differences in issue salience across rotating Presidency agendas. Accordingly, the analysis identifies (i) government issue salience, (ii) geographical positioning (especially belonging to the Eastern member state group) and (iii) the European Council's own agenda as the most relevant factors in determining the rotating Presidency agendas and issue salience therein.

Having detected the main fluctuations of issue salience across rotating Council Presidencies and factors determining such variation, Chapter III slightly shifts the angle of analysis. It first looks at the legislative outputs during the same period of investigation, i.e. 1997-2017, and then studies the relationship between the legislative outputs and rotating Presidency issue salience. Given the large number of binding legislation adopted throughout 20 years, the first part of the chapter is based on a dynamic topic model – a quantitative text analysis technique suited for analysing large corpora of unstructured texts. Hereby, the study detects the main topics being addressed in the EU legislation as well as the shifts in the number of acts adopted each semester. The second part of the chapter examines the association between rotating Presidency priorities and legislation proposed and finalised in the same Presidency semester. The analysis shows that the rotating chair can conclude legislation that was tabled during its six months in office. However, this does not imply that the adopted laws necessarily align with the Presidency's priorities stated in the half-year programmes.

Following the list of the agenda powers granted to the rotating Presidency, Chapter IV analyses an often overlooked issue: the possibility of enacting agenda-exclusion strategies, i.e. exerting delay power. This chapter relies on the qualitative case study approach by looking at two Council chairs – the Latvian and Luxembourg Presidencies – both held in 2015. The main added value of this study is the operationalisation of the delay in the legislative process, which aims to overcome the natural complexity associated with the definition of an absence of an event. Furthermore, since Chapter IV looks at the post-Lisbon period, the detected cases of the delay provide additional evidence that – despite the changes

in the institutional environment – the rotating chair remains in possession of agenda-exclusion power, as a option to oppose unwanted legislative proposals at the EU level.

Taken all of the above, the sequence of four chapters presents a coherent story of the rotating Presidency agenda-setting powers, stretching from agenda-structuring, and its influence towards the legislative outputs, to agenda-exclusion, as an alternative way to influence the legislative outputs. The results of each chapter not only fill certain gaps in the literature, but also open the new trajectories for interpreting the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Chapter I. Rotating Council Presidencies and issue salience: a glimpse into the 20 years perspective

Introduction

Being one of the oldest institutions within the European Union (EU), the rotating Council Presidency has triggered contradicting interpretations – from a powerful actor to a rather administrative body in the decision-making process. The latter perception was reinforced after the Treaty of Lisbon, with the establishment of two positions: the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Separating leadership of the European Council from the Council of the EU undermined the role of the rotating Presidency. Nevertheless, the ministerial level of governance still constitutes a major part of the EU decision-making process, simultaneously involving a national and, especially, ideological dimension into it (Tallberg & Johansson, 2008). Therefore, the stance of the rotating Council Presidency should be granted extra attention when speaking of issues being discussed among ministers.

Different explanations of the Presidency roles are often framed in terms of agenda management powers the chair holds. Despite issue inheritance and certain institutional constraints put on the rotating mechanism, scholars have argued (Häge, 2016; Warntjen, 2013) that even in a post-Lisbon era countries are able to leave a national imprint in the Council's work.

Following such line of reasoning, this study focuses on the long-term trends across agendas of the rotating Council Presidencies. By presenting an original hand-coded dataset of 40 rotating Council Presidency programmes (issued in 1997-2017), this chapter operationalises them as half-year work agendas. The main objective is to detect the shifts in attention dedicated to policies (i.e. issue salience) across rotating EU members by interpreting them from a punctuated equilibrium approach. As the study presents longitudinal developments, three institutional changes the Presidency has faced in the recent decades are considered. These include the introduction of the multi-annual Presidency programme by the Seville

European Council in 2002, the changes of the Council's rules of procedure in 2006 and the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force in 2009.

The chapter begins with a general presentation of the agenda studies and the application of the punctuated equilibrium approach in this field. Next, the chapter discusses EU agendas and how the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU fits in the broad picture. As a result, the second part of the chapter presents the operationalisation of the key variable in question – issue salience for the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, and the extent to which the rotation of the chairs leads to punctuations in attention attached to policy areas. The main shifts in issue salience are then evaluated by looking at several indicators evaluating the magnitude of these changes.

1. Theoretical framework

Determining the extent and the context of issues being discussed at the political level (Princen, 2009), agenda-setting has been thoroughly addressed in the literature. According to Princen (2009), there are three types of agendas: political (referring to decision-makers), public (addressing issues emphasised by the public) and media (covered by media representatives). Issues raised on each of them are usually perceived as different topics facing contradicting approaches (Princen, 2009). In other words, they often specify the scope of a conflict in a specific area (Princen, 2007). However, the definition of a problem and, accordingly, the selection of the most important one, differs from policy to policy (Rocheffort & Cobb, 1994).

Political and public agendas can also be framed as initiative-based, being either inside or outside ones (Princen & Rhinard, 2006). Inside initiatives usually emerge within the government and tend to remain on the political level. The outside-initiative model, on the contrary, aggregates issues from the public and gradually elevates them to the political level (Princen & Rhinard, 2006). Princen and Rhinard (2006) have also distinguished a mediating agenda, representing initiatives formed at the decision-making level, yet, later on being conveyed to the public.

Within the EU, such distinction between political and public agendas is less applicable, since the involvement of citizens is rather low, demonstrating the lack of the EU public sphere (Princen & Rhinard, 2006). Therefore, the theoretical assumptions addressed in the following sections concern the political agenda of the EU.

1.1. Agenda-setting as a set of institutional rules and powers

Agenda-setting is frequently interpreted as a set of constraints that determine an interaction between political actors who are able to influence the policy process by tabling the proposal, structuring the agenda, etc. Tallberg (2006) distinguished two types of agenda-setting processes. The first refers to a single actor in charge, possessing a unique asset to issue policy proposals. In this regard, the other political actors can only invoke alternative means (e.g. negotiations) in order to amend the initial legislation.

The second model equally confers agenda-setting rights to multiple players. Given the chairmanship organised at the governmental level, each political actor, representing its own state, has a right to introduce a proposal. However, if the chairmanship is organised at a higher (e.g. supranational) level, the chair is more constrained and can only present a proposal informally, i.e. persuading other political actors to place the issue that would benefit the presidency (Tallberg, 2006). Nevertheless, in this case the chairman remains in an advantageous position due to the information about preferences of other political actors (Princen, 2009).

Whilst powers held by different actors and institutional rules constitute an important part in the agenda-setting activities, the modes of an action they apply also require an additional consideration. Carammia, Princen and Timmermans (2016) claim that an institution dealing with multiple issues could work according to two modes: 1) focusing on several key issues at a time, depending on the salience attached to the topics; or 2) working on all the issues simultaneously. Whilst the first approach corresponds to the selection of the most important questions, leading to significant changes over time, the second one ensures more stability, given the constant scope of the agenda (Carammia et al., 2016).

Starting from the Policy Agendas Project developed in the United States (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002), a large number of studies has been carried out in the past two decades analysing public attention and its shifts over time. Nevertheless, instead of focusing on the institutional or policy-related specificities, scholars investigated the way political actors process information and prioritise political issues (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). To this end, the punctuated equilibrium approach is the most well known theory applied in the agenda research. Therefore, the main rationale behind this theory and explanatory factors are presented in the following section.

1.2. Punctuated equilibrium as a leading theory in agenda studies

Jones and Baumgartner (2005) can be called the founding fathers of the punctuated equilibrium approach, as it is known today. Originally, the theory is based on the biological evolution, which presents a competition among species having a single goal – survival (Carmines & Stimson, 1993). In case of policy issues, such competition is rather external, related to the human nature and a tendency to gain attention (Carmines & Stimson, 1993).

According to the punctuated equilibrium approach, a political system is a unit comprising multiple policy subsystems, which tend to develop incrementally, following a path-dependency route (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Nevertheless, occasionally disruptions of policy attention bring certain issues to the epicentre of the policy-making activities (Baumgartner et al., 2006), hereby, creating conditions for major policy punctuations (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

Punctuated equilibrium theory rests upon the bounded rationality assumption, which is linked to an unequal treatment of information flows: short-term memory and selective attention (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). In other terms, given all the information, political actors face the ‘bottleneck’ problem: they tend to consider a limited number of issues at a time, leaving out the others (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). In this regard, new issues or new attributes attached to already existing problems are likely to attract policy-makers’ attention, which eventually may lead to policy punctuations.

Bounded rationality is equally related to emotions, which determine the allocation of attention (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Therefore, importance given to problems is not necessarily positively correlated with severity of them. Even less significant questions can attract decision-makers' attention, e.g. being related to their political views or attention paid by the public (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

The latter aspect reflects the core of this conceptional approach: individual level decision-making patterns, being brought to the organisational level. According to the scholars, same as individuals, governments and organisations have limited capacity to address all the issues in the political space, which forces them to select the preferred ones (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Hence, looking from a long-term perspective, policy punctuations should be interpreted not as exceptions, but as integral parts of the incremental policy-making process (Princen, 2013).

1.3. Causes of policy punctuations within and across the agendas

The policy punctuations are conditioned by several reasons. First and foremost, they are linked to political changes (e.g. electoral cycles), which bring new actors and new preferences on the political stage. Agendas can also be interrupted by the emergence of new issues or new attributes attached to them, related to the so-called venue-shopping activities. What is more, institutional environment and exogenous or unexpected events should be taken into consideration when explaining the major policy shifts (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Each of these factors is more thoroughly addressed in the following sections.

1.3.1. Political actors

When evaluating agenda changes, political actors should be considered as the primary cause of the agenda dynamics. The new party leaders or recently-formed governing coalitions usually have different preferences compared to their predecessors. This automatically leads to the reshuffling of prioritised issues and likely shifts in the agenda equilibrium (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Baumgartner et al., 2006).

Kingdon (1984) hypothesised policy changes as a consequence of exploited windows of opportunities. These are the constellations of circumstances, which provide a possibility for a policy shift. The major reason for the policy window to open is a change in a political stream, being it a new government, a new administration or even a reallocation of seats in the parliament (Kingdon, 1984). Nevertheless, according to Kingdon (1984), an important distinction should be made between governmental and decision agendas (p. 21). Whilst the first one includes more topics and is mainly related to the political debates spinning around them, the second one encompasses a selected list of issues. In order to reach the decision-making stage, problems, proposals addressing them and political actions should be coupled, which, accordingly, opens the window of opportunities for a policy change (Kingdon, 1984).

Nevertheless, even though the political actors play an important role in contributing to the punctuations in policy attention, their behaviour depends on a few factors, such as preferences, expertise, information available, and the institutional environment (Vliegenthart et al., 2013). The following sections shed more light on the latter ones – information (presented as the new issues on the agenda or unexpected events), as well as the institutional environment.

1.3.2. New issues, issue attributes and venue-shopping

Policy change, as previously noted, can be linked to a rise of new issues or their attributes. The term ‘issue emergence’ defines new problems or previously disregarded information entering the political scene. New attributes, on the other hand, are linked to a redefinition of a problem, providing a new perspective for the interpretation (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

While in both cases implications tend to be similar – a sudden emergence of a particular topic on the agenda – they are conditioned by the ideological dimension. A new issue or its attribute are expected to shift the attention only when a new ideological cleavage is brought to a political discourse and cannot be redefined using the existing partisan lines (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). In relation to this, Ringe (2005) used the term ‘focal points’. According to the scholar, focal points are the core elements when speaking of an introduction of a new

issue cleavage to the ideological space (Ringe, 2005). To pursue such goal, one should either invoke expertise (i.e. resting on policy analysis) or more rhetoric means (Ringe, 2005). In this respect, strong political parties or legislative committees are considered to be the main originators of new political cleavages (Ringe, 2005).

The emergence of new issues or their attributes can also be linked to the so-called venue-shopping – an attempt by decision-makers to expand a conflict to new areas (Princen, 2009). In order to raise an awareness of a new problem or to emphasise a previously overlooked one, policy-makers search for the new institutional arenas. This can be done either vertically, e.g. shifting from one level of political discourse to another (e.g. from national governments to the Council of the EU) or horizontally (staying at the same, e.g. supranational, level, but raising awareness of the issue at another Council configuration) (Princen, 2009). Vertical and horizontal venues can either operate separately or interconnect through a complex institutional system. Nevertheless, they do not necessarily lead to a policy change (Princen, 2013).

According to Baumgartner and Jones (2002), the effect of an issue emergence and venue-shopping depends on the feedback policy-makers give to the main triggers. Negative feedback defines an attempt to preserve incrementalism, preventing the agenda from drastic changes. Positive feedback, on the contrary, puts an emphasis on the incoming effects that enhance the likelihood of policy punctuations (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002).

These two types of responses positively correlate with the number of attributes attached to an issue. The higher the number, the higher the likelihood of a policy change, and vice-versa (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002). This situation is based on the assumption that policy-makers, operating in different policy venues and competing for attention, tend to reframe existing issues in order to change an angle of the debate and, hereby, the final outcomes (Princen, 2009a). Having a larger number of specificities indicates that an issue can be interpreted from various perspectives. Hence, invoking different policy images facilitates the attention shifts.

On the contrary, the attempt of policy-makers to prevent any changes from entering a policy space is related to the formation of the iron triangles (Sharp, 1994). Due to a particular gain for policy-makers (e.g. in legislative committees), as well as for the bureaucracy and interest groups, policy changes are bounded to incremental improvements (Sharp, 1994). Such situation is also known as institutional friction, which is further addressed in the following part.

1.3.3. Institutional changes

Institutional environment plays an essential role in explaining dynamics on the political agendas. As pointed out in the previous section, resistance towards the policy changes and the maintenance of the status quo is represented by institutional frictions (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

As in the case of new issues or their attributes, institutional frictions are linked to the negative feedback of the policy makers towards the incoming issues (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). In case such feedback is sustained, stable and gradual policy developments persist (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Nevertheless, contrary to the gridlock situations, frictions can be overcome, often as a response to the positive feedback. Once it is pursued, major punctuations in attention follow (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

Institutional changes *per se* might also induce certain dynamics on the political agendas, e.g. by amending decision-making rules or changing the distribution of power among political actors (Baumgartner et al., 2006a). However, alone they have little impact on the agenda dynamics. As presented in the study by Baumgartner et al. (2006a), the institutional design and administrative structures are deemed to be important. However, in order to be overcome, institutional frictions should be addressed by the political actors (Baumgartner et al., 2006a). This leads to the assumption that the position of political actors is necessary in order to change the *status quo*.

1.3.4. Exogenous factors and unexpected events

In addition to the internal information flows, political actors are equally responsive to the external influence or unforeseen situations, which bring related issues on the top of the agenda. This is explained by John and Jennings' (2010) argument that policy agendas are not independent from the exogenous forces. Instead, they should be considered as equal causes to the endogenous forces leading to the punctuations in political attention (John & Jennings, 2010; Alexandrova, 2015).

As presented by the case study of the European Council, the share of attention given to the specific exogenous issues depends on two main factors: humanitarian concerns and strategic reasons (Alexandrova, 2015). With regard to the former, manmade disasters tend to be more salient, especially implying high numbers of casualties. From a strategic point of view, a geographical proximity and a strength of trade relations predict the prominence of an issue on the European Council agenda (Alexandrova, 2015).

Nevertheless, when examining shocks and punctuations on the agenda, it is important to assess the temporal dimension. External events are usually short-term and rather sporadic (Kingdon, 1984). Therefore, related shifts in attention are expected to be more abrupt, in comparison to the venue-shopping activities or institutional changes.

On a more general note, in times of crisis, the agenda space becomes more limited, therefore, there is significantly less room for new issues to enter a policy space; whereas peace and stability guarantee an easier agenda access (Baumgartner et al., 2011).

1.4. Agenda-setting within the EU

The EU agenda is a good example of a complex institutional system, exhibiting interconnected policy-making venues. According to Princen (2009), agenda-setting within the EU not only explains the daily policy-making activities, but also the EU integration itself.

1.4.1. Agenda-setting as the EU integration process

Looking at the two most prominent approaches of the EU integration – intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism – divergent interpretations of the agenda can be derived.

Intergovernmentalism, as widely known, emphasises the role of the member states. Taking into consideration their national interests and bargaining powers, countries decide whether they will cooperate or refrain on a particular issue (Princen, 2009). Hence, the daily agenda is insignificant when trying to trace the major trends in agenda-setting. The proponents of this approach focus mainly on the EU treaties, as the core elements that could explain long-term issue importance (Princen, 2009).

Neo-functionalists, on the contrary, put more emphasis on the EU institutions or multilevel actors, e.g. transnational interest groups. They are highly involved in the policy-making process and, furthermore, due to the rising number of policy issues, are conferred more powers (Princen, 2009). By emphasising the spillover effects between these policies, neo-functionalists apply a monitoring approach towards the everyday activities of the EU. Hereby, they claim that integration is gradual and cannot be explained only by the EU treaty developments (Princen, 2009).

Given this conventional division, one may claim that the rotating Council Presidency carries features from both approaches. On the one hand, it acts as a representative of the member states' interests, including the chair itself. On the other hand, it interacts with the Commission and the Parliament, which add a supranational element to the Presidency's mode of operation.

For the purpose of this research, the division between intergovernmental and supranational angles is not further discussed. However, the research relies on the assumption that the Presidency behavioural patterns regarding the agenda-setting activities might contain properties from both standpoints.

1.4.2. The EU as a policy venue

The EU agenda it is widely known for its large scope. Therefore, as Princen (2009) argues, the main goal of policy actors is not to put an issue on the EU agenda, but rather to prioritise it. This can be observed by a vertical venue-shopping, when domestic issues are transposed to the EU agenda and framed as supranational ones (Princen, 2009).

There are different reasons for shifting national concerns on the EU agenda. They could refer to 1) the national constraints while proceeding with a policy, 2) the aim of the government to impose national standards abroad (e.g. to protect its domestic market) or 3) pursuing missionary goals, such as promoting human rights (Princen, 2009). Looking from the rational perspective, vertical venue-shopping is more likely when the goal to be attained guarantees a better outcome on the EU rather than national level (Princen, 2009), or when the country tries to optimise costs of certain policies by europeanising their national priorities (Börzel, 2002). Nevertheless, depending on the aim and the issue itself, an actor may employ different strategies.

In addition, Princen (2011) presented a bi-dimensional typology of agenda-setting strategies. The first dimension refers to either the pursuit of attention or credibility, while the second distinguishes between venues and issue frames (Princen, 2011). As a result, four possible strategies are presented: mobilising supporters (attention+venues), building capacity (credibility+venues), raising interest (attention+framing) and stating the authority (credibility+framing) (Princen, 2011).

Given a high complexity of the EU system, strategies also depend on the rules regulating the institutional environment. Coming back to Kingdon's (1984) division between governmental and decision agendas, Princen (2009) claimed that when moving from one to the other, both vertical and horizontal obstacles may arise. Vertical ones can be approximated as a rejection by other EU member states to put an issue on the EU agenda. Instead, horizontal obstacles refer to the elimination of an existing issue from the EU table (Princen, 2009).

The previous strategies to a certain extent overlap with a typology presented by Börzel (2002). The author distinguished pace-setting, foot-dragging, and fence-sitting strategies at the EU (Börzel, 2002). The first line of action corresponds to an active promotion of certain policies; the second – to the prevention from certain national proposals entering the EU agenda or the claim for compensation (e.g. in environmental, cohesion policies); whilst the third one mainly represents indifference towards any changes, as the states that belong to such cluster are usually satisfied with the existing policies (Börzel, 2002).

Nonetheless, when applying a venue-shopping approach, policy actors can overcome conventional burdens by acting transnationally. Such strategy involves establishing a direct contact with one of the EU institutions (usually the European Commission) or even international organisations, whose agendas are later on transferred to the EU level (Princen, 2009). Hereby political actors are able to avoid domestic constraining dissensus, and to raise an awareness of an issue on the supranational level.

1.5. Rotating Presidency as an agenda-setter

The main roles held by the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU also confirm the fact that the chair comprises both intergovernmental and supranational modes of action. Being one of the first institutions, initially the Presidency was considered as a rather administrative body, whose functions were expanded and institutionalised over the decades.

As already mentioned in the general introduction, regarding formal roles assigned to the Presidency, scholars often list four of them: organiser, mediator, political leader, as well as internal and external representative (Elgström, 2003; Niemann & Mak, 2010; Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006; Schout, 1998; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2003, 2006; Tallberg, 2006; Wallace & Edwards, 1976; Wallace, 1986;). Nevertheless, since the chair inevitably incorporates a national element, Schout (1998) together with Vanhoonacker (Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2003, 2006) suggested that the national interests representation should extend this list.

Agenda-setting, as such, is not formally included in the Presidency's duties, however, it is related to the political leadership function, which concerns steering the debate (Elgström, 2003; Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006; Schout, 1998; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2003, 2006) or organising and brokering negotiations, as a part of the agenda management and mediation (Bengtsson et al., 2004; Crum, 2007; Dür & Mateo, 2008; Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006; Schalk et al., 2007; Schout, 1998; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2003, 2006; Wallace, 1986)

However, with the beginning of a new century and an increasing complexity of the EU system, the Presidency's freedom was tied by three institutional developments: the Seville European Council meeting, the change of the Council's rules of procedure in 2006 and the Treaty of Lisbon. The European Council meeting in Seville adopted more cooperative measures between the EU institutions by introducing a multi-annual Presidency programme idea. Hereby, countries intending to hold the rotating Presidency in the upcoming period, were obliged to consult the European Commission before adopting a common (at that time – involving two states only) Presidency work programme (Warntjen, 2007a).

The following amendment of the Council's rules of procedure in 2006 formed the basis for today well-known Presidency Trios. Countries (in groups of three) are required to issue a common programme for 18 months, in cooperation with the European Commission (Council of the EU, 2006).

The third remarkable change was made in 2007 with the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon (entering into force at the end of 2009). Besides reinforcing the Trio Presidency model, the Treaty left a significant imprint on the rotating Presidency's roles and responsibilities. Taking in to account the fact that a political leadership function was granted to the President of the European Council, and that the presidency of the Foreign Affairs Council was shifted to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the only powers left for the Presidency in agenda-setting terms, were organisation and mediation, as well as internal representation, implying a restricted room for manoeuvre. Yet, these roles incorporate the Council agenda management function, which can be regarded as an important institutional

asset remaining in the hands of the rotating chair. In relation to this, the next section addresses the agenda control strategies.

1.5.1. Strategies for agenda influence

Three main strategies to shape the agenda, as listed by Tallberg (2003) are 1) agenda-setting, 2) agenda-structuring, and 3) agenda exclusion. The first activity is related to the introduction of new issues; the second – to prioritising certain problems, while the third – to discarding issues from the agenda (Tallberg, 2003).

According to Tallberg (2003), agenda-setting can also be named as policy entrepreneurship, since it mainly concerns raising awareness of a topic. This approach is linked to Kingdon's (1984) concept of window of opportunities, when policy advocates are able to put forward their priorities (Tallberg, 2003). The Presidency, thus, can attach more attention to certain issues by organising debates, informal Council meetings or simply including these items in the Presidency programme (Tallberg, 2003). Furthermore, in cooperation with the Commission, the chair is also able to put forward certain proposals, or develop particular practices within the Council, given institutional niches with vague rules of action (Tallberg, 2003a).

Even though Tallberg (2003) named the latter Presidency power as agenda-setting, this research uses alternative expressions, such as proposal making power (Häge, 2016), policy entrepreneurship (as proposed by Tallberg (2003) himself), policy initiative or others. This allows to avoid a major misunderstanding with the general concept of agenda-setting, which, as already stated in the general introduction, defines the overall agenda management activities. Therefore, for the purpose of this research and this chapter in particular, agenda-setting powers, linked with Tallberg's (2003) typology, are further explained as policy entrepreneurship or other concepts listed above.

Agenda-structuring is mostly related to the country-specific priorities and emphasis put on them during the term. Here Tallberg (2003) lists such factors as geographical, constitutional

or socio-economic differences that determine policies and especially positions countries take. In order to exert such power, the Presidency can either decide on the frequency of meetings, manage their actual agenda, organise informal gatherings or, under the co-decision procedure, aim to reach an agreement during the first reading (Tallberg, 2003).

The latter point is related to the privileged information on member states' positions and preferences the Presidency possesses. This allows the chair to deliver a package deal (especially under the qualified majority voting (QMV) rule), provides the Presidency with a broader room for manoeuvre (Tallberg, 2004) and, as Crum (2007) underlines, increases the efficiency of negotiations. Nonetheless, the success of the Presidency highly depends on the original proposal presented by the Commission (Warntjen, 2007), as well as divergence of member states' interests, especially under the unanimity rule (Crum, 2007).

When it comes to the last institutional power – agenda exclusion, it can be interpreted in a quite straightforward way, i.e. the Presidency trying to leave certain issues out, remaining silent on them or proposing implausible deals (Tallberg, 2003).

1.5.2. Institutional rules

In addition to institutional advantages, there are certain rules, procedures and constraints the rotating chair needs to take into consideration.

Firstly, formal agenda-setting powers are concentrated within the hands of the European Commission. Hence, the proposal-making power of the Presidency depends on the relationships and contacts with the Commission (Tallberg, 2003a). Secondly, decision-making rules are essential, since they not only empower, but also limit the Presidency's actions. Under the QMV, the Presidency has more room for manoeuvre, as it needs to negotiate solely with the pivotal players (Tallberg, 2006). Thus, QMV is more favourable for Presidencies holding extreme positions (Thomson, 2008). Under the unanimity rule, on the other hand, the Presidency faces more restrictions. Unless the chair's position is close to the most remote EU member, chances to pursue its own goals are limited (Tallberg, 2006).

At this point, intergovernmental-supranational division should also be taken into consideration. As Tallberg (2006) argues, in policy areas that are subjects to supranational decision-making, Presidency's powers are highly restricted. The only exception is the possibility to put forward comments (on behalf of EU members) regarding a particular Commission's proposal. This being the case, the Commission is obliged to revise the initial document (Tallberg, 2006).

In the intergovernmental bargaining arena the chair has more influence to shape the final outcome. It presents the initial text for negotiations, as well as manages the whole deliberation process, which, even taking into consideration positions and suggestions of other member states, leaves the Presidency room for manoeuvre (Tallberg, 2006).

To a certain extent, intergovernmental-supranational line represents another issue-clustering: high and low politics. Whilst the former refers to purely political issues, being laid down by the political leaders, the latter implies more technical questions raised by the experts, for instance, in the Council working groups (Princen & Rhinard, 2006).

A high-low policy cleavage can be represented by four phases of issue development, as previously distinguished by Cobb and colleagues: initiative, specification, expansion and entrance (Princen & Rhinard, 2006). Regarding the initiative stage, high-politics issues often present a common problem that is acknowledged by heads of states, whereas a bottom-up approach expresses more expertise-led concerns (Princen and Rhinard, 2006). The specification stage relates to issue framing, which then distinguishes between rather broad and general goals in high-politics and more precise definitions of an issue in the low-politics field (Princen & Rhinard, 2006).

Whilst the issue expansion represents top-down and bottom-up approaches of problem emergence, the entrance phase, instead, focuses on the strategies for accessing the EU decision-making agenda. Hereby, high-politics rests upon a political will and interest of heads of states, whereas the core goal of actors in low-politics field is to reach a point which prevents policies from going backwards (Princen & Rhinard, 2006).

Taking this definition into consideration, in the post-Lisbon era the high-low divide is defined by a separation between the European Council and the Council of the EU, high-politics being concentrated in the hands of the heads of the countries/governments, whilst low-politics being dealt at the ministerial level. To this end, after the Treaty of Lisbon the rotating Presidency powers became limited to the low-politics issues, the intergovernmental high-politics debate being managed by the President of the European Council.

2. Problem analysis

Given a variety of accounts interpreting the EU agenda, there have been a number of studies carried out accordingly. Nonetheless, this research narrows down the frame of the analysis by elaborating on Tallberg's (2003) typology of Presidency's agenda-shaping powers. Although there are a couple of studies that have looked at the agenda dynamics at the Council of the EU, a comprehensive longitudinal study touching upon the rotating Presidency is needed in order to draw more general inferences, especially concerning the post-Lisbon era. In this respect, the following sections provide a short overview of the essential works concerning Tallberg's approach and draw upon the remaining gaps in the state of the art.

2.1. Research on agenda management in the pre-Lisbon period

One of the major works demonstrating institutional advantages possessed by the rotating Council Presidency was performed by Warntjen (2007). In his study, the scholar analysed environmental policy by looking at the relationship between salience attached to the area in the party manifestos of the government in office and legislative activity during the Presidency term. As shown by the empirical analysis, there was a significant association between the two (Warntjen, 2007). Crum (2007), on the other hand, did not find any significant evidence of countries utilising the term for national gains. However, he stated that agenda management strategy employed by rotating chairs had an influence on the negotiations themselves (Crum, 2007).

Additional studies evaluated the Presidency's influence on the legislative outcome while examining different decision-making stages. Schalk et al. (2007) presented a stage-based model composed of four steps. The first two steps concern the Commission's proposal, split into 1) pre-adoption and 2) adoption stages, whereas the latter two – at the Council level – are divided into 3) intermediary and 4) voting phases (Schalk et al., 2007). According to the results, the more centralised the country's position in the decision-making process is, the higher the chance to exert influence. In addition, a number of studies confirmed that a voting stage provides the Presidency with additional room for manoeuvre (Schalk et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008; Warntjen, 2008).

In the analysis of the first Trio Presidency (Germany-Portugal-Slovenia), even before the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force (2007-2008), Vieira and Lange (2012) acknowledged that the rotating chair practices its managerial and agenda-setting powers through controlling the meetings and procedures, as well as brokering the deals at the working party, COREPER and ministerial levels. The scholars admit that the Presidency can also raise awareness of certain issues and, if the window of opportunities is open, initiate decisions (Vieira & Lange, 2012). Such procedural and information powers were also named by Verhoeff and Niemann (2011). However, the authors highlighted the fact that a country might alter its priorities during the term if this guarantees a better reputation in a long-term perspective (Verhoeff & Niemann, 2011).

Alexandrova and Timmermans (2013), on the other hand, while looking at the European Council agenda in 1975-2008, claimed that the rotating chair does not have any specific institutional advantages to put forward its national interests. The European Council represents a purely intergovernmental area, where political powers play a more important role than the rotating Presidency office (Alexandrova & Timmermans, 2013). However, these conclusions are based on the research prior the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force. Thus, a comparative study between the pre- and post-Lisbon periods is essential to validate these findings.

2.2. Research on agenda management in the post-Lisbon period

Whilst most of the studies were conducted during the pre-Lisbon period, there are rather few works analysing the Presidency's impact on the agenda-setting in the Council after the change of the treaty.

Warntjen (2013) was one of the first scholars addressing the issue of the small number of studies carried out regarding the impact of the rotating term in the Council of the EU and utilising Tallberg's agenda management typology. More precisely, in one of his latest works, Warntjen (2013) examined Presidency's scheduling power: the ability of the Presidencies to either put forward or to stall certain proposals. Using the interview data, the scholar demonstrated that, despite the Treaty of Lisbon and certain powers transferred to the permanent positions, the rotating Council Presidency remains an influential actor, being able to present national priorities at the EU level (Warntjen, 2013).

Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie (2013), as well as Karolewski, Mehlhausen and Sus (2015), while looking at the Polish Presidency in 2011, supported the assumption that the Presidency remains a powerful actor. Karolewski, Mehlhausen and Sus (2015) considered organisational, procedural and information powers to be the key assets of the rotating Presidency. Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie (2013), on the other hand, distinguished a three-tier typology of the Presidency influence: 1) determining agenda vs. influencing context of proposals; 2) varying with respect to the environment the chair operates in; 3) policy-based.

It is important to note that Vandecasteele et al. (2013) focused specifically on the external EU policies, which after the Treaty of Lisbon were shifted to the newly established positions. Hence, in the case of the Eastern Partnership, Poland was able to play a role in setting the agenda for the Council's preparatory bodies (especially COREPER) and during bilateral meetings (Vandecasteele et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the authors correctly pointed out that there is no direct relationship between member states holding certain powers and exerting influence. In the areas where the Presidency has a say, it has to act together with other EU

bodies, since no formal discretionary powers (e.g. in bilateral talks) are granted to the rotating chair in the external policy field (Vandecasteele et al., 2013).

Regarding the most recent research, Häge (2016) has also scrutinised Presidency's scheduling powers. By measuring the timing of the working group meetings in 1994-2014, he revealed policy discontinuity across rotating Council Presidencies. The study presented significant attention shifts over time and across topics, which can be further interpreted as a scheduling power the rotating chair holds and exercises (Häge, 2016), despite the fact that some topics remain sticky on the long-term Council agenda (Häge, 2016a).

2.3. Remaining puzzles

The agenda management powers of the rotating Council Presidency were thoroughly addressed before the Treaty of Lisbon (Bengtsson et al., 2004; Elgström, 2003; Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006; Schout, 1998; Schout & Vanhoonacker, 2003, 2006; Tallberg, 2003, 2004, 2006; Warntjen, 2007), when the rotating Presidency was also in charge of the agenda of the European Council – no longer so (Batory & Puetter, 2013). Hence, the number of studies drawing upon the altered roles after the Treaty of Lisbon is significantly lower. In addition, scholars often focus on the decision-making stages, procedures and results rather than agenda-setting activities (Schalk et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008; Warntjen, 2008).

Whilst the majority of Presidency-related studies were based on small-N cases, longitudinal large-scope analyses mainly examined the European Council (Alexandrova et al., 2012; Alexandrova & Timmermans, 2013; Alexandrova, 2015; Alexandrova et al., 2016), leaving the ministerial level out. Häge's (2016) time-series research of the rotating Presidency's scheduling power has been the first attempt to present a longitudinal analysis at the Council of the EU. Notwithstanding a substantial contribution, Häge's analysis, however, lacks more specific details on the attention shifts over the years, and especially across the rotating Presidencies. In this respect, accounting not only for the magnitude of the punctuations in attention alone, but also taking into consideration the timing and the member state holding the rotating office would grant relevant insights in respect to the existing academic work.

Taking into consideration the state of the art and the gaps in the literature discussed previously, this chapter assesses the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU by looking at the variations of salience attached by the Presidencies to different EU policies. The longitudinal descriptive analysis allows to consider three major institutional changes that had important effects on the functioning of the rotating chair: the Seville Council, the Council decision in 2006 establishing the Trio Presidency, and the Treaty of Lisbon. Hence, the following research question is raised:

To what extent do rotating Presidencies shape the agenda of the Council of the EU?

In order to provide an answer to the main puzzle, the study examines two further hypotheses:

H1.1: The rotation of the Council Presidencies leads to punctuations in policy salience.

Provided previous research on agenda studies and the application of the punctuated equilibrium approach therein, this hypothesis relates to the main feature of the punctuated equilibrium theory. To this end, observing punctuations in attention (i.e. policy salience) and given leptokurtic distributions of these changes in issue salience allows to assume that the rotating Presidency is able to structure the Council agenda in prioritising different sets of issues.

The second hypothesis focuses on the institutional changes – one of the main reasons of such policy punctuations:

H1.2: Institutional changes have diminished rotating Presidency's agenda-shaping powers.

In other words, to corroborate the hypothesis, we should observe a decreasing number of punctuations across policy areas over time. The main purpose is to analyse the variations in issue salience across different rotating Council chairs. The operationalisation of the main variable – issue salience – is explained in the following section. Nevertheless, for the purpose of a concept specification in this dissertation, it is important to note that issue salience, issue

attention, issue importance, policy salience and topic salience are used as synonyms. This choice is related to the application of the punctuated equilibrium theory, which speaks about the changes in attention policy makers pay to various topics. The following section presents a more detailed specification of the study object.

3. Issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes

Issue salience is a rather complex concept, which has been given different definitions and ways of measurement. This section presents the most conventional interpretations and proceeds with the operationalisation, followed by the descriptive statistics of the main variable – salience attached to policies in the rotating Council Presidency work programmes.

In the literature, salience is often defined as an importance given to a certain policy area or an issue (Bueno de Mesquita & Stokman, 1994; Laver, 2001). There are two factors that best define the concept: 1) resources (capabilities) an actor possesses, and 2) willingness to influence the decision-making process (Bueno de Mesquita & Stokman, 1994, p. 78; Arregui et al., 2004; Arregui & Thomson, 2009; Vandecasteele et al., 2015). Alternatively, salience can also be interpreted as a parameter affecting the utility loss in the decision-making process (Arregui, 2016; Thomson & Stokman, 2006).

When conceptualising salience, Bailer (2004) emphasised timing as a key factor that impacts salience, or, alternatively, preference intensity for an actor. Being impatient on an issue and attaching a high importance to it eventually results in less power resources during the bargaining process (Bailer, 2004). Lower salience, on the contrary, has no substantial effect on a bargaining satisfaction (Arregui, 2016).

At the national level, salience is often related to issues that are essential for the government or the country (Bickerton et al., 2015). Nevertheless, it may also denote issues that are found important by the interest groups and, thus, lead to a preference formation within the country (Leuffen et al., 2014). However, salience should not be confused with a position of the country – the latter can be extreme, yet, exposing low preference intensity (Veen, 2011).

For the purpose of this research, issue salience is defined as follows: an importance attached to a policy issue in the rotating Presidency work programme, expressed by a degree of emphasis (percentage of recitals) given to a topic, disregarding the policy positions of actors involved (Laver, 2001). Such operationalisation is further explained in the following sections, simultaneously presenting alternative ways to measure the variable of interest.

3.1. Measurement of the Presidency issue salience

In terms of measurement, several methods are often invoked in order to disentangle the complexity of the variable. Currently, two the most prominent ones are the document/text analysis and expert interviews. The document analysis (e.g. party manifestos, government programmes, speeches) is often used for longitudinal studies and based on the content coding, calculating the frequency of recitals with respect to different policy areas. Thematic content analysis relies on single keywords, whereas relational one counts (quasi-) sentences (Laver, 2001).

Expert interviews are used to evaluate salience in a shorter time period, however, compared to text analysis, they ensure a higher validity (Warntjen, 2011). To estimate salience, some scholars (Thomson & Stokman, 2006; Thomson et al., 2012; Cross, 2013; Warntjen, 2008) present a scale, in which respondents have to indicate preference intensity. Here higher values correspond to higher salience attached to an issue.

Other ways of measurement involve media coverage (Helbling & Tresch, 2011; Warntjen, 2011) and public opinion surveys (Warntjen, 2011). Media analysis is particularly relevant for verifying text analysis, especially in time-series research, since it usually uses the same technique (Helbling & Tresch, 2011). Furthermore, Häge (2016a) looked at the duration of the working party meetings at the Council of the EU, assuming that their variation in length is a proxy for measuring attention given to policies (Häge, 2016a).

Concerning studies on salience for the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, different data and methods were applied. Warntjen (2007), while looking at the environmental policy

area, analysed party manifestos of the government holding the rotating Presidency office. In order to avoid partisan bias, the scholar cross-validated his findings by looking at half-year programmes of the rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU (Warntjen, 2007). Vandecasteele et al. (2015), on the other hand, based their studies on both Presidency programmes and in-depth expert interviews.

Since the aim of this study is to have a broader picture of long-term attention shifts across countries holding the rotating office and policy areas, the empirical analysis relies on the half-year rotating Presidency programmes as the proxy for the Presidency, and, hence, the Council agenda.

3.2. Data selection

Rotating Presidency programmes are often considered as the first information source for presenting priorities of member states in the upcoming term (Elgström, 2003; Häge, 2016; Tallberg, 2003; Thomson, 2008; Vandecasteele et al., 2015; Warntjen, 2007). Additionally, they are prepared by the national administrations and, thus, considered as their political statements, taking all the responsibility for the content (General Secretariat, 2016).

Häge (2016) correctly pointed out that programmes often differ in length, style or details paid to issues, which might impede document comparability, especially while looking at words or other text elements (Häge, 2016). Longer programmes tend to address certain topics more in depth, whereas the absence or just a brief reference to a policy issue could lead to a presumption that the state does not have an interest in it (Budge et al., 2001).

Nonetheless, Presidency programmes also have some shared features. Considering the fact that approximately 80% of Council's agenda is inherited (Smeets & Vennix, 2014; Warntjen, 2013), programmes inevitably ensure issue continuity. This feature was even more strengthened after the Council decision in 2006 and the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) introducing the Presidency Trios and common programmes they are obliged to present.

This change has also brought a more unified approach to the structure of the Presidency work programmes. Starting from 2009, these documents have two major parts: a strategic framework and an operational programme. The former usually specifies the core objectives of the Presidency, as well as Council's long-term goals, whereas the latter expresses certain priorities in each of the Council configuration for the upcoming period (Van Hecke & Bursens, 2011). Both parts are important in terms of identifying key issues for the Presidency. Therefore, this study looks at complete content of the documents, which also helps to draw a comparison between pre- and post-Lisbon periods.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

Presidency programmes were obtained from their official websites (when available), as well as by contacting the EU institutions (the Council and the European Commission) and national representations. In total, 40 programmes in the period 1997-2017 were collected and coded: from the Luxembourg Presidency in the second half of 1997 to the Maltese Presidency in the first semester of 2017.

In terms of length, documents show a rather significant variation. The shortest one includes 1510 words (British programme in 2005), whilst the longest – 27 488 words (Italian programme in 2014). The average word count is 12 072 words. For research purposes, percentages of references to specific policy areas are used in order to avoid over- or under-representation of issues addressed.

It is important to note that Finnish Presidency programme from 2006 that was issued by the Government Secretariat of the EU Affairs, presents only the preliminary agenda. However, it is considered as the only remaining version of the official text, therefore, used as a proxy for the full programme.

Luxembourg programmes from 2005 and 2015 are named as Presidency priorities. Nevertheless, considering the fact that on the Presidency website the work programme and

Presidency priorities are used as synonyms and cover the majority of policy areas, the documents addressing the priorities are treated as work programmes.

Regarding the British Presidency programme in 2005, despite its length, the document is treated as a proxy for the work programme, since the Presidency priorities were addressed in a separate document.

3.3.1. Hand-coding of Presidency programmes¹

In order to measure the dependent variable, as well as to reveal the shifts of salience over time, this study is based on a hand-coding method and uses the codebook from the EU Policy Agendas Project (EUPAP, 2016).

The EU Policy Agendas Project has originated from the Comparative Agendas Project and examines policy shifts in different EU institutions across topics and over time (Alexandrova et al., 2014; EUPAP, 2016). There are two main codebooks developed: the general and the one for the European Council Conclusions. Each of them contains 21 major policy topics and 250 subtopics (with an exception of the codebook for the European Council Conclusions that has additional variables) (EUPAP, 2016).

Considering the fact that the EU Policy Agendas Project is coordinated by Petya Alexandrova, Marcello Carammia, Sebastiaan Princen and Arco Timmermans, who have already carried out studies on the EU institutions and their policy agendas, the codebooks they employ are well-refined, thus, ensuring a higher validity and precision of the research. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, presenting a dataset coded by a single author, the general codebook is employed² (using the version 3.3, updated in April 2015).

¹ A more elaborated explanation of the coding rules is presented in Appendix 1.

² To adapt the codebook to the current study, some changes were made (see Appendix 1). Nevertheless, to obviate the lack of inter-coder reliability, the coding of the Presidency programmes followed the guidelines of the EUPAP. The European Council Conclusions dataset online was treated as an example for the coded content.

Taking into account a relative variation in the structure of the Presidency work programmes, only the content part is analysed. The study leaves out tables of contents, as well as appendices and additional paragraphs used to address the event calendars, since the most important meetings and events are named in the main text.

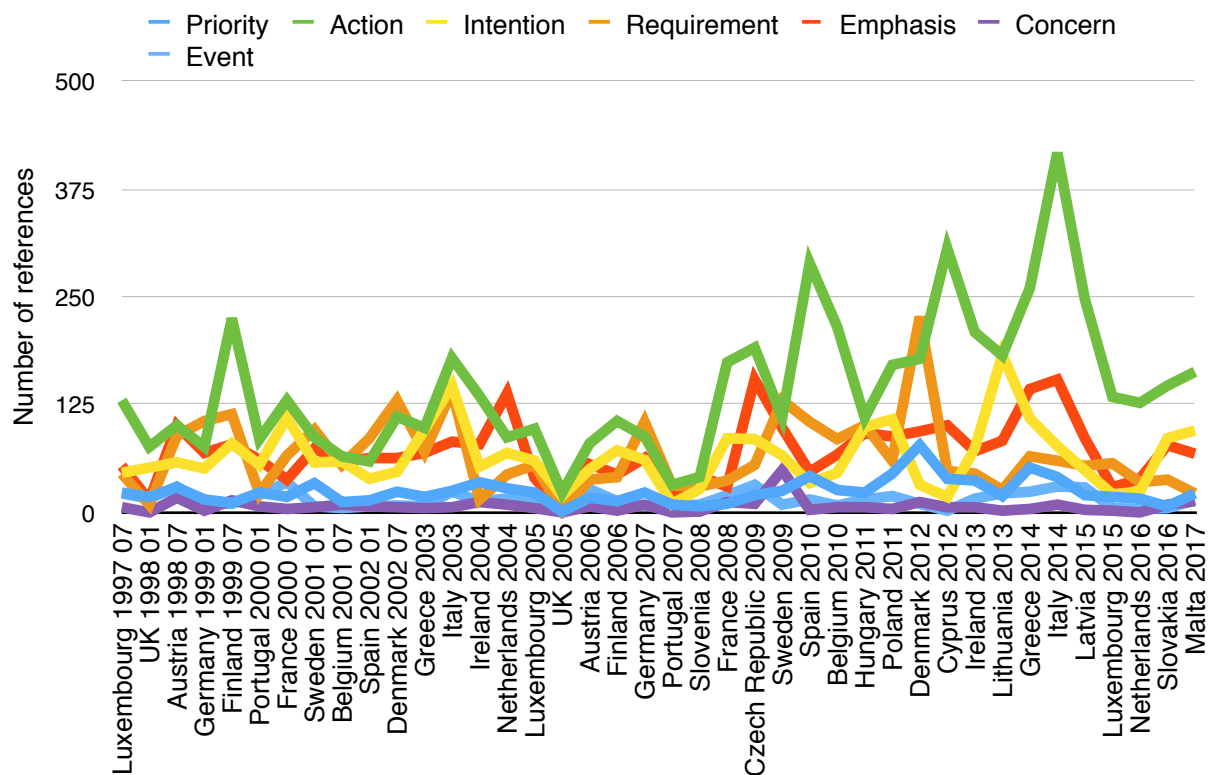
Each Presidency programme is coded at the quasi-sentence unit, attaching a single code from the codebook. On the contrary to previous studies, this research does not cover the full content. Some scholars analysing the executive agendas (Jennings et al., 2011a; Mortensen et al., 2011; Breeman et al., 2009) remarked that certain documents, e.g. speeches, tend to contain a symbolic part, which should be considered when performing the text analysis. In Alexandrova, Carammia and Timmermans' (2012) analysis of the European Council such policy-free content makes 3%. This research, however, applies a more strict filtering.

In order to address issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes, seven categories, defining the concept, were distinguished: 1) priorities, 2) actions, 3) intentions for an action, 4) requirements for an action/mean, 5) general emphasis of certain issues, 6) concerns and 7) events. In other words, statement-like sentences referring to the past events or performance of other EU institutions, as well as those not involving any link to policy areas the Council deals with are excluded (see Appendix 1 for a more thorough explanation).

As depicted in Figure 1.1, the majority of references are actions to be performed by respective countries. Yet, the emphasis on certain policies, requirements for an action, as well as intentions comprise a significant share of the recitals. Whilst actions refer to obligations to be performed by the chair, the latter categories give more freedom for a presiding member state in implementing their half-year programmes. Hereby, the chair may amend a current policy path or even avoid certain developments.

On average, approximately 21% of the content is omitted from the coding. Such selection gives a more refined representation of salience attached to political fields by different Presidencies, avoiding a measurement fallacy in the further analysis.

Figure 1.1: References in the rotating Presidency programmes by category



In addition, this coding also aims to address one of the major issues regarding the Presidency programmes – the intention of putting topics on the agenda. A higher emphasis attached to a certain policy area may relate not only to a national interest, but also to a will of finalising the dossier and claiming it as a Presidency achievement. On the other hand, limited attention can be regarded as a low expectation for any kind of progress to be achieved during the term, however, still being crucial for the presiding member state (Vandecasteele et al., 2015).

Taking this into consideration, selected (quasi-) sentences are coded according to two categories: Presidency-related or EU-related ones. Whilst the first one includes all units that express a clear reference to the country holding the chair or the Council in a more general sense, the latter represents broader actions to be performed, without a clear link to an agent. On average, approximately 60% of recitals refer to the Presidency actions, the trend being particularly evident in the post-Lisbon period. Thus, facing the reduction of powers at the EU

level, the rotating Council Presidencies presented more articulated and ambitious programmes, aiming to maintain their stance at the EU level.

3.4. Indicators presenting variation in issue salience

Issue salience, being expressed as a frequency of references (quasi-sentences), provides an overall picture of the most important and highly varying topics. Nonetheless, to address the actual change and fragmentation of agendas, four statistical indicators are further invoked: 1) percentage-percentage method, 2) kurtosis, 3) issue divergence and 4) entropy (also known as Shannon's H) index.

As the majority of political agendas, the rotating Presidency ones are also subjects to incremental changes. Hence, it is important to compare relative changes in attention across semesters. For this purpose, "percentage-percentage method" is applied³ (Alexandrova et al., 2012, p. 76; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). This measurement aims to overcome the issue of different length of the Presidency programmes by treating the scope of the Presidency agenda as non-constant (Alexandrova et al., 2012).

Kurtosis refers to statistical expectations derived from the punctuated equilibrium theory, where both punctuations and incrementalism constitute the main trends of the agenda development (Alexandrova et al., 2012). Situations causing policy frictions and sudden abruptions can be observed in institutional structures where decision-making costs are higher (e.g. due to the division of tasks among multiple actors) or where multiple veto players are involved (Baumgartner et al., 2009). In statistical terms, this situation is usually depicted by a histogram with high peaks of small changes (levelling around 0) and fat, long tails, representing policy punctuations (Alexandrova et al., 2012). In this respect, the distribution is represented by a kurtosis index exceeding 3 (Bevan & Jennings, 2014) or a leptokurtosis index higher than 0.123 (Baumgartner et al., 2009).

³ Formula: (percentage of issue X at time_2—percentage of issue X at time_1)/percentage of issue X at time_1 (Alexandrova et al., 2012). Cases, in which Presidencies did not pay any attention to specific policies (i.e. salience is 0) and percentage differences could not be calculated, were omitted. Such rigid model helps to ensure that kurtosis values are not over-estimated (Bevan & Jennings, 2014). Nevertheless, for the visual representation, missing values are treated as 0 (Figures 1.3-1.7).

In addition, to evaluate the (in)stability of the rotating agendas, Carammia et al. (2016) measured the divergence of issues across successive semesters. The authors reversed the initial index presented by Sigelman and Buell (2004), and, hereby, treated higher numbers as a higher diversity⁴. Since the objective of this research is to estimate the changes across rotating Council Presidencies and topics they address, the modified interpretation of an index is used.

Finally, to evaluate the changes in the scope of the agenda across semesters, entropy, also known as Shannon's H index, is presented⁵ (Jennings et al., 2011; Alexandrova et al., 2012). The range of this index varies depending on the number of issues addressed (Carammia et al., 2016). The higher the value, the more topics are covered, whereas a lower value represents a concentrated agenda, focusing on a few issues (John & Jennings, 2010; Jennings et al., 2011).

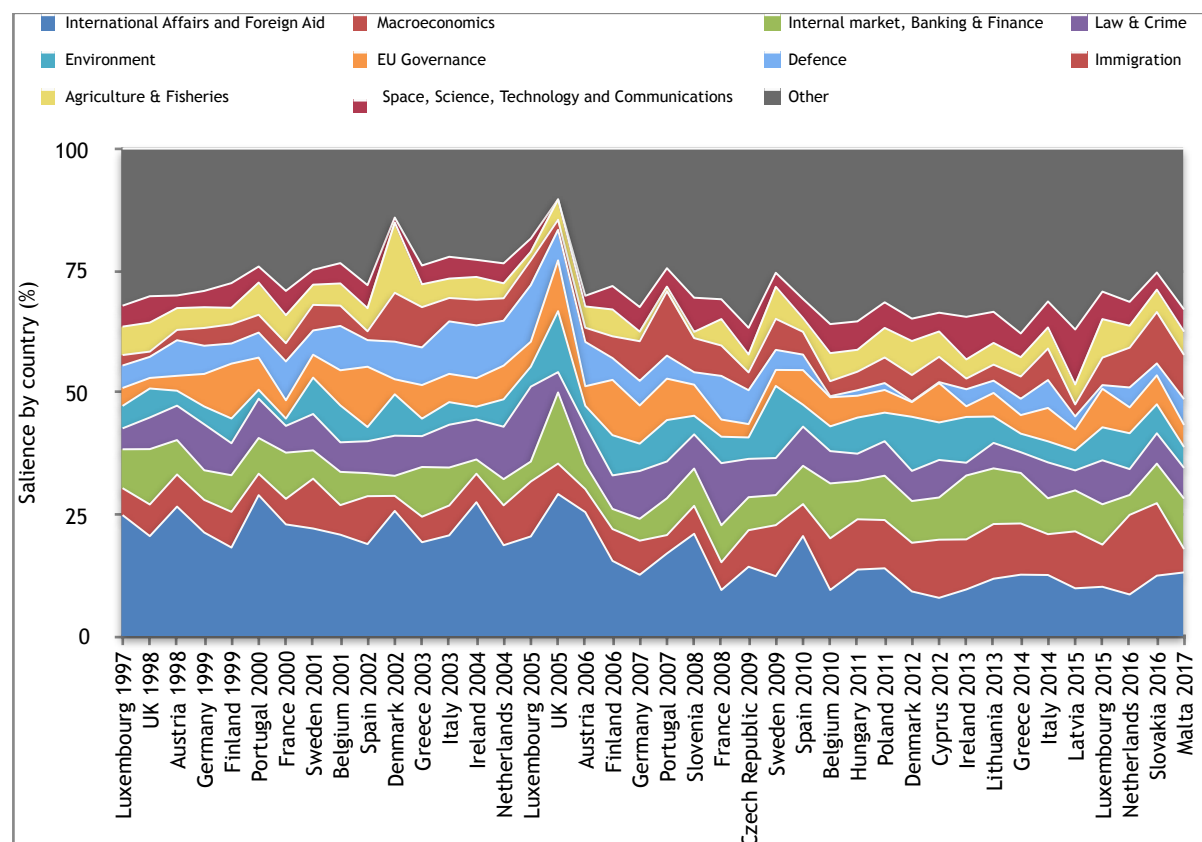
4. Summary statistics

As presented in Figure 1.2, attention to different policies attached by the rotating Council Presidencies expose moderate fluctuations in the past 20 years (1997-2017). Ten prevailing issue areas that (on average) gained the greatest share of attention in the examined time period are the following: international affairs and foreign aid (17,24%), macroeconomics (8,04%), banking, finance and internal trade (7,68%), law and crime (7,21%), environment (5,82%), EU governance (5,80%), defence (5,13%), immigration (5,09%), agriculture and fisheries (4,74%), and space, science, technology and communication (4,51%).

⁴ Formula: $100 - \sum^n |P_t - P_{t-1}| / 2$, n – number of issues, P – percentage given to one issue (slightly modified formula presented by Carammia et al. (2016)).

⁵ Formula: $H = (-1) \sum p(x_i) \ln(p(x_i))$ (Jennings et al., 2011).

Figure 1.2: Variation of salience (% absolute numbers) across rotating Council Presidencies by topic⁶



International affairs and foreign aid policy, with some fluctuations, was a prevailing topic during 1997-2010, marked by the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007. Macroeconomics, instead, became equally significant only with the Treaty of Lisbon, coinciding with the Euro crisis and, therefore, becoming a prevalent subject across the EU. A similar trend can be observed in the banking, finance and internal trade area. Yet, country-related factors here might also play the role, since, for instance, the UK both in 1998 and in 2005 paid relatively more attention to the topic than former or succeeding Presidencies.

Whilst the latter three policies tend to be rather sticky on the Presidency agendas, other topics have been subjects to moderate or even significant fluctuations. In the case of defence,

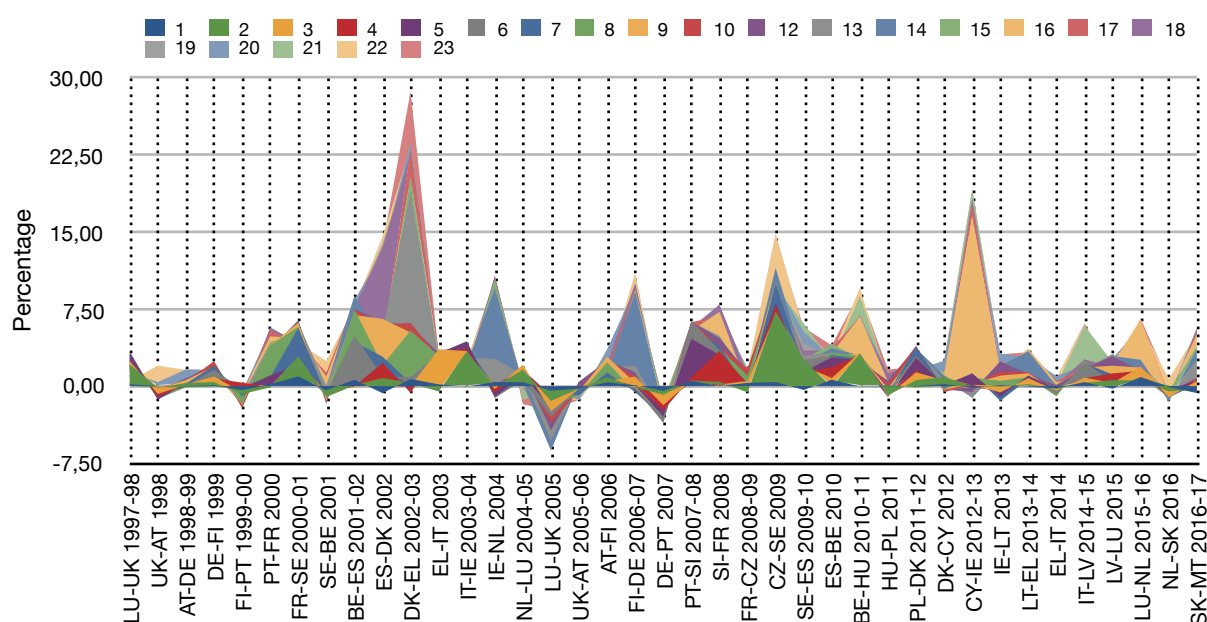
⁶ Other policy areas include the following: civil rights, minority issues and civil liberties; health; labour and employment; education; energy; transportation; social policy; regional and urban policy and planning; foreign trade; public lands, water management and territorial issues; culture and media. Additionally, a miscellaneous category is created in order to address policy areas which could not be split across single policies. However, as the average share of attention given to these complex issues is around 1%, with low volatility over time, the category is excluded from the further analysis.

attention was steadily growing until 2005, yet, facing a sharp decline in the following years (with an exception of the French Presidency in 2008). Immigration policy, instead, exhibits three more evident peaks of attention: in 2002, 2007 and from 2015 onwards. However, in order to observe the actual changes in attention paid to respective policies, the following section presents their relative values.

4.1. Relative changes in issue salience across rotating Presidencies

While the absolute values of issue attention represent the total share of importance given to particular policies, the actual shifts should be evaluated by looking at the relative percentage changes across semesters.

Figure 1.3: Percentage-percentage differences in issue salience in 1997-2017



Note: Policy areas by codes: 1 – Macroeconomics; 2 – Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties; 3 – Health; 4 – Agriculture and Fisheries; 5 – Labour and Employment; 6 – Education; 7 – Environment; 8 – Energy; 9 – Immigration; 10 – Transportation; 12 – Law and Crime; 13 – Social Policy; 14 – Regional and Urban Policy and Planning; 15 – Banking, Finance and Internal Trade; 16 – Defence; 17 – Space, Science, Technology and Communications; 18 – Foreign Trade; 19 – International Affairs and Foreign Aid; 20 – EU Governance; 21 – Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues; 23 – Culture and Media; 22 – miscellaneous.

Figure 1.3 shows that over the past 20 years fluctuations of issue attention across the rotating Presidencies were quite common. The most substantial peaks are observed in foreign trade

policy during the Danish Presidency (2002), social policy during the Greek (2003) term, regional and urban policies during Dutch (2004) and German (2007) Presidencies, civil rights and minority issues addressed more by the Swedish (2009) chair, as well as defence policy greatly emphasised by the Irish Presidency (2013). To this end, these results corroborate the first hypothesis (H1.1) that the rotating mechanism of the Council Presidency leads to the punctuations in policy salience.

Nevertheless, these fluctuations are not equally distributed throughout the given time frame. On the one hand, peaks may reflect the representation of domestically sensitive issues during the term. On the other hand, they may be related to the internal or external affairs the EU was involved in, or institutional rules adopted at a certain moment in time. Hence, dividing the 20 year period into four time-lapses according to three main institutional changes – the Seville Council, the change of the Council’s rules of procedure in 2006 and the Treaty of Lisbon – visualises their impact over the Presidency’s scheduling power.

As shown in Figures 1.4-1.5, the establishment of the multi-annual Presidency programme idea during the Seville Council did not have any major influence on the shifts in issue salience: changes within policies are observed before and after the summit.

Figure 1.4: Percentage-percentage differences in issue salience before the Seville Council

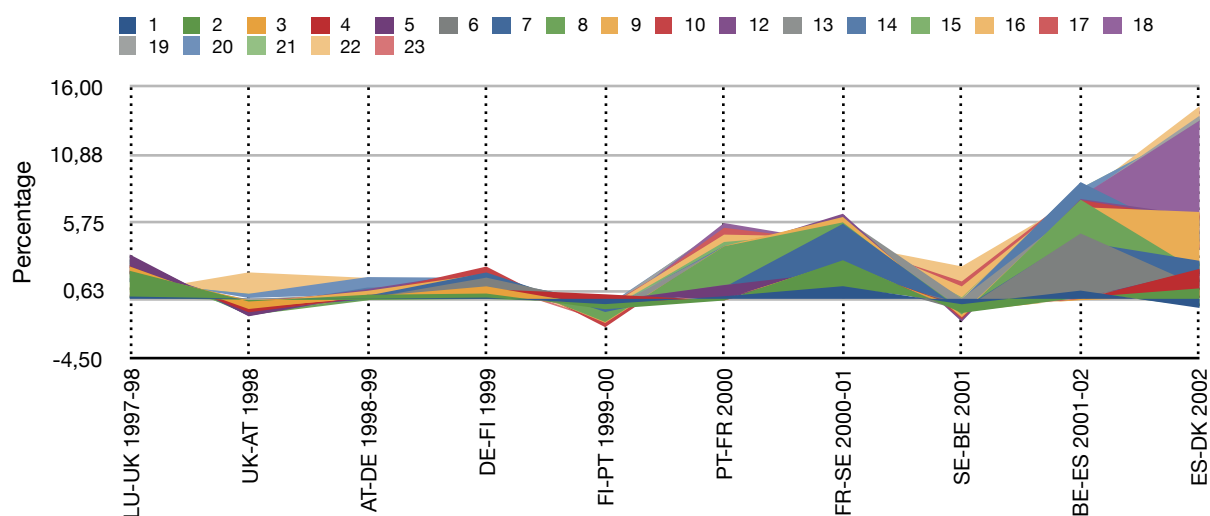
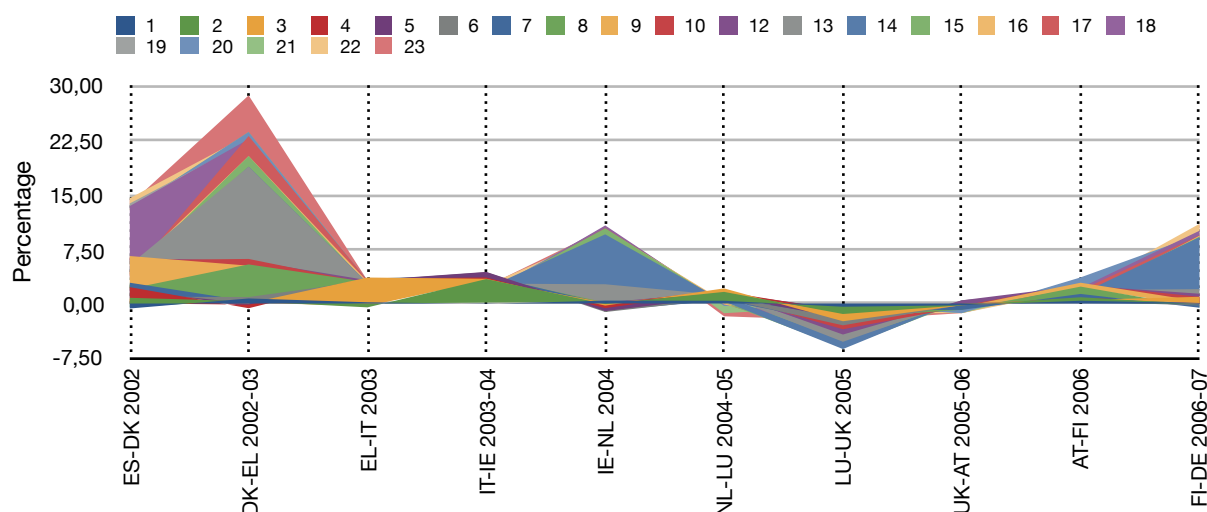


Figure 1.5: Percentage-percentage differences in issue salience between the Seville Council and the Council decision in 2006



The adoption of the Council rules in 2006 (Figure 1.6) was more constraining, however, did not prevent from further moderate punctuations. The most influential institutional change in this regard is the Treaty of Lisbon (see Figure 1.7). With an exception of the defence policy during the Irish Presidency (2013), the remaining policies fluctuated only to a limited extent, ensuring more stability and continuity on the Council agenda. Hereby, these results provide sufficient evidence to support the second hypothesis raised in this chapter (H1.2).

Figure 1.6: Percentage-percentage differences in issue salience between the Council decision in 2006 and the Treaty of Lisbon

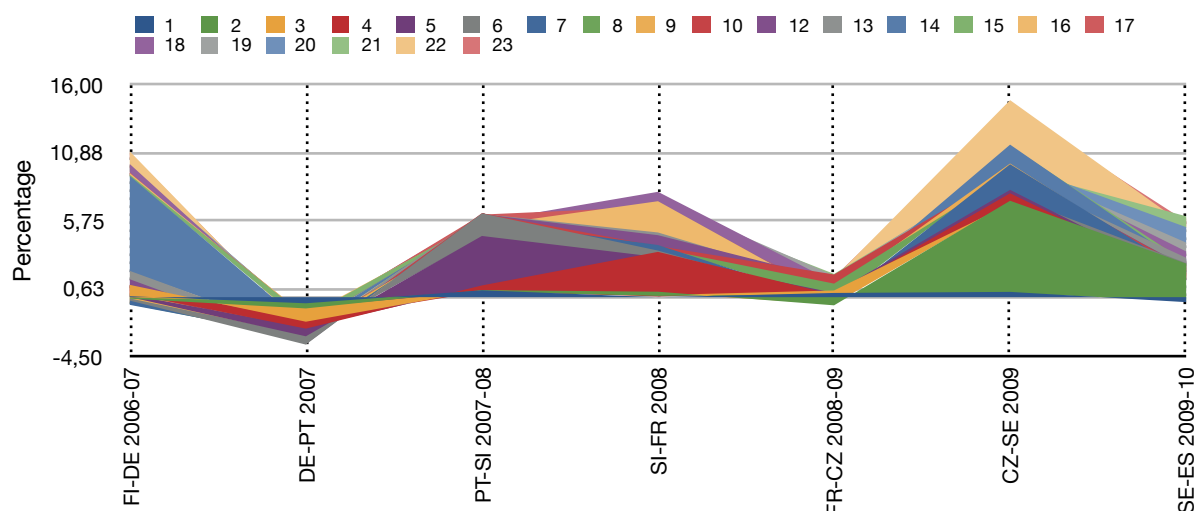
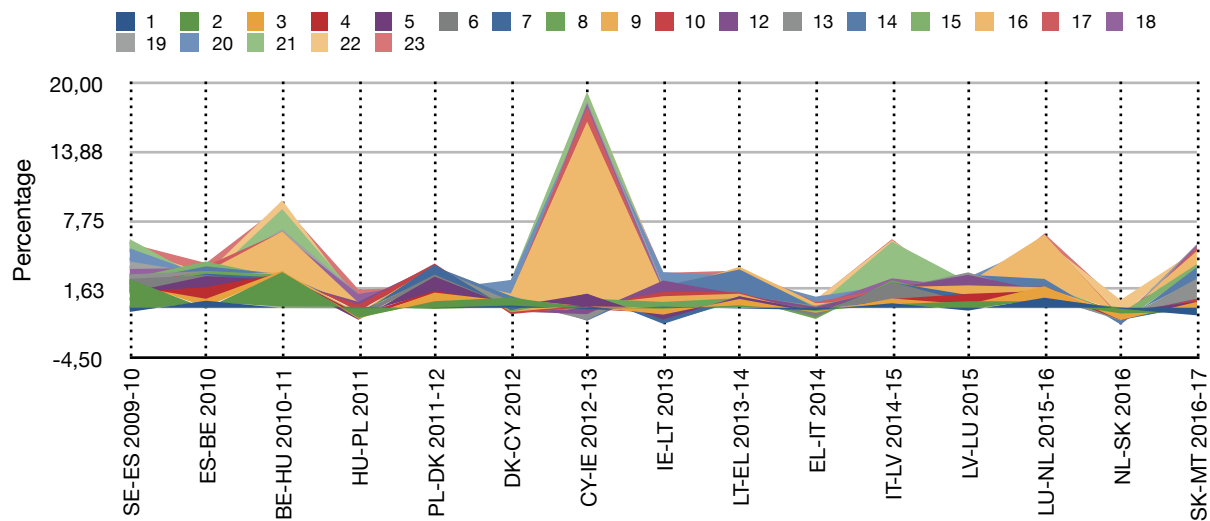


Figure 1.7: Percentage-percentage differences in issue salience after the Treaty of Lisbon



In addition to the previous shifts in attention, the support for the punctuated equilibrium theory is further provided by the overall kurtosis level. The index, including all policies, greatly exceeds the normal distribution one, equalising to 67.31 (1-kurtosis index being equal to 0.35). Such non-normal, leptokurtic distribution is further presented in Figure 1.8.

Figure 1.8: Frequency distribution of relative changes in issue salience covering all policy areas in 1997-2017

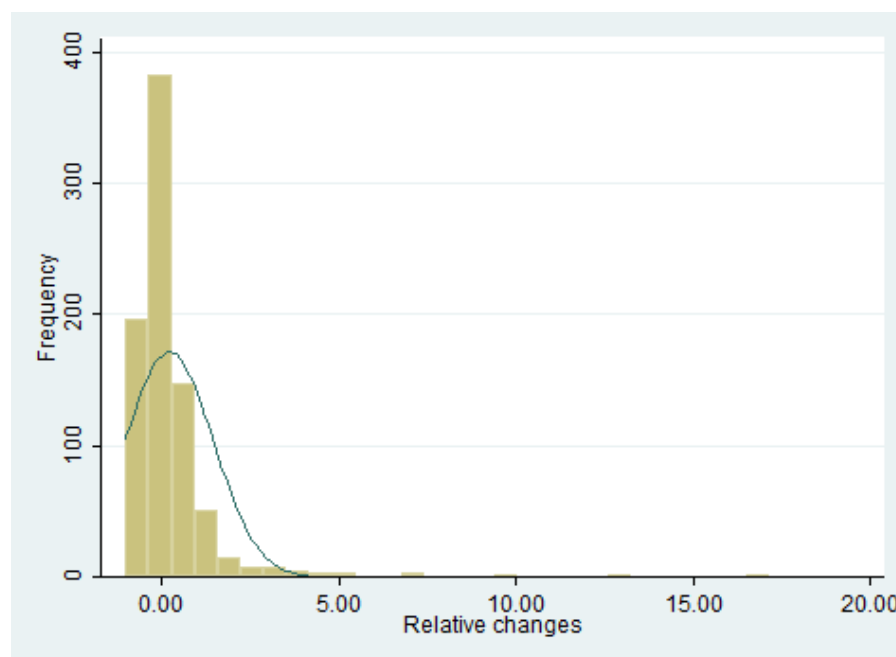
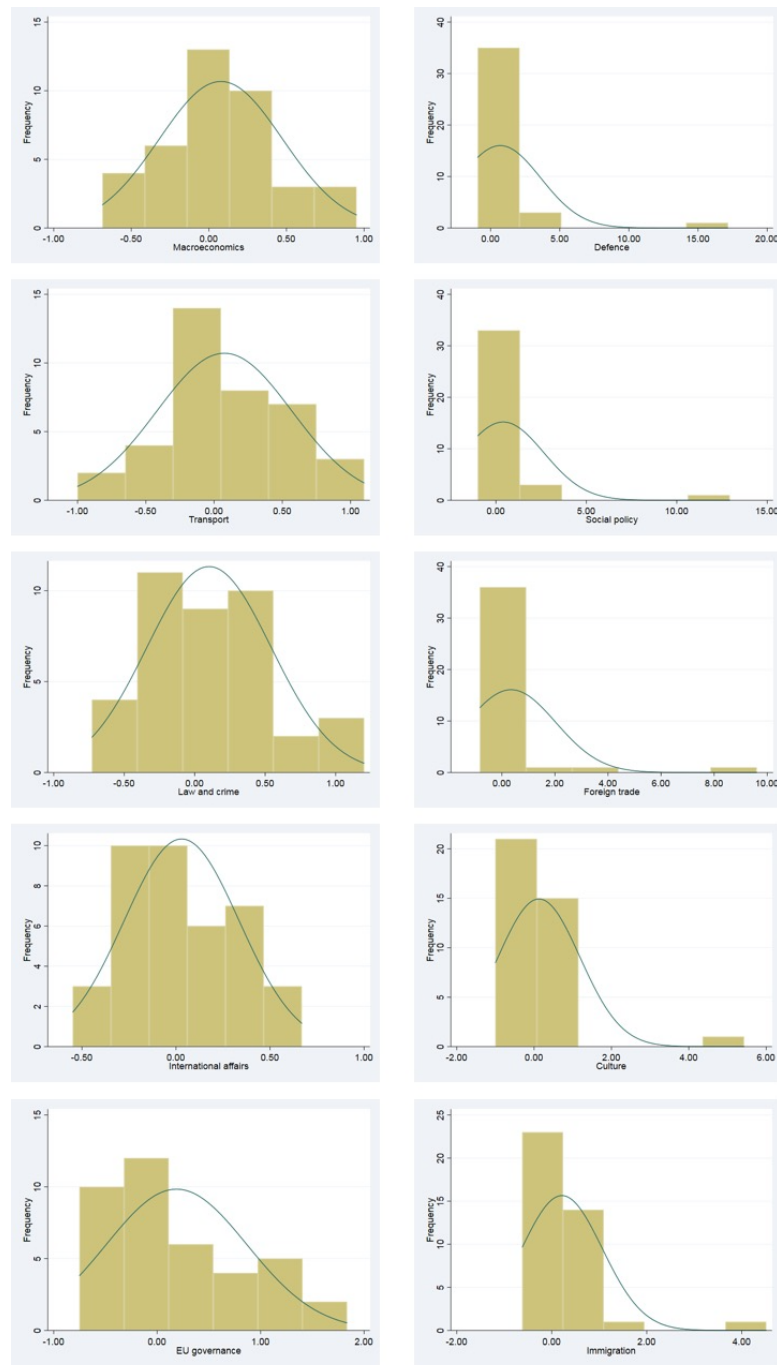


Figure 1.9: Frequency distribution of relative changes in policy areas with low and high kurtosis levels



Note: low kurtosis levels on the left column present (top-down) macroeconomics, transport, law and crime, international affairs and foreign aid, EU governance. High kurtosis levels on the right column: defence, social policy, foreign trade, culture, immigration.

Nevertheless, a more nuanced policy-by-policy analysis shows some variations. Whilst kurtosis index of macroeconomics, transport, law and crime, international affairs and foreign aid, as well as EU governance issues range from 2.31 to 2.95 and, therefore, resemble a

normal distribution, the remaining policy areas clearly confirm the presumptions of the punctuated equilibrium theory – long periods of incremental changes, disrupted by occasional attention shifts. To this end, the highest kurtosis rates were exposed by immigration and culture policies (ranging around 18), foreign trade (25.13), and especially defence and social policies, having a kurtosis of 27 (see Figure 1.9).

These results go in hand with the previously presented figures, especially regarding relative attention shifts. Macroeconomics, law and crime, international affairs and foreign aid, as well as EU governance were among the ten policy areas that (on average) received the highest shares of attention in the Presidency programmes. Furthermore, the salience attached to these policies remained constant. The remaining policy areas, on the contrary, presented more evident shifts in issue salience.

It must be noted that these results resemble the national agendas⁷, where macroeconomics, foreign affairs, governance and defence issues compose the large majority of attention (Jennings et al, 2011). Nevertheless, while the fluctuations in issue salience on the national agendas depend on the balance between core and selective issues⁸ (Jennings et al., 2011), punctuations across rotating Presidencies can be linked to two explanations: either the EU-level factors (e.g. enlargement) or country-related policy priorities. While each of these possible explanations need to be examined more in detail, especially in relation to the most prominent peaks presented in Figure 1.3, they support the hypothesis H1.1, expecting changes in issue salience due to the rotation of the Council Presidencies.

4.2. Instability and entropy of the Presidency agendas

The instability index of the rotating Presidency agendas corroborate Häge's (2016) findings that the Presidency has up to 30% of room for manoeuvre in shaping the Council agenda and representing its priorities.

⁷ In the United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark, France and Spain (Jennings et al., 2011).

⁸ When the core policies (e.g. macroeconomics or international affairs) are more salient, less space on the agenda is left for selective policies. However, there is no issue competition between core policies (Jennings et al., 2011).

Figure 1.10: Issue divergence across rotating Council Presidencies (%)

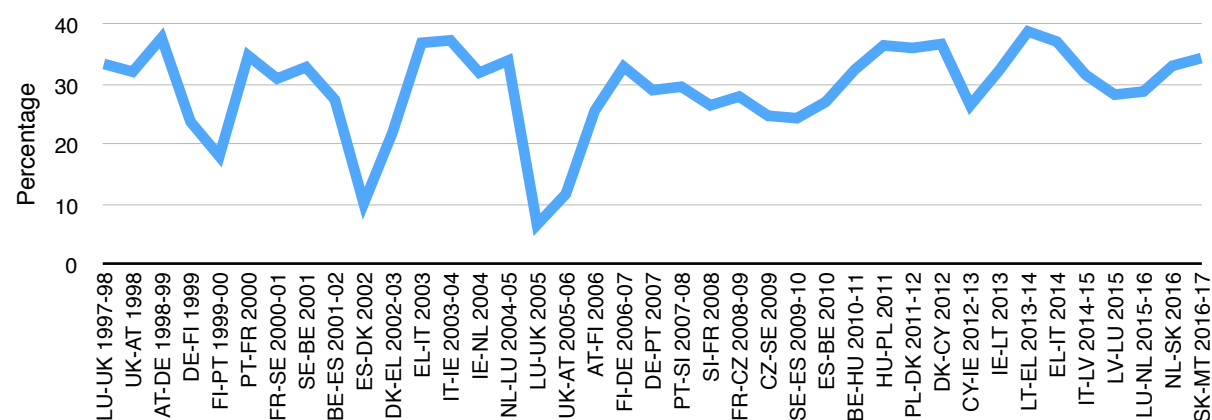
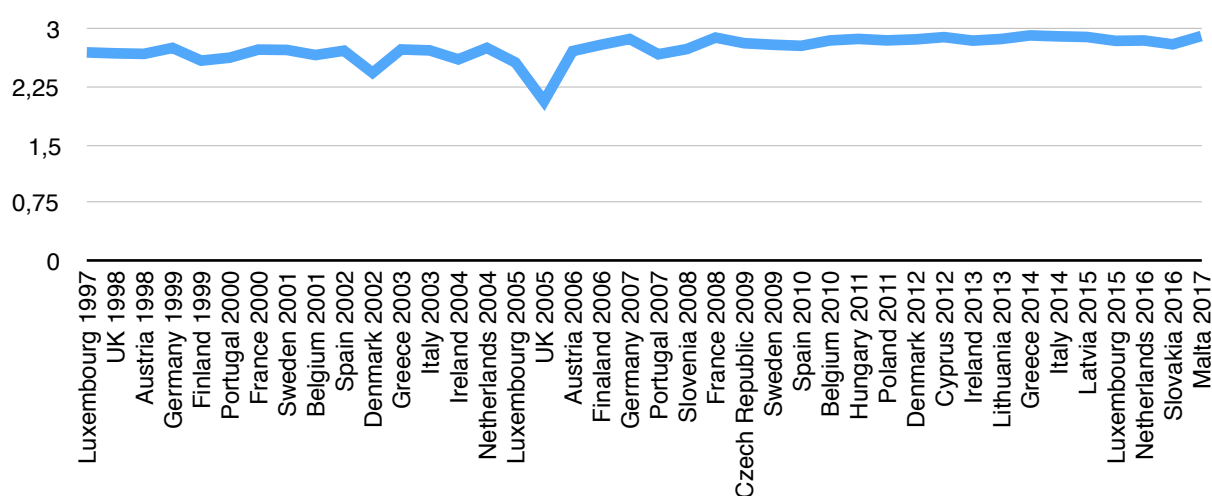


Figure 1.10 shows issue divergence scores across sequential semesters, i.e. the extent to which the programmes of successive rotating Presidencies differ from each other (Carammia et al., 2016). As depicted in the figure, on average these differences level out around 29%. In this regard, the establishment of the Trio Presidency can be regarded as the key institutional change that ensured a larger room for manoeuvre for each member state during its Presidency term, since the diversity became more stable after 2006. Alternatively, continuous divergence in the post-Lisbon period can be interpreted as *de facto* interruptions of agendas, for instance, due to crises or unexpected events. Nevertheless, to confirm this assumption, a further analysis is required.

Figure 1.11: Entropy scores of rotating Council Presidency work programmes



Regarding the entropy scores, which present the range of issues being addressed in the Presidency programmes, no significant variations were observed (Figure 1.11). With an exception of the British Presidency in 2005, which issued an atypically short programme, semestral changes confirm the fact that each Presidency is obliged to take into consideration ongoing affairs in each of 10 Council configurations and the topics discussed therein. Therefore, the scope of the agenda (as the number of topics being discussed) remains stable.

5. A comparative perspective across EU policy agendas

Regardless of a rather limited literature on the agendas of the EU institutions, recent studies by Alexandrova and colleagues (2014), as well as Häge (2016a) provide an opportunity to draw comparative lines across the policy agendas of the European Council, the Council of the EU and its rotating Presidency. Although the coding and operationalisation of salience attached to different topics is not coherent across all studies⁹, this section addresses the common lines.

As presented in Appendix 2, international affairs stand as the dominant policy area across all agendas, which, accordingly, underlines a high salience of the topic at the EU level. Internal market, likewise, was given a significant share of attention in both institutions, whereas EU governance, although received relatively less importance by the rotating Presidencies, remained among the top issues being discussed¹⁰.

Going further down the ranking, trends tend to diverge, simultaneously representing the division between intergovernmental and community policies (see Appendix 2). Employment or energy policies, being less regulated at the EU level (Hix & Høyland, 2011), were more prioritised by the European Council, whereas agriculture received a higher share of attention in the Council of the EU. Nevertheless, the so-called law and crime policy, as a part of Justice

⁹ Whilst the same coding instructions were used to analyse the European Council and the rotating Presidency agendas, Häge (2016a) adopted a different operationalisation for measuring attention within the Council – the number and length of working party meetings.

¹⁰ This observation is based on the assumption that the General Affairs Council, addressed in Häge's coding, is involved in the preparations for the European Council meetings and issues discussed therein (Häge, 2016a).

and Home Affairs, despite belonging to the coordinated EU competences (Hix & Høyland, 2011), was more often emphasised at the ministerial level.

To a certain extent, these results are driven by the similarity/divergence in measuring issue salience within the respective institutions. Yet, considering the fact that international affairs, internal market and EU governance issues were rather equally emphasised on all three agendas, a policy factor does play a role. To this end, more EU institutional agendas need to be analysed by applying either of the methods in order to observe the actual effects of the policy area or the specificities of the institutions in question and their governance mechanisms.

Conclusion

Although the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU is often criticised for its administrative nature and rather limited powers in the decision-making process, it remains one of the core objects of analysis when looking at the Council agenda, and especially variations in salient topics. This chapter investigated the extent to which the rotating chair is in a position to shape the Council agenda, which resulted in the following findings:

Table 1.1: Main findings of the Chapter I

RQ: To what extent do rotating Presidencies shape the agenda of the Council of the EU?	
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Result</i>
H1.1: The rotation of the Council Presidencies leads to punctuations in policy salience.	Corroborated
H1.2: Institutional changes have diminished rotating Presidency's agenda-shaping powers (which are depicted by a decreasing number of punctuations over time).	Corroborated

As shown by the summary statistics of the original hand-coded dataset of 40 rotating Presidency programmes, a punctuated equilibrium theory explains the trends across salience attached to different policies. Whilst several policy areas, such as macroeconomics, international affairs, law and crime and EU governance tend to be more sticky on the

Presidency agenda, punctuations in the majority of remaining fields are more pronounced. In relation to this point, the analysis allows to support the first hypothesis (H1.1), accordingly presenting the agenda-structuring powers possessed by the rotating chair even in the post-Lisbon period. To what extent such results can also explain agenda-setting, as a policy entrepreneurship, is a subject to a further evaluation of the data presented above.

Nevertheless, institutional developments in the last two decades did influence the Presidency's room for manoeuvre. Starting from 2006, when the Council amended its rules of procedure and implemented the Trio Presidency idea, shifts in attention across rotating member states have significantly decreased. With an exception of the defence policy during the Irish Presidency in 2013, only marginal fluctuations across agendas were observed, ensuring a higher continuity of policies. To this end, it allows to support the second hypothesis (H1.2) raised in this chapter.

However, even moderate fluctuations of issue salience provide an evidence that the rotating Presidency is in charge of the Council agenda. Given the issue divergence index, each member state, especially in the post-Lisbon period, can decide up to one third of the topics discussed in the Council. Taking into account this room for manoeuvre, the Council Presidency may consequently exert influence on the EU legislative process.

A brief comparison between the Council of the EU and the European Council agendas adds to the studies of issue inheritance, as well as convergence of salient topics across institutions. International affairs, internal market and EU governance were simultaneously emphasised on the EU agendas, representing an incremental policy development over time. Nevertheless, the main puzzle lies within the remaining policy areas and observed shifts in attention. In this regard, Chapter II sheds more light on the national and supranational elements deemed to explain the analysed phenomena, i.e. differences in issue attention across rotating Presidency programmes.

Chapter II. What influences the rotating Presidency agenda? A quantitative analysis of national and supranational factors

Introduction

The dynamic nature of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU is one of the major reasons why agendas of the rotating chairs are exposed to attention shifts in a long-term perspective. Despite institutional constraints that were established in order to prevent EU policies from major fluctuations, a longitudinal analysis of rotating Presidency programmes, operationalised as their agendas (see Chapter I), reveals that in certain policy areas incremental developments are interrupted by significant attention shifts.

The literature presented in the previous chapter underlines different reasons for changes in issue salience, which could be clustered into three categories: 1) national, 2) supranational factors and 3) unexpected events or crises (either within the EU or outside ones). Depending on a policy area, they may play a different role in determining the attention shifts. Nevertheless, this chapter aims to shed more light on the first two dimensions, i.e. national and supranational factors.

It is commonly known that positions and bargaining strategies employed by the EU members during the negotiations (especially in the Council) are highly influenced by the domestic factors: governments in power, their political interests and pressures coming from within the country (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). As Hooghe et al. (2002) claim, ‘European politics is domestic politics by other means’ (p. 985). However, as the Presidency operates in a multi-layered institutional environment, a supranational angle should also be taken into consideration. This especially concerns one of the key institutions related to the Council of the EU – the European Council, shaping long-term policy objectives.

Based on the new hand-coded dataset of 40 rotating Presidency programmes presented in Chapter I, this study provides an analytical perspective towards the differences in issue

salience¹¹ exhibited across their half-year agendas and, hereby, resulting in major policy punctuations. Given a complex institutional environment the rotating chair operates in, and different actors being involved in the agenda management process, the study examines five main factors of influence at the national level, i.e. government's ideology and salience attached to policies, public opinion, national contributions to the EU budget, as well as geographical positioning. Furthermore, given the supranational environment, issue salience of the European Council is further analysed. The European Council not only acts as an informal agenda-setter for the EU (especially regarding broad roadmaps), but is also closely linked with the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU by representing the member state positions.

Although this is not an exhaustive list of variables that may have an impact on the rotating chair's agenda, the aforementioned factors are considered to have the most direct impact when shaping the work programmes for the Council Presidency term. Accordingly, this analysis yields a better understanding of the extent to which a country holding the rotating chair is responding to the national influence, especially after the changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon. The examination of the European Council agenda, in this regard, does not only present a supranational element, but also demonstrates the link between high and low politics, being accordingly dealt at the European Council and the Council of the EU.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the main factors of influence towards the rotating Presidency agendas, accordingly drawing the main theoretical expectations. As a result, the second part of the chapter presents a statistical analysis of the associations between selected variables and issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes.

1. Theoretical framework

Rotating Presidency agendas involve a number of activities to be performed during the half-year term. They range not only across different Council configurations, but also hierarchical

¹¹ For the purpose of this research, as already presented above, topic salience, issue attention, policy salience are used as synonyms for issue salience.

decision-making stages: from working groups and COREPER to ministerial meetings. Hereby, drafting the Presidency programme directly involves different levels of national officials, both in the capital and at the permanent representations in Brussels.

The preparatory process for the Presidency starts up to several years before the term and involves a number of actors in the national ministries, governmental agencies, permanent representations in the EU, with the main contact point being the Prime Minister's office or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Elgström & Tallberg, 2003). Such coordination structure anticipates a great impact from the domestic environment, including both administrative and political factors. Nevertheless, to what extent each of the pivotal national actors can exert their influence on the rotating Presidency agenda highly depends on the national coordination system the country has adopted.

Kassim (2003) distinguished four types of national coordination systems across two lines – the level of centralisation and the selection of policies prioritised. Whilst the first dimension reflects the administrative division of the country, i.e. being centralised (unitary) or decentralised (federal), the second dimension takes into consideration resources and capacity of the member state (Kassim, 2003). Although one may expect smaller countries with fewer resources to be selective on policies they focus on, Kassim's (2003) typology presents the opposite. Hereby, Spain is assigned to the selective member states group, whereas, for instance, Denmark and Belgium – comprehensive coordination systems (Kassim, 2003). As it was pointed by the author, such differences, more than resources themselves, are shaped by the different administrative structures, institutions in place and even the national interests (Kassim, 2001). Therefore, since the rotating Council Presidency programme addresses all Council configurations, one may expect that member states employing a selective approach attach a higher importance to a set of policies during the term.

As a part of the coordination system, the relations between the capital and the permanent representation in Brussels (which often acts as an important information point) need to be further addressed. Panke (2010) distinguished three possible configurations between the two institutions: capital-based, Brussels-based or balanced systems (Panke, 2010). According to

the scholar, in order to ensure efficiency and parity between the national and EU-wide position, the balanced system is preferred (Panke, 2010).

Defining the interactions between institutions and officials, both the administrative structure and the policy coordination system can have an impact on shaping the rotating Presidency agendas. Nevertheless, since this study aims to evaluate the fluctuations in policy salience, administrative and coordination systems are not considered to have a direct effect on them. Thus, they are excluded from the empirical analysis, presented in the second part of the chapter.

It must be noted that even during the preparation process, the Presidency does not operate solely at the national level. Given that a large share of the Council dossiers are inherited from the previous Presidencies, a country is obliged to maintain contacts with the preceding chairs, as well as the European Commission, given its exclusive power to initiate proposals (Warntjen, 2007; Wurzel, 2000). In addition, nowadays the Presidency's role is more institutionalised, and, therefore, bounded also by the rotating Trio programmes. The adoption of the Council's rules of procedure in 2006, which were later on embedded in the Treaty of Lisbon, aimed to secure the continuity of ongoing political issues in the Council. Therefore, countries holding the Presidency are not allowed to transgress frames set by the Trio programme (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2015). On the other hand, the common 18-month agenda is drafted by three countries themselves, which ensures them a certain room for manoeuvre. The latter aspect is further discussed in section 1.2.

Relating to the European-level priorities, Tallberg (2006) notes an 'unwritten rule' of the Presidency programmes – to fit the national concerns into the general EU lines of action. Regardless of the boundaries set for the member state holding the chair, countries still possess a leeway to address these issues according to their national positions. This can be observed by the inclusion of topics that would not appear on the other Presidency's programme (Tallberg, 2006).

Given a diverse multi-level environment the rotating chair operates in, the main research question raised in this chapter is the following:

Which factors determine the salience attached to policies in the rotating Presidency programmes?

To provide a comprehensive explanation, the subsequent sections address both national and supranational elements, deemed to play a relevant role in designing half-year rotating Presidency programmes, and, hereby, determining the main fluctuations in policy salience across presiding member states.

1.1. National factors of influence

There are several domestic factors that are expected to play a major role in shaping the Presidency's agenda: the government in power during the Presidency term, public opinion, net contributions to the EU budget and a geographical position. Each of them is addressed as follows.

a) *Government in power.* As Aspinwall (2002, 2007) states, ideological position of the government plays an essential role in the EU decision-making process. Looking at the Council level, which is much more prone to party mobilisation than the European Council (Tallberg & Johansson, 2008), differences on specific issues might arise not only across countries, but also among ministers belonging to the same coalition, thus, bringing inconsistencies between different Council configurations (Aspinwall 2002, 2007; Miklin, 2009). Being representatives of their domestic electorate, ministers have post-seeking incentives, which motivate them to advocate proposals, likely guaranteeing a post in the following elections (Budge, 1993; Häge, 2007). This, in turn, signals a weak control of EU issues at the national level, empowering ministers to act according to their political preferences during the Council meetings (Miklin, 2009).

In addition, ideological preferences not only present diverging positions, but also shape issue ranking. Left governments are expected to be more inclined to emphasise social or environmental policies (Warntjen, 2007, Hooghe et al., 2002), whereas right-wing governors focus on market integration (Hooghe et al., 2002) or industry (Warntjen, 2007). In other words, leftist governments are more prone towards European integration and policies that induce it, whereas right-wing cabinets prefer liberalisation (Aspinwall, 2007).

Nevertheless, EU policies cannot be evaluated merely according to these generalisations. Whilst in some cases ideological spectrum seems to shape the policy outcomes to a larger extent, e.g. climate change issues (Farstad, 2017) or defence (Russo & Verzichelli, 2016), the others depend on specific circumstances, such as general salience of an issue at the EU level and salience attached to it by domestic actors, such as interest groups (Bailer, 2010).

Therefore, when evaluating government's influence, this study addresses two main aspects: salience attached to policies by the cabinet (at the time of the Presidency), as well as its ideological (left-right) position. In this regard, two separate expectations associated with the same independent variable – the government in power – are put forward:

H2.1a: Issue salience for the government in power is associated with issue salience in the rotating Presidency programme.

H2.1b: Government ideology is reflected in salience attached to issues in the rotating Presidency programme.

H2.1a is tested by utilising the Manifesto Project Dataset (2016b version) (Volkens et al., 2016), i.e. matching policy areas in two codebooks used for the analysis¹², and then calculating salience of each policy issue for the government¹³. In other words, H2.1a allows

¹² Codes for policy areas in the European Policy Agendas Project (used for hand-coding rotating Council Presidency programmes) and the Manifesto Project Dataset (utilised for measuring issue salience of the government in power during the Presidency) are matched. See Appendix 3 for more details.

¹³ As the Manifesto Project Dataset presents salience of policy issues for each political party, the government issue salience is calculated proportionally to the seats each government party had in the parliament at the time of the Presidency.

to perform a policy-level analysis. H2.1b, instead, presents the overall ideological direction of the government (which is important when having coalition governments), and is tested by employing the Parliaments and governments (ParlGov) database (Döring & Manow, 2016)¹⁴.

b) *Public opinion*. Undoubtedly, public opinion nowadays plays a major role in shaping decision-makers' positions, and, eventually, the final policy outcomes. As argued by Hooghe and Marks (2001), governments are constrained by domestic policy arenas, i.e. they are expected to respond to national interests, which later on are brought to the EU level and face public priorities of other member states.

Political representation of public choices is highly driven by the intention of being re-elected (Aspinwall, 2007; Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2005). Nevertheless, the relation between public opinion and a policy output might not be straightforward: one could influence another, or even be reciprocal (Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2005). As shown by Neundorff and Adams (2016), there is a clear mutual association between parties updating their priorities and public response towards the change in issue ownership through a support for the party. In general, public priorities are often limited to a low number of issues. Therefore, experiencing shifts in issue salience attached by the public is more sensitive and, therefore, more likely to turn into political changes (Iyengar, 1993).

Although one may expect the European governments to be less preoccupied with the public priorities when it comes to international or supranational decision-making (as their complex institutional structures lead to less accountability), recent studies (Hagemann et al., 2017; Wratil, 2019) provide contradicting evidence. If European integration becomes a salient issue at the domestic level, polarising the party system, then public priorities are much more reflected in the Council negotiations, usually leading to an increased controversy between member states (Hagemann et al., 2017). This is more likely when it comes to the extension of EU authority in environmental, security (common EU border, migration, data sharing) policies, in the field of statistical surveys, as well as the EU funds (Hagemann et al., 2017). Instead, regarding historically key EU policies, such as agriculture and fisheries, as well as

¹⁴ Left-right scores for the governments, as in the Manifesto Project Dataset, are weighed according to the number of seats each government party won in the last elections before the rotating Presidency term.

the common market, public opinion does not seem to have a strong influence (Hagemann et al., 2017). In addition, the EU policy-making process seems to respond well to the territorial (i.e. country-related) concerns. Member states whose public attaches high salience to an issue and has a clearly pronounced opinion on it, are more likely to succeed in securing legislation close to the priorities of their public (Wratil, 2019).

Although it has been claimed that countries holding the rotating Presidency are less likely to oppose the Council decisions (Hagemann et al., 2017) due to their impartial role, some case studies provide contradicting evidence. For instance, Swedish representatives during the country's term in 2001 were notified to abstain from making compromises, since this would have gone against the public will (Elgström & Tallberg, 2003).

The latter situation exemplifies a case of “constraining dissensus” (Hooghe and Marks, 2009) and the emergence of a new – EU related – cleavage in the national political space. Gabel (2000) claims that when preferring supranational governance over the domestic one, voters change traditional patterns in party politics, and, thus, alter issue salience. Hereby, a higher support for the EU integration eventually leads to more important legislative acts adopted at the supranational level (Toshkov, 2011).

Considering all the above, this study regards public opinion as one of the key variables affecting salience attached to issues in the Presidency programme. Therefore, the following hypothesis is raised:

H2.2: Issue salience for the public of the presiding member state is associated with issue salience in the rotating Presidency programme.

For the purpose of this research, issue salience for the public (i.e. public opinion) is measured following Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov's (2016) study on the policy responsiveness at the European Council level, using semestral Eurobarometer survey data regarding the question “What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at

the moment? (MAXIMUM 2 ANSWERS)”¹⁵.

c) *Contributions to the EU budget.* According to Moravcsik (1998), economic factors play an important role when shaping the national preferences. Although there are several angles to evaluate such impact, some scholars (Bailer et al., 2015; Copsey & Haughton, 2009) have focused on redistributive policies and net transfers obtained by single EU member states. Net-recipients, being economically weaker EU members, tend to support distributive policies (Copsey & Haughton, 2009). Net-contributors, on the other hand, tend to vote against the redistributive legislation (Bailer et al., 2015), which suggests that concerns with the net contribution to the budget are more important than the areas of expenditure themselves. In this regard, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H2.3: Issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes differ between net-recipients and net-contributors.

In order to support such hypothesis, countries are grouped into two corresponding categories (net-contributors and net-recipients), invoking financial figures and reports produced by the European Commission (European Commission, 2008, 2017, 2017a). As the last available budgetary financial report data reaches 2016, contributions from the Maltese Presidency (that held its office in 2017) are approximated by looking at the annual figures from 2016.

d) *Geopolitical factors.* Along with economic issues, geopolitical factors are often considered as important elements, to a certain extent influencing the national preferences of the EU member states (Moravcsik, 1998). A geographical position not only shapes country's regional policy priorities, but also relates with its foreign policy and security issues. For instance, regarding the enlargement or neighbourhood policies, countries tend support cooperation

¹⁵ Given the fact that the Eurobarometer survey inquires only a limited number of questions, policy areas are matched with the corresponding subtopics from the European Policy Agendas Project, as suggested by Alexandrova, Rasmussen and Toshkov (2016). However, for the purpose of the full regression model encompassing all independent variables, policy areas are presented at the main topic level. In this regard, public opinion data in macroeconomics as well as health and social policy areas is presented in pooled numbers from subtopics falling under the main themes. In order to ensure that respondents did not pick as both 'most important issues' topics from the same theme, additional tests at the individual level were made. Based on the data from Ireland, Italy and Slovakia, representing different EU regions (i.e. West, South and East), only minor overlaps were registered. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, pooled data from relevant sub-categories in a) macroeconomics and b) health and social policy fields are utilised. See Appendix 3 for more details.

with states that are in close proximity (Elgström, 2003). The latter could be best illustrated by two branches of EU neighbourhood policies: Eastern Partnership and Southern Partnership. Depending on the geographical position of the EU member, a country holding the Presidency emphasises more either Eastern Partnership (e.g. Poland) or Southern Partnership (e.g. Italy) in its working programme (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011; Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU, 2014).

Regarding the intra-EU dimension of the geographical positioning, some scholars (Thomson et al., 2004; Zimmer et al., 2005) have underlined geographical cleavages, such as the North-South divide. To a large extent this clustering overlaps with the division among net-contributors and net-recipients (Zimmer et al., 2005), as well as countries that diverge across market-driven or regulatory strategies towards the EU policies (Thomson et al., 2004). The traditional typology claims that Northern member states often pay higher contributions to the EU budget and, hereby, prioritise free market, deregulatory approach. Southern states, on the contrary, tend to benefit from the EU funds and often emphasise redistribution together with market regulation (Zimmer et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, after the 2004 enlargement, the traditional North-South divide is no longer adequate. Although on the basis of financial transfers received Eastern European member states could be grouped with Southern countries, geographical differences and regional policies related to them point out distinct priorities. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a triple typology is applied, clustering EU Presidencies to Northern, Southern and Eastern states, the latter also representing members that joined the EU in the past 15 years. Hence, the following hypothesis is raised:

H2.4: Issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes differ depending on the geographical position of a member state.

Division of countries across three clusters is based on the official geographical grouping presented by the United Nations (UNSD, 2017) and the 2004 enlargement.

1.2. Supranational factors of influence

Whilst national factors are considered as the first predictors of diverging levels of salience attached to certain policies, the supranational dimension is likely to bring some dynamics as well. The European Council, in this regard, needs to be given a separate share of attention, as the two institutions (i.e. the rotating Presidency and the European Council) remain highly connected, despite the changes of the Treaty of Lisbon. In addition, several other supranational factors tend to intervene when shaping the half-year Presidency agendas. Hence, they are further discussed.

a) *European Council*. Whilst in the pre-Lisbon period the agenda management of the European Council was a part of the rotating Presidency responsibilities, the latest treaty amendments shifted the European Council agenda from being a constituent part of the rotating Presidency agenda to an institution influencing its content.

Being responsible for broad, long-term EU initiatives, the European Council is undoubtedly one of the most influential institutions in the EU. Through the summit Conclusions, it exerts informal agenda-setting powers by delegating tasks to different EU institutions (e.g. the Commission) or even member states (Alexandrova & Timmermans, 2013). Furthermore, decisions in the European Council are based on pure national interests, reflecting issue-specific rather than ideological interests (Tallberg & Johansson, 2008).

Looking at the link between the European Council and the rotating Presidency agendas, Alexandrova and Timmermans (2013) have argued that the latter is rather a reflection of the European Council, especially when speaking of the national interests. It is important to note that such finding was based on a study of Presidencies in 1976–2008, i.e. before the Treaty of Lisbon, when both institutions were considered together. Therefore, conclusions provided by Alexandrova and Timmermans (2013) require a further in-depth analysis of the rotating Presidencies, looking merely at the ministerial level, and addressing the post-Lisbon period. Yet, even to date, the link between the two institutions is expected to remain, being represented by the following hypothesis:

H2.5: European Council issue salience is associated with issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes.

In order to measure issue salience for the European Council, EU Policy Agendas Project dataset (Alexandrova et al., 2014) is invoked. However, since the heads of states meet quarterly (hence, twice per Presidency semester), the Conclusions expected to reflect in the Presidency programmes are issued beforehand. Therefore, to evaluate the association between the two agendas, a time lag of one year is used. In this regard, it is expected that the national ministries take into account the topics discussed at the highest level in the EU already when shaping the Presidency programme.

b) *European Commission*. The European Commission is one of the key actors the country assuming the rotating chair has to keep in contact with. Officially holding the initiative power, to a certain extent the European Commission determines the performance of the Presidency. This especially regards new proposals, on which the Presidency should reach an agreement with the Commission, in case it wants to put forward certain legislation (Tallberg, 2003). Such task, however, is rather complicated, since the European Commission is more policy-oriented, whereas the Presidency needs to ensure coherence across all Council configurations (Schout, 1998) and, therefore, avoid possible contradictions among them.

As some scholars note (Cross, 2012; Golub, 2012; Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Orbie, 2013), close relations with the Commission can additionally contribute to the Presidency's bargaining success. A favourable content of the proposal allows a presiding member state to address its national priorities (Warntjen, 2007). However, this aspect highly depends on the decision-making stage. Based on the quantitative analyses, scholars agree that the final (voting) stage provides the Presidency with the highest influence over the proposals (Schalk et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008; Warntjen, 2008).

Given that this analysis is neither aiming to evaluate the proposals put forward by the European Commission, nor their relation with the rotating Presidency's capabilities to put new proposals on the EU table, at this stage of the research the European Commission is

excluded from the empirical tests. Nevertheless, its likely impact when shaping the Presidency agendas is considered when interpreting the final results and should be addressed in the further reiterations of this study.

c) *Trio Presidency*. As briefly mentioned beforehand, the Trio Presidency is a rather recent, yet, an evident constraint for the rotating chair, especially when shaping an individual half-year programme. The first attempt to establish a long-term cooperation between successive Presidencies was made in 2002, when country leaders decided to set a strategic multi-annual programme, covering three years, and an operational one, addressing short-term policies of one year (Raik, 2015).

Such continuity attempts were further embedded in the Treaty of Lisbon, specifying a Trio cooperation. Whilst the major work is supposed to be conducted through a close cooperation between the states by dividing the tasks (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007), the final programme is to be drafted in consultation with the European Commission, the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Raik, 2015). In addition, multi-annual programmes, implemented at the EU level, have to be taken into consideration (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007).

Despite such limitations, rotating Trios are formed following the geographical diversity (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007), which, accordingly leads to a broader joint Trio programme, reflecting specificities of each state. In one-year preparatory period, the programme reaches different levels of the coordination network, where ministers and heads of governments have a final say (Batory & Puetter, 2013). This allows member states to tailor each of the policies according to their views and to attach attention to specific topics (Warntjen, 2013).

As it was presented in Chapter I, a gradual establishment of the Trio Presidency had a moderating effect on the rotating Presidency agendas, ensuring more stability over time. Hereby, since this chapter aims to look at the main factors causing the differences in issue salience across Presidency programmes, Trio programmes are not further addressed in the empirical analysis.

d) *External events*. Previously to the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon, the rotating chair held a few formal roles, including the external representation of the EU (Quaglia & Moxon-Browne, 2006). After the most recent institutional changes, this duty was circumscribed due to the permanent positions established. Yet, unexpected (usually external) events, remain one of the issues for the rotating chair.

First and foremost, crises or natural disasters tend to shift policy makers' priorities as new issues disrupt the existing equilibrium of political attention (John & Jennings, 2010). Often requiring an instant reaction, unexpected events have a direct implication on the Presidency's agenda by constraining the scope of it (limiting the space for other policies to be discussed) (Karolewski, Mehlhausen & Sus, 2015).

Nevertheless, although some external events might have long-term consequences, which should be tackled as well, their nature presupposes that in drafting half-year agendas, it is beyond Presidency's control to foresee upcoming crises. Therefore, their impact is not included among the variables tested in this analysis.

Considering all of the above, the following empirical analysis addresses the key national and supranational factors that are expected to shape the Presidency's agenda and differences across different member states holding the chair.

2. Methodology

In order to assess the main factors that have an impact on the content of the rotating Presidency agendas and issue salience presented therein, the analytical part is based on the statistical analysis.

In this regard, the dependent variable in this study is the level of issue salience per policy area for a specific Presidency. Following the operationalisation of issue salience presented in Chapter I, it is expressed by a degree of emphasis (percentage of recitals) given to a topic in the half-year rotating Presidency programme. This measurement disregards the policy

positions, hereby corresponding to the operationalisation of independent variables, such as government issue salience, public opinion and European Council issue salience.

As the government in power is represented by two dimensions (ideological left-right and the topic-salience), in total six independent variables are tested. The first part of the analysis focuses on the national-level factors, whereas the second one additionally includes the European Council, as a supranational-level institution assumed to play a role in shaping the Presidency agendas.

The nested structure of the data allows for multiple modelling choices. Since there are few member states having repeated observations (i.e. holding the Presidency more than once in between 1997 and 2017), a classical panel model, as well as multilevel models with countries as a second level are not an optimal choice. Therefore, the analysis presented in this chapter is carried out through simple linear regression models (OLS). The regression models are performed while accounting for time-invariant factors (such as the state holding the presidency or the policy areas) by means of binary variables. The empirical analysis is split into two parts: 1) assessing national variables only, and 2) additionally accounting for the supranational priorities, captured by the European Council agenda.

Assuming that the Presidency programme can be shaped merely by one specific independent variable, it is important to assess each of them separately. For this purpose, Tables 2.1 and 2.2 present bivariate regression analyses. Regarding the full model with national variables, the analysis is divided across 8 different specifications (B1-B8). The basic model (B1) includes the following variables: a) issue salience for the government in power, b) ideology of the government, c) contributions to the EU budget and d) the geographical position. Public opinion is excluded from several specifications due to the limited data (i.e. missing public opinion on specific policies), which significantly decreases the number of observations¹⁶.

¹⁶ This missing data may have implications on the results of the analysis. However, this research does not employ a multiple imputation technique to deal with this issue due to the fact that the public opinion data is not missing at random. The questions asked in the Eurobarometer survey are co-ordinated by the European Commission (Haverland et al., 2018), and tend to cover the same policy areas over the years. Therefore, following Pepinsky's (2018) findings that multiple imputation leads to more biased results when the data that is not missing at random, this study does not address the missing data issue.

The 8 specifications, reported in Table 2.3 below, include the basic model (B1)¹⁷, as well as other control variables, namely: (B2) – policy area; (B3) – policy area and the Presidency; (B4) – policy area and the post-Lisbon period; (B5) – public opinion; (B6) – public opinion and policy area; (B7) – public opinion, policy area and the Presidency; (B8) – public opinion, policy area and the post-Lisbon period.

Regarding the second part of the analysis, including also the European Council issue salience among independent variables, similar linear regressions are performed. Hereby, the study begins with the bivariate analysis, presented in Tables 2.4 and 2.5, and then continues by assessing the full model (Table 2.6). Following the previous analysis, 8 specifications (C1-C8) in the full model are examined. The main difference from the previous tests is the basic model (C1), which additionally includes the European Council issue salience.

It is important to note that due to the code-matching across different variables and datasets, specifications excluding public opinion address 17 policy areas (some of them presented as a combination of two, e.g. health and social policy, or transport (infrastructure) and space, science, technology). Due to the already mentioned code-matching and the lack of suitable data, the specifications with the public opinion variable examine only 9 policy areas. Further details on the policy area and code-matching are provided in Appendix 3.

3. Analysis of the main factors influencing Presidency agendas

This section reports the main results of the empirical analysis, discussing the statistical findings in light of the hypotheses raised above. To this end, the section first presents

¹⁷ In order to test the robustness of the baseline models (i.e. with and without public opinion), especially in respect to the possible collinearity between contributions to the EU budget and geographical division, additional tests were performed (see Appendix 4). Table 1 in Appendix 4 shows that an exclusion of net-recipients does not impact the remaining independent variables at the national level (see specification N2), while the exclusion of a geography variable (specification N3) leads towards the significance of net-recipients. This result may suggest that there is a possible collinearity between the two variables. Nevertheless, the multicollinearity test for the baseline model (see Table 2 in Appendix 4) rejects this assumption, as the values are lower than 10 (IDRE, 2018). An identical test was performed for the baseline models of national and supranational factors (Table 3 in Appendix 4). However, since neither net-recipients nor geographical division were significant in the baseline models, no differences across specifications excluding either net-recipients or geographical position were observed. Accordingly, the multicollinearity test (see Table 4 in Appendix 4) was negative. Therefore, the inclusion of both contributions to the EU budget and geographical position in the analysis is justified not only conceptually, but also in statistical terms.

statistical tests only on the national factors (i.e. government issue salience, government ideology, public opinion, contributions to the EU budget and a geographical positioning), while the second part addresses the full model including the European Council agenda and issue salience presented therein.

For the purpose of both full models presented in Tables 2.3 and 2.6, all specifications are accounted for a limited within-group (i.e. within-Presidency) independence of observations.

3.1. National factors

In order to evaluate the effect of each national factors independently, Table 2.1 presents the outputs of respective regression analyses¹⁸. In the models A1-A7, each of the predictors is included individually to assess their insulated effect over the dependent variable – issue salience in the Presidency programmes.

Table 2.1: Determinants of the Presidency issue salience: bivariate analysis

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7
Government salience	0.025						
	(0.024)						
Ideology (left/right)		0.002					
		(0.003)					
Public opinion			-0.009				
			(0.014)				
Net-recipients				0.001			
				(0.011)			
Geography (North)					-0.008		
					(0.011)		
Geography (South)						0.013	
						(0.012)	
Geography (East)							-0.001
							(0.012)

¹⁸ Each regression is performed at the level of policy area code-matching. This especially applies to the public opinion variable, which is matched with the Presidency issue salience at the sub-topic level (following the study of Alexandrova et al. (2016)).

Constant	5.453***	4.695***	4.08***	4.705***	4.711***	4.703***	4.706***
	(0.131)	(0.019)	(0.27)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)
R2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
N	680	840	395	840	840	840	840
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.							

As shown in Table 2.1, none of the national variables present any significant associations with issue salience of the rotating Presidency. In this regard, policy-by-policy analysis is performed further. As in the previous case, each of the independent variables at the national level are regressed with the Presidency issue salience depending on the code-matching level. This remark mainly applies to public opinion, which is matched at the sub-topic level, hence, addresses more nuanced issues (see Alexandrova et al. (2016)).

Table 2.2: Determinants of the Presidency issue salience: bivariate analysis by policy area

Variable	Policy area	Coefficient
Government salience	Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties	0.095**
		(0.039)
	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	1.19**
		(0.532)
Ideology (left/right)	Internal market	-0.528*
		(0.27)
	Defence	0.618*
		(0.32)
Public opinion	Terrorism	0.048**
		(0.018)
Net-recipients	Energy	1.359**
		(0.615)
	Environment	-1.585*
		(0.854)
	Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues	0.351**
		(0.142)
	Space, Science, Technology and Communications	1.407**
		(0.562)

Geography (North)	Energy	-1.985***
		(0.577)
	Regional and Urban Policy and Planning	-0.894**
		(0.343)
	Environment	1.638*
		(0.861)
	Space, Science, Technology and Communications	-1.094*
		(0.586)
	Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues	-0.351**
		(0.144)
	Defence	1.647*
		(0.953)
Geography (South)	Health	-0.865**
		(0.413)
	Environment	-1.956*
		(1.067)
	Regional and Urban Policy and Planning	0.952**
		(0.433)
	Foreign trade	-1.265*
		(0.663)
	EU governance	1.794*
		(0.972)
Geography (East)	Macroeconomics	2.228**
		(1.086)
	Energy	2.228***
		(0.693)
	Defence	-3.019***
		(1.064)
	Space, Science, Technology and Communications	1.796**
		(0.664)
	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	-5.338**
		(2.239)
	Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues	0.454**
		(0.168)
	Culture and media	0.706*
		(0.387)

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Standard errors in parentheses.

Despite a limited number of observations¹⁹, all of the variables in Table 2.2 present significant associations with the Presidency issue salience, however, in different policy areas. While issue salience for the government in power, government ideology and public opinion present significant associations only in one or two policy areas, allocations of the Council Presidencies based on the contributions to the EU budget or a geographical position present a higher number of relevant relationships.

As it was already noted above, being a net-recipient or a net-contributor to a certain extent corresponds to the geographical position. For instance, while the environmental policy is more often addressed in the Presidency programmes of the Northern countries, it is simultaneously neglected by the net-recipients and Southern EU members. A similar comparison can be drawn in the case of energy, space, science and technology, as well as public lands, water and territorial policies, to which Eastern EU members and, simultaneously, net-recipients pay more attention than the Northern countries.

This geographical dimension suggests the existence of cross-country differences, which vary between Northern-Southern and Northern-Eastern states. Furthermore, given that the division between Eastern EU members and the rest of the EU also represents the cleavage between old and new EU states, more cross-policy inferences can be drawn. Yet, it is important to take into consideration the fact that countries, which joined the EU in 2004, started presiding the Council after the Treaty of Lisbon (Slovenia being the first Eastern state to assume the chair in 2008, even before the Treaty came into force). Therefore, the lower salience of defence and foreign affairs may additionally be linked to the establishment of new institutional positions (the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy). Macroeconomic issues, similarly, may have been given prominence due to the time factor, relating to the Euro crisis. However, additional analyses need to be performed in order to support these claims, while this section continues with the full model, addressing all national factors in question.

¹⁹ Across all the regression analyses, the number of observations is 40 (corresponding to the number of rotating Presidencies examined), except for the public opinion, having 29 observations (due to the unavailable data before 2003).

Table 2.3: Determinants of the Presidency issue salience: multiple regression analysis of national factors²⁰

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8
Government salience	0.025	0.074**	0.075**	0.074**	0.071**	0.057	0.061	0.053
	(0.024)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.039)
Ideology (left/right)	-0.012	-0.013	-0.048***	-0.013	0.006	-0.026	1.265***	-0.012
	(0.01)	(0.011)	(0.001)	(0.01)	(0.079)	(0.078)	(0.114)	(0.068)
Net-recipients	-0.037	-0.046	-0.230***	-0.039	-0.225	-0.229	0.013	-0.311
	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.001)	(0.032)	(0.262)	(0.280)	(0.172)	(0.257)
Geography (Southern)	-0.053	-0.043	-0.221***	-0.04	-0.201	-0.193	-0.782***	-0.157
	(0.042)	(0.047)	(0.016)	(0.041)	(0.265)	(0.291)	(0.112)	(0.294)
Geography (Eastern)	-0.146***	-0.124***	0.028**	-0.074	0.061	0.132	0.267***	-0.225
	(0.04)	(0.044)	(0.011)	(0.049)	(0.252)	(0.260)	(0.08)	(0.240)
Treaty of Lisbon				-0.078**				0.785**
				(0.035)				(0.35)
Public opinion					0.038***	0.004	0.001	0.003
					(0.001)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.012)
Constant	5.581***	7.427***	7.649***	7.445***	3.781***	8.129***	2.309**	7.777***
	(0.128)	(0.571)	(0.597)	(0.573)	(0.567)	(1.241)	(0.946)	(1.250)
R2	0.00	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.12	0.54	0.59	0.55
N	680	680	680	680	221	221	221	221
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.								

As presented in Table 2.3, specifications excluding public opinion (B2-B4) suggest a positive relationship between issue salience for the national government and issue salience for the rotating Presidency. Belonging to the Eastern member state group does play a role too (see B1-B3). With respect to specification B4, the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon seems to have led to a marginal decrease in Presidency powers to influence the Council agenda across all

²⁰ Please note that, in order to ensure that the table can be easily read, the coefficients for certain controls (e.g. Presidencies or policy areas) have been excluded from specifications B2 (policy areas), B3 (policy areas, Presidencies), B4 (policy areas), B6 (policy areas), B7 (policy areas, Presidencies) and B8 (policy areas).

policy areas, except transportation, law and crime, as well as internal market (i.e. banking, finance and internal trade) policies²¹.

Regarding the remaining specifications, public opinion is statistically significant only in one out of four specifications (i.e. B5), along with the government issue salience. These results of specification B5 constitute a rather expected outcome: the government shapes the Presidency programme according to its own views and public perceptions. Nevertheless, none of these two national factors are found relevant in other three specifications (B6-B8). This may be related to multiple reasons. First off, the drop in significance of both public salience and government salience may be due to the fact that the size of the dataset drops once public opinion is included, weakening the quality of the estimation. Secondly, the drop may be linked with possible endogeneity between government salience and public opinion, since an interaction between the two cannot be ruled out in this study. This would explain why government salience is significant in specifications B2-B4, but it is no longer significant in specifications B6-B8, which mirror B2-B4 without excluding public opinion. Finally, in substantive terms, it may be that the inclusion of controls for time-invariant effects which capture the structure of national interests (such as the policy area or the Presidency in office) is enough to empty the government salience of its explanatory potential, once public opinion is accounted for.

While in B8 the Treaty of Lisbon is the only variable showing a significant (this time – positive) association with the Presidency issue salience, controlling for the incumbent Presidency in B7 yields additional insights. In this case, right-wing governments tend to emphasise certain policy areas more than the leftist. The same relationship is observed in the geographical dimension, Northern and Eastern states paying more attention to specific policies in their Presidency programmes than the Southern countries.

These results show some differences across specifications, but the effects are rather marginal, especially when the exclusion of public opinion allows to examine the dataset in full. The government issue salience and the Eastern member state group are the two most prominent

²¹ These three policy areas were not significant in the statistical tests.

factors demonstrating strong associations with the Presidency issue salience, whereas government ideology, public opinion or differences across budget contributions are relevant only under specific circumstances.

To this end, hypotheses H2.1a, addressing the relationship between the Presidency issue salience and the government issue salience, as well as H2.4, assuming the differences across geographical regions, are supported by the analysis of the national-level factors. Accordingly, the assumptions regarding the ideological stance of the government, the public opinion at the national level, and the contributions to the EU budget are rejected. Nevertheless, these results are considered to be preliminary, since the effect of supranational institutions, i.e. the European Council (embodying the hypothesis H2.5) is not accounted yet. In this regard, the effect of the European Council is presented and discussed in the next section.

3.2. Supranational influence

Although the Treaty of Lisbon altered the institutional relationship between the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Council, this section evaluates the fifth hypothesis (H2.5), assuming that two institutions still relate with each other (accounting for the one-year time lag). Since the coding of the Presidency programmes was based on the European Union Policy Agendas Project (Alexandrova et al., 2014) analysing the European Council, the number of policies corresponds well and, thus, ensures a more coherent analysis.

Table 2.4: Determinants of the Presidency issue salience: bivariate analysis at the supranational level

European Council issue salience	0.406***
	(0.031)
Post-Lisbon period	0.005
	(0.012)
Constant	2.819***
	(0.143)
R2	0.403
N	777
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.	

Hereby, Table 2.4 exhibits a significant and positive association between issue salience presented in the European Council Conclusions and in the rotating Presidency programmes. In other words, regardless of the member state assuming the rotating post, issues discussed at the European Council level are correspondingly addressed on the rotating Presidency agendas, despite the latest institutional changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon. In order to test whether such strong correlation between the two institutional agendas exists also across separate policies, bivariate regressions by policy area are performed.

Table 2.5: Determinants of the Presidency issue salience: bivariate analysis by policy area at the supranational level

Variable	Policy area	Coefficient
European Council issue salience	Macroeconomics	0.067*
		(0.038)
	Labour and Employment	0.232***
		(0.06)
	Energy	0.162**
		(0.062)
	Transportation	-0.483**
		(0.225)
	Social Policy	0.323***
		(0.069)
	Regional and Urban Policy	0.167**
		(0.081)
	Defence	0.234**
		(0.093)
	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	0.223*
		(0.119)
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Standard errors in parentheses. Note: only significant policy areas are presented in the table.		

As presented in Table 2.5, out of 21 policy area examined, the significant correlation was observed in eight fields²². Despite rather low coefficients, the majority of policy areas

²² In the analysis of each policy area, the number of observations is 37, since no data on the European Council Conclusions is available starting from 2015 (hence, for the rotating Presidencies from 2016).

showing positive correlations simultaneously represent high-politics issues. Macroeconomics, employment, energy, social policy, international affairs and defence are the topics mainly addressed in the EU Summits. Therefore, the outcomes of the respective regressions support the claim that the European Council acts as an informal agenda setter for high-politics issues, representing an intergovernmental dimension. Consequently, the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU responds to the awareness raised towards specific topics by the heads of states.

Notwithstanding the previous results, the European Council agenda should be evaluated in relation to the other independent variables, especially considering their relevance towards the Presidency issue salience, as was presented in the previous section. In this regard, the outputs of the full model accounting for all independent variables are shown in Table 2.6. Specifications C1-C8 mirror specifications B1-B8, additionally including data on the European Council issue salience and accounting for a limited within-group (i.e. within-Presidency) independence of observations.

One of the main takeaways from the set of models presented in Table 2.6 concerns the influence of supranational level factors on issue salience in the Presidency programmes. Regardless of the specification and control variables, the European Council issue salience shows a positive and strong association with issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes. An increase by one standard deviation in the European Council issue salience leads to 1.45 percentage points increase in the Presidency issue salience (see Figure 1 in Appendix 4). Hereby, this evidence corroborates the fifth hypothesis (H2.5).

A similar trend is observed in the case of issue salience for the government in power. In five out of eight specifications (C2-C5, C7), it presents a positive relationship with rotating Presidency issue salience. It is important to note, however, that an increase of one standard deviation in the government issue salience leads to 0.45 percentage points increase in the Presidency issue salience (see Figure 2 in Appendix 4). These results support hypothesis H2.1a.

Table 2.6: Determinants of the Presidency issue salience: multiple regression analysis of national and supranational factors

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8
Government salience	-0.005	0.072**	0.073**	0.072**	0.092***	0.063	0.072*	0.059
	(0.023)	(0.029)	(0.03)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Ideology (left/right)	-0.006	-0.011	-0.590***	-0.011	0.023	-0.01	0.263**	0.003
	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.077)	(0.01)	(0.106)	(0.093)	(0.11)	(0.085)
Net-recipients	-0.000	-0.037	1.518***	-0.03	-0.225	-0.198	-1.334***	-0.287
	(0.061)	(0.038)	(0.239)	(0.037)	(0.329)	(0.314)	(0.23)	(0.293)
European Council	0.376***	0.110***	0.110***	0.110***	0.210***	0.099*	0.117*	0.096*
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.047)	(0.056)	(0.063)	(0.056)
Geography (Southern)	-0.050	-0.039	0.651***	-0.036	0.025	-0.051	-1.067***	-0.040
	(0.063)	(0.049)	(0.112)	(0.046)	(0.318)	(0.290)	(0.158)	(0.302)
Geography (Eastern)	-0.097	-0.113*	1.175***	-0.075	0.045	0.082	-1.109***	-0.224
	(0.082)	(0.056)	(0.170)	(0.066)	(0.307)	(0.285)	(0.177)	(0.269)
Treaty of Lisbon				-0.057				0.635
				(0.036)				(0.408)
Public opinion					0.001	-0.009	-0.015	-0.010
					(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)
Constant	3.604***	5.349***	6.537***	5.363***	3.280***	6.914***	7.288***	6.699***
	(0.205)	(0.654)	(0.563)	(0.654)	(0.709)	(0.996)	(0.917)	(1.01)
R2	0.35	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.26	0.58	0.63	0.59
N	629	629	629	629	200	200	200	200
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01. Robust standard errors in parentheses.								

The remaining variables (government ideology, contributions to the EU budget and the division between geographical regions) show significant associations with the rotating

Presidency issue salience only in specifications C3 and C7²³. These results somewhat correspond to the analysis of the national factors (regarding the specification B3 in particular). However, these results support hypotheses H2.1b (regarding the government ideology) and H2.3 (relating to contributions to the EU budget) only to a limited extent, since significant associations are conditional on the specification. Instead, since the Eastern member state group is significant in three out of eight specifications (in addition to the ones presented by the Southern member state group), the fourth hypothesis (H2.4) is corroborated.

In relation to public opinion and the enforcement of the Treaty of Lisbon, none of the variables have any effect on the rotating Presidency issue salience. Therefore, the second hypothesis (H2.2) concerning the public opinion is rejected.

To this end, the inclusion of the European Council agenda emphasises the importance of supranational institutions in shaping the half-year agenda for the Council. The extent to which these independent variables play a role, depends on different specifications and conditions accounted for. However, such variations present a multifold environment the rotating Presidency is operating in, as well as the elements influencing its work agenda.

Conclusion

When discussing the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, different factors and circumstances are expected to influence the chair's agenda. They often cover a broad range, starting from the national specificities and touching upon unexpected events or crises. This chapter assessed a set of those variables and provided a more explicit analysis of their effect towards the issue salience addressed in the rotating Presidency programmes. In this regard, the study focused on five national and one supranational element, namely: issue salience for the government in power, government ideology, public opinion, contributions to the EU budget, geographical position and salience attached to issues by the European Council.

²³ Except the Eastern member state group, which presents a significant association with the Presidency issue salience also in specification C2.

The study is divided in two parts, the first one examining only national-level elements, whereas the second one including also the supranational factor – the European Council agenda. Due to the specificities of the dataset, the empirical analysis is based on the linear regression models, evaluating each of the independent variables separately and in the full models.

Based on the results of the national-level analysis, government issue salience and belonging to the Eastern member states group present significant correlations in half of the specifications provided. Although significance and combinations of relevant factors vary across specifications, these two independent variables can be regarded as the key ones when evaluating issue salience for the rotating Presidencies.

The second part of the analysis, incorporating also the European Council agenda, provides additional insights. Hereby, the European Council agenda is deemed to have the strongest association with the rotating Presidency agenda, the government issue salience being the second most important factor in this respect. Such results can be interpreted as follows. The domestic policy agenda of the government in power has a direct influence on the content of the rotating Presidency work programme and the emphasis being put on respective policies therein. Therefore, the statistical analyses (including both national-only and supranational factors) support H2.1a, expecting a positive relation between the two agendas. As for the European Council, despite having separate chairmanships after 2009, both institutions share a common perception of the importance of policies being discussed, which accordingly support H2.5.

Regarding the remaining independent variables, ideology of the government in power and contributions to the EU budget present only a limited number of significant relationships. In both multiple regression models, these two variables show significant associations with the rotating Presidency issue salience only in two out of eight specifications provided. While these results allow to conclude that the differences across the rotating Council Presidency programmes are best defined when accounting for the policy area and the Presidency holding

the office, the results can only partly support hypotheses H2.1b (regarding the government ideology) and H2.3 (regarding contributions to the EU budget).

Since public opinion was not reflected in the rotating Presidency issue salience, the second hypothesis (H2.2) is rejected. Instead, the geographical differences revealed several significant associations with the Presidency issue salience, especially regarding the Eastern member state group. Thus, these results support the hypothesis H2.4, assuming the differences across EU regions. Notwithstanding, the geographical division between countries requires a few more comments in this regard.

The analysis by policy area, presented in Table 2.2, revealed differences not only across North-South or North-East divide, but also between countries contributing or benefitting more from the EU. Furthermore, the Eastern member states cluster stands both for the geographical positioning and for the EU membership duration. In this regard, some differences across policy areas can be further interpreted from this perspective. Yet, it is important to take into account the fact that Eastern member states started presiding the Council after the Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, a higher emphasis on the macroeconomic issues or neglected international affairs topics by the Eastern member states should be evaluated in respect to the Euro crisis and the establishment of the new positions. Overall, the results of the analysis presented above are summarised in Table 2.7:

Table 2.7: Main findings of the Chapter II

RQ: Which factors determine the salience attached to policies in the rotating Presidency programmes?	
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Result</i>
H2.1a: Issue salience for the government in power is associated with issue salience in the rotating Presidency programme.	Corroborated
H2.1b: Government ideology is reflected in salience attached to issues in the rotating Presidency programme.	Partially corroborated
H2.2: Issue salience for the public of the presiding member state is associated with issue salience in the rotating Presidency programme.	Rejected
H2.3: Issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes differ between net-recipients and net-contributors.	Partially corroborated

H2.4: Issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes differ depending on the geographical position of a member state.	Corroborated
H2.5: European Council issue salience is associated with issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes.	Corroborated

Given all of the above, it is evident that, acting on a two-level arena, the Presidency is clearly influenced by both. This study investigated the main influencers of issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes, looking at national and supranational levels. Since, depending on the conditions, the majority of independent variables presented relevant associations with the issues addressed in the Presidency programmes, additional EU-level, as well as international elements (such as external events) need to be included in the further reiterations of this research. The rotating chair is deemed to respond to multiple factors. Hence, evaluating the association between the Presidency work programmes and agendas of the EU institutions (e.g. the European Commission and the European Parliament), as well as accounting for the unexpected events, would provide substantial explanations of the main forces driving issue salience and especially its changes on the rotating Presidency agenda.

Chapter III. From agenda inputs to legislative outputs: where does the Presidency of the Council of the EU stand?

Introduction

A complex structure of the European Union (EU) contains a number of nodes that need to be disentangled when analysing policy developments at the supranational level. The EU decision-making process is influenced by both direct and indirect forces and actors that operate at various levels and decision stages. Nevertheless, when looking at the policy outputs (i.e. legislation adopted at the EU level), there are evident differences in terms of weight each actor brings to the decision-making process, as well as the number and significance of issues discussed.

Following Kingdon's (1984) classification of agendas, where governmental ones concern general, broader debates, whereas decision agendas (as denoted by the name) usually lead to political decisions, the legislation adopted at the EU level can be interpreted as an outcome of the latter. The decision agenda involves three key actors: the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. Accordingly, the final outcomes are the result of an interaction between the agendas of these three institutions. However, to date, there are no studies linking the agendas with policy outputs. Therefore, this chapter aims to interpret the binding legislation of the EU by examining of one of the key institutions – the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union – and to relate its agenda with the binding legislation adopted during the Presidency semesters.

The Council of the EU can be considered the key body when discussing and finalising the EU legislation. Depending on the decision-making rules, the Council possesses different weights when adopting the final agreement. Despite the fact that the majority of EU laws are adopted under co-decision (which was renamed to the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP) after the Treaty of Lisbon²⁴), the Common Foreign and Security Policy, competition rules or anti-

²⁴ To ensure a coherence of this chapter, co-decision is used as a synonym to the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP), even when the content refers to the post-Lisbon period.

discrimination measures are agreed respectively under the consultation or consent of the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2017). Hence, the Parliament can still be overruled, whereas the Council's involvement in shaping the final outcomes is inevitable.

Furthermore, the Council comprises several configurations, as well as levels of operation, which in combination are managed by the rotating Presidency. The rotating chair is the main institutional actor tasked with structuring the legislative agenda of the Council of the EU – both in administrative and political terms. In addition to its official roles and duties, the President holds an informal power to structure the Council's agenda by prioritising or stalling legislative proposals of its interest (Tallberg, 2003). In addition, the Presidency acts as a representative of the Council in trilogue meetings, which provide the chairman with extra leverage on the final legislative outputs. Therefore, considering the remaining gap between EU policy agendas and the final acts, the link between the Council's agenda and the final outputs is operationalised by invoking the agenda (i.e. the half-year programme) of the rotating Presidency and its contribution to the EU legislation agreed in respective semesters.

To evaluate the Presidency's input in the legislative process, the chapter begins with a study of the binding EU legislation (namely, regulations, directives and decisions), agreed between 1997 and 2017. For this purpose, a dynamic topic model approach is employed. This quantitative text analysis method is designed to unveil the latent themes and topics in the large corpora of (unstructured) texts, as well as their development over time. For this reason, based on a two-level non-negative matrix factorisation (NMF) technique (Greene & Cross, 2017), the model explores 6316 binding legislative acts. The results present 16 distinct legislative topics, which depict a two-fold trend: certain policies being sticky on the EU legislative agenda, while the others exhibiting evident punctuations in the number of acts adopted during each Presidency semester. In this regard, the study assesses the empirical validity of a punctuated equilibrium approach to the legislative outputs.

Given the first part of the analysis, the second part focuses on the role of the rotating chair of the Council of the EU. To date, the role of the Presidency has been questioned, especially since the Treaty of Lisbon has come into force. Yet, given the agenda dynamics across

rotating Council Presidencies (see Chapter I), it is expected that a leadership change may have a direct effect on the legislative outputs. Tracing the legislation that was proposed and adopted in the same semester, the study provides more insights about the institutional conditions for the Presidency to exert influence. In addition, the legislation that was agreed upon in each semester is further linked with the analysis of Presidency actions, as anticipated in its half-year programme. This association allows to examine whether priorities expressed in the Presidency programmes were reflected in the final legislation.

1. Theoretical framework

The Policy Agendas Project, a well-known initiative that was launched in the United States by Baumgartner and Jones, and which later on evolved into the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) (Dowding et al., 2016), gave a start to a number of studies examining policy agendas across countries, as well as supranational entities. To a large extent, they all rest upon a punctuated equilibrium approach, which explains abrupt shifts in attention throughout incremental policy development periods (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). To date, the policy dynamics addressed in the agendas can be differentiated across a number of subcategories, namely: the legislative/parliamentary agenda, the executive/Prime Minister's agenda, the judicial agenda, the budgetary agenda, and the political party agenda (CAP, 2018). Nevertheless, whilst national studies form the major part of the overall analyses, at the supranational level the policy agenda research is limited to the European Council. Following the CAP, the EU Policy Agendas Project, run by Alexandrova et al. (EUPAP, 2016), measures salience attached to policies by the heads of EU Member States, as expressed in the European Council Conclusions.

Aside from the EU Policy Agendas Project, agenda studies of other EU bodies additionally focus on the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. Regarding the former, Häge (2016a) focused on the Council working groups, while measuring the timing of their meetings. Based on the variance of the duration of each working group meeting, the scholar captured salience attached to different policy areas (Häge, 2016a).

In their recent study, Greene and Cross (2017) present the European Parliament's (EP) policy agenda. In this study, scholars introduced a novel quantitative text analysis technique – a dynamic topic model. This method allows to unveil the policy agenda dynamics from a large corpora of unstructured texts, which in the above-mentioned study contains plenary speeches and written submissions by the members of the EP. More specifically, scholars track the discussed topics not only within each time period (so-called time window), but also their development over time. As expected, the results provide evidence in accordance with the punctuated equilibrium approach: levels of attention to some agenda items were more stable across time, whereas other topics presented abrupt punctuations in attention (Greene & Cross, 2017).

Dowding, Hindmoor and Martin argue (2016) that policy agendas tend to measure the attention paid to policy issues, which reflects the dynamics of salience across current affairs. Yet, more profound implications of such attention changes for the society are missing (Dowding et al., 2016). One cannot assume that the importance given to a policy topic is a sufficient condition for granting specific outcomes. Therefore, given the existing gap, this study contributes to the state of the art by exploring the legislative outputs and linking them to the policy agenda of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, as a relevant, but often overlooked actor in the decision-making process. Taking into consideration an extensive account of studies relying upon the punctuated equilibrium approach, the study interprets the dynamics in the legislative outputs as a subject to the punctuated equilibrium approach.

1.1. Application of the punctuated equilibrium theory to the EU legislation

In the view of Kingdon's (1984) typology of agendas, it is rather intuitive to consider policy outputs as a product of a decisional agenda. Nevertheless, the underlying question is the following: if we can explain variations on the agenda through the punctuated equilibrium approach, to what extent can the EU legislation be explained by the same theoretical framework?

When analysing binding EU legislative acts, scholars (Schultz & König, 2000; König, 2008) have admitted that the variation observed in the outputs is highly related to the type of a legislative act as well as the policy area *per se*. The dynamics of the legislative outcomes are affected by a lengthy decision-making process. It has been observed that directives take longer to be adopted, as opposed to decisions and regulations (Schultz & König, 2000). Schultz and König (2000) argue that such divergence can be linked to a different nature of the act – directives laying down broader policy objectives, whilst decisions and regulations specifying concrete aspects of the EU law.

Bølstad and Cross (2016), instead, argue that a division between regulations and decisions on the one hand, and directives – on the other, is associated with the EU treaty changes. Scholars find the Amsterdam Treaty to have greatly shortened the legislative duration for regulations and decisions, whilst it had less influence over the directives (Bølstad & Cross, 2016). No similar effect, however, was observed in the case of Nice and Lisbon treaties (Bølstad & Cross, 2016).

In addition, there are substantial differences across policy areas. First of all, due to the variance in the integration process, some policies are governed by different binding acts. While fisheries or trade policy, belonging to an exclusive competence of the EU, exclude directives in their governing system, other areas, e.g. transport, have been governed by different acts in separate time periods (König, 2008). In general, policies belonging to the exclusive EU competencies, such as internal market, agriculture, competition or trade (compared to the remaining areas), tend to have shorter decision-making periods (Schultz & König, 2000). Therefore, such observations lead to the following hypothesis:

H3.1: Given punctuations in policy salience on the EU agendas, the binding EU legislation presents punctuations in the number of acts adopted each semester.

In relation to this expectation, the study further assesses the punctuated equilibrium presumptions, applied to the EU legislation in 1997-2017.

As already presented in Chapter I, the punctuated equilibrium approach is often represented as a combination of three elements: 1) bounded rationality of the decision-makers (i.e. individual level decision-making patterns, leading to the prioritisation of some issues, irrespective of their importance); 2) limited policy space ('bottleneck problem'); and 3) incremental policy developments with rare and abrupt shifts in attention (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

Factors fostering attention shifts are generalised and clustered into four categories: leadership change, venue-shopping (emergence of new issues), external factors and institutional changes (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Looking at them one by one, leadership change is mainly linked to the political cycles. Since new leaders or new governments bring their own set of preferences and priorities to the table, they inevitably reallocate the attention given to the topics. For this reason, the agenda equilibrium moves accordingly (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

Venue-shopping, linked to the emergence of new issues or their attributes, offers a ground for reframing or reinterpreting old topics, as well as introducing new dimensions to a political discourse. These new issues and/or their attributes, along with the actors representing them, are likely to induce policy change (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). Policy advocates, employing either vertical or horizontal lobbying strategies, i.e. moving across different levels or sectors in the decision-making process, attempt to raise awareness of certain problems (Princen, 2009). Yet, the actual change depends on the reaction of policy makers and their feedback towards incoming issues (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002).

As a part of the changing attitudes and perceptions, scholars have analysed the EU legislative agenda as a subject to the swings in public opinion (Princen, 2013). Nevertheless, given that the EU decision-making system is rather isolated from the public, no major evidence was found (Princen, 2013). In respect to this, public attitudes are not considered in the further analysis of this chapter.

External factors and unexpected events do also play an important role in predicting and explaining attention shifts (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; John & Jennings, 2010). Crises, wars or natural disasters bring new information, i.e. new issues to the system and, hereby, may distort the existing equilibrium of policy attention (John & Jennings, 2010).

Finally, an institutional structure, and especially institutional changes are perceived to be essential when analysing policy attention. By determining the decision-making process and the number of veto players in a given policy area, institutional design implies costs (Baumgartner et al., 2006a; Baumgartner et al., 2011; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005) and reinforces stability on the political agenda. This allows to preserve the status quo through so-called institutional frictions (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005).

Contrary to the gridlock situations, institutional frictions indicate resistance rather than the stalemate of the policy-making process. In turn, frictions drive the gradual evolution of the legislative agenda. However, given a sudden shift in the institutional dynamics, the existing frictions are interrupted and followed by major policy alternations (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Such situations are often linked with the incoming information or signals from the environment. Consequently, by responding to them, decision-makers, as previously noted, play an essential role in the agenda dynamics.

Bringing all these factors into the context of legislative outputs, the level of effects tends to vary. Whilst venue-shopping activities and external events are more evident in determining attention changes, they are rather mitigated during the lengthy decision-making processes and can have only a partial influence. Venue-shopping, while shifting the focus of attention, does not necessarily prevent from implementing specific legislation. Furthermore, when evaluating policy outputs, venue-shopping activities are more difficult to detect, since (especially on the horizontal level) they bring a diversity of topics into play. With respect to the fact that this analysis assigns a single dynamic topic to each legislative act, the venue-shopping approach does not fit well into the framing. For this reason, it is excluded from the following study.

In relation to the external events, although they can have an instant reaction at the political level, are less expected to be reflected in the legislation. The measures being invoked to deal with the crisis do not always imply an adoption of new legislative acts. Nonetheless, in cases when crises induce legislative decisions, their effect is extended over time due to the protracted decision-making process. Hence, in order to capture the effect of external events, they need to be evaluated on the case-by-case basis. Since this research employs a quantitative approach, crises and unexpected events are excluded from the empirical analysis.

In this regard, institutional changes can be considered to be the most prevalent causes of shifts within the EU legislation, as systemic alternations tend to bring new actors and decision-making rules into the system. Thus, the following hypothesis is raised:

H3.2: Institutional changes are likely to produce punctuations in the number of adopted binding EU legislative acts.

For the purpose of this research, institutional changes are operationalised as a three-fold phenomena. The first one considers EU treaty changes, which in the timeframe of the study include Amsterdam (1999, as entered into force), Nice (2003) and Lisbon (2009) treaties. The second one is linked to the establishment of new agencies or other EU bodies responsible for the policy areas in the examined period. Thirdly, new member states, permanently entering the EU policy arena, and taking part in further legislative activities. As a result, three enlargement stages (in 2004, 2007, and 2013) are further assessed.

Even though the introduction of the Presidency Trios and their 18-month programme could be regarded as an additional institutional change, in reality they provide a more general framework for single Presidencies (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2015), rather than influence the performance of the chair (Warntjen, 2013). Van Gruisen et al. (2017) pointed out that the Trio effect is more visible only at the end of the 18-month programme, when proposals put forward during the first Trio semester reach the decision stage. A rather limited influence of the Trio cooperation was also addressed by Jensen and Nedergaard (2014), who, looking at the administrative level, found that coordination among foreign

ministries was much more in place, compared to the other ministries. For this reason, the Trio presidency is omitted from the analysis.

Leadership change, being the last indicator to discuss, is a rather complex concept. As previously mentioned, the EU agenda is combined of three bodies acting on the supranational level. In relation to this, the study should consider electoral cycles of the European Parliament, as well as leadership changes of the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU. However, they cannot be equally compared. The cycles of both the European Parliament and the European Commission extend over five years. Hence, they have a rather low impact on the pending legislation. The rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, on the other hand, being in charge of legislation that reaches the Council's table, has informal powers to manage the agenda by prioritising or overlooking certain proposals (Tallberg, 2003). Such strategies have a direct impact on the timing of the legislative acts, as well as their content, given that lagging proposals need to be discussed and voted later on. Considering such institutional environment, the further hypothesis is raised:

H3.3: Shifts in rotating Presidency issue salience are associated with punctuations in the number of adopted binding EU legislative acts.

Given that the EU decision-making process is rather complex and involves several actors which are not tested in this study, one cannot expect to observe a causality between the rotating chair and the legislative outputs. Nonetheless, a correlation between the two is an acceptable indicator to continue the study and to investigate further this association. In order to corroborate the latter hypothesis, the analysis looks into the relative changes of attention given to topics addressed by the rotating Council Presidencies, which were presented in Chapter I. Furthermore, additional implications of the leadership change, which in this chapter is operationalised as the rotation of member states in the Council chair, are presented in the following section.

1.2. Influence of the rotating Presidency on the legislative outputs

Roles and powers of the rotating chair have been long discussed among scholars, without reaching a consensus. Tallberg's (2003) account on the Presidency powers, considered as one of the leading works in the rotating Presidency literature, mostly focused on agenda-shaping activities, which were later on tested by other scholars (see, e.g. Häge, 2016, 2016a). Yet, little attention have been given to the actual decision-making outcomes – legislative acts adopted throughout semesters.

Studies conducted before the Treaty of Lisbon commonly acknowledged that the success of the rotating chair highly depends on the inherited agenda (Wurzel, 2000; Warntjen, 2008, 2013), voting rule or the number of proposals put forward by the European Commission (Tallberg, 2006; Thomson, 2008; Warntjen, 2007, 2008). Scholars agree that a qualified majority voting rule (QMV) confers greater powers to the rotating chair (Tallberg, 2004; Warntjen, 2007), especially when the country aims to address its own interests. Given that after the Treaty of Lisbon the great share of legal acts fall under the QMV, one can claim that the Presidency retains its powers in terms of structuring and influencing the Council agenda.

Furthermore, a legislative procedure is also deemed to play an important role (Warntjen, 2008). As Warntjen (2008) states, under the consultation, there is a high likelihood that the Presidency will be able to finalise the legislative act during the same semester. A similar assumption can be made regarding the consent procedure, since the involvement of the European Parliament in this procedure is rather marginal (European Parliament, 2017). Thus, the rotating chair has more room for manoeuvre in reaching the final decision. Following this reasoning, the fourth hypothesis is raised:

H3.4: The Presidency is more likely to reach the final decision on the legislative act when it is not adopted under co-decision.

The decision-making stage was identified as another condition that either impedes or fosters the Presidency's performance. Several empirical studies provided evidence that the chair's influence increases during the final stages of decision-making, i.e. at the time the agreement

is made (Schalk et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008; Warntjen, 2008). On the other hand, Tallberg (2003) claims that, under co-decision, the Presidency can also aim to reach an agreement during the first reading. This being the case, the rotating chair is likely to succeed in adopting the act during its term. Such expectation is linked to the fact that during the first reading the rotating Presidency is less constrained by the formal decision-making rules and has more flexibility in terms of timing (Warntjen, 2007). Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Presidency's position is included in the final outputs (Rasmussen & Reh, 2013).

It must be noted that the above-mentioned procedural advantages are closely linked to the baseline incentive of the Presidency, that is, claiming credit for the concluded dossiers, irrespectively of whether they are salient for the rotating chair or not. This is easier under the legislative procedures with a limited involvement of the European Parliament, since the Presidency has to put less effort for concluding these dossiers. Conversely, the Presidency has less incentives to invest resources in procedures that involve the European Parliament, such as co-decision.

Nevertheless, the Presidency's incentives might change once the proposals under discussion are highly salient. Although it has been argued that the rotating chair does not have a bargaining advantage during the early agreements in co-decision (Rasmussen & Reh, 2013), such finding is based on pre-Lisbon Presidencies by large member states. However, this might be different in the post-Lisbon period; also, looking at more member states might yield different results. In this regard, the rotating Presidency is expected to push forward the legislative act even under co-decision, when (i) the importance attached to it by the chair is high and when (ii) there is a general support for European-level regulation in the field (Warntjen, 2007). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3.5: Under co-decision, the rotating Presidency is likely to finalise the legislative act in one semester only if both it attaches a high importance to the policy area and it is in favour of EU regulation in the field.

This hypothesis evaluates only those laws, which were proposed and finalised during the same Presidency semester, falling under the co-decision procedure. Such choice is made in order to avoid the measurement bias, since the remaining laws, finalised in the same semester, cannot be directly linked to a single Presidency achievements. Although a chair may possess certain powers in terms of timing at the final decision-making stages, the actual agreement on the act could have been reached by its predecessor (Warntjen, 2008). On the other hand, if the Commission's proposal comes during a specific Presidency and the same country manages to finalise it, it can be considered as a substantial achievement of the chair.

To corroborate the hypothesis H3.5, the adopted laws are linked with the priorities expressed in the Presidency agenda. Having been mentioned in the half-year work programme, priorities express both high importance and a favourable attitude of the Presidency towards the EU-level rules in this policy area (otherwise, they would not be mentioned in the Presidency programme).

Regarding the policy priorities, as it was presented in Chapter I, the coding of the rotating Presidency programmes addressed member state's willingness to act by allocating respective quasi-sentences to seven categories: 1) priorities, 2) actions, 3) intentions for an action, 4) requirements for an action/mean, 5) general emphasis of certain issues, 6) concerns and 7) events. Actions are the dominant category expressed by the Presidency, which can be interpreted as the country's aim to exhibit an efficient performance. Nevertheless, priorities, being used less frequently, presuppose a high importance of the policies addressed. Therefore, they are invoked for evaluating the legislative acts adopted under co-decision.

This Presidency performance evaluation to a certain extent employs a pledge approach, often applied in the country-level studies (Thomson, 2001; Thomson et al., 2017). Contrary to the saliency approach, which links issue salience for political parties with the spending of the government (Thomson, 2001; Thomson et al., 2017), this study looks at the priorities expressed in the Presidency programmes and their fulfilment at the end of the term, which corresponds to the pledge approach (Thomson, 2001; Thomson et al., 2017). Thus, by linking rotating Presidency agendas and, more specifically – priorities expressed therein, this study

contributes not only to the interpretation of the role of the rotating Presidency during the decision-making process, but also relates the EU input agendas with policy outputs. Accordingly, the chapter opens up new trajectories for the future research.

2. Methodology²⁵

The data used in the analysis was retrieved from the EUR-Lex website, containing all the EU legislative acts and steps in the decision-making procedures. Overall, the corpora consists of 6316 binding legislation – directives, regulations and decisions – adopted between 1997 and 2017. Whilst the initial data included a larger number of documents, due to inconsistencies between the Commission proposals and the final acts (i.e. a mismatch between the dates provided in the Commission proposals and in the final legislation), 406 cases were dropped. Nevertheless, the size of the corpora remained sufficient in order to apply a novel quantitative text analysis technique – the dynamic topic model, developed by Greene and Cross (2017).

2.1. Automated text analysis and alternative methods

There are several reasons explaining such methodological choice. Taking into consideration Quinn's et al. (2010) interpretation of various text analysis techniques (such as reading, human coding, dictionaries, supervised learning and topic models), there is an optimal tradeoff between the features and costs each of the method entails. While qualitative techniques (such as coding) give a more nuanced picture of categories and provide a basis for their clustering, they are missing relevant text features and document mapping possibilities. Furthermore, human coding is a rather costly technique (Quinn et al., 2010). Dictionary-based coding, on the other hand, provides text features and mapping; it also allows automatised coding. Nevertheless, as in the case of manual coding, the initial costs are high (Quinn et al., 2010).

Supervised learning and topic models can, thus, be considered as efficient alternatives. A supervised method holds an advantage in pre-defining and nesting relevant textual categories.

²⁵ The methodological section, as well as the results of the application of the dynamic topic model, presented in sections 3 and 3.1, were developed in collaboration with Dr. James P. Cross (University College Dublin).

However, it requires a pre-analysis of the data (Quinn et al., 2010). In this regard, topic models (based on an unsupervised approach) are more efficient to analyse large corpora and to detect prevailing themes over time, even though the evaluation of such topics requires additional post-analysis interpretation (Quinn et al., 2010).

Although unsupervised machine learning is becoming more widespread, studies of the legislative texts using this technique are limited. Notwithstanding, this content analysis lies between “thin” interpretations, based on names, length of the documents or similar factors, and thorough studies of small-N cases (Evans et al., 2007). Therefore, it would provide a sufficiently elaborated evaluation of the main themes being addressed in the legislative outputs (Evans et al., 2007).

With respect to the analysis of policy attention, Downding et al. (2016) have also admitted that machine-learning techniques, especially unsupervised ones, can grant a systematic analysis, focusing not on issue salience in a given moment, but rather measuring its relevance over time. Following this reasoning, the first part of the empirical analysis invokes the dynamic topic model approach. The explanation of the model is presented in the following section.

2.2. Dynamic topic model

As already noted before, topic models are particularly suited for analysing a large corpora of unstructured texts, due to their ability to identify latent thematic structures across documents (Greene & Cross, 2017). They are based upon the assumption that words appearing in a similar context share a similar meaning. Dynamic topic models, in this respect, bring an additional added value in presenting the development of topics over time. Consequently, by tracing the evolvement of the terms, one can observe the changing nature of the themes unveiled.

There are several dynamic topic models that have been developed over time. For instance, Blei and Lafferty (2006), in order to extend the application of the latent Dirichlet allocation

(LDA), as one of the basic topic models, relaxed the underlying assumption that the document order does not matter, and thereby developed the dynamic topic model. Thus, the terms were seen as a sequence of separate word distributions rather than a single one, presenting a ‘bag of words’ (Blei, 2012).

The dynamic topic model utilised for this analysis, however, rests upon the study of Greene and Cross (2017), and employs the Python programming language. The model itself is based on the application of two layers of non-negative matrix factorisation (NMF) to a set of document-term matrices. Contrary to the previously developed dynamic topic models, the two-layered approach allows to capture both broad and niche topics in the political texts (Greene & Cross, 2017). Given that the EU legislation often comprises a number of thematic topics, the latter method is more suitable for the analysis. Whereas more elaborated explanation of this innovative technique could be found in the work of the scholars (Greene & Cross, 2017), the application of the model for this study is briefly presented in the following section.

2.3. Application of the dynamic topic model to the study of legislative acts

To proceed with the analysis, the selected legislative acts were divided across semesters, based on the date of the adoption. After pre-processing the legislation, the analysis proceeds with the first layer of examination: an application of NMF in order to identify a set of window topics and create a document-term matrix for each time window, which in this analysis stands for the rotating Presidency semester.

The above-mentioned data is composed of two factors, first of which relates each legislative act in the corpora to the k window topic, while the second one identifies the top terms linked with each of k window topics. In this regard, the first factor allows to rank the legislative acts (based on their weight) within the Presidency semester (time window) and, depending on the weight, assign a topic to each of the act in that specific time window. The second factor, accordingly, presents the weighting of the top terms with regard to a given window topic.

Hence, the terms with the highest weights are assigned to the specific window topics as their descriptors.

After the first part, the analysis moves to the second layer of the NMF application. Following the model, the topics are associated across rotating Presidency semesters by constructing a topic-term matrix, which allows to evaluate a topic occurrence over time. In other words, based on the relation between top terms denoting the dynamic topic and on the best fit of each window topic to the dynamic topic, the results present a relevant number of dynamic topics across the analysed texts. The top terms of each dynamic topic are presented respectively.

Although this topic model method is considered to be unsupervised, it requires to choose the number of window and dynamic topics. In order to avoid an oversimplification of topics, i.e. presenting only the broad ones, or narrowing them down too much, the previous studies relied on the word2vec tool (Greene & Cross, 2017). This technique allows to detect the coherence of topic models, which is based on the mean pairwise cosine similarity between the term vectors (Greene & Cross, 2017). Following the study by Greene and Cross (2017), this analysis has also employed the word2vec tool.

To test the best fit of the dynamic topics for the given corpora, this study has generated two dynamic topic models, accordingly accounting for 30 and 40 themes possible. Such choice was driven by the fact that the rotating Council Presidency programme dataset has 21 major topics (hence, lying between 20 and 30), however, the legislation may include more nuanced themes, thus, the number was increased up to 40.

Looking at the results of two models, in the case of 30, the range of [15;17] dynamic topics was presented. Raising the threshold to 40, the outputs presented a range of [16;18] dynamic topic model configurations. Comparing the two, the results are very similar. Nevertheless, in order to ensure the highest coherence possible, generated dynamic topics were compared to the window topics. Since during one Presidency semester (i.e. in one window) the adopted legislation did not exceed 15 themes, a set of 16 dynamic topics was selected as the most

suitable number for evaluating the results. This also complies with the fact that a set of 16 topics was suggested within the ranges in both models. As a result, the dynamic topics unveiled in the legislation are presented in the following section.

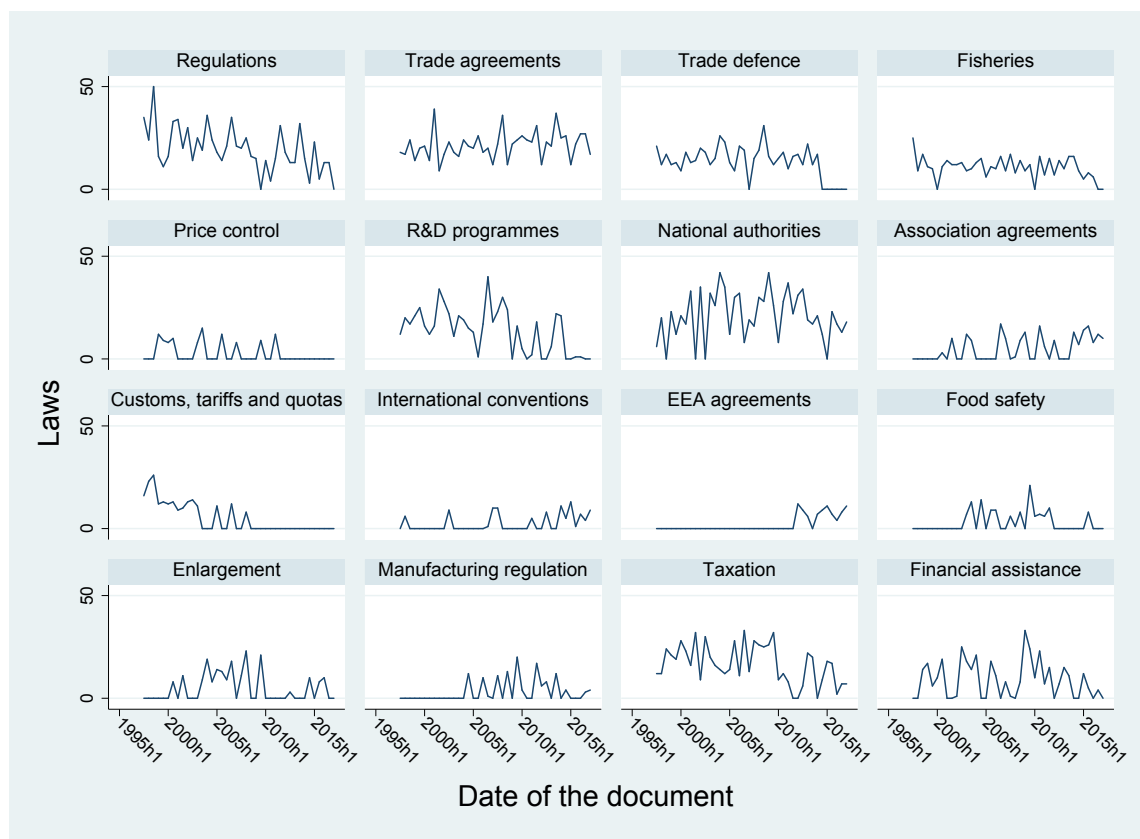
3. Dynamic topic model results

The application of the dynamic topic model on the binding EU legislation presents 16 latent topics addressed over the 20 years period. Although the unsupervised text mining technique does not determine the name of the topic itself, based on the top 10 terms across legislation (see Table 3.1), the dynamics of unveiled themes is presented in Figure 3.1.

Table 3.1: Top 10 terms for 16 dynamic topics generated by the model

Rank	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6	Topic 7	Topic 8
1	regulation	agreement	dumping	fishing	price	programme	member	protocol
2	ec	european	anti	vessels	prices	actions	state	european
3	european	community	duty	opportunities	industry	research	states	union
4	council	council	imports	fisheries	community	community	information	part
5	regard	decision	investigation	waters	market	activities	competent	states
6	having	union	regulation	vessel	producers	energy	data	partnership
7	amended	behalf	product	protocol	production	european	national	member
8	eec	conclusion	basic	species	sales	development	authorities	council
9	union	approved	exporting	fish	provisional	cooperation	referred	behalf
10	replaced	trade	export	zone	imports	programmes	authority	association
Rank	Topic 9	Topic 10	Topic 11	Topic 12	Topic 13	Topic 14	Topic 15	Topic 16
1	tarriff	convention	eea	food	republic	ex	directive	financial
2	products	union	agreement	products	accession	weight	eec	assistance
3	quotas	international	joint	modified	part	containing	ec	fund
4	customs	decision	committee	containing	european	manufacture	tax	european
5	quota	accession	decision	consisting	bulgaria	tonnes	decision	eur
6	regulation	european	european	authorisation	romania	quota	council	decision
7	agricultural	parties	cooperation	placing	member	materials	vat	union
8	autonomous	council	draft	ec	act	products	measure	commission
9	duties	party	fields	produced	association	exceeding	states	council
10	duty	united	eu	labelling	czech	mm	commission	budgetary

Figure 3.1: Dynamics in the scope of legislation adopted each semester across 16 dynamic topics



As one may expect, a large share of themes belong to the exclusive competences of the EU (Hix & Høyland, 2011), such as fisheries, trade policy (including trade defence and agreements with third countries), customs regulation, price setting (especially for agriculture products) and regulation of the internal market (for instance, as presented by Regulations²⁶ and Manufacturing regulation topics in Figure 3.1). Nevertheless, a great number of topics shown in Figure 3.1 also refer to policy areas, which do not exclusively fall under the EU oversight. These involve the legislation on the national competent authorities and information they provide, enlargements, association agreements and international conventions, as well as financial assistance, research and development programmes, taxation and food safety.

²⁶ Although the topic is presented in a rather broad way, the legislative acts falling under this theme mainly concern regulatory aspect of the common market policies, e.g. regarding specific agriculture products and fisheries. Such regulatory policies are presented by a separate topic due to the fact that they compose a large share of the legislation, which is then captured by the dynamic topic model, based on the unsupervised approach.

A variety of topics simultaneously address the differences across policy areas/issues in terms of emphasis given to them during 1997-2017. For instance, price control and customs, tariffs and quota topics were present until 2010-2012, whereas food safety and manufacturing regulation came up only around 2003-2004, yet, remained until 2017. European Economic Area (EEA) agreements, in this regard, were present only for a short time period, starting in 2012. Hence, these differences between the above-mentioned policy areas provide a preliminary support to the first hypothesis (H3.1). Nevertheless, the underlying conundrum is the following: can the developments of these policies be interpreted from a punctuated equilibrium perspective? In this regard, a further section focuses on the relative semestral changes in the EU legislation throughout the 20 years period and explains them from the punctuated equilibrium approach.

3.1. Dynamic topics from a punctuated equilibrium perspective

Given that the punctuated equilibrium approach implies attention shifts, for the purpose of this study the number of legislative acts adopted in one policy area during one Presidency semester is considered as a unit of measurement of legislative importance. Yet, the absolute numbers of laws adopted each semester have a limited explanatory power. With the aim at grasping the magnitude of shifts in legislative outputs, relative percentage changes in the legislation adopted are considered. Hereby, the number of legislative acts in one policy area is represented as a share of the total laws adopted during that semester. Relative differences, accordingly, allow to compare the actual variations in the scope of legislation across topics and over time.

As depicted in Figure 3.2, there are clear differences across 16 themes. While in the case of fisheries, price control, customs, tariffs and quotas or taxation relative changes were rather marginal, trends in legislation on the research and development (R&D) programmes, international conventions or financial assistance expose the opposite tendency. Overall, approximately one third of the topics presented in Figure 3.2 demonstrate significant shifts in the scope of legislation adopted. However, to interpret such policy developments from a punctuated equilibrium approach, it is important to look at the distributions of these changes.

Figure 3.2: Relative changes across semesters in the scope (%) of the legislative acts adopted

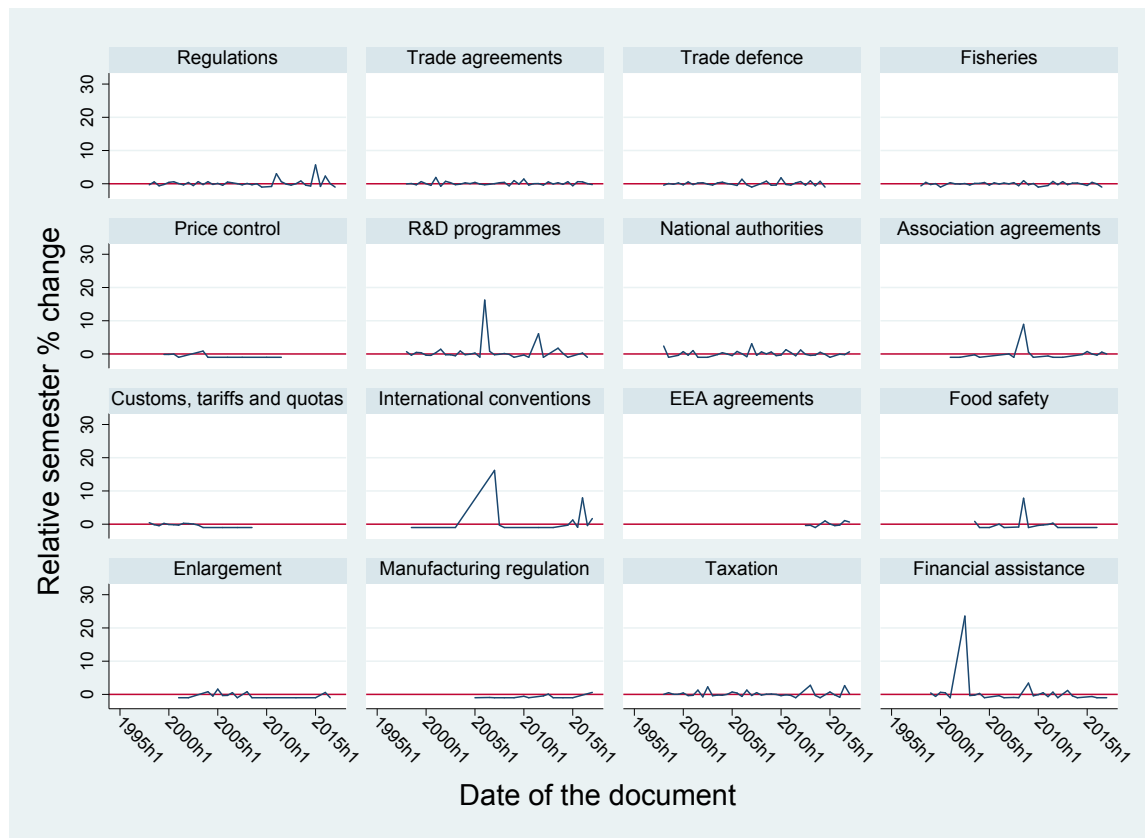
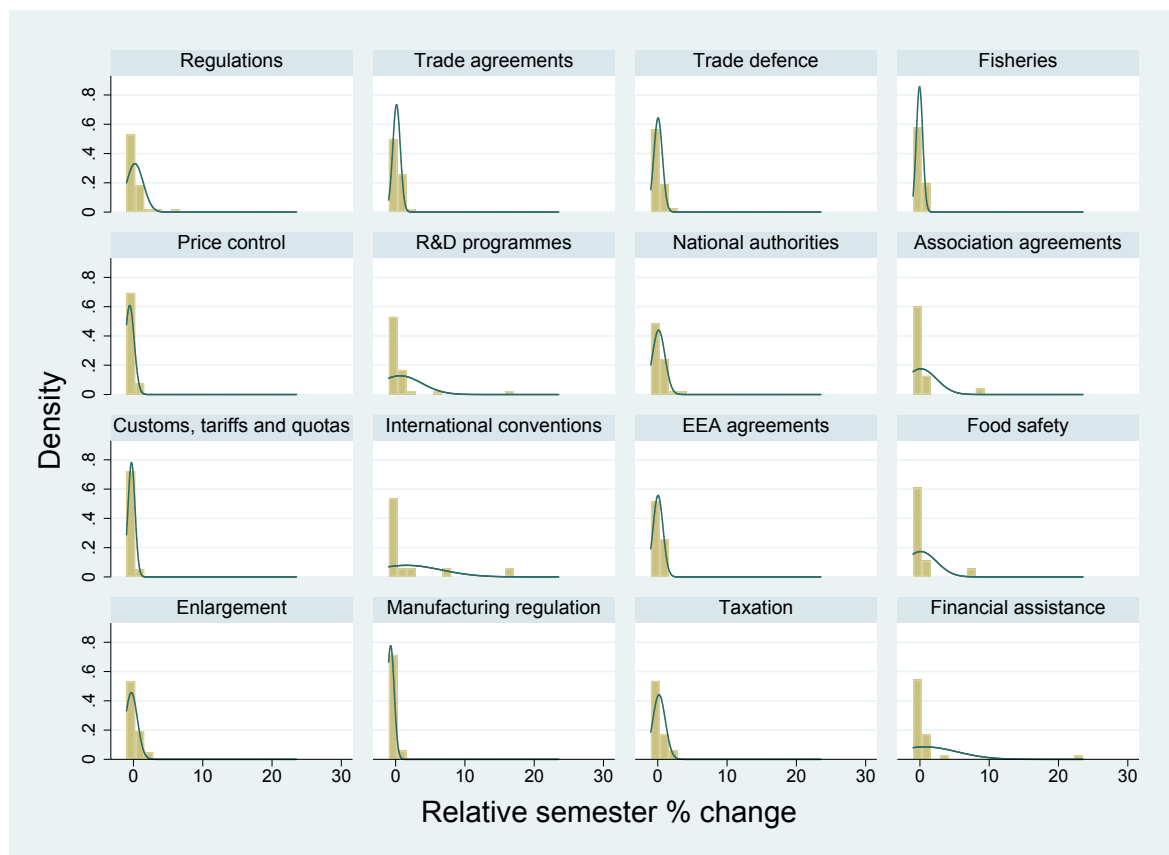


Figure 3.3, hereby, presents the density of percentage changes in the EU legislation that was adopted between 1997 and 2017. Whilst in some policy areas changes were rather small, hence, not causing any major disruptions in the equilibrium (e.g. in trade defence, enlargement or EEA agreements), the others exhibit leptokurtic distributions, demonstrating deviations from a normal legislative development trend.

According to Jones and Baumgartner (2005), distributions with a high density of small policy changes (levelling around 0), forming slender peaks and rather long, fat tails (which stand for punctuations), describe the punctuated equilibrium theory in statistical terms. Following this argument, one can notice that such trend was present in several topics across the legislative outputs: research and development programmes, association agreements, international conventions, food safety, financial assistance programmes and, to a certain extent, regulations. The latter results allow to corroborate the first hypothesis (H3.1), i.e. that binding EU legislation presents punctuations over time.

Figure 3.3: Distributions of relative changes in legislation adopted per Presidency semester



The results presented in the figures above already allow to interpret the legislative outputs from the punctuated equilibrium perspective. Nevertheless, the following section examines several policy areas in order to assess two factors, possibly influencing punctuations in the EU legislation: 1) institutional changes and 2) the rotation of the Council Presidencies.

With regard to the institutional changes, the study investigates three topics: a) research and development programmes (topic 6), b) food safety (topic 12), and c) financial assistance (topic 16). Such selection of policies is determined by, firstly, the leptokurtic distributions of the above-mentioned topics, as depicted in Figure 3.3. The study expects to explain punctuations in these policy areas (see Figure 3.2.) by the institutional changes in the examined time period. As this analysis does not take into account external factors, international conventions (topic 10) as well as association agreements (topic 8), both of which presented leptokurtic distributions (see Figure 3.3), are therefore excluded from the further assessment. This is due to the fact that both issue areas are strongly dependent on the

external factors, hence, the fluctuations observed in the latter cases may be strongly influenced by them and not the internal EU developments (e.g. institutional changes). While the regulations topic (No. 1) captures policy content of several areas in the single market, even presenting a leptokurtic distribution, it is too broad to be associated with any institutional changes, hence, it is excluded from the analysis.

When it comes to the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU and its approximation as a leadership change, the empirical analysis sheds light on two policies: a) fisheries (topic 4) and b) food safety (topic 12). This selection of policies is based on the following reasoning. First of all, they present two different trends of the developments of the legislative outputs – fisheries exhibiting incremental changes (minor fluctuations over time), whereas food safety involving some abrupt shifts in the numbers of legislation adopted. Considering both tendencies, one would expect the rotation of the Council chair playing a role in the latter, and not in the former case.

Furthermore, the coding of the rotating Presidency programmes and the themes presented by the dynamic topic modelling approach are rather diverse. Most of the topics presented by the dynamic topic model are treated as subtopics in the coding template of the rotating Presidency programmes (based on the EUPAP codebook). For instance, trade agreements, trade defence, customs, tariffs and quotas topics belong to the international trade topic, while enlargement, association agreements and international conventions – to the international affairs and foreign aid theme. Moreover, in some cases, the results of the dynamic topic model cover aspects of several policy areas. For instance, research and development programmes include both research and innovation policies, as well as investment in the enterprises or promotion of labour activities. Thus, comparing these topics with the ones presented in the Presidency programmes would be complicated. In this regard, fisheries and food safety, as subtopics of agriculture and fisheries theme, provide a more precise data for the comparative analysis.

Hence, the following section focuses on two independent variables – institutional changes and the rotation of the Council chair – in order to assess the validity of the punctuated equilibrium theory on the legislative outputs.

3.2. Institutional changes as the main drivers for punctuations in EU legislation

The Table 3.2 below shows a correspondence between punctuations in policy areas, represented by the dynamic topic model results, and the institutional changes, i.e. new treaties entering into force, newly established EU bodies (agencies) and the EU enlargements. These results should not be interpreted as a causal chain, i.e. that the alternation of the EU treaties, new agencies or accession of member states implied changes in the legislative outputs. Instead, each of the assumed links is investigated in the following part of the section.

Table 3.2: Correspondence between punctuations in the dynamic topic model results (both in absolute and relative values) and the institutional changes at the EU level

Institutional changes		Topics/policy areas		
		R&D programmes	Food safety	Financial assistance
Treaty changes (when entered into force)	Amsterdam 1997 (1999)	1	0	1
	Nice 2001 (2003)	1	0	1
	Lisbon 2007 (2009)	1	1	1
EU Agencies	Established throughout the period	1	1	0
Enlargements	Eastern 2004	1	1	1
	Eastern (2nd wave) 2007	1	0	0
	Croatia 2013	1	0	1

Note: 1 stands for an observed association, whereas 0 indicates no relationship.

1. *Research and development (R&D) programmes.* As already noted by the name, the topic comprises two major policies: research and development, which, accordingly, cover several issue areas in the EU. In relation to the legislation adopted each semester (Figure 3.1), the

topic clearly exhibited the most evident fluctuations, even though only a few peaks are observed in relative terms (Figure 3.2).

Looking at the treaty changes, neither the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) nor the Treaty of Nice (2001) included any provisions concerning R&D. As a matter of fact, research and development were regarded as separate policies. Both Amsterdam and Nice treaties incorporated only several references in relation to the research field, more thoroughly addressing economic and sustainable development (Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997; Treaty of Nice, 2001).

In the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), instead, previously used as a single term, “research” was replaced by “research, development and space”, additionally setting the basis for the establishment of a European Research Area. Hereby, the Treaty put substantially more emphasis on the joint co-existence of three topics. Furthermore, with the Treaty of Lisbon, the area of research, development and space was recognised as a shared competence between member states and the EU, this becoming a novelty in research and space fields (Reillon, 2016). As a result, the EU bodies were entitled to launch supranational-level projects (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). In addition to the research aspect, a sustainable development was addressed, emphasising the improvement of social systems and labour markets within the EU (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007).

The rights granted to the Union with the Treaty of Lisbon contributed to the establishment of the agencies linked with the research and development area. In 2007, both the European Research Council (ERC, 2017) and the Research Executive Agency (REA, 2017) were launched, whereas in 2008 the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (Regulation (EC) No 294/2008) started its work. Later on, in 2014, the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency was opened (Commission Implementing Decision 2013/801/EU).

Whereas the previous institutional changes may have contributed to the absolute shifts in the number of legislative acts adopted in the R&D field (peaking in numbers around 2007-2009 (see Figure 3.1)), they cannot explain the relative changes in the scope of legislation

presented in Figure 3.2. The major spike in 2006, instead, can be interpreted as a result of the EU Research Framework Programmes. Given that in 2007 the Sixth Framework Programme had started (CROS, 2018), the legal acts adopted in 2006 could have been related to the expiring Fifth wave of research programmes, and a preparation for the new framework.

With reference to the last institutional factor – EU enlargements – the treaty of accession of ten Eastern European states in 2004 did not include any specific articles related to R&D, except for the regulations for the state aid (Treaty of Accession, 2003). These clauses concerned only Hungary, Malta and Poland (Treaty of Accession, 2003). For Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia no specific references were added either, except for the contributions expected from the countries to the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (Treaty of Accession, 2005; Treaty of Accession, 2012), as was the case for the member states joining the EU in 2004 (Treaty of Accession, 2003).

Hereby, the extent to which the above-mentioned institutional changes contributed to the scope of legislation adopted in relevant semesters is limited. Whereas in absolute terms, all three parts of institutional changes (i.e. treaties, relevant agencies and enlargements) may have contributed to the growing numbers of R&D laws, they did not explain the punctuations of relative changes. On the one hand, it can be linked to the specificities of the policy area, for instance, that it is governed predominantly by the multi-annual Research Framework Programmes, which induce variations in numbers of legislative acts. On the other hand, there may be alternative explanations, yet, they need to be further investigated through a thorough process tracing analysis.

2. *Food safety*. While no change in the legislation was observed after the adoption of Amsterdam and Nice treaties, the Treaty of Lisbon did not foresee any amendments or new annexes in terms of the content of food safety issues. Nevertheless, a rather important change brought by the Treaty of Lisbon was the decision-making procedure: it was shifted from consultation to co-decision (European Commission, 2009). This, in turn, fostered the legislative process, which, in the dynamic topic model results (Figures 3.1 and 3.2) is presented by the peak around 2009, when the Treaty entered into force.

Concerning the EU agencies, responsible for the development of the policy area, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), founded in 2002 (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002), can be considered as the main driver emphasising the issue importance. Created as a response to the outbreaks of various crises (EFSA, 2018), it has pushed forward food safety to the top of the EU agenda. As presented by the dynamic topic model results, only then the issue started to be more prevalent in the EU law.

In addition to the establishment of EFSA, the Eastern EU enlargement in 2004 has contributed to the prevalence of food safety legislation. The newcomers were obliged to meet the standards of the current member states by upgrading their food processing chains and food inspection standards, monitoring residues in agriculture production, and several other ongoing issues (European Commission, 2003). In this regard, having ten Eastern states joining the EU, a rise in the number of binding legislation can be linked with the accession requirements.

As a result, all three institutional factors contributed to the emergence of the topic and to further fluctuations in the food safety legislation. Nevertheless, the Treaty of Lisbon had the major impact on the peak presented around 2009 (Figure 3.2).

3. *Financial assistance.* On the contrary to the two previously presented policy areas, financial assistance concerns not only the EU member states, but also their neighbouring partners. Thus, in the area of financial assistance, the EU has several loan funds, which are accordingly utilised for providing financial aid either to the member states, facing financial debts, or their partners outside the Union.

Within the EU treaties, financial assistance was first mentioned in the Treaty of Nice (2001). The aid was supposed to be provided to the EU members only, in cases of damages from severe natural disasters or other occurrences independent from countries themselves (Treaty of Nice, 2001). The Treaty of Lisbon (2007), on the other hand, included a paragraph linked to the third countries and the possibility to provide financial assistance, as a part of bilateral cooperation. Furthermore, in a consolidated version of the Treaty of the Functioning of the

EU, the mutual assistance for EU members, facing balance of payments issues, was granted (Consolidated version of TFEU, 2008). Yet, the key financial assistance programmes were developed only after the Treaty of Lisbon, with the eruption of the Euro crisis. These involved the European Financial Stability Facility, which in 2012 was replaced by the European Stability Mechanism (ESM, 2018).

Regarding the latter EU loan programme, fluctuations in EU legislation in absolute numbers (Figure 3.1) and marginal relative shifts (Figure 3.2) between 2011 and 2014 can be regarded as the outcomes of the treaties. Financial assistance was provided to Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus (European Commission, 2018). On the other hand, the underlying reason to use these programmes might have been the Euro crisis and its consequences to the countries listed above. While crises and external events are excluded from this analysis, they should be addressed more thoroughly in the further developments of this research.

In relation to the latest EU enlargements, the accession treaty of Croatia (Treaty of Accession, 2012) had foreseen certain financial assistance mechanisms and their regulation. Whilst some documents adopted during the period can be linked to Croatia joining the Community, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), run by the European Commission and concerning several countries, is another factor, which have contributed to the growth in the numbers of related legislation in 2011-2014. Even though Croatia's accession fitted into the 2007-2013 framework, simultaneously there was a second round of IPA programmes (IPA II) launched for 2014-2020 (Regulation (EU) No 231/2014). Therefore, aiming to sign all the relevant documents before the entry of a new funding period, an increase in legislative acts around 2011-2014 is possibly associated with the governance of the financial assistance programmes rather than a single-state EU enlargement.

Taking into account all three cases and the examination of institutional effects over the changes in respective legislative outputs, treaty changes (especially the Treaty of Lisbon) tend to contribute the most to the legislative dynamics, while new agencies and EU enlargements presented only a marginal influence.

The main reasons for such limited impact arising from the institutional changes are several. First of all, policy areas analysed above may not be equally addressed in the new treaties or requirements set for the new member states. They all concern diverse fields and governance mechanisms. Hence, specificities linked with the topic may not have the same weight when designing new institutional rules. Secondly, some policy areas are subjects to the multi-annual programmes, which additionally raise the importance of the issues discussed. As a result, these programmes may have an even greater influence on the number of legislative acts adopted. Finally, in certain cases (e.g. financial assistance), punctuations may relate to the external events, which should be considered in the further developments of this research. Nevertheless, the evidence provided by three case studies allow to support the second hypothesis (H3.2) raised in this chapter – punctuations in the EU legislation can be explained by the institutional changes.

3.3. Rotating Council Presidency as an influencer of legislative punctuations

Being in charge of the Council agenda and simultaneously involved in the EU decision-making process, the rotating Presidency is expected to have leverage on the legislative outputs. In order to examine the link between the rotating mechanism and the legislative dynamics, this section brings two policy areas into the limelight: fisheries and food safety.

As presented in the topic model results, these two topics exhibited diverging results. Whilst fisheries policy was a subject of a rather steady development, food safety presented more evident punctuations over time (see Figure 3.2.). Therefore, assuming the Presidency's influence over the final legislation, it should be present only in the case of food safety, exhibiting punctuations in the scope of legislation adopted over time.

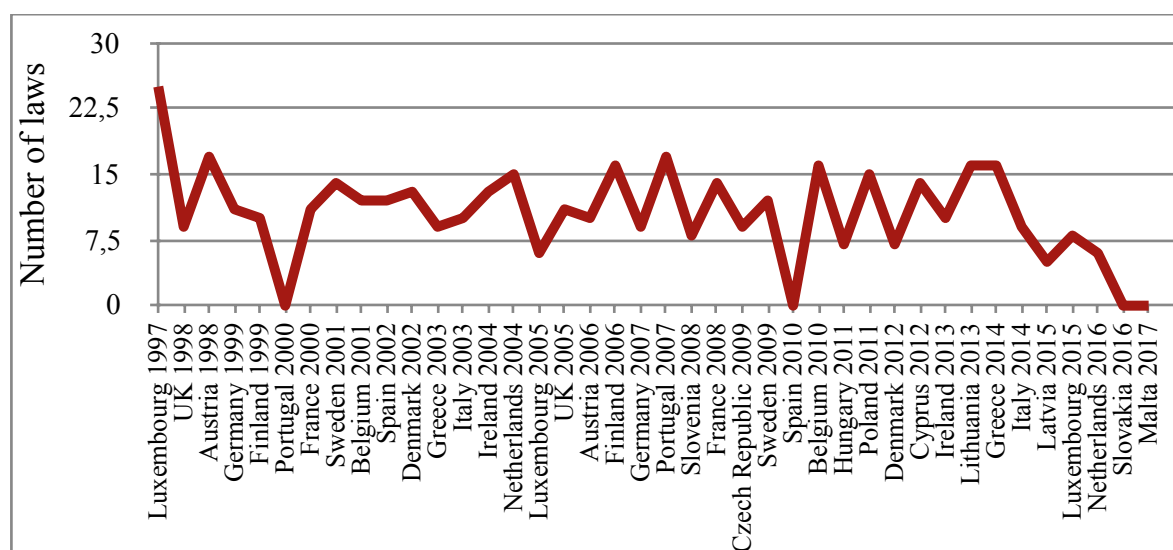
In order to operationalise salience rotating Presidencies attach to the above-mentioned policies, the dataset presented in Chapter I is used. Hereby, both fisheries and food safety are coded as sub-topics of a broader Agriculture and Fisheries theme.

3.3.1. Fisheries policy

Looking at the dynamic topic model results (see Figure 3.4), one could claim that fisheries policy, exhibiting a rather steady number of legislative acts adopted each semester, tends to be sticky to the EU agenda. Regardless of the policy reforms in 2002 (Princen, 2009a) and 2014, fisheries remained a subject to institutional frictions.

The policy reform in 2002 addressed three major aspects: 1) new quotas in order to manage deficiencies in fish catches, 2) a higher involvement of stakeholders (in fisheries and environmental fields), and 3) an enforcement of fishing standards (Princen, 2009a). Nevertheless, these obligations remained rather declarative statements: while quotas were kept being decided by responsible ministers, involvement of relevant NGOs was questionable (Princen, 2009a).

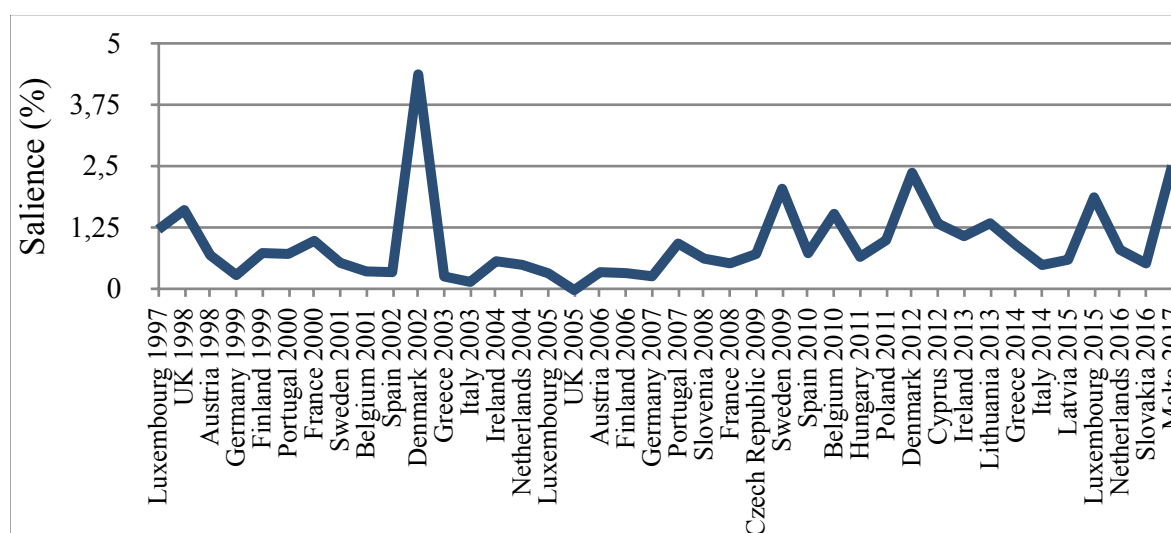
Figure 3.4: Dynamics in the number of legislative acts in fisheries policy



The second significant reform in fisheries sector was initiated in 2011, when the European Commission put forward several proposals: the new regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy, as well as the establishment of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (European Commission, 2011, 2011a, 2011b). Whilst the new regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy entered into force in 2013 (Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013), the fund was officially approved by the regulation adopted in 2014 (Regulation (EU) No 508/2014).

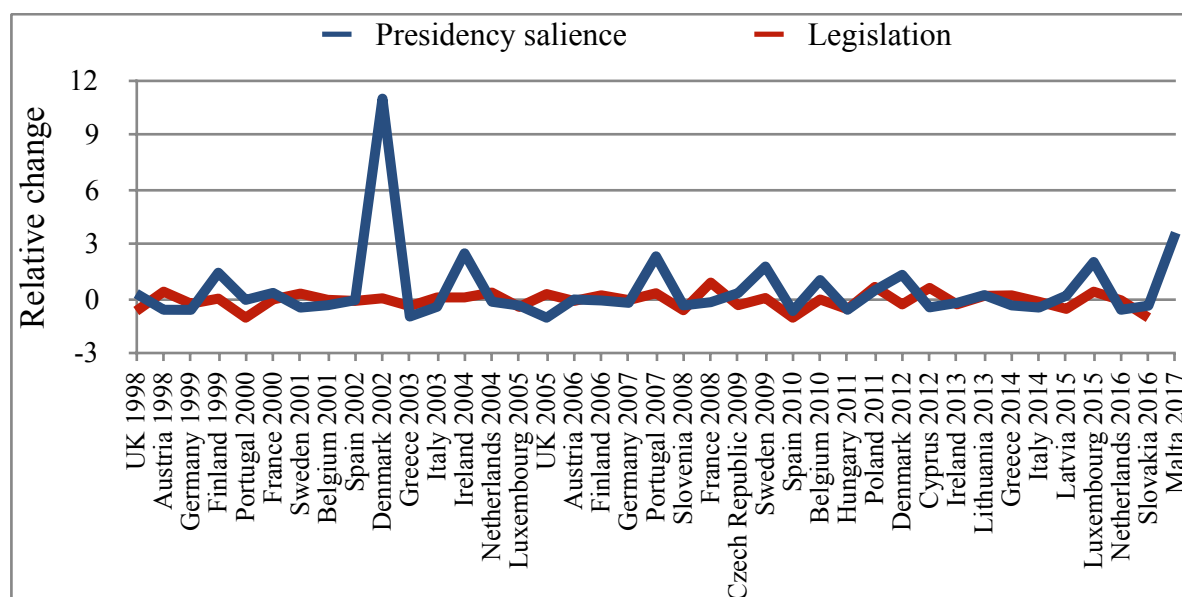
Relating these institutional changes with the importance attached to fisheries policy by the rotating EU member states, one can notice a significant peak in 2002, presenting a high salience of fisheries for the Danish chair (Figure 3.5). Historically Denmark had a strong stance on the Common Fisheries Policy (Hegland and Raakjær, 2008), which was further proved by finalising three essential regulations, linked with the 2002 reform during the Presidency period. However, no major fluctuations (in relative terms) across the legislative outputs occurred at that time (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.5: Dynamics in salience attached to fisheries policy across rotating Council Presidencies



In relation to the second reform, as Figure 3.5 depicts, starting from 2009, the rotating Presidencies used to give relatively more attention to fisheries policy. Nevertheless, no significant fluctuations in relative values were observed (Figure 3.6). In this regard, despite several associations between the reforms and the attention paid to the fisheries policy in the rotating Presidency programmes, relative changes in the legislation regarding fisheries did not present any evident shifts, which simultaneously supports the idea that the policy area was “sticky” on the EU legislative agenda. Thus, the expectations with regard to Presidency’s impact on fisheries policy are supported: no major impact was observed.

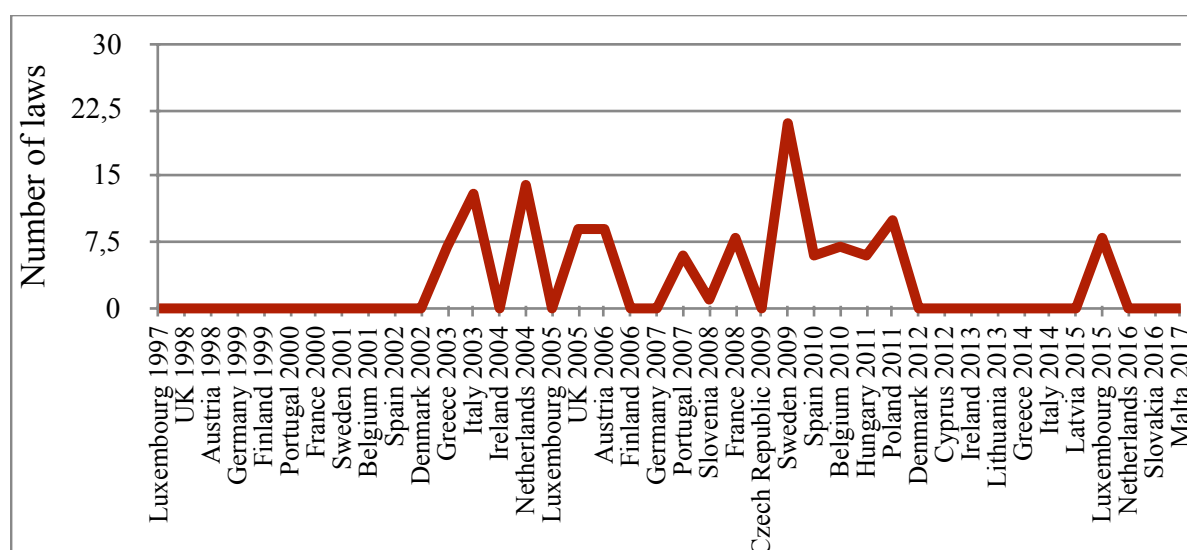
Figure 3.6: Relative changes in salience given to fisheries policy by the rotating Council Presidencies, compared to relative changes in the scope of legislative acts in fisheries policy adopted each semester



3.3.2. Food safety policy

Whilst some major institutional changes and development of the food safety policy were presented previously, this section focuses on the association between fluctuations in policy salience attached by the Presidency and the shifts within the legislative outputs.

Figure 3.7: Dynamics in the number of legislative acts in food safety policy



Trends of salience across the rotating Presidency semesters in the food safety field differ from the fisheries policy. Both in absolute and relative terms, there were some evident fluctuations in the numbers of legislative acts regulating food safety in the EU. As presented in Figure 3.7, after emerging in 2003, food policy was a subject to constant fluctuations in the number of legislation, and remained on the legislative agenda until 2012 (with an exception in 2015).

Looking at the levels of salience the rotating Presidencies attached to the food safety policy (Figure 3.8), no direct link between them and the adopted legislation can be established. Nevertheless, taking into account a time lag, which represents a lengthy decision-making period (especially before the Treaty of Lisbon), salience given to food policy by the Danish Presidency is reflected in the increase of legislative acts in 2003 and 2004. However, since the Danish term coincided with the establishment of the European Food Safety Authority, a further investigation needs to be carried out in order to measure the actual influence of the two factors.

Figure 3.8: Dynamics in salience attached to food safety policy across rotating Council Presidencies

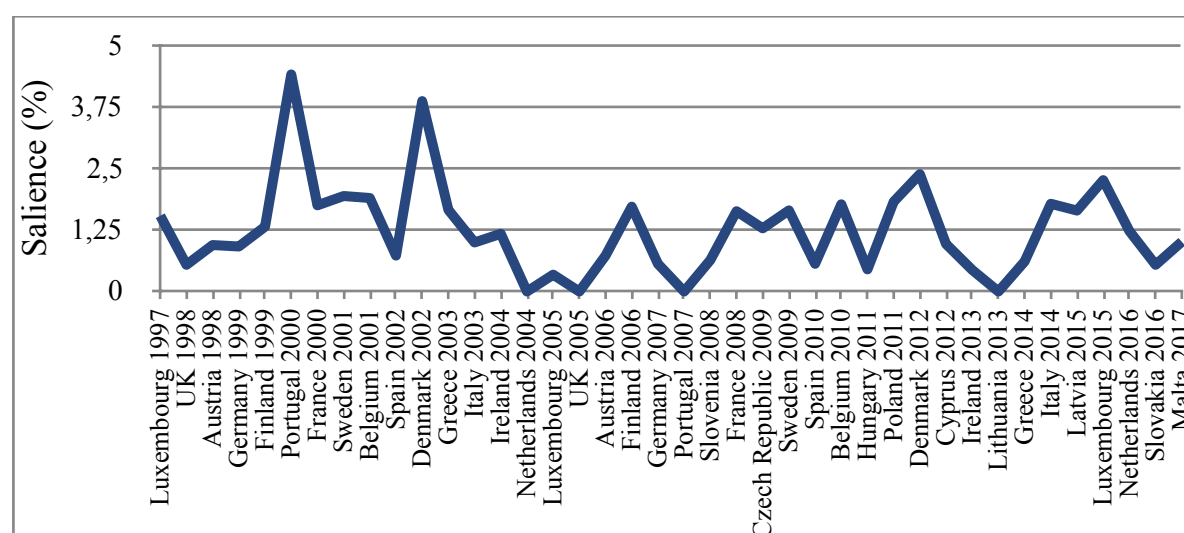
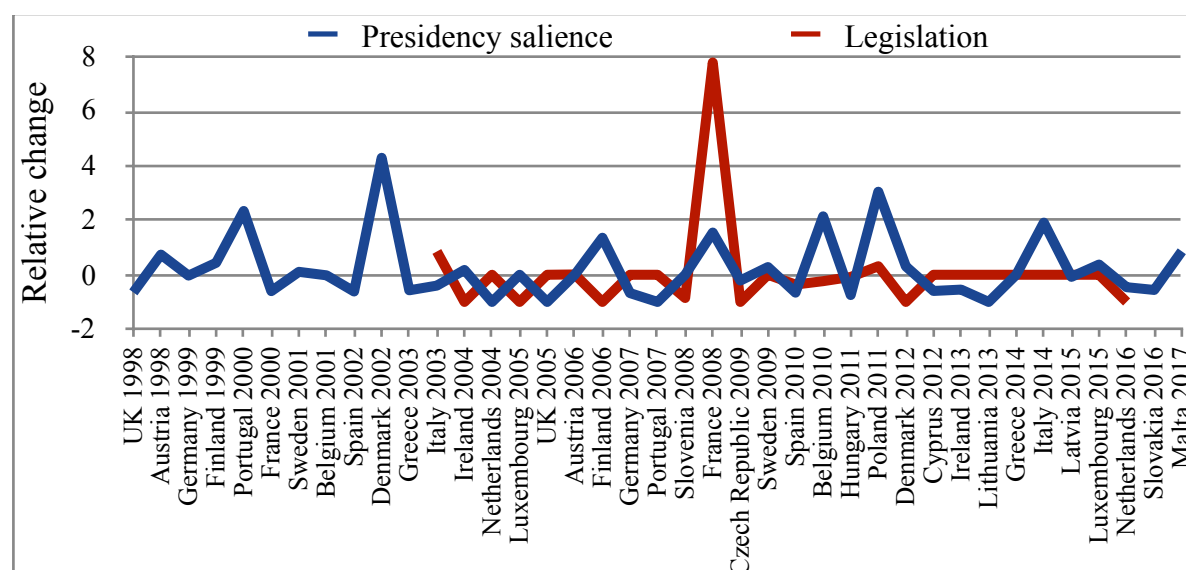


Figure 3.9, instead, presents relative changes both in salience and the scope of legislation. Whereas the majority of fluctuations in issue salience did not correspond to those in the legislative outputs, an overlap between the two during the French Presidency (2008) needs to be addressed further. Unlike Denmark, France did not attach equally great importance to the

topic. Nevertheless, a relative increase in salience and the Treaty of Lisbon (about to come into force) may have fostered the adoption of certain pending proposals, given that the food safety was transferred under co-decision. Yet, in order to support this claim, a more thorough examination of the link between the two is required.

Figure 3.9: Relative changes in salience given to food safety policy by the rotating Council Presidencies, compared to relative changes in the scope of legislation adopted in the field



Given the two analyses, the punctuations in salience across rotating Presidencies cannot be matched with the dynamic topic model results – only sporadic links are presented. In this regard, the third hypothesis (H3.3) cannot be corroborated. Nevertheless, the Presidency’s influence on the legislative outputs is further examined in the following section.

4. Presidency achievements during the term: from agenda to the legislative outputs

The dynamic topic model results provided a broad picture of the binding legislation at the EU level by presenting the prevailing topics and policies. Whilst the rotating chair was participating in finalising each piece of legislation during the term, the actual impact on the content or the acceleration of negotiations remains in question. Despite the fact that the treaty changes aimed at simplifying the legislative procedures and shortening the decision-making

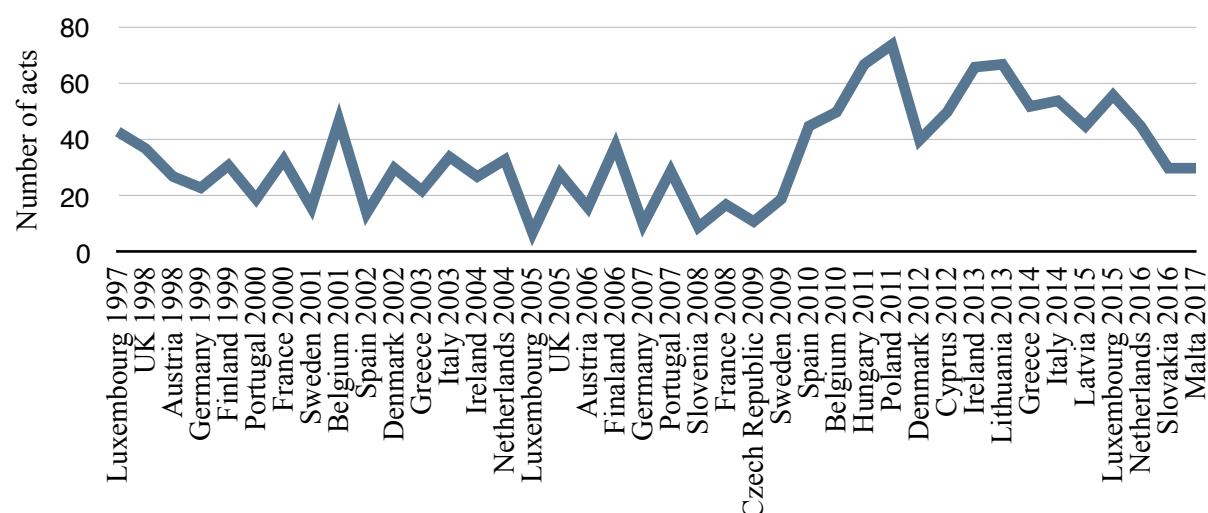
process, it remains rather lengthy. Therefore, especially in the case of the co-decision procedure (applied for the majority of EU legislation), the expectations for the Presidency to finalise the dossiers proposed during the term are low. Nevertheless, in case of special legislative procedures, the Presidency's chances to finalise the legislation increase. In this regard, the following sections address the legislative performance of each rotating Presidency throughout the 20-years period.

4.1. Summary of the legislation agreed by rotating Presidencies

As depicted in Figure 3.10, the variation of binding acts agreed each semester presents a clear cleavage across two main time periods. Whilst during 1997-2009 the average number of acts was approximately 25 laws per semester, in 2010-2017 the number has doubled.

With respect to the timing, the Treaty of Lisbon could be regarded as the main institutional change influencing such shift. As the Treaty entered into force in December 2009, a steep increase in the number of acts adopted each successive semester reaffirms the efficiency in the decision-making process (Verdun, 2013). The transfer of policy areas under co-decision, and moving from unanimity to the qualified majority voting in some areas, contributed to the shortening of the decision-making process, as presented in Figure 3.10.

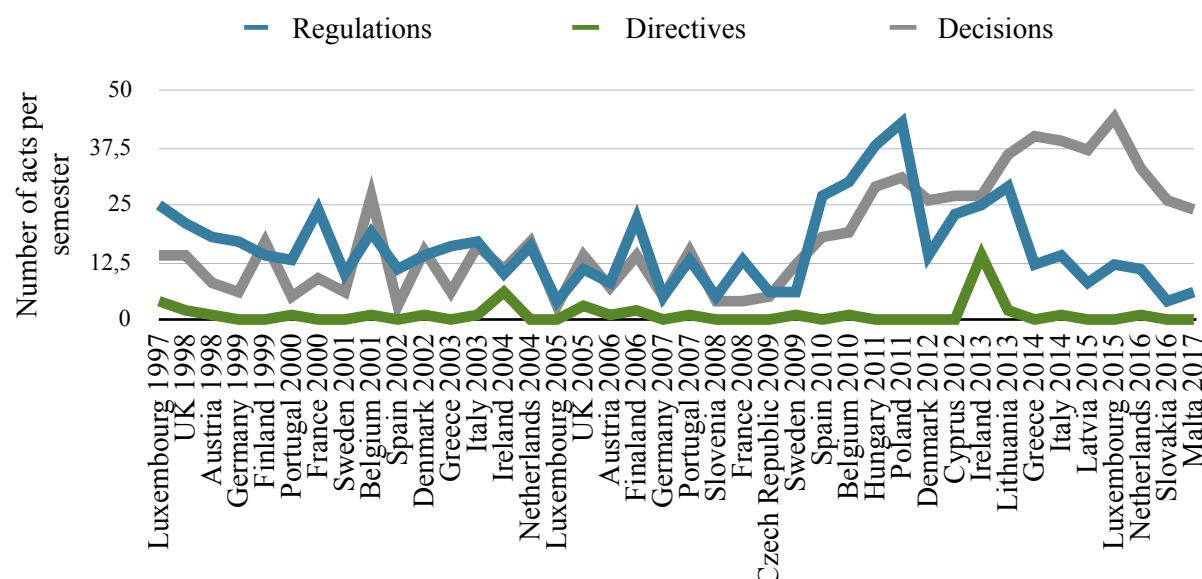
Figure 3.10: Total number of acts, proposed and adopted in the same semester



Source: files extracted from a dataset of a joint study with Dr. James P. Cross.

Looking at the nature of binding legislation (Figure 3.11), regulations and decisions are the dominant categories, whereas the number of directives agreed in each 6-month term is marginal. While this can be partly linked with the fact that directives usually take longer to be finalised (Schulz & König, 2000; König, 2008), in this case the majority of regulations adopted are the Council regulations, which fall under the non-legislative procedure²⁷, similarly as the Council decisions. Such decision-making rules, accordingly, shorten the time required for the adoption of the acts.

Figure 3.11: Types of binding legislative acts, proposed and adopted during the same Presidency semester



Source: files extracted from a dataset of a joint study with Dr. James P. Cross.

4.2. Influence of the rotating chair in respect to decision-making rules

In light of institutional changes the Union has faced in the past 20 years, the rotating Presidency's performance needs to be evaluated by addressing the major shifts in the legislative proceedings, which are presented in the following section.

²⁷ After the Treaty of Lisbon, the non-legislative procedure (as a part of the special legislative procedure) is applied to several policy areas, where the Council of the EU is the main legislator, nevertheless, a consent or a consultation of the European Parliament is required. This procedure applies for accession or withdrawal from the EU, breaches of fundamental rights, and international agreements, including those adopted under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Council of the EU, 2014). See section 4.2.1. for a further explanation.

4.2.1. Reforming the EU legislative procedures

Back in 1997, when the Maastricht rules were still in force, the main legislative procedures applied for the EU legislation were co-decision, cooperation, assent, agreement, consultation (Metadata Registry, 2017), and the consultation of the European Central Bank (Lambrinoc, 2009). Co-decision can be regarded as the most well-known decision-making procedure, during which the Council and the European Parliament act as equal legislators (Metadata Registry, 2017). The cooperation procedure to a certain extent resembled co-decision. As set by the treaties, cooperation required the Council to take into consideration Parliament's amendments during the second reading and to adopt the final decision by a simple majority (Novak, 2018).

Moving down the ladder, the assent procedure specified a rather limited role of the European Parliament by only allowing to approve or reject the instruments discussed in the Council (Metadata Registry, 2017). In other words, it provided the Parliament with a veto power on specific legislation. The agreement procedure could be considered as another kind of the assent procedure. Whereas the assent was originally applicable to association agreements and EU membership issues (Metadata Registry, 2017), the agreement procedure regulated international accords, especially regarding commercial policy with third countries and international organisations (Article 133, Treaty establishing the European Community (Nice consolidated version)²⁸).

The consultation, in this regard, granted even less powers to the European Parliament, as it officially required to issue an opinion by a simple majority (Hix & Høland, 2011). Yet, since the Parliament's position could be disregarded by the Council, as the main legislative body, one may have often observed the Parliament supporting the Commission's stance rather than the current *status quo* (Hix & Høland, 2011).

The consultation of the European Central Bank (ECB), even though less often discussed in the literature, was another procedure regulating the Economic and Monetary Union. Given

²⁸ In majority of cases, the Council was acting under the qualified majority rule, without consulting the Parliament (Article 133). The EP, however, was entitled to approve or reject the proposal (EU Monitor, 2018).

that the latter area falls within the competences of the ECB, an official duty to consult the institution was enclosed in the treaties (Lambrinoc, 2009).

Having a different weight in the decision-making process, i.e. requiring involvement of different actors to a varying extent, the above-listed procedures were followed until the reforms of the Treaty of Lisbon. Pursuing an already-mentioned goal – to increase efficiency – the Treaty simplified the decision-making process by abolishing the cooperation procedure. Furthermore, ‘co-decision’ was renamed to the ‘ordinary legislative procedure’ and, additionally, shifted more than 40 policies under this rule (Novak, 2018). The remaining procedures were labelled as the ‘special legislative procedures’ (Council of the EU, 2014).

In relation to the special legislative procedures, ‘assent’ was renamed to ‘consent’ (Novak, 2018), simultaneously including the agreement procedure. At this point, it is important to note that concerning international agreements, EU accession and secession topics, as well as breaches of fundamental rights, the European Parliament’s consent was defined as a ‘non-legislative procedure’ (Council of the EU, 2014).

The consultation procedure, after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, accordingly, incorporated all the consultation procedures designed in the previous treaties. Nevertheless, as in the case of the consent procedure, the consultation of the Parliament regarding the international agreements adopted under the Common Foreign and Security Policy is treated as a non-legislative procedure (Council of the EU, 2014).

4.2.2. Evaluation of the performance of the Council chairs

The altered decision-making rules and procedures provide an explicit basis for the evaluation of the performance of the rotating chairs. As already mentioned, reaching the final agreement on a specific legislation does not give a straightforward measurement of the Presidency’s success. Although the rotating chair possesses higher influence over the deliberated laws during the final decision-making stages (Schalk et al., 2007; Thomson, 2008; Warntjen, 2008), i.e. when the acts are adopted, a political decision may be a merit of the previous

Presidency. While addressing this aspect would provide additional insights regarding the Presidency's influence over the legislative outputs²⁹, it is not a part of this dissertation. Instead, this section assesses the fourth hypothesis by looking at the acts, which were proposed and adopted during the same semester, accounting for the legislative provisions.

As summarised in Table 3.3, the majority of the legislation in the pre-Lisbon period was adopted under the agreement and consultation procedures. Such results confirm that a limited involvement of the European Parliament ensures a greater room for manoeuvre for the rotating chair to reach a common position during its term. In addition, whilst cooperation, consent and consultation of the European Central Bank led to rather few acts agreed in respective semesters, several Presidencies managed to get legislation adopted under co-decision. These acts, therefore, can be regarded as significant achievements of the Presidency.

Table 3.3: The number of binding legislative acts adopted each semester across different legislative procedures in the pre-Lisbon period (1997-2009)

Presidency	Co-decision	Cooperation	Assent	Agreement	Consultation	ECB consultation	Total
Luxembourg 1997		1		17	25		43
UK 1998	1			22	14		37
Austria 1998				14	11	2	27
Germany 1999				9	14		23
Finland 1999				19	11	1	31
Portugal 2000	1			13	5		19
France 2000	3			23	7		33
Sweden 2001				9	7		16
Belgium 2001	3		3	27	14		47
Spain 2002	1			8	5		14
Denmark 2002				18	12		30
Greece 2003	2			16	4		22

²⁹ For a more elaborated analysis of the impact of rotating Presidency issue salience over the efficiency of the legislative process, see Cross and Vaznonytė (2018), a working paper presented at the European Political Science Association conference in Vienna, and currently under review at *European Union Politics*.

Italy 2003	2			14	17	1	34
Ireland 2004	2		1	12	12		27
Netherlands 2004				21	11	1	33
Luxembourg 2005		1		6			7
UK 2005	4		1	16	7		28
Austria 2006				8	8		16
Finland 2006	3		1	23	11		38
Germany 2007				7	3		10
Portugal 2007				11	18		29
Slovenia 2008				6	3		9
France 2008	1		1	8	7		17
Czech Republic 2009	1			3	7		11
Sweden 2009				7	10	2	19

Looking at the post-Lisbon era presented in Table 3.4, non-legislative proceedings brought a large share of credit the Presidency could claim at the end of its term. Such results are influenced by a marginal involvement of the European Parliament in the non-legislative proceedings, as in the case of agreement and consultation procedures before 2010.

Table 3.4: The number of binding legislative acts adopted each semester across different legislative procedures in the post-Lisbon period (2010-2017)

Presidency	Ordinary legislative procedure (previously co-decision)	Special legislative procedures			Total
		Consent	Consultation	Non-legislative procedure (consent or consultation)	
Spain 2010				45	45
Belgium 2010	2		1	47	50
Hungary 2011			1	66	67
Poland 2011	4		2	68	74
Denmark 2012	1			39	40

Cyprus 2012	3			47	50
Ireland 2013	1			65	66
Lithuania 2013	4		3	60	67
Greece 2014	3		4	45	52
Italy 2014	1		2	51	54
Latvia 2015	2	1		42	45
Luxembourg 2015	1			55	56
Netherlands 2016			3	42	45
Slovakia 2016				30	30
Malta 2017				30	30

Nevertheless, despite several constraints brought by the Treaty of Lisbon, none of them had an effect on the chair's role with respect to co-decision. As shown in Table 3.4, 10 out of 15 Presidencies examined after the Lisbon managed to finalise legislation (proposed in the same Presidency semester) that was falling under co-decision.

The above-mentioned results give enough evidence to support the hypothesis H3.4: the rotating chair is more likely to finalise the legislative act in the same semester in case it falls under the procedures having a limited involvement of the European Parliament (such as consent or consultation). Yet, to address the hypothesis linked to the acts adopted under co-decision (H3.5), a closer look at the Presidency priorities, as expressed in the rotating chair programmes, is required.

4.2.3. Rotating Presidency's role under co-decision: from priorities to the outputs

As demonstrated in the tables of the previous section, a rather limited number of legislative acts (which can be called as more substantial achievements of the Presidency) were adopted under co-decision. Nevertheless, this section sheds more light on this procedure by linking the adopted legislation with the priorities expressed in the half-year Presidency work programmes. For the purpose of this study, a three-tier typology is employed. Thus, the study

provides additional insights on the extent to which the official Presidency priorities are transferred into legislation, depending on the nature of the policy area.

Table 3.5: Correspondence between the rotating Council Presidency priorities and achievements in legislation under co-decision

Evaluation	Typology	Policy areas														21 - Public lands, water management and territorial issues
		1 - Macroeconomics	3 - Health	4 - Agriculture and fisheries	5 - Labour and employment	7 - Environment	8 - Energy	9 - Immigration	10 - Transportation	15 - Internal market, banking, finance	17 - Space, science, technology and communications	18 - Foreign trade	19 - International affairs and foreign aid	20 - EU governance		
Priority, influence	Adopted, overall congruent	EL 2003_Decision No 2003/430/EC		EL 2003_Regulation (EC) No 1128/2003	LT 2013_Regulation No 1298/2013			BE 2010_Regulation (EU) No 1211/2010	FI 2006_Regulation (EC) No 1900/2006	LT 2013_Directive 2013/58/EU (non-direct link)	PT 2000_Decision No 1215/2000/EC	DK 2012_Regulation (EU) No 765/2012		CY 2012_Regulation (EU) No 1216/2012		
		PL 2011_Regulation (EU) No 1310/2011						PL 2011_Regulation (EU) No 1342/2011	FI 2006_Directive 2006/137/EC	EL 2014_Regulation (EU) No 248/2014 (non-direct link)		EL 2014_Regulation (EU) No 374/2014				
		PL 2011_Regulation (EU) No 1311/2011														
		PL 2011_Regulation (EU) No 1312/2011														
Priority, no influence	Adopted, policy (not content) congruent	LV 2015_Regulation (EU) No 2015/1017			LV 2015_Regulation (EU) No 2015/779					UK 1998_Directive 98/33/EC	FR 2000_Regulation (EC) No 2887/2000	LT 2013_Regulation (EU) No 1384/2013	FR 2008_Regulation (EC) No 1337/2008	IT 2003_Decision No 2003/785/EC		
		LU 2015_Regulation (EU) No 2015/1839								EL 2014_Decision No 562/2014/EU		IT 2014_Regulation (EU) No 1150/2014		IT 2003_Decision No 2003/786/EC		
Non-priority, no influence	Adopted, non congruent		BE 2001_Directive 2001/104/EC			FR 2000_Regulation (EC) No 2038/2000	IE 2004_Directive 2004/85/EC	UK 2005_Regulation (EC) No 2046/2005	ES 2002_Regulation (EC) No 894/2002	BE 2001_Regulation (EC) No 2560/2001	UK 2005_Decision No 2113/2005/EC	CY 2012_Regulation (EU) No 1217/2012		IE 2013_Regulation (EU) No 528/2013	CY 2012_Decision No 1104/2012/EU	
			BE 2001_Decision No 36/2002/EC			FR 2000_Regulation (EC) No 2039/2000	IE 2004_Regulation (EC) No 1223/2004		CZ 2009_Regulation (EC) No 545/2009		UK 2005_Directive 2005/82/EC					
			FI 2006_Regulation (EC) No 1902/2006			UK 2005_Directive 2005/88/EC										
			BE 2010_Regulation (EU) No 1238/2010													

Table 3.5 summarises semestral achievements of the rotating Presidencies during the past 20 years, considering legislation proposed and adopted under co-decision in one semester. All the acts are allocated by policy area across three categories: 1) priority + influence, 2) priority + no influence, 3) non-priority + no influence. The first category lists legislative acts, which overlap with the priorities expressed in the rotating Presidency programme both in terms of the policy area and the content. The second one presents binding legislation that is congruent with the Presidency priorities, however, only in terms of policy area, but not the content. The third group, in this regard, presents legislation, which was agreed in one semester, nevertheless, did not relate to the priorities of the member state holding the rotating office.

46 legislative acts that were agreed upon in one semester are assigned to respective policy areas following the codebook utilised for the analysis of the Presidency programmes (see Chapter I). Nevertheless, as shown in Table 3.5, not all policy fields are represented in the outputs.

Out of 21 field, in 14 of them Presidencies were able to achieve agreements on certain legislative acts. These include macroeconomics (1), agriculture and fisheries (4), banking, finance and internal trade (15), international affairs (19) and EU governance (20), health (3), labour and employment (5), environmental (7), energy (8), immigration (9) and transport policies (10), as well as space, science, technology and communications (17), foreign trade (18) and public lands, water management and territorial issues (21). Taking into account the overall number of acts adopted in each of the fields, macroeconomics, internal market and foreign trade are the dominant ones.

When examining the Presidency achievements from a more thorough perspective, i.e. applying a previously presented three-tier typology, further differences are revealed. While in each of the three sections binding legislation makes accordingly 34%, 26% and 40%, cross-policy differences could be observed. Laws that were named among the Presidency priorities and which were simultaneously consistent with their content, are the most evident in the macroeconomics field. A few acts in agriculture and fisheries, labour and employment,

immigration, transportation, internal market, science and technology, as well as foreign trade and EU governance were also agreed, leaving the remaining areas under-represented.

The legislation, corresponding to the expressed priorities regarding the policy area, but not the content, cover seven policy areas. The majority of the acts were adopted in the EU governance field, but also macroeconomics, labour and employment, internal market, science and technology, foreign trade, and foreign affairs.

However, the largest numbers of legislative acts fall within the third section, presenting no link between the Presidency priorities and the acts adopted. The finalised acts in this section cover 10 policy areas, the majority of them addressing health issues. The only policy fields not tackled in this segment are macroeconomics, agriculture, labour and employment and international affairs.

Given that neither health, nor environmental, energy or public lands, water management and territorial policy legislation was prioritised by the respective Presidencies, several interpretations can be put forward. Following Warntjen's (2007) reasoning and given the adopted laws, which were not associated with the priorities of presiding countries, rotating Presidencies a) did not have a clear interest in a policy field, b) were not in favour of the EU-wide regulatory environment, or c) both of the above. However, in order to establish a more robust link between the two, further qualitative case studies should be performed.

In order to support the hypothesis H3.5, addressing the link between adopted legislation and Presidency priorities supporting the EU-level rules, a few points need to be underlined. First of all, despite a clear congruence between the acts and the content of the Presidency programmes, addressed policy areas are mainly coordinated by the EU, e.g. macroeconomics (involving monetary policy), fisheries (under the umbrella with agriculture), internal market and foreign trade (Hix & Høland, 2011). Hence, the adoption of binding legislation is facilitated. In addition, the timing of certain adopted legislation proves that an emergency factor plays a role. For instance, in the case of the Polish Presidency, macroeconomic topics were on the top of the agenda due to the ongoing Euro crisis. This situation may have greatly

facilitated the adoption of the legislation in question. Therefore, the extent to which the Presidency success (expressed by the adoption of acts under co-decision) is a subject to external forces needs to be addressed in the further research.

On the other hand, laws covered in the remaining areas, i.e. labour and employment, immigration, transportation, or space, science, technology and communications, which belong to the shared competences between the EU and member states (Hix & Høland, 2011), provide evidence to support the fifth hypothesis (H3.5) raised in this chapter. In these cases, one can assume that respective Presidencies had a clear interest in particular fields, aiming for the European regulations.

Additional attention needs to be paid to the areas that were not represented by any of the binding legislation agreed upon in 1997-2017. These policies concern civil rights, minority issues and civil liberties (policy area No. 2), education (6), law and crime (12), social policy (13), regional and urban policy and planning (14), defence (16), and culture and media (23). In respect to policy integration, they all belong to the shared or even coordinated competences between the EU and its member states (Hix & Høland, 2011). The division of competences already assumes possible controversies arising in the above-mentioned areas, given that the social policy or defence issues tend to represent national sensitivities of the EU members. However, limited data does not allow to make any further assumptions related to the specificities of these policies, especially since several of them fall under the same competence levels and expose congruence between Presidency priorities and the content of the adopted legislation.

In this regard, the study showed that during the Presidency semester the legislative power of the rotating chair is rather limited. Based on the proposals adopted in 1997-2017, the procedures with a limited involvement of the European Parliament tend to provide a favourable environment for adopting the legislation, which confirms a fourth hypothesis raised in the study. With regard to co-decision (OLP), the results are not straightforward and can only partly confirm the fifth hypothesis. In order to claim credit for their achievements, countries may include certain priorities on their programmes (Warntjen, 2007). This strategy

may be more common in cases when the chairman is aware of the general agreement on the act between member states. Formally acting as a mediator, the Presidency may aim to finalise certain legislative acts in order to gain a good reputation, closely linked to the efficiency of its semestral performance. However, to prove or discard such assumption, further analysis needs to be carried out.

Conclusion

Whereas the agendas of the EU institutions remain a rather under-researched topic, there are even less links established between the agenda inputs (i.e. items being discussed) and outputs (legislation adopted). Considering the gap in the literature, this chapter presents the analysis, associating the agenda of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU (as the main institution managing the agenda of the Council) with the binding legislation adopted at the EU level (i.e. directives, regulations and decisions).

This overarching goal was separated in two main parts: 1) presenting a study of binding legislation adopted at the EU level, and explaining it through the punctuated equilibrium theory; 2) linking the programmes of the rotating Council Presidencies with the legislative outputs. The main findings are summarised in Table 3.6 and elaborated further below:

Table 3.6: Main findings of the Chapter III

RQs: To what extent can the EU legislation be explained by the punctuated equilibrium approach? To what extent can the rotating Presidency influence the legislative outputs?	
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Result</i>
H3.1: Given punctuations in policy salience on the EU agendas, the binding EU legislation presents punctuations in the number of acts adopted each semester.	Corroborated
H3.2: Institutional changes are likely to produce punctuations in the number of adopted binding EU legislative acts.	Corroborated
H3.3: Shifts in rotating Presidency issue salience are associated with punctuations in the number of adopted binding EU legislative acts.	Rejected
H3.4: The Presidency is more likely to reach the final decision on the legislative act when it is not adopted under co-decision.	Corroborated
H3.5: Under co-decision, the rotating Presidency is likely to finalise the legislative act in one semester only if both it attaches a high importance to the policy area and it is in favour of EU regulation in the field.	Partially corroborated

Regarding the first part of the chapter, the legislative acts were analysed employing a novel text analysis technique – the dynamic topic modelling approach. Given that the analysed corpora comprised 6316 unstructured texts, this quantitative method was suitable in order to unveil the prevailing themes in the legislation over the 20 years examined. The results presented 16 dynamic topics evolving over time. Yet, as assumed by the punctuated equilibrium approach, not all of them exhibited significant fluctuations over an extended incremental policy-making period. Considering that a majority of topics belong to the exclusive competences of the EU, only six themes exhibited abrupt, however, rather rare punctuations. Therefore, the study confirmed the first hypothesis (H3.1) and the general assumption that the punctuated equilibrium approach could be further applied in explaining the dynamics of the legislative outputs.

When looking into more specific factors that could have initiated such disequilibria, institutional changes (operationalised as treaty changes, establishment of new EU-level agencies and the EU enlargements), as well as rotation of the Council Presidencies were examined. Whereas the study provided evidence to support the second hypothesis (H3.2) related to institutional changes, the third hypothesis (H3.3) was rejected. The rotation of the Council Presidencies and, accordingly, the shifts in issue salience cannot be linked with the legislative dynamics. Although these results limit the explanatory power of the punctuated equilibrium approach towards the legislative outputs, the analysis supports the fact that the EU decision-making process entails a prevention mechanism against sudden interruptions. Furthermore, whilst institutional changes were evaluated on three policies, the rotating Presidency effect was assessed only on two of them. Therefore, in order to increase an external validity of these insights, further studies need to be carried out.

Additionally, the study has further scrutinised the impact of the rotation of the Council Presidencies on the legislative outputs. As presented in the second part of the empirical analysis, countries are capable of finalising the legislative acts during their Presidency terms. However, the results are highly dependent on the decision-making procedure. The lesser involvement of the European Parliament guarantees the rotating chair an opportunity to reach the final agreement on the legislation proposed in the same semester. This, accordingly,

supports the fourth hypothesis (H3.4). Yet, given that the majority of acts are adopted under the co-decision procedure, a part of the analysis scrutinised the Presidency's powers to finalise the legislation under this rule.

A comparative analysis between the binding legislation under co-decision (proposed and adopted in the same semester) and the rotating Presidency programmes (i.e. their working agendas) revealed that only one third of the acts were congruent with the Presidency priorities. The remaining ones were compatible only in terms of policy areas or none of the above. This leads to the assumption that the rotating chair may have faced other incentives than the salience of the policy area and the support for the EU-wide regulation when pushing forward certain legislation. These may have involved a pursuit of a good reputation or efficiency. Due to the controversial findings, the fifth hypothesis (H3.5), can only be partly supported.

Taking into account all the aspects discussed above, it can be concluded that there is a link between the Presidency agendas and the legislative outputs, given that the chair is capable of reaching an agreement on the proposed legislative acts during the same semester. Nevertheless, the association remains limited. Institutional aspects tend to play a major role when shifting the dynamics of the legislative politics. Regardless of these findings, further research would yield additional insights in relation to the link between the Presidency priorities and the legislative outputs, hereby, extending the external validity of these findings. Furthermore, given the remaining gap between input and output agendas, an examination of other EU institutions would provide more robust conclusions to such comparative analysis and, consequently, new theoretical and empirical insights.

Chapter IV. Ruling by delaying? Investigating the informal powers of the rotating Presidency in the post-Lisbon era

Introduction

The three main agenda-shaping mechanisms put forward by Tallberg (2003), i.e. agenda-setting, agenda-structuring and agenda-exclusion, are undoubtedly the cornerstones for the analysis of the powers held by the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. As this categorisation of agenda control mechanisms was chosen to shape the structure of this dissertation, in light of previous chapters, this part of the analysis looks more in depth at the agenda-exclusion.

Agenda-setting, labelled as policy entrepreneurship (Tallberg, 2003), is a rather marginal asset belonging to the Presidency. While it was often linked with raising awareness of certain issues (Tallberg, 2003), with the increased role of the European Council, the factual agenda-setting power of the rotating chair has substantially diminished. In relation to that, a great extent of attention in the state of the art was given to the agenda-structuring capabilities the Presidency possesses and exercises the most. In a series of studies, Warntjen (2007, 2013, 2013a) proved that a member state holding the rotating office is able to exert influence when controlling the Council agenda and pushing forward prioritised proposals. Häge (2016), on the other hand, confirmed that the Presidency's room for manoeuvre in structuring the Council agenda extends up to approximately 30%. Nevertheless, the Presidency roles are not limited by the so-called positive agenda-setting.

The third agenda control mechanism of the rotating chair – agenda-exclusion – presents a negative concept of power. As Tallberg (2003) describes it, the exclusion of issues refers to leaving them out from the Council's table, as well as proposing unfeasible deals or disregarding the dossier. Considering the fact that a majority of EU legislation takes more than half a year to be adopted, it is highly plausible that a rotating chair, due to the domestic sensitivities, may utilise its term for discontinuing the legislative process (Kollman, 2003; Warntjen, 2013). Yet, whether the national preferences alone are sufficient for the rotating

Presidency to pursue an exclusion, or, in other words, a delay strategy, especially after the Treaty of Lisbon, remains under-researched. Taking this literature gap into account, this chapter aims to disentangle the scope of the delay instrument by presenting a novel operationalisation of the phenomenon. In addition, the chapter examines the constellation of conditions, which lead to a postponement of specific dossiers.

Given that little attention was attached to the rotating position in the post-Lisbon period, this analysis sheds more light on the Presidencies that took office starting from 2010. Despite institutional constraints brought by the Treaty of Lisbon, this study argues that agenda-exclusion is one of the informal powers member states are capable of using, even in a constrained institutional environment. In order to confirm such assumption, the study relies on the comparative case study approach.

1. Theories explaining the delay mechanism

In the decision-making process, the delay power is often operationalised as a reflection of limited influence or an asset of the last resort. The former can be presented as a strategy used by the European Parliament during the consultation procedures. Although to a limited extent, the institution can use informal mechanisms to get its preferences incorporated in the final legislation (Kardasheva, 2009; Panke, 2012). On the other hand, during co-decision (or OLP), where both the Council and the Parliament have equal roles, the delay is perceived as a strategic tool, given that the procedure has three stages ending with a conciliation committee (Golub, 1999). Alternatively, the delay process was extensively researched during the final stages of the policy cycle – the transposition of EU directives to the national legislation (e.g. Kaeding, 2006; König & Luetgert, 2009; Steunenberg, 2006; Thomson et al., 2007; Zhelyazkova & Torenvlied, 2009).

With regard to the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, the delay can be interpreted more as an expression of a limited influence. In reference to the EU legislative process, the delay strategy can be seen as a tool to seek consensus in the Council (Heisenberg, 2005) or, especially after the Treaty of Lisbon, to protect national interests by forming a blocking

minority (Thomson, 2011). Nevertheless, the delay power granted to the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU should not be considered as an ultimate instrument to terminate negotiations on a specific legislation. Rather, it is a way to prolong the decision-making process in order to avoid unfavourable outcomes.

The area in which the rotating Presidency can exert its influence is limited to the management of the Council's work. In relation to the latter, Tallberg (2003) and Kollman (2003) were the first scholars to investigate the agenda-setting powers of the Presidency, including the possibility to delay, or to exclude certain acts from the ministers' table (Tallberg, 2003). Nonetheless, Tallberg (2003) himself acknowledged that agenda-exclusion, as a general asset linked to the agenda control mechanisms, was introduced by Bachrach and Baratz (1963) calling it a non-decision-making power (Tallberg, 2003). To a certain extent, agenda-exclusion could be compared to a negative decision-making power. However, contrary to the latter, it does not encompass a veto right, given that the EU institutions do not have to express a formal consent with regard to their agendas. Yet, several key features addressed by Tallberg (2003) allow to use agenda-exclusion, negative Presidency agenda-setting power, and a delaying power as synonyms³⁰, the latter, however, being associated with a broader term, denoting inaction in the EU legislative process.

First of all, as the name presumes, the exclusion power allows a member state holding the rotating office to stall the work on the dossier by refusing to address a certain proposal either among the working groups and ambassadors, or even at the ministerial level (Tallberg, 2003). Secondly, the Presidency may remain silent on a specific subject, without bringing it to the general attention (Tallberg, 2003). Finally, impossible deals to reach a compromise are named as an alternative strategy to eliminate issues from the decision agenda (Tallberg, 2003).

Although one should not presume that a rotating Presidency, granted with such informal powers, actually exerts them, a number of studies carried out in the pre-Lisbon period affirmed this assumption. Whilst German Presidency in 1999 decided to abstain from any action in social policy in relation to workers' rights, as well as on an almost fully ready

³⁰ In this chapter, the 'delay power' is used interchangeably with 'agenda-exclusion', i.e. as synonyms.

vehicle recycling directive, French Presidency in 2000, accordingly, withheld a dossier on a third pillar (Tallberg, 2003). Additionally, Warntjen's (2013a) study on the occupational and health safety field showed that having no particular interest on the related legislation, the rotating chair remained merely inactive, stalling the negotiations, which can also be perceived as a form of delay. It must be noted that the latter studies addressed the pre-Lisbon period. Nevertheless, whether the treaty changes could have had a substantial influence on reducing the rotating chair's capabilities to delay the legislative acts, is not evident.

Whilst the transfer of the European Council Presidency chair from a rotating to a permanent position should not have any impact on the delay power, as the European Council is not directly involved in the decision-making process, the transfer of Presidency of the Foreign Affairs Council to the High Representative clearly circumscribed the rotating chair's powers in the external relations field.

From a more institutional point of view, the extension of the QMV to the majority of policy areas after the Treaty of Lisbon leads to the opposite assumption. As the member states cannot veto the legislation, delaying the proposal can be viewed as an alternative to win more time for the negotiations and implementation of their specific preferences. This argumentation leads to the following research question:

RQ: To what extent and why do rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU delay specific policy proposals in the post-Lisbon period?

Taking into account the fact that the new Lisbon arrangements are not expected to prevent the rotating chair from exerting its influence, this chapter examines the scope of delayed legislation in the Council since 2010. Considering a limited research (especially regarding the actual examples) on the phenomenon in the post-Lisbon era, this chapter provides a relevant contribution to the state of the art.

At this point, it must be noted that this research does not aim to compare the necessary and sufficient conditions determining the issue exclusion in pre- and post-Lisbon years.

Considering that the existing studies rely on several exemplary single cases, they serve more as a confirmatory evidence for Presidencies to exercise their agenda-exclusion power. In this regard, this study provides a corresponding evidence in the post-Lisbon period.

1.1. Main theoretical arguments

A recent study by Hagemann, Hobolt and Wratil (2017) proved that a rotating chair does not oppose acts discussed in the Council during the voting stage. Nonetheless, the study presented in this chapter is based on the assumption that instead of utilising their veto power, rotating Presidencies tend to delay certain proposals.

There are several incentives that impel member states to pursue an agenda-exclusion strategy. While the size of the country could be considered as one of the key reasons (assuming that smaller member states tend to possess less resources and are forced to disregard certain dossiers), Tallberg (2006) claims that the size has little impact on the strategic behaviour of the member state. This statement can be supported by examples of German and French Presidencies, presenting a delay strategy irrespective of the size-related power these countries hold within the EU.

More than the size *per se*, exclusion during the rotating Presidency term is linked with the salience a country attaches to specific policy proposals, as expressed in the semestral rotating Presidency work programme. In this regard, Warntjen (2007) claimed that a higher prioritisation of issues and a pro-European position leads to country's influence on the proposal by fostering negotiations. Nevertheless, inconsistencies between the proposed legislation and the domestic policy may lead to great adjustment costs not only for the government, but also the key actors concerned (Kassim, 2001). Therefore, facing such situation, the rotating Presidency is expected to delay the negotiations on the file in order to maintain its neutral stance.

This assumption is in accordance with the fact that on the most salient issues, countries tend to have weak bargaining positions (Moravcsik, 1998). On the other hand, holding a Council Presidency provides a member state with additional informational privileges. In this regard,

Thomson (2008) theorised that a rotating Council Presidency, especially having an extreme position on the issue, may either proceed with the legislation, defending its stance, or delay it in order to prolong the negotiations and use lobbying for incorporating its preferences in the final act. In relation to this, Warntjen (2013) claimed that the delay power can only be used during the first stages of the decision-making, as during the second reading countries are getting closer to the final agreement, which is unlikely to be disrupted by the Presidency preferences. Therefore, the decision-making stage is crucial for whether the Presidency exercises the delay power.

Nevertheless, as presented by the longitudinal analysis in Chapter I, issue salience for the rotating chair tends to vary both across policies and over time. In this regard, assuming that some policy areas might be underemphasised, resources and office-related gains should be taken into consideration.

Given that the importance of a specific policy area is low, a cost-benefit approach suggests delaying the legislation and shifting the resources to more favourable proposals. However, a member state assuming the rotating chair often has office-related objectives – i.e. to claim credit for its achievements, and, therefore, guarantee a good reputation (Warntjen, 2007). In this regard, controversial proposals in the Council of Ministers, requiring additional input from the Presidency, are more likely to be delayed, vis-a-vis the ones for which the chair is able to foresee the final agreement.

1.2. Explanatory mechanism

Whereas the delay strategy can be driven by both high and low salience issues and, correspondingly, incongruence with the national position or disagreement in the Council, the low salience and controversy among member states is less country-related. In other words, any rotating Presidency is expected to postpone the developments of a specific act if there are more salient issues at stake (including crises and unexpected events), and especially if they require substantial resources.

High salience and inconsistencies between the national position and the proposed EU legislative act, on the other hand, present the strategy, which can be attached to a particular member state holding the rotating Presidency given its national priorities. Considering that the powers of the rotating chair are often deemed to be limited (especially in the post-Lisbon period), the adoption of the legislation, which is contradicting to the national preferences, can provide additional insights when the rotating chair is willing to risk its neutral stance in the Council by delaying a specific legislation. This argument leads to the following hypothesis:

H4.1: Council Presidencies tend to delay dossiers in policies which are highly salient for them, yet, the content of the legislative act is incongruent with the national position.

Alternatively, as already mentioned, high salience of a policy often induces the member state to finalise pending proposals, especially if they correspond to the Presidency's position. In this regard, the second hypothesis addresses an opposite strategy of a rotating chair:

H4.2: Council Presidencies tend to finalise legislation in highly salient policy areas given the congruence of the content of the act with the national position.

By examining the above-mentioned hypotheses, this study focuses exclusively on the highly-salient issues for the member states, addressing two alternative strategies. Such pre-selection of cases is based on the fact that previous chapters paid a great attention to salience rotating Presidencies attach to issues, how the importance of topics varies across countries and how it may influence the legislative outputs. In this regard, focusing on highly salient issues is congruent with the remaining parts of the dissertation. However, this does not mean that resource- and reputation-driven reasoning, linked with low-salience issues, is irrelevant. However, the latter approach focuses more on office-related gains and a general credit-claiming, which have a different mechanism, compared to the salience approach.

In relation to the limited state of the art, fewer expectations can be drawn when applying a three-dimensional typology, i.e. merging salience, congruence of the legislative content and controversy/agreement in the Council. Table 4.1 outlines four possible configurations,

combining different independent variables. Hereby, the strategies depend on a (in)congruence of the content, and controversy/agreement in the Council.

Table 4.1: Typology of Presidency strategies for highly salient policies

	Congruence (content)	Incongruence (content)
Controversy (Council)	<i>(Advance/Delay)</i>	<i>(Advance/Delay)</i>
Agreement (Council)	<i>(Advance/Delay)</i>	<i>(Advance/Delay)</i>

Whilst no specific hypotheses are raised in this regard, the empirical analysis is utilised to inductively explore these strategies and the main factors leading to specific outcomes. After having been applied to the highly salient policies only, the framework can be further extended to the low salience issues. This would provide a more elaborated set of factors conditioning the Presidency's delay strategy.

2. Research design

With respect to the limited number of studies exploring the rotating Presidency's agenda-exclusion power and considering that this research focuses only on the post-Lisbon Presidencies, the qualitative research design is the most suitable for providing well-grounded analysis and answers to the hypotheses raised above. The nature of the variable of interest, i.e. the delay of the dossiers at the Council level, raises the main challenge for a researcher: how to observe an absence of an action? Whilst invoking an appropriate operationalisation, the examination of the agenda-exclusion may also be based on the quantitative methods, such research design involves a high risk of misvaluation of the phenomenon of interest. Separate EU legislative acts often address nuanced and peculiar policy issues. Therefore, for matching their content with the national positions of EU member states and trying to observe the main controversies among ministers, an in-depth analysis is required. Furthermore, the number of Presidencies that held the rotating office after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force is limited to 15 countries. Therefore, small-N qualitative case study analysis is performed in order to address the research question and theoretical assumptions outlined in this study.

This section is divided into two parts: the first one presents the case study methodology, while the second overviews the operationalisation of variables.

2.1. Case study approach

Whilst both quantitative and qualitative methods can be equally utilised for evaluating case studies (Toshkov, 2016), qualitative approach is better-tailored to address a conceptual validity issue (George & Bennett, 2005). Considering that the agenda-exclusion, delay, or so-called negative agenda-setting power are rather ambiguous concepts, the qualitative case study analysis, comparing several relevant cases, will provide more well-grounded insights.

In addition, an in-depth analysis grants an opportunity to refine current or develop new theoretical expectations. Based on the aim of the research, case studies can be grouped into co-variational, congruence and causal process tracing categories (Blatter & Blume, 2008). Whilst co-variational design is mainly tailored for theory-testing, congruence analysis provides a wider interpretation of a phenomenon in question by testing several theoretical accounts (Blatter & Blume, 2008). Process tracing, on the other hand, addresses causal mechanisms whilst looking at contextual factors and temporal events, aiming for an in-depth explanation (Blatter & Blume, 2008). In other words, case studies have two major goals: to test the existing theoretical assumptions, or to explore theoretical and/or empirical settings by drawing new inference (Toshkov, 2016).

The aim of this research is not to select a single case study approach, but rather, as denoted by the research question, to combine two objectives: to assess the theoretical assumptions in relation to the agenda delay power by the rotating Presidency, and to evaluate the reasons and conditions, which lead to such strategy. This aim of the research goes in hand with the state of the art and the existing gaps: given the analysis of the agenda-exclusion before the Treaty of Lisbon, it is necessary to evaluate whether the post-Lisbon period put certain constraints on this Presidency power. Hereby, the theoretical assumptions are assessed concerning this matter. However, given a diverse institutional environment, the reasoning behind the pursuit of these specific agenda delay strategies might be different. Therefore, contextual conditions are expected to provide additional insights for drawing inferences, as presented in Table 4.1.

When evaluating the empirical results and assessing the possible external application of the outcomes to the other case studies, the analysis takes into consideration limitations that come along with the case study method, such as the anticipated bias in the case selection, a bounded ability to evaluate the average causal effects or limited external validity (George & Bennett, 2005). However, in order to minimise possible fallacies, the following section of the chapter elaborates on the operationalisation of the variables identified in the study.

2.2. Operationalisation of variables

Compared with other types of agenda-shaping activities, the delay power is more difficult to observe and assess. Furthermore, the main determinants for pursuing such strategy also present a rather complex nature. Therefore, for the purpose of this chapter, research variables are operationalised in Table 4.2.

While the dependent variable, i.e. the delay of a legislation, is further explained in the following section, three independent variables are evaluated based on the data listed in Table 4.2. In relation to the semi-structured interviews, respondents are selected based on the policy area of interest and their position occupied. In other words, national officials, who were involved in the rotating Presidency matters, especially regarding the negotiations on the selected dossiers at the EU level, are interviewed.

Table 4.2: Operationalisation of variables addressed in the research

Dependent variable		
Variable name	Operationalisation	Data
Delay of a legislative dossier	No discussions were organised during the specific Presidencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Votes “against” in the Council on the EU, as presented on the public votes database of the Council of the EU and the VoteWatch.eu platform; 2) Eur-Lex database and European Parliament Legislative Observatory (for tracing semesters where discussions were missing); 3) Documents from the Council of the EU (agendas of the meetings, outcomes and minutes of the meetings, press releases, Council conclusions, videos from the Council meetings, etc.); 4) Semi-structured interviews with national and EU officials (of the country that held a Presidency at a particular moment in time).

Independent variables		
Variable name	Operationalisation	Data
Salience of a policy area	Importance given to a topic by the government in power at the time of the rotating Presidency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Manifesto Project Dataset. Salience attached to policies by the governments is calculated proportionally to the seats each government party took in the parliament (calculations are taken from Chapter II); 2) Public opinion, presented in Eurobarometer (ranking of the most important issues at the country and personal levels); 3) EU statistical data (regarding a specific policy); 4) Semi-structured interviews with national/EU officials.
Congruence of national and EU-level positions	Correspondence between the content of the dossier and the national position of a presiding EU member	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Legislation concerning the policy area of interest, as well as governmental and ministerial acts at the national level of a member state holding the rotating chair; 2) Speeches and public statements of the ministers in charge of the policy area; 3) Media coverage with regard to an issue; 4) Public votes at the Council of the EU (utilising VoteWatch.eu platform); 5) Semi-structured interviews with national/EU officials.
Controversy in the Council of the EU	The level of disagreement among the ministers with regard to the issue discussed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Agreement index (Hix et al., 2005), based on the public votes in the Council; 2) Agreement index, based on the public documents, stating the positions of the governments at the rotating Presidency (given that the Council votes were before/after the respective rotating Presidency term); 3) Semi-structured interviews with national/EU officials.

3. Substantiating strategic delay: case selection

As already presented in Table 4.2, the delay of a legislative proposal is approximated using four different data sources. Yet, considering scarce studies prior to the adoption of Treaty of Lisbon and no actual evaluations of this Presidency power afterwards, the operationalisation of the delay strategy is presented below. The latter steps not only clarify how the listed data sources are used, but also provide the manual for the replication of the detection of the delayed legislative proposals. The main steps are the following:

1. Detection of votes ‘against’ in the Council. While utilising the VoteWatch.eu platform and public votes database of the Council of the EU, all the votes against specific legislative acts across 15 rotating Presidencies (that held an office after the Treaty of Lisbon entered

into force) were recorded. Such case examination allows to establish a proxy for policies and even more specific issues, where member states' interests were likely to diverge from the direction shaped by the EU.

2. Selection of the ongoing legislative acts during respective Presidencies. Based on the list of legislation that was opposed by the member states, the dossiers ongoing during the respective Presidency semesters were singled out. Given that at the final (voting) stage a member state was against the proposal discussed in the Council, its development during the Presidency semester had a high likelihood to be delayed.
3. Controlling for missing discussions. In order to detect policy proposals which were excluded from the agenda on purpose, the following step in case selection is to check whether the legislative acts listed in the previous steps were actually discussed during the Presidency semesters. Looking at the sequence of decision-making events in each of the dossiers, the study examined whether the opposed legislation was disregarded during the Presidency (no discussions in the Council observed during the 6-month term).
4. Congruence with the rotating Presidency programme. As an additional check of the delay strategy, the congruence analysis between the content of the legislative acts and the Presidency programme was performed. This gives an additional validity on the impetus for the rotating Council Presidency to delay a particular dossier: not mentioning the legislation in the work programme could be regarded as an agenda-exclusion.

Considering that the presented operationalisation of the dependent variable is rather exploratory, additional validity mechanisms are included. The exclusion (delay) of a specific act could be linked not only to the incongruence between national and EU positions or disagreement in the Council, but also external factors, such as crises, which shift the policy attention to different fields. Nevertheless, having specific acts adopted in the same policy area, where the delay was detected, provides additional validity that the exclusion of a legislation from the debates was likely induced by the Presidency-related factors. In order to address a counterfactual argument, for each of the delayed legislation that is detected while following the four identification steps, the study presents cases of finalised acts during the same Presidency semester in the same policy area. This allows to narrow down the focus on the key independent variables and their interactions.

Table 4.3, hereby, presents all the cases of the delayed legislation during Presidency terms since 2010, as well as acts, which were agreed during the same semesters.

Table 4.3: Summary of selected cases

Presidency	Policy area	Delayed legislation during the Presidency	Adopted legislation during the Presidency
Spain (2010)	Transport	Directive 2011/76/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 September 2011 amending Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures	Directive 2010/35/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 June 2010 on transportable pressure equipment and repealing Council Directives 76/767/EEC, 84/525/EEC, 84/526/EEC, 84/527/EEC and 1999/36/EC
Poland (2011)	Migration	Directive 2014/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers	Directive 2011/98/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State
Latvia (2015)	Employment	Directive (EU) 2018/957 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 June 2018 amending Directive 96/71/EC concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services	Regulation (EU) 2015/779 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 amending Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013, as regards an additional initial prefinancing amount paid to operational programmes supported by the Youth Employment Initiative
Luxembourg (2015)	Macroeconomics (economy financing and taxation)	Regulation (EU) 2017/1131 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 June 2017 on money market funds	Council Directive (EU) 2015/2376 of 8 December 2015 amending Directive 2011/16/EU as regards mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation

As shown in Table 4.3, the delay was observed in 4 out of 15 examined cases: Spanish Presidency in 2010, Polish Presidency in 2011, Latvian Presidency in 2015 and Luxembourg Presidency in 2015. In other words, 1/4 of countries presiding the Council in the post-Lisbon period managed to delay certain legislative acts. These results allow to support the claim that the rotating chairs, even after 2009, possess the agenda-exclusion power, and are able to use it during the Presidency periods. Although the number of delayed acts in absolute terms is

rather low, four different countries aiming to employ this strategy suggest that agenda delay is considered to be a rather exceptional asset used during the rotating term.

Regarding the delayed acts listed in Table 4.3, it must be noted that during the Latvian Presidency the Directive (EU) 2018/957 on the posted workers status was not delayed in the same way as in other cases. During the voting on the Enforcement Directive in 2014 Latvia expressed its opposition to the act (VoteWatch, 2014). Considering that the Enforcement Directive was adopted less than a year before Latvia took over the rotating Presidency, this research is based on the assumption that the Latvian Presidency, exercising its institutional powers, prevented the amendment for the initial Posted Workers Directive coming on the EU agenda. In this case, the delay is represented not as an exclusion of an already proposed legislation, but as a buffer to put forward a new proposal.

Additionally, it must be underlined that such selection of counterfactuals, i.e. the acts, which were adopted during the same semesters in the same policy area, narrow down the generalisations of the results, as eventually only one policy area per country is examined. On the other hand, it ensures a higher validity of the research outputs. With regard to this point, cases were selected in respect to their binding nature. Although Latvian and Luxembourg Presidencies are compared on directives-regulations basis, both types of acts are considered as raising controversies in the Council, compared to the other kinds of legislation (Golub, 2008; König, 2008; Warntjen, 2007). Hereby, the agreement issue among ministers is controlled. Nevertheless, it must be stated that the Council Directive, adopted during the Luxembourg term, was negotiated under the consultation procedure (Council Directive (EU) 2015/2376). Therefore, the Council had extra leverage when negotiating the directive, which is further considered in the empirical analysis.

Finally, the selected cases demonstrate not only a range of different Presidencies, but also policy areas, geographical positioning and seniority of member states. Luxembourg and Spain represent old, yet, accordingly, Northern and Southern EU member states, whereas Poland and Latvia are regarded as new Eastern European countries.

4. Evaluation of cases

Provided the legislative acts in Table 4.3, this section allocates them across two groups of salience (high-low). This allows to detect policies, which were highly salient for the Presidencies, in order to assess the hypotheses raised above.

4.1. Attribution of salience across legislation

In relation to salience, scholars use various definitions that could best fit their study topic and methodology (see Chapter I). Since this chapter is looking at the logic behind the delay strategy adopted by the rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU, salience is linked with three main parameters. The first one relates to issue salience for the government in power at the time of the Presidency, the second – issue salience for the public (i.e. public opinion) in the presiding country, and the third – a current situation at the national level, presented by relevant statistics (socio-economic data) in a specific policy area.

To evaluate government salience for each of the policies, the study employs the Manifesto Project Dataset (see Chapter II for more elaborated explanation of the measurement of government salience). Public salience (i.e. public opinion) is based on the Eurobarometer data. In both cases, the threshold of high-low salience depends on the comparative importance granted to the other policy issues.

The socio-economic data related to a specific policy area are extracted from the Eurostat database. Even though they do not measure salience as such, they present the importance of a policy area in the country with respect to the previous and the following years of the rotating Presidency, as well as with respect to the EU average. Therefore, based on the data provided, relevant statistics are evaluated accordingly, showing high or low importance of the policy area in the country.

Four policies in the above-mentioned countries are assessed in terms of these three factors. For being highly salient, at least 2 out of three parameters should present high importance of the policy area at the national level. Following this operationalisation, the next section

analyses four countries and respective policy areas, in which the delay of legislation was detected.

4.1.1. Spanish Presidency (2010): transport policy

The evaluation of the transport policy in Spain is not straightforward. In relation to the government salience, transport policy is coded together with IT (infrastructure and technology) field. Therefore, in order to approximate what share of importance could be attributed to the transport only, investment data, presented as gross fixed capital formation, is used. According to the Eurostat (Table 4.4), Spain invested twice more in transport rather than technology sector:

Table 4.4: Investment in Spain

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<i>Gross fixed capital formation (investment) in Spain (mln. euro)</i>					
Transportation and storage	22 924,0	17 864,0	19 710,0	19 385,0	16 604,0
Information and communication	10 049,0	8 165,0	9 906,0	10 513,0	11 163,0
<i>Total gross fixed capital formation (investment) in Spain (mln. euro)</i>					
Total investment in Spain	326,064.0	262,499.0	248,987.0	229,884.0	205,839.0
Transport as a share (%) of total investment	7,0	6,8	7,9	8,4	8,1
<i>Difference in share between Spanish and the EU investment in transport</i>					
Gap in investment (%)	0,32	0,12	0,78	1,73	1,70

Source: Eurostat, 2018.

With reference to the data above, 6% of the Spanish government's salience attached to infrastructure and technology can be interpreted mainly as the attention paid to infrastructure projects. Certainly, this is only an approximation of salience based on the investment figures. Nevertheless, given that budget allocations are often employed in order to measure government salience (CAP, 2018), this operationalisation provides a valid interpretation. In

this context, taken salience proportionally to the investment, infrastructure would account for around 4% of the Spanish government's priorities. Although this percentage is similar to salience given to employment, education or economic policies (Volkens et al., 2016), overall, the importance of transport remains in the middle-low category of prioritised issues.

Looking at the investment figures in a broader sense, Spain's total investment in transport between 2008 and 2012 comprised approximately 7-8% (Table 4.4). Compared to the overall investment in the EU, the difference was negligible (Table 4.4). Despite this fact, the share of investment to the transport sector in Spain was rather low.

Due to the fact that the transport topic was eliminated from the Eurobarometer questionnaire as of 2006, public opinion cannot be evaluated. The Eurobarometer survey is mainly designed by the European Commission, which has an interest in measuring public opinion on specific issues (Haverland et al., 2018). Therefore, eliminating the question on the public transport after 3 years it was first asked shows a decreasing importance of a policy. In this regard, public interest towards the transport policy is considered to be low.

Overall, accounting for the period before, during and after the Presidency, the transport sector was equally of low salience in Spain. The governmental attention was moderate, whereas the economic data and the absence of public opinion showed a rather marginal importance of a policy.

4.1.2. Polish Presidency (2011): migration policy

Both the delayed and the adopted acts during the Polish Presidency refer to the third-country nationals as workers within the EU. Even though the content might be linked to the combination of two policy areas – migration and employment – for the purpose of this research two legislative acts are approximated as migration laws, since in the codebook utilised for this dissertation employment of the third-country nationals is considered to be a part of a migration topic (EUPAP, 2016). Such decision was made in order to ensure congruence with the previous chapters, especially regarding the coding the Council Presidency programmes (see Chapter I).

Looking at the programmes of the Polish governing parties at the time of the Presidency (Civic Platform and Polish People's Party), immigration as such was not included in any of them (Volkens et al., 2016), which presents a low importance of the topic. Correspondingly, a similar picture is provided by the public opinion. Two Eurobarometer surveys carried out right before the Presidency (May 2011) and at the end of the term (November 2011) confirm that immigration was considered to be a national and personal issue only for 1% of respondents (Eurobarometer, 2011; Eurobarometer, 2011a).

Nevertheless, migration data provide the opposite interpretation. As presented in Table 4.5, in 2011, people who received residence permits for remunerated activities in Poland comprised 14,6% of the total number of residence permits issued in the EU. The number of people staying in Poland for work reasons was higher not only than in the other Eastern European countries, but also Netherlands, France and even Germany, which have a rather long history of labour migration (see Table 1 in Appendix 5).

Table 4.5: Total number of people who received permits to reside in the EU for remunerated activities

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
European Union (before the accession of Croatia)	648 588	791 461	523 862	480 958	533 615
Poland	11 123	86 839	76 525	97 031	141 668
Share of permits issued in Poland vs. the EU (%)	1,7	11,0	14,6	20,2	26,5

Source: Eurostat, 2018.

Furthermore, with regard to Table 4.6, one could observe a significant number of residence permits issued in Poland in 2010 for seasonal work. This is rather exceptional, in particular since in 2008-2009 and later on, in 2012-2013, no such permits were issued in the country.

Table 4.6: Total amount of residence permits issued for seasonal workers

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
European Union (before the accession of Croatia)	54 972	119 664	27 951	20 323	17 065
Poland	0	73 156	0	0	0
Share of permits issued in Poland vs. the EU (%)	0	61	0	0	0

Source: Eurostat, 2018.

The previous tables, showing the scope of immigration to Poland, can be interpreted as follows: neither by the government, nor by the public an instant and considerable rise of seasonal workers in 2010 was regarded as an unexpected problem or issue the government needs to address. Hence, regardless of the socio-economic data, which presented a more sensitive aspect of the policy, during the Polish rotating Presidency term labour market migration was a low-salience topic.

4.1.3. Latvian Presidency (2015): employment policy

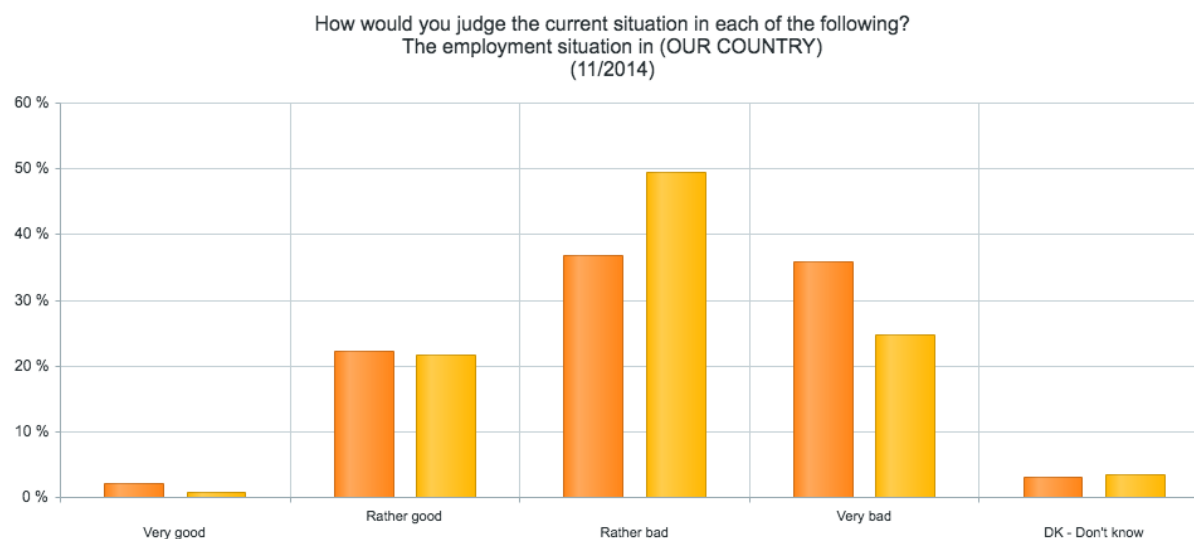
Latvian Presidency was managed by a newly elected government (being in office from the end of 2014) with a centre-right coalition (Döring & Manow, 2016). In light of the political orientation, it is rather evident why employment policy received very little attention in the coalition: the policy area gained only 1,2% of the total content of the party programmes (Volkens et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the public perceived the employment situation from a completely different perspective.

The Eurobarometer surveys carried out in November 2014 and in May 2015 demonstrate that in both cases unemployment was seen as a primary problem, which Latvia was facing (Eurobarometer, 2014; Eurobarometer, 2015). From a more personal standpoint (i.e. answering the question “what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment?”), respondents named unemployment, respectively, as a second and a third issue in the two surveys (Eurobarometer, 2014; Eurobarometer, 2015).

A similar trend was observed when asking a more specific question: “how would you judge the employment situation in your country?” The responses right before the Presidency term depict a rather negative public attitude (see Figure 4.1).

Nevertheless, the data on the active population, as well as the total employment in the country do not seem to deviate from the EU average. On the contrary, the employment rate was even higher in Latvia than all EU members taken together (see Tables 4.7 and 4.8).

Figure 4.1: Evaluation of the employment situation in Latvia (yellow bars) and the European Union (orange bars)



Source: Eurobarometer, 2014.

Table 4.7: Active population in Latvia, 15-64 years (%)

	2013	2014	2015	2016
European Union (current composition)	72,0	72,3	72,6	73,0
Euro area (19 countries)	72,2	72,4	72,5	72,9
Latvia	74,0	74,6	75,7	76,3

Source: Eurostat, 2018.

Table 4.8: Total employment in Latvia (resident population concept), 15-64 years (%)

	2013	2014	2015	2016
European Union (current composition)	64,1	64,9	65,7	66,7
Euro area (19 countries)	63,5	63,9	64,6	65,5
Latvia	65,0	66,3	68,1	68,7

Source: Eurostat, 2018.

Following the three-tier evaluation of salience, the importance of employment policy in Latvia was low. The government did not pay significant attention to the topic, and the socio-economic data did not present a critical situation with regard to the employment, despite the public highly prioritised the issue.

Nevertheless, according to the Latvian representatives to the EU, employment was one of the three key country priorities during the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU (Interview No. 1). Equally significant the topic was also for the Latvian government, given

that some events related to the employment issues were hosted in the presiding member state (Interview No. 1). Although the latter observation comes from the activities during the Presidency term and not from the party policy programmes issued beforehand, it reflects an actual issue importance during the six-month term.

The Latvian case is slightly exceptional in comparison to the other three. As it was mentioned previously, the country did not exclude the ongoing legislation, but prevented it from entering the EU agenda. Hence, while the dismissal of the ongoing legislative acts could be linked with a low salience and limited resources possessed by the member state, preventing the act from entering the amendment phase of the initial legislation signals an essential issue. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, employment is considered as a highly important policy area for the Latvian Presidency.

4.1.4. Luxembourg Presidency (2015): economic and financial policy

Party manifestos of three coalition parties in Luxembourg at the time of the Presidency, i.e. the Democratic Party, the Socialist Workers' Party and the Greens, show that internal market (and, thus, financial) issues occupied a large share of the party programmes (9,2%). Accordingly, they were the third most discussed topic after health and social policy, as well as civil rights issues (Volkens et al., 2016). However, acknowledging the fact that the Regulation on money market funds includes clauses also on governmental investments, which eventually would strengthen the EU economy (Regulation (EU) 2017/1131), the act should be evaluated also from the macroeconomic policy perspective. The latter also entails taxation issues, as regards the Council Directive on the exchange of information in the field of taxation (Council Directive (EU) 2015/2376). In respect to this, economic issues comprised around 7,8% of the Luxembourg coalition attention, being the 5th most important policy in the country (Volkens et al., 2016).

A rather high salience of the economic issues is also reflected in the public opinion surveys. The Eurobarometer results from May 2015 (i.e. before the Luxembourg Presidency term) ranked economic situation as the third most important problem facing the country, and the eighth personal issue (Eurobarometer, 2015a). Notwithstanding, the survey carried out during

the Luxembourg term (in November 2015) presented an increase in importance of economic issues for respondents even from the personal point of view: both country- and personal-level graphs show that economic issues were the third-most important topic for respondents (Eurobarometer, 2015b).

With respect to the taxation policy, in the Eurobarometer survey of May 2015, taxation was ranked only as the 10th of 13 issues listed, whereas on the personal level it was perceived as the 6th most important problem (Eurobarometer, 2015a). In November 2015, instead, taxation was ranked among the least worrying issues (Eurobarometer, 2015b).

With regard to the economic data, it is evident that Luxembourg is the leading economy in the area of money market funds (see Table 4.9). This allows to assume that the Regulation defining the rules for the supranational governance of this specific topic could have been perceived as a sensitive legislation for Luxembourg.

Table 4.9: Money market fund shares/units (in mln. euros), as presented in the financial balance sheets

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Czech Republic	2 611,3	2 949,1	84,1	62,6	:
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	8 260,0	8 212,0	9 576,0	11 663,0	:
Greece	1 110,0	1 576,8	6 725,5	4 473,2	:
Latvia	0,0	0,0	:	:	:
Lithuania	2,0	7,8	1,1	8,1	:
Luxembourg	12 257,0	22 077,6	26 868,0	30 501,3	:
Hungary	190,0	312,6	345,4	49,9	73,1
Malta	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	:
Netherlands	12 730,0	20 889,0	25 964,0	29 968,0	:
Austria	350,6	596,8	805,1	957,5	:
Romania	17,3	80,3	36,7	36,6	:
Finland	2 021,0	2 812,0	2 216,0	2 099,0	2 081,0
Sweden	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	:

Note: Only the countries which provided the data are presented in the table. Source: Eurostat, 2018.

Although the exchange of information in the field of taxation cannot be represented by the statistical tables, the Luxembourg civil servant confirmed that the Council Directive on the exchange of information in the field of taxation (Council Directive (EU) 2015/2376) was one

of the key legislation the Presidency was willing to finalise. On the contrary, the Regulation on money market funds (Regulation (EU) 2017/1131), despite being extremely salient for the government, was decided to be delayed (Interview No. 4).

The above-mentioned empirical evidence allows to conclude that macroeconomic and financial policies were of high importance during the Luxembourg Presidency, showing high salience for the government, the public, as well as in the national economy.

4.2. Attribution and selection of cases

With regard to all four countries and respective policies presented in the previous section, the allocation of salience provides the following configurations (Table 4.10):

Table 4.10: Configurations of factors leading to salience of a policy area by country holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU

Presidency	Policy	Government salience	Public salience	Socio-economic data	Value of salience
Spanish 2010	Transport	Medium-low	Low	Low	Low
Polish 2011	Migration	Low	Low	High	Low
Latvian 2015*	Employment	Low	High	Low	High*
Luxembourg 2015	Financial markets/economics	High	High	High	High

The Latvian case, as already noted above, presents an exception of the delay (prevention for the act to come onto the agenda), which intuitively leads to operationalising the policy area as of high importance. Such allocation of cases to the high-low salience typology turns into two countries having a high emphasis on the policy issues and the other two – low one.

Since this chapter focuses on highly salient policies and the delay strategies linked to the respective legislation, the empirical analysis is based on two case studies: Latvian and Luxembourg Presidencies. Although both countries presided the Council in 2015, even falling under the same Presidency Trio, the delay strategies were different. The case study

analysis, in this regard, provides new insights when interpreting the agenda-exclusion, as well as Presidency powers in general. This is especially relevant when discussing the stance of the rotating chair in the post-Lisbon period.

Moreover, the empirical analysis also investigates the controversy in the Council. For this purpose, an agreement index, presented by Hix and colleagues (2005), is calculated. The scholars employed such measurement in order to estimate a party group cohesion in the European Parliament (Hix et al., 2005). However, ‘yes’, ‘no’, and ‘abstain’ votes are accordingly used in the Council, which allows to calculate cohesion also in this institution. The index ranges from 0 to 1, where 1 stands for a full cohesion (i.e. consensus).

The results of the analysis of two rotating Presidencies have a limited external validity. Nevertheless, the study addresses half of the cases where a delay strategy was observed, and disentangles a three-dimensional strategy applied by the rotating member states. In this regard, following the steps provided, the study can be further extended by looking at the low-salience policies, or investigating future rotating Council Presidencies.

5. Latvian Presidency and employment policy

Employment policy was one of the key areas and even one of the three core priorities for the Latvian rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2015 (Interview No. 1). Nevertheless, the dossiers belonging to the field reached different outcomes. Hence, this section elaborates on the content of two legislative acts: revision of the Posting of Workers Directive, as well as the Regulation on additional pre-financing of the programmes supported by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), evaluating them in respect to the Latvia’s position and preferences regarding these two acts. Although the Directive (EU) 2018/957 was only in the deliberation phase, being on the list of the European Commission’s programme, the content of the proposal for amendment of the Directive 96/71/EC is invoked in order to perform a comparative analysis.

The main difference expected to be observed between the two legislative acts is the (in)congruence of the content with the national position. Therefore, the following sub-

sections shed more light on the Latvian position in respect to the Posting of Workers Directive (section 5.1.) and the Regulation on the pre-financing of the Youth Employment Initiative (section 5.2.).

5.1. Posting of Workers Directive

The initial Posting of Workers Directive 96/71/EC, adopted in 1996, was the first attempt to regulate the movement of workers in the common market by setting the rules for employment and working conditions. While the host country was obliged to respect the minimum standards for maximum hours of work, holidays, health and safety conditions at work, the sending country was responsible for workers' remuneration and social security (Schmid-Drüner, 2018).

Considering the date of the initial directive, the market situation has changed substantially over the years, especially taking into account the waves of the EU enlargement. Strangely enough, the European Commission did not address the issue until 2012, when it tabled two proposals: for the Enforcement Directive and so-called Monti II Regulation (Rasnača, 2018). While Monti II Regulation, which had foreseen the right to take a collective action in the context of a freedom of establishment and freedom to provide services (COM (2012) 130), was soon withdrawn due to the lack of support (Rasnača, 2018), the Enforcement Directive (2014/67/EU) was adopted in 2014. The latter act aimed at addressing some of the prevailing issues, such as possible fraud cases, circumventing the law or information exchange among the EU members (European Commission, 2018a). Nevertheless, some major issues, especially with regard to the discrepancies among countries in terms of payment, remained.

In order to address the previous aspect, in 2016 the European Commission tabled a proposal for amendment of the initial Directive 96/71/EC. It aimed at enforcing the principle 'equal pay for equal work' and eliminating major differences in terms of payment among the member states (Schmid-Drüner, 2018). The latter included not only the new rules in relation to the rate of pay, but also the universally applicable collective agreements across all

economic sectors, as well as posting of temporary agency workers (European Commission, 2016).

Although the Enforcement Directive and the proposal for amendment intended to refine a rather outdated directive (European Commission, 2016a), both acts received an objection by some member states. As argued by Latvia and Hungary, when it comes to the implementation of certain clauses, the Enforcement Directive had foreseen only a limited control and administrative supervision of the European Commission, which would not solve the existing inconsistencies between the EU members (VoteWatch, 2014).

The amendment for the Posting of Workers Directive, despite being tabled in 2016, was briefly mentioned in the Commission's annual programme already in 2015. The document addressed the planned targeted review of the Directive, as well as the communication on the Labour Mobility Package (European Commission, 2015). Both activities were foreseen in December 2015 – already after the Latvian Presidency term. Nevertheless, such planning provoked controversial reactions from the member states. Nine Eastern European countries wrote an official letter to the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Mobility in order to emphasise the existing inequalities in terms of economic development, welfare systems and labour laws across the EU countries (Letter to Commissioner Thyssen, 2015). Furthermore, they demanded for a more thorough evaluation of the current application of the Enforcement Directive (Letter to Commissioner Thyssen, 2015). Seven Western European states, instead, expressed a support for the initiative (Letter to Commissioner Thyssen, 2015a). While the Council of the EU reached the final agreement on the Directive only in October, 2017 (Council of the EU, 2017), this study is focusing specifically on the Latvian Presidency term. Therefore, the following sections pay more attention to the national approach towards the legislation, trying to investigate whether the role of the Presidency could have contributed to the delay of the proposal for amendment of the Directive 96/71/EC.

5.1.1. National position of Latvia with regard to the Directive 96/71/EC

The posted workers issue and the development of EU-level rules in the field had been long criticised by Latvia. Already in 2014, when the Council adopted the Enforcement Directive 2014/67/EU, Latvia expressed its vote against the act. As the main reasoning, the representative of a country claimed that the amendments envisaged in the Enforcement Directive did not address the imbalance between the new rules imposed on the receiving countries and the different conditions of working environment across the EU member states (VoteWatch, 2014).

As the Enforcement Directive was followed by the Commission's initiative to review the existing legislation, Latvia, in cooperation with the other eight Eastern European states addressed the issue of an early stage for the proposal to be made. Given that the implementation of the rules embedded in the Enforcement Directive (2014/67/EU) were incomplete, countries claimed that the proposal should have taken into consideration the current situation more critically (Letter to Commissioner Thyssen, 2015). The main points raised by the EU members involved the following:

1. Differences across social welfare systems in the EU states. Although the amendment of the Directive 96/71/EC aimed to address the existing inequalities among member states and, hereby, the employees, it raised additional issues to the home country: the proposed legislation anticipated not only the monthly remuneration, but also allowances stated in the collective agreements, travel expenses, etc. (Directive (EU) 2018/957). Furthermore, the amendment included a statement that when the posting exceeds 24 months, the legislation of the host state enters into force (Directive (EU) 2018/957). For Latvia, this was not an ideal compromise. Covering the travel expenses if the posted worker is sent to a higher income country (e.g. Scandinavian) creates a large amount, exceeding the minimum wage in the country even several times (van Hoek & Houwerzijl, 2011). Hereby, employers could be reluctant in sending their workers abroad.
2. Social dumping. In relation to the previous point, imbalances among member states create room for abusing the current conditions. As it was reported by Voss et al. (2016), Latvia

became an example of the ‘letterbox’ company. This can be illustrated by an example of a German-Latvian agency, which hired third country nationals from Philippines, claiming the lack of employees for the international trucking (Voss et al., 2016). However, soon after being employed in Latvia, they were posted to another EU member state, consequently exploiting the differences in wages (Voss et al., 2016). In this regard, Latvia, facing such issues, in collaboration with the other Eastern member states asked the European Commission to review the Enforcement Directive and existing implementation issues in relation to persisting hazards for the single market (Letter to Commissioner Thyssen, 2015).

3. Temporary agency workers. The amendment of the Directive 96/71/EC involves a clause with regard to the equal treatment of temporary agency workers (European Commission, 2016). The latter aspect was often referred as a possible niche for fraudulent activities in Latvia. Therefore, temporary employment agencies in the country are required to receive a licence from the State Employment Agency (van Hoek & Houwerzijl, 2011). The proposal for amendment, however, does not address such national issues, which, after the finalisation of the act would require Latvia to apply the new rule, possibly, exposing certain job-seekers to an increased risk.
4. Transparency and information exchange. With the goal of addressing some of the remaining problems, deriving from the posted workers directives (and related amendments), one of the key requirements with respect to the amendment was to increase the transparency and information exchange among member states (Interview No. 2). A limited (if any at all) accessibility to work agreements was seen as one of the pertaining issues (van Hoek & Houwerzijl, 2011). Since there is no official requirement by the host state to provide written employment conditions, the created uncertainty further leads to the hesitation in utilising the posted workers framework (van Hoek & Houwerzijl, 2011). Additionally, Latvia raised the issue of information about administrative requirements and control measures applied to posted workers, which would also raise additional legal clarity issues (Interview No. 1).

The listed points, however, remained even after the proposal for amendment was tabled. According to the reasoned opinion by the Saeima (the Latvian parliament), consultations

referring to the act did not respect the subsidiarity principle (European Parliament, 2016). In addition, the parliament raised the point that an enforcement of ‘equal pay for equal work’ principle is not proportional to the economic situation across the EU member states (European Parliament, 2016). Hereby, a ‘yellow card’, issued by the Latvian parliament, confirmed that there are inconsistencies between the Latvian and the European approaches towards the posting of workers framework.

Considering that the voting against the Enforcement Directive was performed by the representative of the executive branch (the government), whereas almost two years later a similar opinion was issued by the legislators, the whole posted workers framework in Latvia is incongruent with the suggested European approach. However, as stated by the Latvian representatives to the EU (Interview No. 1), such resistance of a country to support both the Enforcement Directive and the proposal for amendment is not induced by the clash between the national and the EU legislation *per se*, but rather by “a general philosophy – where do we want the EU, the internal market to go” (Interview No. 2). In other words, Latvia emphasised negative implications the laws might have on the internal market and economies of some member states.

From a legal perspective, taking a rather obscure content of the legislation into consideration, Latvian courts often struggle with the interpretation of the minimum standards in the host country, and an interaction of them with the provisions in the home country (Rasnača, 2018). Therefore, although no concrete mismatches between the national and the EU legislation were observed, the lack of clarification of specific terms in the Enforcement Directive, as well as the proposal for amendment of the Directive 96/71/EC created different interpretations of the law.

5.1.2. Public speeches and media coverage

Given that during the Latvian Presidency the proposal for amendment of Directive 96/71/EC was not yet on the EU agenda, neither politicians, nor the media addressed the question upfront.

It must be noted that even before the Latvian Presidency, the Enforcement Directive of posted workers status received only a limited attention in the media. Whereas in Latvia the publications were mostly based on the official sources, informing about the adoption of the Enforcement Directive (see, for instance, Latvijas Republikas Labklājības Ministrija, 2015), European media had briefly defined the situation as raising further debates. They were particularly linked with the criticism of the Enforcement Directive by France, according to which the legislative text lacked the clarification of social guarantees for posted workers (Euractiv, 2015). This issue was mostly related to the social dumping problem, which the country further raised in the negotiations of the agriculture funds, causing major disagreement with Germany (Robert, 2014).

Yet, underlining that this study mostly concerns the proposal for amendment of Directive 96/71/EC, the media aspect did not play an important role. Such situation may also be partly explained by the fact that member states were hoping for the new proposal to address prevailing issues in the field. Hence, in order to avoid institutional disagreements, they did not expose this question to the public.

5.1.3. Controversy in the Council regarding the amendment of the Posting of Workers Directive

Whilst the controversy of the issue across the EU members was already briefly presented in the previous sections, calculating the agreement index (Hix et al., 2005) provides a quantitative approach towards the situation in the Council in respect to the Directive.

In order to utilise the formula, positions of member states during the Latvian Presidency term are approximated by two letters sent to the Commission by Western and Eastern member state groups. As not all the countries took sides with the latter two, the outsiders are counted as those agreeing with the law. This decision is based on the fact that abstention is basically equal to 'no' votes. On the contrary, taking the Enforcement Directive into consideration, none of the countries, which did not sign the letters, voted against (VoteWatch, 2014). Hereby, remaining silent on the issue is regarded as a 'yes' vote.

Based on this approximation, the agreement index on the amendment of the Directive 96/71/EC is 0.5, meaning that countries were rather equally divided on the legislation. In this regard, considering Presidency strategies in a three-dimensional space, the revision of Posting of Workers Directive presents a strategy, where high salience coupled with incongruence between national position and the EU legislation, as well as controversy among the Council members, leads to the rotating chair delaying the respective proposal.

5.2. Pre-financing for the Youth Employment Initiative

As a response to the economic crisis and increasing unemployment levels, following the call from the European Council, the European Commission proposed the establishment of the Youth Employment Initiative (European Commission, 2015a). For this purpose, a separate budget of 3,2 billion euros was dedicated at the EU level in order to address youth unemployment levels, in addition to 3,2 billion coming as ESF allocations (European Commission, 2015a).

The main problem with the funds targeted to resolve the issue was grounded in the lengthy implementation systems (involving responsible authorities), which apply for all European Investment and Structural funds (Interview No. 1). Hereby, some member states, such as France or Spain, although started implementing the measures in order to reduce the youth unemployment levels, due to the absence of the formal fund management authorities, these countries could not receive the actual funds (Interview No. 1). The whole procedure of allocating the finances became lengthy and did not reach beneficiaries as soon as it was expected (Interview No. 1). Furthermore, countries claimed not being able to deal with the problem alone (European Commission, 2015a). Therefore, acknowledging a high demand, additional funds from the YEI budget were granted to EU member states in a short term, aiming to address the existing bottlenecks.

The regulation, envisaging additional almost 1 billion euros of pre-financing to the Youth Employment Initiative, was proposed in February, 2015 (Eur-Lex, 2015a), and adopted in May, 2015 (Regulation (EU) 2015/779). In the view of the fact that the act was agreed under

the ordinary legislative procedure, the speedy adoption presupposes that the legislation was of high importance for the EU member states and/or did not create any major disagreements in terms of the content.

5.2.1. National position of Latvia with regard to the Regulation

The Regulation on the pre-financing of the Youth Employment Initiative can be considered as one of the Latvian Presidency achievements during the term. Other than the nature of the act, according to the Latvian representatives (Interview No. 1), one of the main reasons why the Regulation got quickly approved, was the general agreement reached on the policy beforehand. Regulation (EU) 2015/779 aimed at addressing the bottlenecks already in the implementation phase, whereas the Directive (EU) 2018/957 on posted workers was perceived as a new policy, which required a new balance in reconciling all four freedoms of the single market (Interview No. 1).

Youth Employment Initiative was one of the core priorities for the EU, as well as for Latvia, which faced rising unemployment levels during the crisis (Interview No. 2). Although interviewees from Latvia were in disagreement among themselves on whether employment was one of the key priorities for the rotating Presidency (Interview No. 1 vs. Interview No. 2), the Youth Employment Initiative clearly had a significant level of salience at the EU level. With respect to the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2015/779, the rotating Presidency held discussions in the Council working groups, as well as with responsible rapporteurs and representatives from the European Parliament in order to ensure that both institutions interpret the Regulation in a similar manner (Interview No. 1). As stated by the Latvian representatives to the EU, there were several unanswered questions, for instance, whether the lengthy system for getting finances was the main issue, and whether the measures employed by member states were sufficient (Interview No. 1). Nonetheless, given that no official reporting was received from the member states, and that no additional budget was required, but rather an increased rate of pre-financing got approved, the agreement was greatly facilitated not only within the Council, but also with the European Parliament (Interview No. 1).

From a national perspective, the Regulation (EU) 2015/779 did not by any means conflict with the national legislation – on the contrary, it was seen as a financial support to address one of the major challenges, especially given high levels of youth unemployment domestically. Furthermore, as confirmed by the Latvian representatives, the lack of pre-financing did not have any effect on the implementation of the YEI at the national level (Interview No. 1). All the funds from the Youth Employment Initiative are separated in the national budget, which ensures a smooth implementation of the programmes and, later on, a claim for funds from the European Commission (Interview No. 1).

5.2.2. Public speeches and media coverage

Months before Latvia had assumed the rotating chair of the Council, the media was rather balanced in presenting both shortcomings and benefits of the Youth Employment Initiative. Following the Finnish example, the scheme was applied across the EU countries, presenting rather positive initial results (Barbière, 2014). While the leaders of the EU in June 2014 agreed that youth unemployment should be pinned on the Commission's agenda as one of the key priorities for the Union (Jacobsen, 2014), some members of the European Parliament, on the other hand, questioned the whole initiative.

Anders Primdahl Vistisen, who was the youngest member of the European Parliament and a representative of the far-right Danish People's Party, had criticised the social funds to fight unemployment as not delivering optimal solutions (Euractiv, 2015a). According to the MEP (who was also a member of the budget committee), given the diversity of unemployment levels across countries, the actual solution would be to strengthen the single market, instead of providing EU-level funds (Euractiv, 2015a).

Nevertheless, in the beginning of 2015, the Commission stepped forward and tabled a proposal for pre-financing of the YEI. The main message of the institution was to show that youth unemployment remains one of the key challenges in the EU. In this point, the European Commission, as a matter of a priority, deemed it necessary to grant countries a part of the dedicated budget right after the operational programmes were implemented (Jacobsen, 2015).

At the domestic level in Latvia, the Youth Employment Initiative was less exposed to the media attention. As the Minister of Welfare Augulis stated right before the Presidency term (Augulis, 2014), the Youth Employment Initiative had presented fruitful results, nevertheless, in the field of unemployment more needed to be achieved. Yet, according to the minister, it was necessary to focus on granting more rights and possibilities for disabled people (Augulis, 2014). The same message was later on reiterated when presenting the Presidency aims to the European Parliament committee in the field of social and employment policies (BNS, 2015).

Considering the circumstances in which Latvia took over the rotating Presidency in the beginning of 2015, and the statements by the Minister of Welfare, the Youth Employment Initiative and the Regulation for pre-financing of programmes was regarded more as an inherited EU priority, on which the European Commission had a stronger stance than the Presidency itself. Nevertheless, the discussion of the issue at the national level can be considered as the aim of the country to present the legislation as the Presidency achievement.

5.2.3. Controversy in the Council regarding the pre-financing for the Youth Employment Initiative

As the pre-financing for the YEI was approved in extremely short period, the agreement in the Council can be easily calculated looking at the voting results (VoteWatch, 2015). In this regard, no votes against or abstentions being recorded, the agreement index for the Regulation is 1, presenting a pure consensus among member states.

In contrast to the case of Posting of Workers Directive, the adopted Regulation regarding pre-financing of the YEI presents the alternative expectation: high salience, matched with congruence between the national stance and the legislative proposal, as well as given an agreement in the Council, leads to the smooth adoption of the act.

5.3. Institutional environment during the Latvian Presidency

To provide a more nuanced picture of the Latvian Presidency and its strategies with regard to two legislative acts, it is necessary to discuss the institutional environment. At the time of the

Latvian Presidency, the institutional situation within the EU was rather peculiar, given that not only the Latvian government has just taken the office, but also the European Commission was counting its first months. Therefore, since the Commission did not propose any clear legislative plan, many of the priorities put forward by Latvia were based on the common lines between the EU member states (Interview No. 2). Nevertheless, according to the Latvian interviewees (Interviews No. 1 and No. 2), the contacts with the European Commission remained frequent and extensive. Several Latvian representatives additionally stated that a good performance of the rotating chair to a certain extent depends on the European Commission: from the agenda being set, to its support during informal trilogues (Interview No. 1).

In relation to the latter aspect, the Commission's aim to revise the Posting of Workers Directive could have been planned for the end of 2015 (European Commission, 2015), taking into account Latvia's position on the current legislation. Given extensive and warm contacts between the Latvian Presidency and the Commission (Interview No. 2), the postponement of the proposal by the Commission may have been enforced by the aim to please the Presidency, knowing that the legislation on the Posting of Workers Directive is highly questionable by the latter. This argument also goes in hand with the unwritten requirements to maintain close contacts between the chairs. Considering that in the final legislation Latvian (and other states') requirements were ignored (Interview No. 2), the Commission's behaviour can be considered as a strategic diplomacy, eventually favouring member states, whose vote is sufficient to reach the QMV. As it was put by the Latvian diplomat, "the European Commission is always listening, but they are taking into account the situation at the moment, and especially where the centre of force lies" (Interview No. 2).

Alternatively, the delay of the discussions and the proposal for amendment itself could have been induced by the external events. The attacks in Paris a week before Latvia assumed the rotating chair and the following eruption of migration crisis had a great influence on the work of the Presidency, as well as the other EU institutions (Interview No. 2). Hereby, as the Commission was actively involved in the negotiations of migration policy, it could have shifted the attention from employment issues. On the other hand, the fact that the

Commission had started consultations on the Labour Mobility Package but not the posted workers question, leaves the issue open-ended for the further research.

5.4. Takeaways from the Latvian Presidency

As presented by the empirical analysis of two acts in employment policy during the Latvian term, they both correspond to the hypotheses H4.1 and H4.2, presenting different Presidency strategies of action. Despite of being salient laws, they were addressed in a different manner. The Youth Employment Initiative, presenting a full congruence with the national approach, was adopted in an extremely short period, whereas the amendment of the Directive 96/71/EC regarding the posted workers status experienced a delay not only at the Council, but also at the EU level, preventing the proposal from reaching the EU agenda.

Although to a certain extent such results could have been induced by the institutional environment and external events, which required substantial attention from the Presidency, as well as other member states, the controversy in the Council with regard to the Posting of Workers Directive presented an additional reason why the amendment was postponed. This especially holds having the Regulation on the pre-financing of Youth Employment Initiative being adopted swiftly, in a short time period.

6. Luxembourg Presidency and macroeconomic policies

In the case of Luxembourg, two legislative acts in question – the Regulation on money market funds and the Council Directive regarding the exchange of information in the taxation field – seem to represent slightly different subsets of policies. Nevertheless, they both fall under the macroeconomics policy, as noted in the EU Policy Agendas Project Codebook (Alexandrova et al., 2015). Hereby, this section provides an in-depth analysis of both legislative acts, evaluating congruence of the content between the EU law and the national position, followed by the analysis of the agreement in the Council of the EU.

6.1. Regulation on money market funds

The primary initiative to develop a more strict regulation of money markets came from the European Parliament. In 2012 the institution issued a resolution on the shadow banking, asking the European Commission to review the current regulatory framework, especially with regard to money market funds. At that time, they were managed under the rules set in the Directive on Undertakings for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities and the Directive regarding Alternative Investment Fund Managers (European Parliament, 2017a).

After a number of consultations and impact assessments, in 2013 the European Commission tabled a proposal, specifying new rules for regulating the money market funds. Taking into account the effects of the last economic crisis in Europe, the regulation was designed to respond to external shocks by ensuring more stability, a more structured portfolio by a diversification of assets, a good credit quality and increased liquidity (Council of the EU, 2017a).

Although the legislative file was rather complex and took four years to be finalised (Eur-Lex, 2017), during the last Council meeting the regulation was adopted without any further debates and negotiations, Luxembourg being the only country voting against (Council of the EU, 2017a).

6.1.1. National position of Luxembourg with regard to the Regulation

During the ECOFIN meeting in October 2015, the European Commission raised the question concerning a pending proposal for the Regulation on money market funds, offering its support for the Luxembourg Presidency in advancing the negotiations (Council of the EU, 2015). The main response from the Presidency was a promise to seek consensus among the member states, and also keeping tight contacts with the Commission (Council of the EU, 2015).

Nevertheless, the main opposing country, which had to find a common point with the rest of the Council members, was Luxembourg itself. It must be noted that Luxembourg did not

object the legislation, considering the importance of money market funds in financing the economy (VoteWatch, 2017). The main issues raised by the Luxembourg representatives, instead, questioned the quotas set by the EU, which did not take into account the application of funds to the third countries (VoteWatch, 2017).

Considering that Luxembourg money market funds make a considerable share on the EU level (see Table 4.9 above), such strict regulation proposed by the European Commission was contradicting to the national view. Furthermore, a great amount of money market funds in Luxembourg are exclusively directed towards the third countries, such as Japan (Interview No. 4). For this reason, without diversifying between EU vs. non-EU countries, in Luxembourg this legislation was considered to have a negative impact on the development of this market structure (VoteWatch, 2017).

However, the European Commission mainly followed the position by the European Systemic Risk Board, advising to regulate these specific funds in a more restrictive manner in order to avoid systemic risks (Interview No. 4). Hence, the Regulation was perceived as an additional measure to the already existing EU legislation (i.e. the Directive on Undertakings for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities and the Directive regarding Alternative Investment Fund Managers).

As claimed by the Luxembourg civil servant (Interview No. 4), the main issue with the legislation was the fact that it fell under the QMV, yet, concerned only a limited number of countries: Luxembourg, Germany, France, Ireland, UK and – to a certain extent – Italy. As depicted in Table 4.9, from these six countries listed above, only Luxembourg and Germany presented economic data on the money market funds. This allows to assume that negotiating the legislation towards the Luxembourg's ideal point was a rather difficult task. Hereby, the country decided to opt out from the further discussions on the file during the 6 months in order to remain credible and loyal to its views, yet, staying rather neutral at the Council level (Interview No. 4).

6.1.2. Public speeches and media coverage

The Regulation on money market funds was not only a complex, but also technical file. Considering that the field was already regulated by the EU law, additional measures to prevent systemic risks may have been perceived as a part of the overall restrictive economic policies. Hereby, neither the media nor the responsible ministers did not highlight this specific dossier.

On the other hand, such silent strategy can also be linked to the so-called unwritten norms attached to the Presidency institute. They are mainly based on the rational calculations, considering the reputation issue (Niemann & Mak, 2010). Hence, as the Regulation on money market funds was an extremely salient issue for Luxembourg, avoiding any media or public attention could have been a strategic choice to prevent the escalation of the dossier.

6.1.3. Controversy in the Council regarding the Regulation on money market funds

The Regulation on money market funds was pending for four years in total. Even though no reasoned opinions by national parliaments were issued (European Parliament, 2018), the first discussion in the Council was recorded only in the middle of 2016, when COREPER II reached an agreement on the general approach (Council of the EU, 2016). Whilst the latter could be considered as the approximation of the converging positions towards the legislation, Luxembourg's stance on the act needs to be accounted for. Hence, Luxembourg's vote against the Regulation (EU) 2017/1131, expressed in 2017 (VoteWatch, 2017), makes the agreement index in the Council equal to 0.95. Despite the fact that Luxembourg's defection did not have any effect on the final outcomes (given the QMV rule), neither it reduced the general agreement in the Council, the vote expressed country's opposition to the final text of the Regulation, as a matter of national concerns towards the legislation.

Applying these results to the three-dimensional typology presented in Table 4.1, the delay of the Regulation on money market funds provides yet another theoretical insight. Considering that the file received a general support in the Council and was highly salient for the Luxembourg government, the legislation was, nevertheless, opposed due to major

inconsistencies of the main provisions with the national position. Thus, the Presidency strategies outlined in Table 4.1 can be extended by adding a new set of variables leading to the delay tactics.

6.2. Amendment of the Directive 2011/16/EU as regards mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation

The Council Directive agreed upon in 2015 was a second amendment of the initial Directive 77/799/EEC regarding the cooperation and exchange of information in the taxation field. The first amendment repealing the initial legislation was adopted in 2011 (Council Directive 2011/16/EU). The legislation obliges tax authorities, which issue rulings or pricing arrangements at the national level, to register respective companies into the central EU database (European Commission, 2015b). Hereby, even in taxation policy, which mainly remains in the hands of the national administrations, the EU created certain regulations in order to ensure more transparency across member states when it comes to cross-border transactions and tax rulings or price arrangements for companies concerned.

The Directive was adopted in relatively short time – 9 months – being finalised during the Luxembourg Presidency (Eur-Lex, 2015), without any abstentions or votes against (VoteWatch, 2015a). Nevertheless, representatives from Czech Republic have expressed their recommendation not only to look at the corporate level, but to regulate VAT too. Given the repercussions of VAT evasions for some national budgets, Czech Republic suggested the application of a reverse charge mechanism, for which it expected the European Commission to come up with a possible proposal on the issue (VoteWatch, 2015a).

Another issue has arisen with the Swedish delegation and the Swedish Parliament issuing a reasoned opinion addressing the in-compliance of the act with the subsidiarity principle (European Parliament, 2015). Nevertheless, it did not prevent countries to approve the final legislation and close the file, despite being in the last stages of negotiations (Interview No. 4).

6.2.1. National position of Luxembourg with regard to the Council Directive

On the contrary to the Regulation on money market funds, the Council Directive on the exchange of information in the field of taxation was adopted 9 months after the Commission put forward the proposal (Eur-Lex, 2015). Hence, the attempt to finalise the file presumes a rather high coherence between the Commission's position (given that it tabled the file) and Luxembourg's national stance.

The Council Directive (EU) 2015/2376 was ranked as a rather important priority of the Luxembourg Presidency in the field of taxation, considering that it was named both in the work programme (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2015), as well as among the main achievements of the Presidency (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2015a). Besides, high salience of an issue was also confirmed by the Luxembourg civil servant: the Presidency aimed to reach a final agreement on the act (Interview No. 4).

Such goal allows to assume that regarding the content of the legislation, there was a high coherence between the Commission's proposal and the position taken by Luxembourg. This said, finalising the legislation during the term would have given Luxembourg credit in front of the Commission and simultaneously fulfilling its national goals. On the other hand, taking into account the major tax scandal that broke at the end of 2014 (Bowers, 2014), i.e. several months before the Luxembourg started its term in the Council, the reputation issue may also have played a role.

As stated in the leaked documents, Luxembourg had been found making agreements with multinational corporations, arranging favourable taxation terms for them (Bowers, 2014) and, hereby, attracting even more foreign investment. The scandal had a great resonance across Europe, with the European Commission starting an official investigation. The main question was whether it should be regarded as a fraudulent practice, given that Luxembourg was using a tax dumping, which could have been perceived as unfair competition at the European level (Hirst, 2015). In this point, approving the EU legislation which ensures a higher transparency across countries and is especially directed towards the companies, but not individuals, can be

interpreted as a way to solve the EU-wide reputation crisis. The next sub-section presents the main points addressed in the media in relation to the tax evasion.

6.2.2. Public speeches and media coverage

Considering the so-called Luxleaks scandal, during the rotating Presidency no direct comments from Pierre Gramegna (Luxembourg Minister of Finance) were public in relation to the negotiations on this particular legislative file. Nevertheless, the media was intensively following the Commission's investigation on the suspected tax evasion. In this regard, Jean-Claude Juncker, a Prime Minister of Luxembourg at the times when the main tax agreements were made, and the President of the European Commission during the scandal, was often in the limelight of discussions (e.g. Holehouse & Samuel, 2015). However, as it could be expected, he did not confirm any involvement in tax arrangements, neither commented much on the matter from the national point of view, which was presumably mainly due to his position in the Commission.

The media, however, named Luxembourg and Germany as two EU member states with the highest risk for money laundering cases (Crisp, 2015). The main reason was considered to be some loops, allowing to cover the fraudulent practices (Crisp, 2015).

Furthermore, in the midst of the Luxembourg Presidency (i.e. October 2015), Fiat was found to be unlawfully using the Luxembourg system in order to minimise its tax expenses and, therefore, obliged to pay approximately between 20 and 30 million euros due taxes (Hirst, 2015). The latter decision was complemented by the Commission's announcement about another scrutiny procedure for McDonald's, which was as well suspected to have avoided taxes, as of special agreements signed in Luxembourg (Irish Times, 2015).

Luxembourg suppressed its reaction towards such Commission's rulings until the end of the term. In December 2015, however, the government publicly announced its plans to appeal the Commission's decision on the case of Fiat (The Luxembourg Government, 2015). While the latter process is still ongoing (Bodoni, 2018), one could claim that the country officials tried

to avoid the media attention in relation to the tax scandal as much as possible during its term, maintaining a positive country image in Europe.

6.2.3. Controversy in the Council with respect to the amending Directive regarding mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation

During the Luxembourg Presidency semester, the chair had to deal with several issues arising in regard to this legislation, such as the subsidiarity principle raised by the Swedish parliament, or Czech Republic intending to play a veto card on the full act, which fell under the unanimity rule (Interview No. 4). Nevertheless, considering the voting output of December 2015, none of the countries vetoed the legislation (VoteWatch, 2015a). Even though Czech Republic issued an opinion in reference to the legislation, looking at the registered votes, the agreement index of this particular act was equal to 1. Thus, Luxembourg, being a small, yet, experienced Presidency, was able to deal with arising issues and to reach a consensus in the Council.

Hereby, the Council Directive (EU) 2015/2376 on the exchange of information in the field of taxation was congruent with the national position held by Luxembourg, which led to the act being pushed forward to the final adoption during country's Presidency term.

6.3. Institutional environment during the Luxembourg Presidency

As the Luxembourg Presidency was succeeding the Latvian one, the constellation of external events and crises was rather similar. In this regard, migration issues were occupying a large share of attention not only in the migration policy directly, but also during the budget negotiations (Interviews No. 3 and No. 4). In terms of the financial crisis, the major issues were already in the past, except for the Greek bailout process, in which the Luxembourg Presidency was highly involved (Interview No. 4).

In relation to the EU institutions, Luxembourg was able to maintain good and frequent contacts both with the European Commission and the European Parliament. As for the Commission, in the field of financial services, the priorities of the Presidency and the

Commission highly overlapped (Interview No. 4), which made the communication smoother. In addition, the Presidency had an official from the Commission working at the permanent representation of Luxembourg in Brussels. Such close cooperation, in combination with experience of representatives themselves, greatly facilitated the daily contact with the Commission (Interview No. 3).

Nevertheless, both interviewees from Luxembourg admitted that agendas of the two institutions did not always go hand in hand (Interviews No. 3 and No. 4). There were cases when the Presidency was informed about the changes at the last minute (possibly, due to priority shifts within the Commission), hence, this led to the slowdown of the deliberation process (Interview No. 3). In some other cases, the European Commission was reluctant towards the results achieved by the negotiators from the rotating Presidency side (Interview No. 4). Yet, the main constraint put on the rotating chair can be approximated by the number of proposals currently put on the table. Which ones should be prioritised, on the other hand, was completely in discretion of the rotating chair (Interview No. 4).

As regards the European Parliament, Luxembourg, as “a small state, one of the founders of the EU, had a good reputation in front of the Parliament” (Interview No. 3). The Presidency managed to re-establish the trust between two institutions after the previous budgetary negotiations, where the rivalry between member states and the European Parliament had a great impact on the institutional relations (Interview No. 3).

Hereby, despite delaying a challenging act in the EU – the Regulation on money market funds – Luxembourg managed to maintain a neutral stance and good relations with the supranational institutions.

6.4. Takeaways from the Luxembourg Presidency

As in the case of the Latvian Presidency, both legislative acts that were pending during the Luxembourg Presidency supported the hypotheses H4.1 and H4.2 raised in this research. Coherence between the content of the legislation and the national position, a general

agreement in the Council and a highly salient topic both for the Presidency and the EU led to the adoption of the Council Directive regarding the exchange of information in the field of taxation. On the contrary, incongruence between the dossier and the national position for a highly salient issue, despite an accordance in the Council, induced the delay of the negotiations of the Regulation on money market funds.

Whilst the latter point provided a novel insight for the possible strategies presented in Table 4.1, one must take into account the reputation issue. The reputation is often more salient for new Presidencies (Niemann & Mak, 2010). Hence, the choice whether to delay the legislation given the consensual environment in the Council depends on the importance the Presidency attaches to its public image, which is accordingly linked with the country's experience in chairing the Council meetings. Luxembourg, being one of the founding EU members, managed to maintain its good reputation. Therefore, even delaying the negotiations on one of the files was not perceived as a violation of the Presidency norms.

Conclusion

In light of the powers granted to the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, this chapter intended to address the one that is seldom examined – the delay of the legislative process. Whereas Tallberg (2003) paved the way for the future analysis defining Presidency's agenda-setting, agenda-structuring and agenda-exclusion capabilities (the latter being interpreted as a delay power in this chapter), only the first two were analysed more comprehensive in the state of the art. Therefore, based on Tallberg's (2003) definition of agenda-exclusion, this study has provided an operationalisation of the agenda delay strategy.

Considering the fact that a delay in the EU decision-making process is identified not only by an actual exclusion of an issue from the agenda, but also by remaining silent during the discussions (Tallberg, 2003), the chapter presented the main steps in order to observe a postponement of an act during the Presidency term. The results showed that out of 15 Presidencies examined, 4 countries were detected to have delayed specific legislative dossiers. The latter results cannot be compared with the ones in the pre-Lisbon period, as

previous research followed a different methodological line. However, this study showed that, despite the new institutional boundaries set by the treaty amendments, the rotating Presidencies retain their agenda management powers and exert them accordingly.

Seeking for the main explanations of such country behaviour during the term, the chapter examined the following explanatory mechanism: high salience of the policy at the national level, coupled with incongruence of the content of the legislation with the national position. With the objective of ensuring a higher validity of such proposition, a counterfactual was proposed: high policy salience, matched with a congruence between the national and the EU position. In this regard, the study focused only on highly salient policies, which were deemed to provide more insights in relation to the rotating Presidency strategies. The empirical analysis examined two Presidencies – Latvian and Luxembourg – both of which were held in 2015. The results of the analysis are summarised in Table 4.11 and further elaborated regarding each of the cases examined.

Table 4.11: Main findings of the Chapter IV

RQ: To what extent and why do rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU delay specific policy proposals in the post-Lisbon period?	
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Result</i>
H4.1: Council Presidencies tend to delay dossiers in policies which are highly salient for them, yet, the content of the legislative act is incongruent with the national position.	Corroborated
H4.2: Council Presidencies tend to finalise legislation in highly salient policy areas given the congruence of the content of the act with the national position.	Corroborated

The Latvian case on employment policies and especially the amendment of the Posting of Workers Directive presented the exception in operationalising the delay strategy. Instead of delaying the ongoing legislative process, Latvia prevented the initial proposal from being tabled during its term. The country had a clear interest in opposing the new law, considering the lack of implementation of the Enforcement Directive that was adopted right before the Latvian term. In relation to it, despite being addressed on the European Commission's agenda in 2015, and even mentioned as a part of the consultations on the Labour Mobility Package, the proposal for amendment of the Directive on posted workers was tabled only in 2016.

To what extent this was purely the Latvian Presidency achievement rather than a combination of factors, remains a question. Considering tight relations between the Latvian Presidency and the European Commission, such movement by the European Commission could have been induced by the aim to avoid contradicting legislation and to stay in good terms with the Latvian representatives. This can be corroborated by the fact that the final law addressed very few questions raised by the country and its fellow partners in Central and Eastern Europe.

Concerning Luxembourg, the Regulation on money market funds was confirmed to be a political decision not to pick up the file during the term, despite the urge coming from the European Commission. In this case, national interests played a major role for the country to pursue a delay approach, despite a rather consensual environment among the ministers of finance in the Council.

Taking the latter two cases into consideration, the analysis provided sufficient evidence to support the first hypothesis (H4.1). Although the results remain limited to two case studies, they pave the way for the future analyses, following the steps provided, and possibly complementing them by additional factors.

The robustness of these results is further corroborated by two cases, presenting the aim of the rotating Presidencies to finalise the important legislation during their terms. Therefore, based on the Regulation for pre-financing the Youth Employment Initiative, as well as the Council Directive concerning the exchange of information in the field of taxation, second hypothesis can also be supported (H4.2).

Additionally, the analysis of this case study contributed to the expectations raised for the three-dimensional typology (see Table 4.12). A highly salient and incongruent act, facing a dissent in the Council, as presented by the Latvian example with the Posting of Workers Directive, was delayed, whereas congruence of the content with the Presidency's position and agreement among member states led to a rather rapid finalisation of the act (the cases of the Regulation for pre-financing the Youth Employment Initiative and the amendment of the Directive 2011/16/EU as regards mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of

taxation). The case of Luxembourg and the Regulation on money market funds, on the other hand, provided an additional insight: even facing convergence of positions in the Council, yet, a strong national disagreement in relation to the act, the rotating member state chose to delay the legislation. Whilst country representatives titled it as a way to remain neutral over a highly sensitive file, the national interests were clearly at play. Therefore, the country had an official reason to postpone the act to the following semesters.

Table 4.12: Rotating Presidency strategies in three-dimensional typology for highly salient policies

	Congruence (content)	Incongruence (content)
Controversy (Council)	<i>(Advance/Delay)</i>	<i>Delay</i>
Agreement (Council)	<i>Advance</i>	<i>Delay</i>

These results, although constrained to the highly salient policies only, present the allocation of possible rotating Presidency delay strategies in three out of four constellations. The combination of a congruent content and controversy in the Council, however, leaves the question of a possible rotating Presidency strategy open. Whilst this puzzle can be filled by the future analysis, addressing more recent rotating Presidencies, it must be noted that country-related factors should be taken into consideration when drawing more general inferences about these rotating Presidency strategies. This especially stands for the incongruence of the content between the national position and the EU legislation, coupled with a general agreement in the Council. Although the Luxembourg Presidency did delay the Regulation on money market funds, the country, being one of the founding members of the EU, has a generally good reputation. Nevertheless, the situation might be different if such behaviour was to be followed by a relatively new, yet, controversially evaluated member state. However, since no such cases were detected in this study, more rotating Council Presidencies in the recent and upcoming years should be investigated in order to validate this assumption.

To explore the delay power more in detail, an additional evaluation of Spanish and Polish Presidencies, looking at the policies of low salience should also be carried out. This would provide a more refined selection of factors which are deemed to influence the rotating Presidency behaviour, facing an option to exclude a particular issue from the agenda.

This study provided a glimpse into the rotating Presidency powers that still remain under-researched, especially in the pos-Lisbon period. Looking at the absolute numbers of countries which pursued the delay strategy after the Lisbon, around a quarter of them utilised their agenda-exclusion power. As the detected member states comprised both old and new (i.e. Eastern European) member states, this allows to claim that in terms of exerting their institutional powers, the classical old vs. new member states cleavage does not apply.

Furthermore, as presented by both delayed and advanced cases in the same policy areas, the delay power is exercised not at the policy, but rather at the legislation level. This suggests that the rotating Presidency powers should be analysed not only at the macro-, but rather meso- or even micro- level. The Council of the EU deals with a number of low-scale issues, which are parts of more general policies. Therefore, to discern the actual powers of the rotating chair, one needs to look at them from a more nuanced perspective.

List of Interviews

Interview No. 1 (cumulative, via e-mail questionnaire) with Latvian representatives to the EU. May 15, 2018.

Interview No. 2 with a Latvian diplomat. June 5, 2018, Brussels.

Interview No. 3 with a Luxembourg representative to the EU. June 5, 2018, Brussels.

Interview No. 4 with a Luxembourg civil servant. June 26, 2018, Brussels.

Conclusion

In light of the recent internal and external challenges the EU was (and still is) facing, as well as the discussions being raised therefore regarding previous and possible new institutional reforms, this dissertation looks more closely into one of the oldest institutions of the Union – the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. Having gone through several reforms over the last decades, the Council Presidency yet raises the question of efficiency and importance, which constitutes my original objective to undertake this project: does the rotation each half-a-year provide desirable outcomes? Or, better, can the rotating chair actually deliver tangible results?

A first fundamental change, which significantly altered the institutional dynamics, occurred with the Treaty of Lisbon. Transferring the chairmanship of the European Council to the elected President, and the Foreign Affairs Council – to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, clearly portrayed the need to ensure continuity of high politics issues. In this regard, the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU remained behind the scenes of the main EU decision-making process. To a certain extent, it is of no surprise, as the main roadmaps are shaped by the heads of states in the European Council, often gaining more media and public attention. On the other hand, the Council of Ministers inevitably remains a crucial institution within the EU mechanism, with the rotating Presidency in the forefront. Furthermore, as the rotation of the Council Presidency sustained the principle of equality between member states, the resistance to the Lisbon reforms (at their early stage) was quite prominent (Tallberg, 2006). Hence, the rotating post was perceived as an advantageous obligation, commonly shared among the EU members.

Taking this into consideration, the main objective of this research rests upon a broad question, raised in the introduction: to what extent can the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU still be considered as an influential player, especially regarding the Council agenda and the legislative outputs? The fact that the chairmanship of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy issues was transferred to the High Representative did influence the Council stance in the

field. However, the as the European Council does not have a direct impact over the decision-making process, the rotating Presidency retained its powers at the ministerial level.

This broad question cannot be answered by a simple research design. Hence, throughout the four core chapters of this dissertation, I provided a multi-dimensional and multi-methodological investigation of the Presidency powers, focusing on its capabilities to manage the Council agenda. Whilst a number of trajectories could be set for such research, this dissertation rested upon three agenda management powers, identified by Tallberg (2003): agenda-setting, agenda-structuring and agenda-exclusion. Furthermore, in order to go beyond agendas research, I performed an additional analysis linking input agendas with policy outputs.

I believe that this doctoral dissertation puts forward a multifold contribution to the field. Findings presented in the main chapters contribute not only to the state of the art (in the field of the rotating Presidency), but also to the further application of the punctuated equilibrium theory. This dissertation, in its integrity, allows to evaluate the institute of the Council Presidency in a temporal perspective, comparing pre- and post-Lisbon periods and the changes occurred over time. Hereby, the following sections recall the theoretical and empirical contributions of this research. Next, I discuss the overall relevance of this dissertation and its main limitations, opening the path for further research.

1. Theoretical contributions

The main theoretical contributions of this dissertation are twofold: theorising the causes of punctuations in issue salience across rotating Council Presidency programmes, presented in Chapter II, as well as drawing new insights regarding the conditions for the agenda delay during the Presidency term, identified in Chapter IV.

In relation to the punctuations in issue salience across rotating Presidency programmes, which were outlined in Chapter I, one of the major follow up questions regarded the reasons for such shifts in attention. Hereby, Chapter II hypothesised possible causes of such

differences across Presidency programmes. Intuitively, domestic triggers – issue salience and ideology of the government in power, public opinion, contributions to the EU budget or a geographical position – were proposed as factors influencing the content of the rotating Presidency agendas and, hence, issue salience therein. Nevertheless, in addition to the national factors, the European Council agenda, represented by its Conclusions, was further proposed as an important element at the supranational level, influencing the content of the rotating Presidency programmes.

Chapter II demonstrated that three of the above-mentioned factors are essential when discussing differences across rotating Presidency agendas: issue salience for the government in power during the presidency, the geographical position and the European Council agenda. The relevance of the government issue salience is straightforward, since the cabinet is responsible for shaping the rotating Presidency agenda. The division of countries based on the geographical position also presented relevant associations with the rotating Presidency issue salience. The main differences were particularly evident between the Eastern member states group, and the rest of the countries.

With regard to the European Council, similar prioritisation of issues confirms the fact that despite the separation of the chairmanship of two institutions, they remain related. Such findings also suggest that the rotating Presidency, independently from the country holding it, follows the European Council agenda, when preparing its half-year working agenda. Although these results could have been foreseen in advance, no previous research has hypothesised the main reasons for differences across rotating Presidency agendas. Hereby, Chapter II provided new theoretical insights to the agenda studies, simultaneously suggesting an inclusion of more factors (especially at the supranational level) in further reiterations of the study. They would also allow to assess the importance of the government ideology or the contributions to the EU budget, which in this study showed only a limited influence, depending on the specifications tested.

A second, but equally relevant theoretical contribution in the theoretical realm concerns agenda delay strategies, thoroughly discussed in Chapter IV. Given the lack of empirical

studies, especially in the post-Lisbon era, the study provided not only a new theorisation of a strategic agenda-exclusion, but also a new technique to operationalise the delay on the Council agenda. Furthermore, it examined the combination of conditions which may foster the Presidency either to advance or delay certain legislative proposals.

Several exemplary cases of so-called agenda-exclusion powers were provided both by Tallberg and Warntjen, however, they concerned only the pre-Lisbon cases. Furthermore, scholars did not aim to identify broader conditions for exerting agenda-exclusion power on the Council agenda. In this regard, Chapter IV drew new theoretical expectations when it comes to delaying legislative acts during the ministerial debates. In addition, invoking an inductive approach, the study presented configurations of factors (i.e. controversy/agreement among Council members and (in)congruence between the content of the legislation and the national position) as pathways to the delay strategy. Although theoretical expectations based on the interaction of these factors need to be complemented and verified by further studies, this contribution opened a new window in the agenda studies, as well as research on the rotating Presidency powers.

While these theoretical inputs are essential to advance the state of the art, the major added value of this dissertation, however, lies in its empirical contributions. These are discussed in the following section.

2. Empirical contributions

The main findings presented in this dissertation yield significant empirical contributions: 1) the introduction of new dataset of the rotating Presidency programmes, presented in Chapter I; 2) methodological inputs, combined out of a) application of new methodology in order to evaluate trends in the legislative outputs and linking them with the Presidency priorities (Chapter III), as well as b) operationalisation of agenda delay strategy in the Council of the EU (Chapter IV). Furthermore, the studies presented in these chapters, once considered together, contribute to the 3) assessment of the empirical validity of Tallberg's agenda-shaping strategies (i.e. agenda-setting, agenda-structuring and agenda-exclusion), possessed

by the rotating Presidency, as well as an application of the punctuated equilibrium approach to both the rotating Presidency agendas and legislative outputs. Each of these contributions are addressed more thoroughly in the next sections.

2.1. New dataset of rotating Presidency agendas

The hand-coded dataset of 40 rotating Council Presidency programmes in 1997-2017, which is presented in detail in Chapter I, constitutes one of the major contributions of this project. In light of the discourse about the shrinking powers of the rotating Presidency, the initial chapter questions these perceptions by presenting long-term trends in issue salience across rotating Presidency agendas. Taking into account Häge's studies of the Council agenda, approximated by the working group meetings, Chapter I contributes to these findings by examining the input agendas, i.e. half-year work programmes. However, contrary to the previous works, this rotating Presidency programme dataset additionally addresses the country variable, i.e. member state holding the chair. Therefore, it allows to perform a more nuanced cross-policy analysis, accounting for the member state in power at a certain moment in time. In addition, as the coding followed the European Policy Agendas Project, coherence across the agendas provide a basis for a further comparative analysis.

2.2. Methodological inputs

One of the most substantial contributions in methodological terms was yielded in Chapter III. This chapter evaluated the binding EU legislation by applying a novel quantitative text analysis technique – a dynamic topic model. The method is suited to analyse large corpora of unstructured texts following unsupervised approach. In other words, without pre-determining initial topics, utilising the Python software and its relevant packages, the model detected the main themes (being both core and rather niche topics), prevailing in the binding EU legislation over time.

This analysis was the first attempt to investigate thematic trends in the EU legislation employing a dynamic topic model approach. As presented by the results, topics detected by the software represent a variety of policy areas, either governed at the EU level, or belonging

to the shared competences of the member states. Furthermore, contrary to the other automated text-analysis methods, the dynamic topic model approach allowed to trace the development of themes over time. As a consequence, this trait enabled to interpret the legislative dynamics from the punctuated equilibrium approach, evaluating two of the explanatory mechanisms: institutional changes, as well as the rotation of the Council chair.

The initial driver to perform the analysis presented in Chapter III was a lack of similar studies in the field. Nevertheless, the results supported the primary objective – to interpret the EU legislative outputs from the punctuated equilibrium perspective. This, in turn, allowed to address the persisting gap between input agendas and legislative outputs. In this regard, the dynamic topic model is a suitable technique to investigate thematic trends in the EU legislation on a large scale, trace their evolution and link them with agendas of different EU institutions.

The second methodological contribution is introduced in Chapter IV. Since the research on agenda-exclusion is limited, presenting the new set of theoretical expectations on the agenda delay has required a new methodological contribution. Chapter IV proposes a novel approach to identify delays, willingly pursued by the rotating Presidency. Step-by-step operationalisation of issue exclusion from the ministerial meetings serves as a template for similar analyses in the future, thus, raising a new objective – establishing and validating a common pattern(s) of agenda-exclusion strategies across countries.

Chapter IV investigated the extent to which the rotating Presidency can stall dossiers on the Council agenda in the post-Lisbon era. Based on 15 Council chairs examined since 2010, four of them pursued a delay strategy in the Council of the EU. In other words, more than a quarter of member states successfully managed to protract the negotiations on specific legislative acts. Such outcomes suggest that, besides agenda-setting and agenda-structuring, agenda-exclusion is still in the hands of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU.

2.3. Assessing the theory with new empirical data

This dissertation applies Tallberg's claims about agenda-shaping powers of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU by means of the new dataset on the programmes of the rotating Presidency, looking into agenda-setting and agenda-structuring powers, as well as by investigating the agenda delay. Hereby, findings present that even in the post-Lisbon era the rotating Presidency remains in charge of the Council agenda dynamics. This analysis is coupled with an application of the punctuated equilibrium theory to the new datasets: programmes of the rotating Presidencies, as well as the EU legislation, both of which provide support for the main assumptions raised by the theoretical approach.

2.3.1. Three agenda management powers

Chapter I opened up the discussions about the agenda control powers possessed by the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. By investigating the long-term trends across rotating Presidency work programmes, this dissertation presents the main variations in issue attention across 40 rotating Council Presidencies that took office between 1997 and 2017. The results indicate that, despite several institutional changes, the rotating Presidency institute sustained its advantageous position to shape the Council agenda.

Nevertheless, gradually decreasing fluctuations in issue salience supported the initial hypothesis: the introduction of the multi-annual Presidency programmes (later on – the Trio Presidency) enhanced the continuity of policies, thus, leading to less variations in issue attention. On the other hand, the Trio setting secured a stable room for manoeuvre: since 2006 (when the Trio was first introduced) each rotating chair can shape up approximately 30% of the Council agenda. In this regard, even within the boundaries of the common 18-month programme, the equality principle in addressing domestic priorities was sustained. In other words, Chapter I provided a counter-argument to a persisting opinion (especially after the Treaty of Lisbon) that the influence of the rotating Presidency became limited.

Looking at these findings from the agenda management perspective, the results provide abundant evidence to confirm that the Council Presidency is in charge of agenda-setting (as

policy entrepreneurship) and agenda-structuring activities. Nevertheless, the extent to which variations in policy attention constitute the genuine introduction of new issues on the agenda rather than a resettlement of the current priorities, is beyond the scope of this dissertation and it remains open for further investigation. In principle, it would be reasonable to assume that the separation between the (now appointed) chairmanship of the European Council and the Presidency of the Council has diluted the actual agenda-setting powers (i.e. introduction of new issues) of the Council Presidency. However, considering the collaboration with the Commission, the Presidency may claim credit for certain dossiers. Yet, to evaluate the extent to which the rotating Presidency can introduce new topics on the Council agenda, as a cooperation with the Commission, requires further research. On the other hand, fluctuations in issue attention, widely discussed in Chapter I, clearly confirm agenda-structuring powers the rotating chair maintains.

Finally, the third power – agenda-exclusion – is investigated in Chapter IV. The chapter provides evidence supporting the view that, even after Lisbon, the Presidency of the Council of the EU (regardless of the seniority of the country) possesses and exerts a delay power on the Council agenda. Although no further comparisons in the scope of protracted legislation can be drawn between pre- and post-Lisbon periods, Chapter IV can be regarded as a ground for continuing agenda-exclusion studies at the Council level, accounting for more relevant factors.

It is evident that institutional amendments introduced in the past two decades did limit the room for manoeuvre of the rotating Presidency. Nevertheless, as presented in Chapters I and IV, the chair can still influence around 1/3 of the Council agenda by prioritising certain proposals or excluding some issues from the table. In this regard, Tallberg's typology – presented more than a decade ago – can still be applied to the post-Lisbon period. The only exception is the Presidency power to introduce new issues on the agenda, which became rather limited after the latest treaty changes, yet, needs to be investigated further.

2.3.2. Punctuated equilibrium and the rotating Presidency agendas

A second contribution in assessing the theory (additionally to the Tallberg's approach presented in the previous section) is linked with the interpretation of the rotating Presidency agendas from a broader perspective: focusing on particular long-term dynamics and attention paid to policies. In this regard, Chapters I and III applied the punctuated equilibrium approach. Following the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) and especially the European Policy Agendas Project (EUPAP), as a branch of the former, Chapter I yields new insights into the EU agendas studies, focusing on the Council of the EU. Chapter III, instead, evaluates the dynamics in the EU legislative outputs from the punctuated equilibrium perspective, and relates them with the input agendas.

To a certain extent, the longitudinal trends of the rotating Presidency programmes resemble the main tendencies on the European Council agenda (presented in EUPAP). In other words, whereas certain policy areas (such as international affairs or macroeconomics) remained 'sticky' on the agenda, the others showed substantial punctuations in issue attention over time. These observations are to a certain extent trivial, given that the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU is a dynamic institution, held by different member states each semester. Nevertheless, the study presented in Chapter I looked at the rotating Presidency agenda as a single unit, which, as the findings show, can be interpreted from the punctuated equilibrium perspective.

Chapter III, instead, extended the application of this theoretical approach even further, examining the content of the EU legislation over time. The main empirical contributions presented in Chapter III were already addressed in a previous section. Yet, it is important to note that the EU legislation (as an output of the agendas) can accordingly be analysed from the punctuated equilibrium point of view. The topics detected by the dynamic topic model demonstrated both incremental as well as significant developments in the scope of the legislative acts adopted each semester. As a result, Chapter III investigated two factors, as possible causes of punctuations in the legislative outputs: institutional and leadership changes, the latter concerning the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. Certainly they are not exhaustive and require a further inclusion and investigation of venue-shopping

activities or exogenous events, especially acknowledging the fact that the rotating chair cannot be regarded as a single influencer of the legislative dynamics. Nevertheless, this study provides a solid ground to base further research on, in particular aiming to apply the dynamic topic modelling approach.

To this end, Chapter I and Chapter III brought an added value into the field of Comparative Agendas research while extending the scholarship at the EU level. Findings supporting the main theoretical assumptions simultaneously confirm the fact that it is necessary to continue the research on the European Policy Agendas, which would allow to compare the EU institutions over time, examine the main attention shifts and, most importantly, link them with the policy outputs. In this regard, Chapter III discussed legislative acts, which are analysed through the same theoretical lenses. Hence, connecting input agendas with legislative outputs would yield a substantial added value to the field of EU studies.

In sum, the above-mentioned theoretical and empirical contributions add to multiple research fields: rotating Presidency studies, European policy agendas, as well as to the broad field of EU institutional studies. Each of the core chapters of this dissertation simultaneously addresses a component of a common puzzle and specific gaps in knowledge of different fields by introducing a new dataset, examining new theoretical expectations and applying new methodological approaches. Taking this input into account, the following section summarises the main findings of this dissertation, which is followed by new angles to tackle the persisting research puzzles.

3. The main takeaways from this dissertation

Insofar, to a large extent I have discussed the academic contributions of this research project. Nonetheless, I believe that this dissertation carries important implications to the debate about the necessity of institutional reforms at the supranational level, and – in particular – about the powers and influence of member states on the decision-making process of the Union.

The main trends in issue attention on the rotating Presidency agendas in the past 20 years suggest that changes on the agenda are incremental rather than abrupt. Certain policy areas

have so far remained largely ‘sticky’ on the agenda, since they pertain to fields that, while sorely needed for the functioning of the Union, remain highly politicised (and hence, more suitable to intergovernmental politics). These, for instance, include macroeconomics and international affairs. The remaining policy areas, however, exhibit punctuations over time. This carries important implications for the possible reform of the rotating Presidency. In this regard, the deliberated elimination of the rotating mechanism in essential policy areas, such as economic affairs or social and employment policies (Puetter, 2014), and the establishment of a long-term elected President may fail to change significantly the dynamics in the Council. This is due, to some extent, to the fact that in the post-Lisbon period rotating Presidencies have approximately 30% of room for manoeuvre in setting the Council agenda, i.e. emphasising policies of their interest.

Therefore, whilst the majority of issues are addressed on a continuous basis, each member state has an opportunity to emphasise its priorities and pursue further development of related policies. In other words, eliminating the rotating Presidency would imply the likely decrease in salience of precisely those items that show more abrupt punctuations – the change would go against the interests of those member-states that clearly need the rotating Presidency to bring onto the agenda issues otherwise neglected by other members. As such, the rotating Presidency remains a powerful instrument in defence of the principle of diversity in the Union.

On the other hand, results presented in Chapter III suggest that the link between the Presidency priorities expressed in the half-year programme and the actual policy outputs, i.e. legislation adopted, is rather weak. In other words, since the majority of the EU decisions are made under the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP), requiring a qualified majority voting in the Council (and a simple majority in the European Parliament), the rotating chair is constrained with regard to what it can achieve during its half-year term³¹. However, findings of Chapter III suggest that the rotating chair can nonetheless exert a (limited) influence over the decision-making process.

³¹ The question remains whether the so-called Presidency priorities, as named in their work programmes, represent the actual salient issues for the country or rather those acts that are expected to be finalised in one semester in order to claim credit for them.

The latter statement can be well illustrated by the Latvian and Luxembourg Presidencies in 2015. Chapter IV demonstrated how these two countries successfully utilised their negative agenda-setting power – i.e. succeeded in postponing the negotiations of specific acts. Although such evidence cannot lead to broad generalisations, they nonetheless well show that the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU is a strategic actor, which (when the circumstances are favourable enough), may succeed in pushing certain proposals forward, whilst protracting the others in order to win time for further negotiations and, possibly, dragging the final outcome closer to the chair holder's ideal point³².

In sum, the work carried out throughout the four chapters of this dissertation shows that, also in the post-Lisbon era, the Presidency of the Council of the EU maintains several institutional assets (mostly in agenda management terms) to leave an imprint in the decision-making process. Notably, the findings of this research complement recent work by Wratil (2019) on congruence between legislative outputs and public priorities in some member states. Similarly to Wratil (2019), this study shows the importance of country-level salience (here – mostly at the government level) in the policy-making process. By managing the Council agenda, the rotating Presidency is able to prioritise policies, which are highly salient domestically. The extent to which these priorities turn into legislative outputs during the six-month period is, however, limited: the effect of the change in issue salience during one Presidency term, likely, continues to be reflected in the legislation over a protracted period of time. While testing such expectation is outside the scope of this dissertation and should be examined in further research, it is beyond doubt that the rotating chair should be taken into account when estimating possible outcomes of the policy process.

4. Limitations, as an outlook for further research

While the results of the different chapters of this dissertation provide a valuable addition to the state of the art on the powers of the Presidency, several limitations need to be taken into account when drawing broader implications. This section provides an overview of the main shortcomings of this dissertation, accordingly, outlining the paths for further research.

³² It is important to note that such statement should be further verified while taking into account positions of the other EU decision-makers, i.e. institutions involved, and their contribution to the given legislation.

One of the main methodological issues left unsolved with regard to the dataset of the rotating Presidency programmes is linked to the inter-coder reliability. Although the coding of the Presidency work programmes followed an established codebook (EUPAP), taking the European Council Conclusions dataset as the actual coding examples, an involvement of the second person in the coding process would ensure a higher validity of the study.

Moreover, in relation to the agenda management activities, one of the key puzzles should be further addressed: whether after the Treaty of Lisbon the rotating chair still possesses agenda-setting powers, interpreted as the introduction of new issues on the agenda. The punctuations across different Presidency agendas demonstrate that the EU member state holding the office is able to prioritise certain policies, but the agenda-setting capabilities and the degree of actual policy entrepreneurship is questionable, especially after the chairmanship of the European Council became a separate institution. In this regard, a further evaluation of the collaboration between the rotating Presidency and the European Commission would undoubtedly provide (at least to a certain extent) answers to the question raised above. This would require to analyse the extent to which the Commission takes into account the Presidency priorities in formulating their annual agendas. While this is feasible in principle, it fell outside the scope and means of this doctoral project and it needs to be addressed by future research.

A second shortcoming of this dissertation concerns the examination of supranational factors over the rotating Presidency agendas. Chapter II, which aimed to reveal the main factors explaining issue salience in the rotating Presidency programmes, encompassed mainly national elements, additionally testing the relation between the rotating Presidency and the European Council issue salience. Nevertheless, since during its term each rotating chair is obliged to communicate with the Commission, and since it works together with the European Parliament on the legislative proposals, agendas of these institutions and priorities expressed therein could yield additional insights to the rotating Presidency studies.

As for the final agenda management power of the rotating Presidency – agenda-exclusion – Chapter IV, due to its qualitative nature, has a rather limited external validity. In this regard,

to validate the current operationalisation of the agenda delay strategy and to draw further expectations about the Presidency behaviour, Spanish and Polish cases (representing low-salience issues) should be examined further. In addition, although Chapter IV did not aim to perform a comparative pre- and post-Lisbon analysis, adopting this comparative approach would provide important findings regarding the change in magnitude of the delay power. This would be of a great interest, since one would expect that Presidencies, in light of the reduced (formal) powers in the post-Lisbon period, would resort to informal strategies to maintain their influence. In other words, the analysis of pre-Lisbon presidencies following the same methodology would provide additional inputs to the debate about the importance of the Treaty of Lisbon on the rotating Presidency institute.

Yet another essential aspect to be addressed in the future research is the level of policy analysis. For the purpose of this research, the codebook of the European Policy Agendas Project was employed to ensure an even coding of the programmes and a higher comparability with the existing datasets both at the national (as a part of the Comparative Agendas Project) and supranational (EUPAP) levels. Nevertheless, the deeper qualitative study conducted in Chapter IV suggested that analysis at the level of policy-area is often too broad to present significant cross-Presidency trends. The cases of Latvian and Luxembourg Presidencies demonstrated that strategies employed by the chairs depend on a specific nature of the issues at stake rather than just on the policy area. In other words, Presidencies may aim to put forward or, on the other hand, stall certain legislative acts, even when they belong to the same policy field.

From a methodological perspective, the adoption of such sub-topic approach in the study of the differences in issue salience across Presidencies could provide a completely new and much more detailed picture. Partly, this was presented in Chapter III, depicting fluctuations in legislation and then linking them with the Presidency issue salience, mostly at the sub-topic level of the EUPAP codebook. Nevertheless, a more thorough examination of sub-topics in each policy field may reveal further differences across member states, ensuring an unprecedented degree of detail in the analysis.

One may argue that agendas alone have little to say about the rotating Presidency performance. Input agendas, presented in their work programmes, mainly address questions to which the chair is expecting to pay attention during its half-year term. However, unexpected events or the change of circumstances may alter such plans, hence, also the final outputs. In this regard, a comparative analysis between input and output agendas of the rotating Presidencies (i.e. between Presidency programmes and reports on the main results delivered in 6 months) could be regarded as an essential study for further generalisations, underlining the main inconsistencies between the goals and the actual achievements of the rotating chair. Such study would also investigate the extent to which the Presidency work agendas are altered in one semester due to *force major*.

Additionally, performing further research on the link between the main fluctuations on the rotating Presidency agendas and the legislative outputs, while taking into account a time-lag and agendas of other EU institutions, one would be able to evaluate the extent to which the contributions to specific legislative acts came from the member state holding the rotating Council office. Alternatively, such analysis could be carried out by looking at the venue-shopping activities or external events, opening the windows of opportunities, as possible strategies to influence the EU decision-making process. As a matter of fact, research on the association between input and output agendas, or agendas and legislative outputs would provide the most rich results due to the limited analyses in this field. Hereby, this dissertation could be utilised as an initial point for such study.

These limitations, notwithstanding the analyses carried out throughout the four chapters of this dissertation, not only show that the Presidency maintains an underestimated degree of power on the EU agenda, but also open a wide range of additional avenues for the future research: both concerning the Presidency as such, and other institutions.

5. Final remarks

This dissertation provides a coherent overview of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU in the agenda management field. By addressing persisting gaps in existing research through the application of agenda-setting theories to the new data on the rotating Presidency

institute, this dissertation moves our knowledge of the rotating Presidency and of its role in the EU policy making process decisively further.

In light of the findings presented in this dissertation, I hope to encourage experts of the Presidency of the Council of the EU to revisit their works in the pre-Lisbon period and contribute further to the field by examining more recent, post-Lisbon rotating chairs. Accordingly, this work is an incentive for younger scholars to investigate the gaps addressed in the previous section and, therefore, to develop further our knowledge about the powers, perks and shortcomings of the rotating Presidency. All in all, this dissertation suggests that the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU is a multipolar, dynamic institution, which reflects the wealth of diversity of the many EU member states.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Coding template

The coding of the Presidency programmes is based on the general EU Policy Agendas Project codebook, version 3.3, updated in April, 2015 (Alexandrova et al., 2015). The codebook has 21 main topic and 250 subtopics. In order to adjust the codebook to the rotating Presidency programmes, two additional codes were introduced:

- The sub-code for sports policy – 2312. The original EU Policy Agendas Project codebook does not include it, however, since 2010 sport is a part of 10 Council configurations (European Council, 2010), more specifically – the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council. Therefore, it is necessary to code this policy area separately.
- A code for (quasi-) sentences including more than one topic/policy area – 2200. This code refers to coded units that 1) cannot be split according to the coding rules and name two or more policy areas (e.g. their interrelation) in one quasi-sentence; 2) the coder is not sure whether these (quasi-) sentences could be split into smaller units.

All rotating Presidency programmes are coded at the quasi-sentence³³ level, assigning a single subtopic code to them – the so-called CAPIC (Comparative Agendas Project Issue Code³⁴). The coded content includes the main parts of the documents, excluding appendices and lists of events at the end of the chapters in order to simplify the comparability of the

³³ Definition of a quasi-sentence and instructions how to split a full sentence into quasi- ones are taken from Budge et al. (2001) work, as well as the Manifesto Project providing Manifesto Coding Instructions (Werner et al., 2011).

Exceptions:

- The Presidency priorities (listed either in the sentence or as bullet points) are treated separately (even if they do not make a quasi-sentence), due to the emphasis given to these issues by the country.
- If a coded sentence contains a primary and a secondary part, and the secondary one can be treated as a quasi-sentence (e.g. addresses the general importance, emphasises), it is coded separately. Otherwise, if a secondary sentence serves only as an explanatory part, it is coded together with the primary, as one unit.
- If the sentence addresses a single policy area by mentioning a few related actions, e.g. ‘the key issues include gender equality and an equal pay between men and women’, they are coded under a more broader topic, in this case – gender issues.

³⁴ The coding, however, does not refer to particular countries named in the coded statements. Such possibility was provided in the EUPAP codebook, allowing to account for more nuanced content, e.g. regarding economic policies or international relations with third countries/regions (Alexandrova et al., 2014).

programmes (not all of them contain event calendars, however, the most important meetings are named in the body text).

Contrary to the EU Policy Agendas Project, not all the sentences in Presidency programmes are coded. As some scholars correctly pointed out (Jennings et al., 2011a; Mortensen et al., 2011; Breeman et al., 2009), executive agendas, which they operationalised as speeches, tend to include symbolic elements about the government's achievements or certain events that do not define any action intended to be taken by the government in the upcoming period. Therefore, scholars excluded them from the coding (Breeman et al., 2009) or assigned a separate code (Mortensen et al., 2011).

A similar tendency can be discerned in the Presidency programmes. These documents often include sentences without a clear reference to the upcoming Presidency or policies the Council deals with. On the one hand, they can be interpreted as importance attached to certain issues due to the space given in the document. On the other hand, the symbolic meaning of such sentences create a measurement error of the salience attached to policies, since they do not refer to any particular intentions or actions, sometimes neither the Presidency itself.

Therefore, considering the purpose of the study presented in Chapter I, i.e. to reveal the salience of policies for different rotating Council Presidencies, and taking into account the fact that the Presidency programme is a subject to certain European rules, required to have a symbolic content, this study follows the strategy applied by the above-mentioned authors (Mortensen et al., 2011; Breeman et al., 2009), excluding a part of a content from the coding procedure. For this purpose, the following categories for the content exclusion are used:

- The sentence does not refer to any of the policy areas and codes defined in the codebook.
- The sentence represents actions, achievements of previous Presidencies or outcomes of certain policies.
- The sentence elaborates on the possible outcomes of certain policies (explanatory function).

- The sentence is a statement that does not relate to the Presidency or any actions/intentions/importance/priorities/etc. that should/will be performed by the EU institutions (including the Presidency).
- The sentence presents an opportunity (expressed by *can/could*), however, works more as a statements, since it does not guarantee neither an action, intention or requirement, nor an importance. E.g. ‘the multilateral trade agreements can contribute to the development of global rules’.
- The subject of the sentence is another EU institution, e.g. the European Council. The latter is excluded in order to avoid (or aiming to minimise) the measurement fallacy regarding the two different institutions, which were separated after the Treaty of Lisbon, when the Presidency of the European Council was transferred to the permanent President, elected for 2.5 years.

Regarding the coded content, salience was denoted by applying 7 categories of (quasi-) sentences:

1. Priority – the category denotes all (quasi-) sentences that refer to the priorities explicitly named in the Presidency programme, since they can best describe the salience attached to issues. Hence, the category entails all (quasi-) sentences including the word ‘priority’ or related to it (e.g. ‘prioritise’).
2. Action – refers to concrete actions that are planned to be taken or accomplished during the half-year term. Verbs indicating the action: *will (do something), actions will focus on (something)*.
3. Intention – represents the aim to take an action (usually by the Presidency), but does not necessarily imply a certain move or an expected result; could also express duties. Intention is denoted by verbs/phrases such as *intends to, the goal/aim/ambition/objective/purpose/responsibility is, the (paramount) task will be, will aim/endeavour/seek/strive/attempt/focus, is willing to, is prepared to, is interested in (something), will try, wants/plans/wishes/hopes to, would like to, expects to, will set a high level of ambition, may, will be responsible for, Presidency’s vision is, is committed/devoted to, stands ready to, proposes, etc.*

4. Requirement – defines the action or policy/measure/mean that is necessary in order to accomplish certain goals/tasks, to cope with challenges facing the EU or to fulfil a certain condition. Verbs/phrases referring to this category: *must, should, shall, have to, needs to, is required for/requires, call for, is to (do something), is/are essential for, is necessary for, becomes a necessity, is crucial for (requirement expressed), is a precondition, is important (in order) to do (something), is of utmost importance, is vital to (do something/that something is done), it is decisive, it is imperative, would be unconceivable without, is called upon (doing something), is one of the conditions, etc.*
5. Emphasis/importance given to a policy area/action – the broadest category, including (quasi-) sentences that 1) attach importance to certain issues that ought to be dealt with or are currently at stake, but no intention for an action is expressed explicitly or no clear actor for taking the initiative is named; 2) express the importance of a specific policy, a mean or a project that is currently ongoing and create a certain value for the future of EU development. Verbs/phrases referring to this category: *emphasis will be given/placed, at the heart/at the core/ at the centre/ at the top of the Presidency's agenda, is a central component/element, play a vital/central/major role, remain high on the agenda, will be a matter on the Council agenda, is a key/key theme/key topic/key areas/key proposal/key activities/key issues/key element, is of key significance, constitutes a significant strength, the main policy theme, will be at the top of relevant initiatives, will be of particular interest, will be an important (issue)/key/main focus (of attention), is/has a major interest, have (major) impact, is of paramount importance, is (concrete thing) of utmost importance, is crucial, issues which have particular resonance, an important aspect/element/catalyst, attaches (great/utmost) importance, is a centerpiece, is vital/a vital interest, is integral to the realisation, the emphasis will be, will draw/devote attention to, form the basis, is the foundation, will form a foundation, focus will be on, is the motto of the Presidency, holds a great potential, is a cornerstone, will constitute one of the most important elements, remains for the time being one of the most complex and significant policies, is an invaluable asset, is an important tool, are the pillars of, is a collective responsibility, is a milestone, one of the main mechanisms, is a major/strategic driver, will devote particular attention, special attention will be given/paid/devoted, will devote due attention, focus will be on (something), will focus its attention, will pay due attention,*

will emphasise/put an emphasis on (something), concentrate its efforts on highlighting, focal area is, believes that (expressed importance), will act as a framework, is a guiding principle, irreplaceable partner, lay particular stress, special responsibility, is a strategic partner, is a historic task, constitute a sound basis, etc.

6. Concern – the category encompasses (quasi-) sentences that express a current issue to be dealt with, something to which the Presidency attaches importance by addressing the issue. Verbs/phrases referring to a concern: *concern, be of concern, remains a key issue, the (key) issue is, there is still uncertainty, involves risks, the problem is not solved, the situation is characterised (naming negative factors), (something) is becoming increasingly difficult, caused a great deal of misunderstanding, have an increasingly serious effect, is under pressure, are overburdened, there is a lot of untapped potential, significant obstacles, destructive, damaging consequences, is impeded, suffers from the lack of (something), create obstacles, is hampered by <...> constraints, has become tricky, presents new demands, etc.*
7. Event – the last category refers to various events (either within the EU or in a global environment) that are named in the body text of the Presidency. It relates to conferences, international meetings and other types of events that are planned to be held during the rotating Presidency, organised or being prepared by the chair. In other words, if the meeting is about to demand time from the Presidency by being on the agenda, it is coded in this category. N.B. Ministerial conferences across different Council configurations are not treated as events, since all the Council activities mainly consist of ministerial meetings.

Furthermore, an additional coding category is also applied – relations with the EU institutions, i.e. the European Commission and/or the European Council. Although this category does not relate to the salience itself, it helps to make correlations between the salience attached by the Presidency and by supranational EU institutions, aiming to define to what extent they coincide.

By addressing 7 categories defining issue salience, the study aims to eliminate the ambiguity, which could be created by more general, vague sentences, often having a symbolic,

representational role. Taking into consideration ambiguous language of the Presidency programmes, these categories produce a more refined definition of salience of topics for specific Presidencies.

Another specificity of the coding is the division between (quasi-) sentences directly linked to the rotating Presidency and the EU as a whole. This distinction draws a line between priorities/actions to be performed by the Presidency, and more general goals, interpreted as the EU objectives/priorities. Further criteria for such division is applied:

1) (Quasi-) sentences referring to the Presidency:

- Include initiatives that will be (or are planned/intended to be) performed by the Presidency and entail a clear reference to the chair (calling it ‘the Presidency’ or just using the name of the country), e.g. ‘the Presidency will/ will support’, ‘the Presidency sees the need’, ‘the Presidency attaches the utmost importance’, ‘the Presidency is aware of’, ‘Greece emphasises/ underlines/ believes that we should/ recognises the importance of’, ‘being a traditionally maritime country, Greece acknowledges the great potential and opportunity that marine and maritime activities hold’ (defines a priority area for the country), etc.
- A pronoun ‘we’ in most cases³⁵ is also considered as a reference to the Presidency, e.g. ‘we see it crucial’, ‘in our efforts’, ‘we shall highlight’, etc.
- Whenever a specific committee or the Council itself is mentioned, it is interpreted as a reference to the Presidency. Since the country presides and manages the work of this institution, all the work done by the Council can also be linked with the rotating Presidency, e.g. ‘the Competitiveness council will provide’, ‘... remains a priority for the Council’, etc.
- Explanatory sentences, going after the ones where a clear reference to the Presidency is made, however, only when they specify the actions planned. E.g. ‘This will include the successful implementation of the recent decisions on the

³⁵ In some cases the pronoun “we” is used to refer to the EU in general. Hence, this division is interpreted depending on the content.

relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers, the effective functioning of hotspots, and steps to foster operational cooperation between member states.’

- Events/meetings named in the main text. It is important to note that only the events, where a clear reference to the Presidency as the host is made, are coded. In other words, sentences such as ‘the meeting will be held during the Presidency term’ is coded as an EU-level event, not the Presidency-related.

2) (Quasi-) sentences referring to the EU in a more general sense:

- Present EU priorities as such, e.g. ‘a key priority for the Union is’.
- Actions/intentions for an action that are to be performed by the EU in general, e.g. ‘the EU and NATO will adopt a Joint Declaration’, ‘the EU will continue to create the right conditions for businesses’, ‘the Union will play an increasingly growing role’, ‘efforts to increase the EU’s capability and strengthen cooperation are part of the ambitions in the area of civil protection’, ‘may also be put on the agenda’ (an intention for an action), ‘a ministerial conference on trafficking in human beings will be held in Brussels’, etc.
- Requirements for an action (that might not necessarily will be performed), e.g. ‘the EU should do’, ‘it is our collective task to develop a Union built on the shared values’, ‘<subject> needs to be done/is a prerequisite’, etc.
- Attach salience to issues in a more general sense, e.g. ‘education and training have a crucial role to play’, ‘the reform will be of central importance’, ‘the EU Integrated Maritime Policy is an important tool’, ‘a strong and effective single market is decisive’, ‘the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is the core of international climate efforts’, ‘equality between women and men is a fundamental and core value of the EU’, etc.
- Express a concern, e.g. ‘Corruption is a major facilitating factor in the spread of organised crime’; ‘Community policies in this area have so far not matched the magnitude of the immigration phenomenon that we are facing.’; ‘An estimated 28 million are infected with HIV/AIDS.’
- When the subject of the (quasi-) sentence is not clear (e.g. there is no direct connection with the Presidency or the Council), coded units are treated as

more general, EU-related ones, e.g. ‘it is hoped that a new framework for cooperation between the EU and Russia will be established during the Polish Presidency’.

Additional notes:

- Conditional sentences are included and coded as an intention, e.g. ‘The question of a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) may be discussed again during the Netherlands Presidency if the leading group of member states that have opted for closer cooperation in this area agree on a proposal for a directive.’
- Sentences referring to an action, which reflect the accountability of the Presidency, are excluded, since they do not have any direct reference to an action to be taken, e.g. ‘The Presidency will present the outcomes of the event at the ministerial meeting of the OECD Environment Policy Committee in Paris and at the Environment Council meeting.’
- Regarding the trilogue negotiations, sentences are not coded, as the Presidency does not have much power in setting or controlling them (these sentences mostly concern the beginning of negotiations, however, involve activities and calendars of the Parliament and the Commission, which cannot be highly influenced by the Presidency).
- (Quasi-) sentences of which the author is not certain, are complemented by an asterisk (*) next to the code assigned.
- If the content of the coded sentence is not entirely clear (because it continues the topic of the antecedent or is elaborated in a following one), a short explanation by the author is made in [...] brackets.
- Although there is a general code for international organisations (except financial ones) – 1926 – sentences referring to very specific topics, e.g. climate change, are coded under more specific categories (e.g. 700 for environmental policies). Only in case a broad and general reference to an international organisation is made, 1926 code is used. Such decision was made due to the fact that in the Presidency programmes relations with international organisations were also named under respective topics,

e.g. dealing with the climate change (ENV Council) or financial regulation and G20 (ECOFIN Council).

- If relations with foreign partners are named under the specific Council configurations, they are coded under this particular policy area. However, if the sentence refers to a couple of broader international issues or relations with the EU's partners are named under the Foreign Affairs Council configuration, they are coded under 1900.
- Europe 2020 and Lisbon Strategy, when mentioned in a more general sense, are coded as 100.
- Sentences referring to growth of the economy in a broader sense are coded under 108.
- Law and Crime (12) policy area is used as a synonym for the Justice and Home Affairs policy area and issues addressed respectively, except of civil rights and migration issues, which were coded under topics 3 or 9 accordingly.

Appendix 2

Salience of policy areas for the European Council and the Council of the EU: comparison across studies				
Issue ranking by the highest levels of salience	Rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU (Vaznonyte) 1997-2017	Council of the EU (Häge, 2016) 1995-2014	European Council (Häge (2016), utilising data from Alexandrova et al. (2014)) 1995-2014	European Council (Alexandrova et al., 2014) 1975-2012
1.	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	Foreign Affairs	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	International affairs
2.	Macroeconomics	Justice & Home Affairs	Macroeconomics	Macroeconomics
3.	Banking, Finance and Internal Trade	General Affairs	EU Governance and Government Operations	Governance
4.	Law and Crime	Internal Market & Industry	Banking, Finance and Internal Trade	Banking, finance & internal trade
5.	Environment	Agriculture	Defence	Defence
6.	EU Governance and Government Operations	Environment	Labour and Employment	Employment
7.	Defence	Economic and Financial Affairs	Law and Crime	Law & crime
8.	Immigration	Transport	Immigration	Environment
9.	Agriculture and Fisheries	Fisheries	Environment	Civil rights & liberties
10.	Space, Science, Technology and Communications	Employment and Social Policy	Energy	Energy
11.	Labour and Employment	Education, Youth & Culture	Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties	Foreign trade
12.	Foreign Trade	Budget	Foreign Trade	Agriculture & fisheries
13.	Energy	Health & Consumer Policy	Space, Science, Technology and Communications	Immigration
14.	Transportation	Research	Social Policy	Science & technology

15.	Social Policy	Development	Regional and Urban Policy and Planning	Social policy
16.	Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties	Telecommunications	Education	Regional policy
17.	Health	Energy	Agriculture and Fisheries	Transportation
18.	Culture and Media		Transportation	Education
19.	Education		Health	Health
20.	Regional and Urban Policy and Planning		Culture and Media	Culture
21.	Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues		Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues	Lands & water

* Comparable policy areas (regarding the ranking of issues) are bolded.

** Miscellaneous code from the rotating Presidency agendas (representing a couple of issues) is excluded. However, by its salience, it lies between Regional and Urban Policy and Planning and Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues codes.

Appendix 3

Code matching between Manifesto Project Dataset and the rotating Council Presidency dataset, based on the European Policy Agendas Project codebook

Code in the Manifesto Project Dataset	Code in the rotating Council Presidency dataset (CAPIC)
101	19
102	
103	
107	
109	
104	16
105	
106	
108	20
110	
201	2
202	
203	
204	
503	
606	
607	
608	
705	
401	15
402	
403	
406	18
407	

404	1
408	
409	
410	
412	
413	
414	
416	
411	17 and 10
501	7
502	23
504	13 and 3
505	
706	
506	6
507	
605	12
701	5
702	
704	
405	
703	4
601_2	9
602_2	
301	14
302	

Explanations and exemptions:

- From the External Relations domain (No. 1), codes related to the EU (108 and 110) are matched with the EU governance issues (20) in the rotating Presidency programmes dataset, as they talk about an extension of EU roles.
- In the Presidency programmes dataset health (3) and social policies (13) are grouped together, following the coding in the Manifesto Project Dataset (in the latter policies are presented under a single code).
- For the same reason, environment (7) is grouped together with public lands, water management and territorial issues (21), as they go together in the Manifesto Project Dataset.
- In addition to the previous topics, space, science, technology and communications (17) are presented together with the transport policy (10) in the rotating Presidency agendas dataset.
- Codes 303-305 in the Manifesto Project Dataset (belonging to the Political System domain) were disregarded, since they are related only to the national political system and cannot be matched with the coding of the rotating Presidency programmes (in the latter they refer only to the EU efficiency of the administration, and not national political systems).
- Code 415 (Marxist Analysis) was also excluded due to its irrelevance for the comparative study.
- Codes from the domain 'Fabric of Society', related to national identity and moral values, i.e. 601, 602, 603 and 604, are excluded, except sub-topics 601_2 and 602_2, which are regarded as references to migration policy.
- Energy policy is not addressed in any of the manifestos (no code provided).
- For measuring the levels of salience, both positive and negative recitals are counted. Given the fact that coding of the Presidency programmes do not take into consideration policy positions, both positive and negative recitals show the overall prominence of the topic in the party manifestos, following the assumption of a limited attention policy makers pay to the current affairs.

Code matching between the Eurobarometer data and the rotating Council Presidency dataset, based on the European Policy Agendas Project codebook

Issues in the Eurobarometer data, which were excluded from the pooled linear regression models:

- Public transport – given that in the overall model transport is matched with IT, furthermore, in the Eurobarometer survey this item was included only in 2003-2006.
- Housing – in broad terms, this issue (as a sub-topic) belongs to the Regional and Urban Policy and Planning in the EUPAP codebook. However, as this theme includes multiple topics, to approximate it only by the housing issue would overestimate the issue importance for the public.
- Terrorism – whilst it is included in the bivariate regression analysis, in the overall model salience attached to terrorism should be divided between internal affairs (i.e. Law & Crime topic), as well as foreign affairs. In the absence of any indicators how to divide this issue, it was excluded from the full models.
- Defence and foreign affairs – considering that foreign affairs is one of the key topics when speaking of the Presidency issue salience, merging it together with defence would have reduced the number of observations and, hence, the comparability of results.

As it is presented in the code matching table, macroeconomics, as well as health and social policy topics are presented by pooled data from the Eurobarometer surveys. An additional test was made in order to ensure that respondents do not pick as both ‘most important issues’ topics from the same theme. Based on the individual level data in Ireland in 2013, Italy in 2014 and Slovakia in 2016, it was found that, accordingly, 122, 116 and 68 overlaps were recorded for the macroeconomic issues (i.e. respondents choosing, as two most important issues, subtopics belonging to the macroeconomics policy area). Regarding health and social policy field, Irish Presidency data provided no overlaps, whereas Italian – 2, and Slovak – 60. Taking into consideration the fact that in each country approximately 1000 respondents were interviewed, these numbers are too little to calculate the percentages of an overlap. Therefore, for these two categories, pooled data of four issues in the macroeconomics field, and of two issues in health and social policy area are used.

Appendix 4

Table 1: Determinants of Presidency issue salience: multiple regression analysis of national factors comparing baseline models

	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6
Government salience	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.071**	0.072**	0.072**
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Ideology (left/right)	-0.012	-0.014	-0.011	0.006	0.00	0.015
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.012)	(0.079)	(0.085)	(0.081)
Net-recipients	-0.0366		-0.0947***	-0.225		-0.216
	(0.032)		(0.034)	(0.262)		(0.271)
Geography (Southern)	-0.053	-0.069		-0.201	-0.276	
	(0.042)	(0.042)		(0.265)	(0.281)	
Geography (Eastern)	-0.146***	-0.167***		0.0613	-0.0615	
	(0.04)	(0.039)		(0.252)	(0.268)	
Public opinion				0.038***	0.038***	0.038***
				(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Constant	5.581***	5.578***	5.558***	3.781***	3.728***	3.7***
	(0.128)	(0.13)	(0.124)	(0.567)	(0.574)	(0.545)
N	680	680	680	221	221	221
R2	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.122	0.121	0.121
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parentheses.						

Table 2: Collinearity test of the baseline model (including national factors)

	VIF	1/VIF
Government salience	1.00	0.999
Ideology (left/right)	1.02	0.976
Net-recipients	1.41	0.711
Geography (Southern)	1.26	0.794
Geography (Eastern)	1.41	0.709
Mean VIF	1.22	

* Public opinion is excluded due to the fact that in none of the specifications with this variable contributions to the EU budget or geography were significant (see specifications N4-N6 in Table 1).

Table 3: Determinants of Presidency issue salience: multiple regression analysis of national and supranational factors comparing baseline models

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
Government salience	-0.005	-0.005	-0.005	0.092***	0.093***	0.092***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.031)
Ideology (left/right)	-0.006	-0.006	-0.006	0.023	0.016	0.022
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.106)	(0.116)	(0.105)
Net-recipients	0.00		-0.036	-0/225		-0.208
	(0.061)		(0.049)	(0.329)		(0.338)
European Council	0.376***	0.376***	0.376***	0.210***	0.209***	0.209***
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.046)
Geography (Southern)	-0.05	-0.05		0.025	-0.046	
	(0.063)	(0.049)		(0.318)	(0.364)	
Geography (Eastern)	-0.097	-0.097		0.045	-0.065	
	(0.082)	(0.073)		(0.307)	(0.325)	
Public opinion				0.001	0.001	0.002
				(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Constant	3.604***	3.604***	3.590***	3.280***	3.226***	3.293***
	(0.205)	(0.205)	(0.198)	(0.709)	(0.721)	(0.675)
N	629	629	629	200	200	200
R2	0.348	0.348	0.348	0.264	0.263	0.264
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parentheses.						

Table 4: Collinearity test of the baseline model (including national and supranational factors)

	VIF	1/VIF
Government salience	1.00	0.995
Ideology (left/right)	1.04	0.966
Net-recipients	1.33	0.750
Geography (Southern)	1.24	0.808
Geography (Eastern)	1.30	0.768
European Council	1.00	0.996
Mean VIF	1.15	

* Public opinion is excluded due to the fact that in none of the specifications with this variable contributions to the EU budget or geography were significant (see specifications S4-S6 in Table 3).

Figure 1: The effect of European Council issue salience on the rotating Presidency issue salience

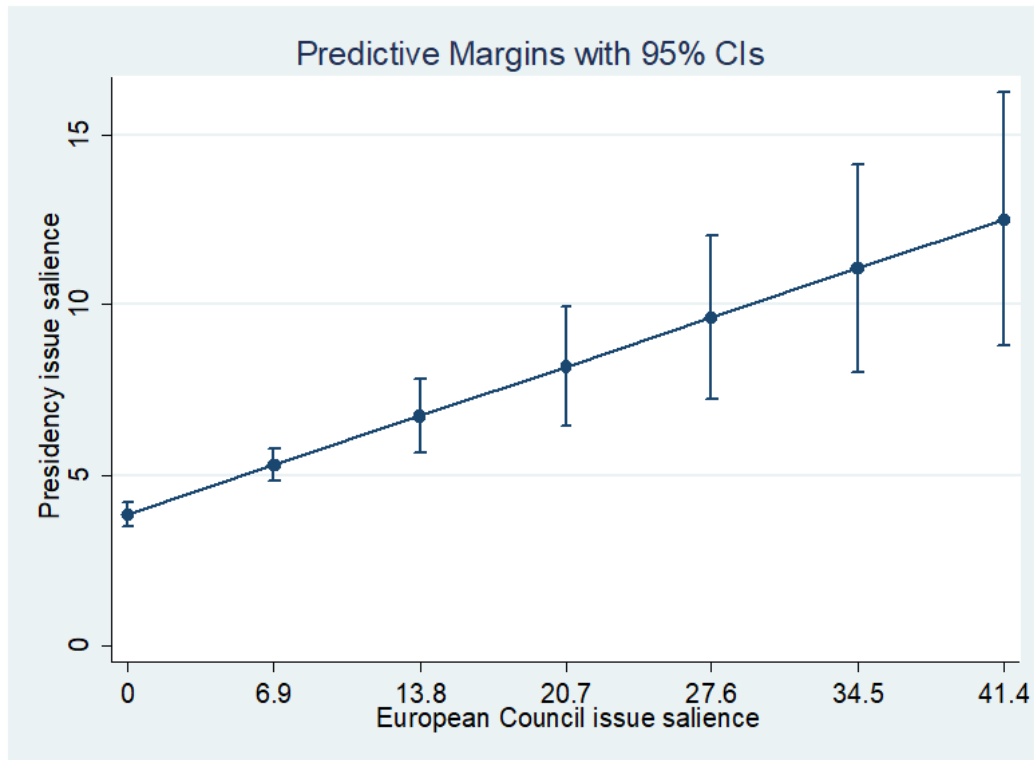
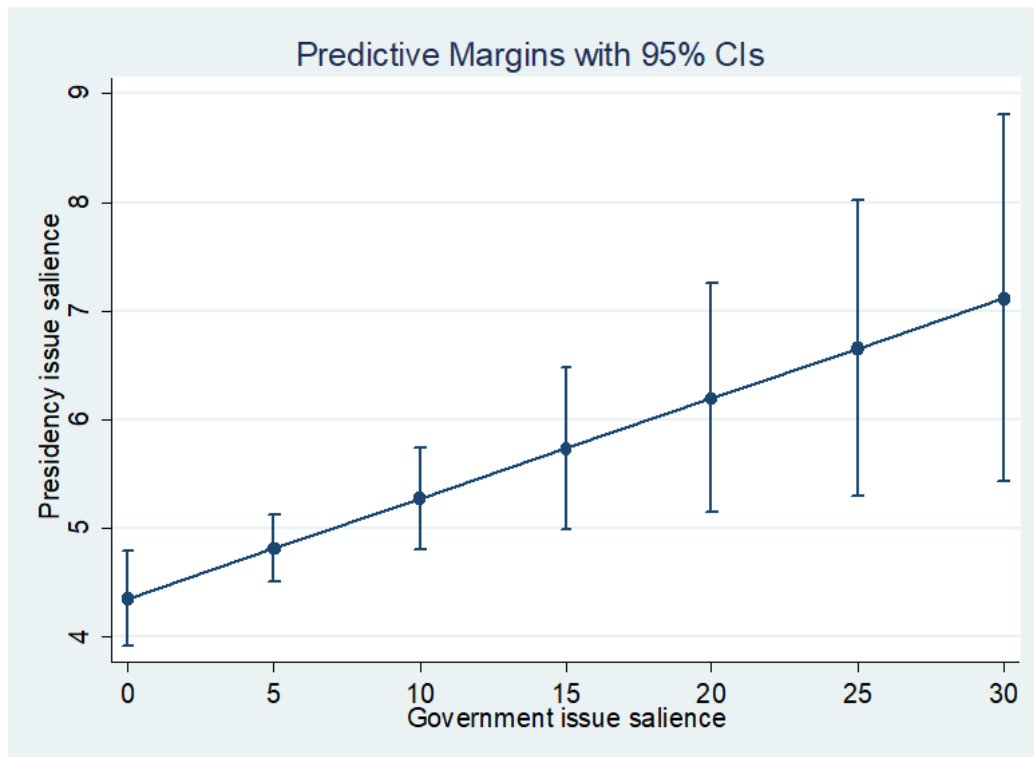


Figure 2: The effect of government issue salience on the rotating Presidency issue salience



Appendix 5

Table 1: Total number of people who received permits to reside in the EU for remunerated activities. Source: Eurostat, 2018.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
European Union (before the accession of Croatia)	648 588	791 461	523 862	480 958	533 615
Belgium	5 391	4 347	4 705	4 647	4 347
Bulgaria	767	299	281	339	334
Czech Republic	11 312	11 606	3 315	17 888	18 263
Denmark	11 113	12 153	10 203	9 132	10 684
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	16 667	16 540	18 659	27 338	27 788
Estonia	1 135	769	1 258	608	579
Ireland	4 827	3 208	3 425	3 720	4 018
Greece	16 383	9 692	5 568	1 037	1 226
Spain	102 736	79 315	86 468	63 713	49 525
France	20 635	18 799	18 335	15 827	18 244
Italy	235 966	359 051	119 342	66 742	80 726
Cyprus	13 762	11 917	9 897	6 889	6 613
Latvia	464	397	519	767	793
Lithuania	1 358	589	1 189	2 163	2 822
Luxembourg	353	278	530	629	1 272
Hungary	5 326	4 229	3 785	3 687	3 561
Malta	534	463	760	877	1 230
Netherlands	10 433	10 448	10 961	10 921	12 673
Austria	2 692	2 923	3 244	3 721	3 555
Poland	11 123	86 839	76 525	97 031	141 668
Portugal	18 275	10 869	7 276	5 917	6 394
Romania	4 724	1 700	1 971	1 656	1 542
Slovenia	11 910	3 659	4 659	4 532	3 674
Slovakia	2 302	1 776	1 321	1 719	1 624
Finland	2 754	2 936	5 024	4 648	4 719
Sweden	18 978	15 273	16 455	18 520	17 189
United Kingdom	116 668	121 386	108 187	106 290	108 552

Table 2: Total amount of residence permits issued for seasonal workers. Source: Eurostat, 2018.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
European Union (before the accession of Croatia)	54 972	119 664	27 951	20 323	17 065
Belgium	0	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	0
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0	0
Denmark	0	0	0	0	0
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	0	0	0	0	0
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0
Ireland	0	0	0	0	0
Greece	13 835	7 937	4 126	16	0

Spain	5 314	8 741	4 507	3 780	3 127
France	2 236	1 061	1 059	1 115	1 000
Italy	23 034	22 345	15 204	9 715	7 560
Cyprus	1 256	1 241	0	0	0
Latvia	0	0	0	0	0
Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0
Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	0
Hungary	791	439	244	0	31
Malta	0	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	0	0	0	0	0
Austria	0	0	0	0	0
Poland	0	73 156	0	0	0
Portugal	0	0	0	0	0
Romania	0	0	0	0	0
Slovenia	1 627	360	366	348	367
Slovakia	0	11	3	0	0
Finland	0	0	0	0	0
Sweden	6 879	4 373	2 442	5 349	4 980
United Kingdom	0	0	0	0	0