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The Role of the Presidency of the EU Council Based on the Example of the EU Enlargement Policy towards the Western Balkans – Subject Matter and Methodological Approach

Introduction

The article aims to present the subject matter and the methodological approach that is applied to investigate the role of the Presidency of the EU Council based on the example of the EU enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans. The research is conducted in the framework of preparation of a PhD dissertation under the same title. The role of the Presidency is analysed and explained through its functions in the said policy and through the results achieved. It is assumed that the Presidency performs management, mediating, representative and leadership functions. The study also aims to verify whether, and to what extent, such “traditional” functions are applicable to the enlargement policy. Would it be possible to single out any specific functions of the Presidency in respect of the enlargement policy?

The assumption is that the Presidency plays in the EU enlargement policy a complex and multidimensional role. This constitutes an exciting and unexplored subject matter. The article aims to indicate potential research questions in the field of interests and the methodological approaches that would be adequate to answer them. In order to efficiently examine the phenomenon in question, it is necessary to draw on various theoretical paradigms, research methods and techniques. The research perspective is provided by the discipline of political science and its various sub-disciplines, such as international relations, European studies, political thought, political systems, politi-

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cal sociology. The following paradigms will be applied: the concept of roles, rational choice institutionalism, constructivism.

1. The Presidency of the EU Council and the EU Enlargement Policy

1.1. The Presidency of the EU Council

The Presidency is a fascinating subject of research in the area of political science because of its multidimensionality, as it functions in an institutional and a functional dimension, and because of the specificity of the European Union¹. The Presidency is a 6-months rotating leadership provided by a Member State in the EU Council (the Council), which is the forum, where national interests clash with the interests of the EU represented by the European Commission (EC) and – in foreign policy – by the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Presidency also represents the Council in dealings with other EU bodies and in certain aspects of external relations². Therefore, it forms part of the European Union's institutional system – it operates in the horizontal dimension, and due to relationships on the EU level and on the state level – in the vertical dimension. It serves as a normative and functional bridge between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. Due to the extensive range of matters that the Presidency deals with, such relationships overlap with a wide scope of its activities.

Like the EU itself, the Presidency is undergoing rapid changes, a landmark example of this being the Treaty of Lisbon, which formally changed the functions of the Presidency by establishing new offices: the permanent post of the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR); by legitimising the "trio" formula and by limiting the Presidency to the EU Council along with the exclusion of leadership of the Foreign Affairs Council and its preparatory bodies³.

¹ K.A. Wojtaszczyk, *Prezydencja w Radzie Unii Europejskiej z perspektywy badań politologicznych*, „Przegląd Europejski” 2011, No. 1 (22), p. 7–8; K. Szczerski (ed.), *Prezydencja w Unii Europejskiej. Analizy i doświadczenia*, Kraków 2009, p. 7–16.

² A. Nowak-Far, *Istota i modele Prezydencji w Unii Europejskiej*, [in:] *Prezydencja w Unii Europejskiej. Instytucje, prawo i organizacja*, A. Nowak-Far (ed.), Warszawa 2010, p. 116–153.

³ See: A. Nowak-Far, *Przewodnictwo Rady w obszarze Wspólnej Polityki Zagranicznej i Bezpieczeństwa*, *ibidem*, p. 155–168; R. Mieńkowska-Norkiene, *Zmiana roli prezydencji po wejściu w życie Traktatu z Lizbony – zagadnienia prawno-instytucjonalne*, [in:] *Zmiana roli*

1.2. The EU Enlargement Policy

The role of the Presidency is examined using the example of the EU enlargement policy, which reflects the specific nature of the EU system well. The said policy combines elements of the EU internal and external policies, of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism and of the cooperation in geographical as well as horizontal and vertical dimensions. Since its very beginning it has been inherent in the process of European integration. It is based on Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). The enlargement policy is one of the most effective instruments of the EU foreign policy and of promoting the values of the European Union.

The direction of enlargement policy is outlined by the enlargement strategies and interim reports of the European Commission, as well as conclusions adopted by the Council. Decisions are taken unanimously by the Council and the European Council. Fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria by an aspiring state and alignment of its legislation with the EU *acquis* are prerequisites for accession to the EU. Because of a strong intergovernmental aspect of the enlargement policy, this process is not only technical but also political.

The definition of the enlargement policy used in this article assumes that the said policy applies to the Western Balkan states for which the EU has explicitly formulated a membership perspective, i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo*⁴, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)⁵ and Serbia. One can distinguish two levels of work carried out by the EU with respect to the enlargement. In strict terms, the enlargement covers countries engaged in accession negotiations with the EU (i.e. Croatia and since June 2012 Montenegro). With those Western Balkan states, which are at a less advanced stage of approximation to the EU, the Eu-

prezydencji po wejściu w życie Traktatu z Lizbony, R. Mieńkowska-Norkiene (ed.), Warszawa 2012, p. 11–26; S. Vanhoonacker, K. Pomorska, H. Maurer, *The Council presidency and European Foreign Policy – Challenges for Poland in 2011*; http://csm.org.pl/fileadmin/files/Biblioteka_CSM/Raporty_i_analizy/2010/1CSM_Raporty_i_Analizy%20K%20Pomorska.pdf (1.12.2012), p. 7–13.

⁴ The independence of Kosovo is not recognised by the European Union as a whole; there are five so called *non-recognisers* within the EU: Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia, Spain, Romania. Therefore, in all EU's documents the asterisk (*) is used. This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

⁵ Because of the country's name dispute between Macedonia and Greece, in all international forums Macedonia performs under the name: "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM). The name issue constitutes the main obstacle in further progress of Macedonia on its path towards the EU membership.

ropean Union is engaged in cooperation within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP).

1.3. The Presidency and the Enlargement policy

The starting point here is the assumption that in the dimension related *stricte* to the enlargement, the Presidency essentially performs “traditional” tasks. These can be classified as management, mediating, leadership and representative functions⁶. The functions have undergone significant changes with respect to the SAP, which forms part of the EU foreign policy shaped by the High Representative. However, in this paper it is assumed that the role of the rotating Presidency, even if one considers it in the dimension of the SAP, has not been reduced to the role of a mere Member State. The enlargement policy provides a good basis for the study of hybrid, imprecise solutions of the Lisbon Treaty regarding the Presidency.

1.3.1. Hypothesis and research questions

According to the adopted hypothesis, *the Presidency of the EU Council participates in the EU enlargement policy at various levels of its development. Its multidimensional role does not depend primarily on the legal and constitutional status of the Presidency, but rather on the practice, which is a consequence of: the position of the state holding the Presidency the specific nature and context of the EU enlargement policy, inter-institutional relations, and inter-state relations.*

The competence of the Presidency and the principles of cooperation within the framework of the enlargement policy are formally defined by legal norms that provide this institution/function with a framework and ensure its continuity. A question arises: how is the Presidency positioned in the system of entities shaping the enlargement policy in the light of such norms? Does it make use of its competences in the functional dimension? Does it step outside the scope of its competences? Is it active/passive in fulfilling a particular function? An analysis of the solutions in-

⁶ On the different Presidency roles see, e.g., O. Elgström, *Introduction*, [in:] *European Union Council Presidencies. A Comparative Perspective*, O. Elgström (ed.), London 2003, p. 1–17; S. Vanhoonaeker, K. Pomorska, H. Maurer, *The Council presidency and European Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 4–7.

troduced by the Treaty of Lisbon allows to take into account the changes in the role of the Presidency. The aim is to examine how limiting the role of the Presidency has affected the way it fulfils its functions and, as a result, its role. On the level of the Stabilization and Association Process, has its role been limited to a merely “supporting” one?

Another subject that is explored is the relationship between the functions fulfilled by the Presidency and the position of the state holding the presidency of the EU Council. How does the geopolitical and economic position influence the impact of the Presidency on other Member States and European institutions, and ultimately, on the unanimous decisions of the Council? The study also covers the competences of the state holding the Presidency and its interests in the field of the enlargement policy, as these determine whether, and in what direction, a given state will use its potential.

The scope of action of the Presidency is determined by the context of the enlargement policy. The slowing down of the enlargement process due to a lack of will to further enlarge the EU; the economic and financial crisis in the EU; bilateral conflicts between the EU states and the states aspiring to EU membership, as well as between the Western Balkans countries themselves; the rate of achieving compliance with membership prerequisites – all these factors are assumed to set limits on the ambitions and the scope of action of the Presidency.

The Presidency is executed in a specific institutional environment, i.e. in the EU Council, where the national interests of the EU Member States clash with the interests of the EU represented by the EC, the HR and the EEAS. The Presidency also represents the Council in its dealings with other EU bodies – the European Parliament, the European Council and its permanent President. The importance and impact of the Presidency depend on the division of competences, but primarily on practical cooperation with the aforementioned bodies. The question is: who plays the role of an “agent” and who is the “principal” in the EC-Presidency relationship regarding the enlargement policy? How is this relationship affected by the permanent leadership of the EEAS on the level of political dialogue with the Western Balkan states? What is the role of the Presidency in the SAP, which is coordinated by the EEAS? Is the Presidency supportive of the High Representative and the EEAS, or perhaps are their relationships of a conflictual nature? How is the perception of the role and place of the Presidency and of the supranational EEAS influenced by the intergovernmental nature of the policy?

The Presidency is an institution and also a function exercised by a state. The study aims to examine how the functions performed by the Presidency depend on its relations with other Member States in the Council and within the trio. Are these relations restrictive or supportive towards the activities of the Presidency? In this bi-directional process, how can the Presidency influence the views of the Member States and other actors of the enlargement policy?

1.3.2. Subject matter and temporal scope of the study

The study is focused on selected presidencies exercised after the adoption of *the renewed consensus on enlargement* in December 2006 and prior to the end of the Cypriot Presidency in December 2012. *The new consensus* marks the beginning of a new stage in the enlargement policy and defines its framework. It was developed by the European Union after the accession of the eight Central and Eastern-European states, Cyprus and Malta; it takes into account the experiences of previous enlargements and the negotiation process with Bulgaria and Romania, the EU's capabilities, as well as the specific characteristics of the current official and potential candidate states.

The proposed timeframe makes it possible to capture changes in the role of the Presidency. The study covers certain pre-Lisbon presidencies, the transitional ones (the Presidencies of Spain, Belgium, Hungary) and the Poland-Denmark-Cyprus trio. The limit of the timeframe is the Presidency of Cyprus, as it has closed the first trio performing under the fully implemented Treaty, which is vital for shaping the practical approach. In addition, the Cypriot Presidency has been particularly interesting in terms of the enlargement policy because of the Cypriot-Turkish conflict and the refusal on the part of Cyprus to recognise the sovereignty of Kosovo.

2. Research Methodology⁷

In order to efficiently examine the phenomenon in question, it is necessary to draw on various theoretical paradigms, research methods and techniques. The research perspective is provided by the discipline of political science and its various sub-disciplines, such as international relations, European studies, political thought, political systems, political sociology. The following paradigms are applied: the concept of roles, rational choice institutionalism, constructivism.

2.1. Theoretical paradigms

Research is based on **the concept of roles**⁸, which is mainly used in the study of international relations. Selected presidencies are analysed in order to identify their functions in the EU enlargement policy. The aim is to find out on which functions – and to what degree – were given priority by the individual presidencies and what determined such a distribution of activities. The role of the Presidency is treated as an organised and purposeful set of impacts on the development of the enlargement policy and on the other participants of the system, which is shaped under the influence of certain variables. The concept of roles is applied in order to verify the assumption that the roles that

⁷ On the methodology in general see, e.g., D. Marsh, G. Stoker, *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, London 2010; D. Leopold, M. Stears, *Methods and approaches*, Oxford-New York 2008. For helpful selection on EU theories consult: M. Cini, A.K. Bourne (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in European Union Studies*, New York 2006; K.E. Jørgenson, M.A. Pollack, B. Rosamond (eds.), *Handbook of European Union Politics*, London 2007; J. Czaputowicz, *Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych. Krytyka i systematyzacja*, Warszawa 2007; B. Krauz-Mozer, *Teorie polityki. Założenia metodologiczne*, Warszawa 2005.

On the methodological approaches applied to investigate the Presidency and for further references see, e.g., A. Niemann, J. Mak, *(How) do norms guide Presidency behaviour in EU negotiations?*, “Journal of European Public Policy” 2010, 17(5), p. 727–742; O. Elgström, J. Tallberg, *Conclusions. Rationalist and sociological perspectives on the Council Presidency*, [in:] *European Union Council Presidencies: A Comparative Perspective*, O. Elgström (ed.), London 2003, p. 191–205. Theoretical approaches in relation to the EU enlargement policy see: F. Schimmelfennig, U. Sedelmeier, *The study of EU enlargement: theoretical approaches and empirical findings*, [in:] *Palgrave Advances in European Union Studies*, M. Cini, A.K. Bourne (eds.), New York 2006, p. 96–116; F. Schimmelfennig, U. Sedelmeier (eds.), *The Politics of the European Union Enlargement: Theoretical Approaches*, London 2005; A. Szymański, *Teoretyczny i metodologiczny aspekt badań nad rozszerzeniem Unii Europejskiej* [in:] *Teoretyczne i metodologiczne wyzwania badań politologicznych w Polsce*, A. Antoszewski, A. Dumala, B. Krauz-Mozer, K. Radzik (eds.), Lublin 2009, p. 307–317.

⁸ On the concept of roles see also: P.J. Borkowski, *Tożsamość międzynarodowa UE w świetle koncepcji ról międzynarodowych*, „Przegląd Europejski” 2009, No. 1, p. 69–84.

are declared *explicite* are, to a large extent, a consequence of the way the Presidency interacts with other Member States, institutions and candidates for membership.

The institution of Presidency is treated as a dependent variable whose shape, role and significance stems from specific circumstances and conditions. Therefore, it seems appropriate to draw on the assumptions of **rational choice institutionalism (RCI)** as an auxiliary paradigm. It is assumed that due to the dominance of an intergovernmental approach to the enlargement policy, it is correct to claim that the Member States play an important role in shaping the EU enlargement process and the Presidency. RCI is useful in analysing the negotiations conducted in the EU Council and the relations between Member States and the Presidency, which is also held by a state. This serves to answer the question of whether the Presidency is in the position of the “principal”, the “agent”, or both simultaneously. With the help of RCI it is possible to explore the relationship between the preferences of different actors in the enlargement policy and the role of the Presidency in reaching final decisions. This approach is therefore appropriate for the study of the mediating and leadership roles of the Presidency. It is also used to examine whether the Presidency is a catalyst of confrontational preferences of the actors involved in the EU enlargement process, whether it constitutes a platform on which compromise can be reached and whether it is effective in pursuing its priorities. The approach is helpful in answering the following questions: Why has this particular structure of Presidency been assumed; whom does it benefit and how; what restricts the independence and significance of the Presidency?

The Presidency takes place on many levels and involves many actors, it is both a product and an element of the EU system, and each role or function it fulfils is associated with a set of features. It is, therefore, important to supplement the rational factor by introducing a structural aspect – this is facilitated by **constructivism**. References to the constructivist approach are justified because of the bi-directionality of impacts (the influence of Member States, European institutions, external circumstances) that affect the Presidency, with the Presidency simultaneously affecting the functioning of the EU. The assumptions of constructivism harmonise with the concept of roles because of the sociological origins of the latter.

2.2. Research methods

Research is based on an analysis of literature on the subject, of sources of law and of the achievements of each Presidency. The critical analysis of sources is complemented

by the data collected through the qualitative techniques – a participant observation⁹ and the in-depth interviews.

In order to organise the research material and prioritise information, **systems analysis, comparative analysis** and **behavioural analysis** is used. The use of **systems analysis (micro-system analysis, to be exact)**¹⁰ makes it possible to view the Presidency as an element of a broader institutional and functional system within the framework of the EU enlargement policy, to indicate its relational links to other elements, to define its place and role in the implementation of the EU enlargement policy. On this basis, manifestations of the way the Presidency is influenced by its environment (the “input”) will be analysed – this refers to the demands and support on the part of Member States, the determinants of the enlargement policy, the legal and constitutional status of the Presidency or the limitation of its competences by other institutions involved in the EU enlargement process. Manifestations of the Presidency’s impact on its environment and on the enlargement policy (the “output”) – including specific decisions relating to enlargement, declarations, impact on defining the order and the course of works – make it possible to evaluate its effectiveness measured by its contribution to the development of the enlargement policy. The ability of the Presidency to direct the impact back onto itself (“feedback”), for example through the ability to gain support for its initiatives or to lead to a compromise, are an important element demonstrating the role of the Presidency. Micro-system analysis makes it possible to identify: With what elements of the system is the Presidency connected? What is the nature of interactions (mutual, conflictual)? What is the degree of autonomy? This serves to determine the dynamism and functionalism of the Presidency as well as its changeability.

The advantage of using systems analysis in examining the role of the Presidency is its flexibility and ease of use with other methods such as **comparative and behavioural analysis**. The former is used to identify similarities and differences in the approach of individual states holding the Presidency to the EU enlargement. The starting point is an analysis of the agendas of the Presidencies. This helps to indicate whether the enlargement was a priority for the selected Presidencies and on what aspects they focused. Subsequently the initial objectives of the Presidencies are confronted with the

⁹ The author gained **the experience of participant observation** during the preparations for and the course of the Polish Presidency as part of employment at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the EU from February to December 2011.

¹⁰ On the systems analysis including the EU enlargement case see: A. Szymański, *Systemowe podejście w badaniach europejskich*, [in:] *Studia Europejskie. Zagadnienia metodologiczne*, K.A. Wojtaszczyk, W. Jakubowski (eds.), Warszawa 2010.

effects achieved in cooperation with the states aspiring to the EU. Conclusions, specific decisions, statements and press releases issued by the EU are examined, as well as the intensity of meetings and work in the area. A comparison of the assumptions and results of individual Presidencies makes it possible to indicate the relationships between the capabilities and direction of actions of the Presidency and the position of the state holding the Presidency as well as the determinants of the EU enlargement process. Comparative analysis is also used to compare the roles of the Presidency and other EU actors in the performance of certain functions.

The normative approach is complemented by **behavioural analysis**. For this purpose a series of individual, unstructured interviews with open-ended questions has been conducted. Moreover, the execution of this tasks was facilitated by the abovementioned experience of practical observation. By analysing the opinions and experiences of representatives of various entities especially from Brussels (EU institutions, Member States, missions of aspiring states)¹¹ directly involved in the daily work relating to the EU enlargement policy, it is possible to identify the subjective factors, interactions within the institutional and functional system and the informal channels of influence. Behavioural analysis is useful in supplementing the existing assumptions and verifying whether the behaviours of individuals are not contradictory to the normative assumptions. This makes it possible to take into account the informal relationships, personal preferences and perceptions of the role of the Presidency by different entities and their influence on the importance of the Presidency in practice. In this way it is possible to gain a holistic view of the role of the Presidency in shaping the enlargement policy, to understand the context of this policy and to explain the intricacies of relationships and the dynamics of changes.

Based on prior analysis of sources and the perceived relationships and repeatability, scenarios can be created. The **simulative method** is used for this purpose. The scenarios are used to search for an answer to the following question: What would be the role of the Presidency in the EU enlargement policy, if there was a change in the balance

¹¹ Selection of a sample – approx. 25 respondents; officials of European institutions (the European Commission, the EEAS, the *General Sekretariat of the Council*, the European Parliament); delegates of Member States to the UE Council (employees of permanent representations in Brussels), representatives of the Polish diplomacy (employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw and of the Permanent Representation in Brussels); representatives of missions to the UE in Brussels from the states participating in the enlargement; experts from Polish and foreign research centres. The group of respondents has included practitioners and experts in the given field, representing various circles and institutions, to ensure a diversified perspective. This also serves to increase the reliability of the interpretation made by the researcher.

of powers in interstate and international relations or in the context of the enlargement policy? This knowledge could be helpful in indicating the direction in which a certain Member State can and should channel its activities to best pursue its objectives during its leadership and in cooperation with other presidencies. The scenarios are related both to the past and the present, but above all they are used for forecasting.

The intended purpose of the research is: to show the relationship between the theoretical assumptions and the practical functioning of the Presidency in the dimension of the enlargement policy, to explain and understand the behaviours critical for the role of the Presidency as well as its contribution to the development of the policy in question. The combination of different theoretical paradigms is aimed at increasing the reliability of findings by enabling their mutual verification (a form of “negative control”); it stems from a concern for capturing phenomena that are invisible from the perspective of a particular theoretical approach.

Conclusions

The undertaken research is innovative because of its subject matter and the way it is presented. The Presidency has been implemented since the beginning of European integration, but it has been subjected to continuous reforms. A breakthrough for the functions of the Presidency and for its position in the institutional system was the Treaty of Lisbon. It is also a new period in the development of the EU enlargement policy, which – after the accessions of 2004 and 2007 – changed its nature, specificity and context. The space for the policy in question, as well as the competences and the importance of the Presidency, are shaped by practice. Of fundamental importance for its consolidation are the post-Lisbon Presidencies, especially the Poland-Denmark-Cyprus trio, which is executed under a fully implemented Treaty. From this perspective, the Lisbon reform is still a novelty and the role and importance of the Presidency in the enlargement policy – a current, exciting and still unexplored subject of research.

The proposed subject matter of the study and the methodological approach makes an attempt at a holistic view of the Presidency as an institution and a function. It analyses and explains the complex system of determinants of the role of the Presidency and of delivering results in the enlargement policy. The example of the EU enlargement policy allows to examine the role of the Presidency at various levels (international/supranational, internal/external, geographical/horizontal/vertical); the adopted timeframe

– to capture the changes in the role of the Presidency for the enlargement policy with regard to the Western Balkans states. The methodology used in the study combines various theoretical paradigms and research methods in order to capture phenomena that are invisible from the point of view of a particular theory or method.

The previous study leads to conclusions about the multidimensional role of the Presidency at the level of the EU enlargement policy. The competences of the Presidency and the principles of cooperation with the other entities shaping the enlargement policy are formally determined by the legal norms that should provide it with a framework and ensure its continuity. There is evidence to conclude that the role of the Presidency is changeable. The Member States holding the Presidency focus on different functions. This may depend on their priorities, ambitions and experience relating to the enlargement policy, but also on their capabilities determined by their economic and political potential.

The progress of reforms in the aspiring states, which has a bearing on the EU enlargement process, has a significant impact on the delivery of results by the Presidency. However, it seems necessary to highlight that this process is not only technical but also political (or even politicised). The primacy of intergovernmentalism in the enlargement policy and the unanimity principle may mean that the role of “agent” is fulfilled by other Member States (which – for example – exercise the right of veto). In such case, the impact of the Presidency would be determined by its ability to influence other countries, as well as the ability to build coalitions of support for particular initiatives.

Moreover, the analysis leads to conclusions about the division of competences between the Presidency and the European Commission, which appears to be quite precisely defined, and between the Presidency and the EEAS. The research results confirm the thesis that the Treaty of Lisbon has changed the role of the Presidency, especially with regard to the Stabilisation and Association Process, which forms part of the EU foreign policy. In connection with the creation of new offices and the European External Action Service, it has restricted the typical functions of the Presidency, particularly on the plane of the SAP. However, in spite of the modifications introduced by the Lisbon reform, the Presidency is able to go beyond the role of “support” for new institutions even at the level of the SAP. Taking advantage of gaps and imprecision of the Lisbon Treaty and of informal channels of influence, the Presidency may even play an initiating and a political role. The role of the Presidency depends largely on the practical approach, on the individual perception of European integration by the state holding the Presidency, as well as on other factors. The proposed methodological approach aims

and allows to prioritise those factors and indicate the main determinants of the role of the Presidency.

The methodological approach presented above stands for a proposal for theoretical paradigms and methods that could be applied to examine multidimensional function/institution of the Presidency, as well as the specificity of the EU enlargement policy. The conducted research also results in pursuing prognostic goals. Gaining an insight into the changes in the institution/functions of the Presidency makes it possible to create scenarios for the future. Examination of relations between the Presidency and the Member States as well as other EU institutions is an inherent part of the debate on the division of tasks and responsibilities within the EU enlargement policy. This leads to further, open research questions about the legitimacy of the intergovernmental nature of the policy and the co-functioning of the Presidency and the EEAS as well as the European Commission and the EEAS in the Stabilisation and Association Process. The analysis could, therefore, be a starting point for designing changes in the Presidency, the EU enlargement policy, as well as in the EU system.

Rola prezydencji w Radzie UE na przykładzie polityki rozszerzeniowej UE wobec Bałkanów Zachodnich – przedmiot i metodologia badań

Streszczenie

Prezydencja w Radzie UE to ekscytujący przedmiot badań politologicznych ze względu na jej wielowymiarowość, jak również dynamikę zmian. Przełom w odniesieniu do funkcji prezydencji i jej pozycji w systemie instytucjonalnym stanowi traktat z Lizbony. Autorka bada rolę prezydencji w Radzie UE na przykładzie polityki rozszerzeniowej UE wobec Bałkanów Zachodnich, która dobrze odzwierciedla specyfikę unijnego systemu. Celem jest zweryfikowanie, jakie funkcje prezydencja spełnia w polityce rozszerzeniowej i na ile powtarzany w literaturze naukowej pogląd, iż traktat z Lizbony ograniczył rolę prezydencji, jest zasadny i wyczerpujący. Autorka zakłada, że rola prezydencji nie zależy przede wszystkim od statusu prawno-ustrojowego, ale od stosowanej praktyki, na którą wpływa szereg czynników wskazanych poniżej w artykule.

W badaniu wykorzystywany został warsztat metodologiczny łączący różne paradygmaty teoretyczne (koncepcję ról, instytucjonalizm racjonalnego wyboru, konstruktywizm) i metody badawcze (systemową, porównawczą, behawioralną, symulacyjną), tak by możliwe było uchwycenie zjawisk niewidocznych w ujęciu określonej teorii czy metody i w konsekwencji efektywne rozpoznanie zjawiska.

***Słowa kluczowe:** prezydencja w Radzie UE, Instytucje UE, polityka rozszerzeniowa UE, proces stabilizacji i stowarzyszenia, Bałkany Zachodnie, metodologia*

Abstract

The Presidency of the EU Council is a fascinating subject of research in the area of political science because of its multidimensionality, as well as dynamism of changes. A breakthrough for the functions of the Presidency and for its position in the institutional system was the Treaty of Lisbon. The Author examines the role of the Presidency based on the example of the EU enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans, which reflects well the specific nature of the EU system. The aim is to verify what functions the Presidency performs in the enlargement policy and to what extent the view – as reiterated in academic literature – that the Lisbon Treaty has limited the role of the Presidency is well founded and exhaustive. The Author assumes that the role of the Presidency does not depend primarily on the legal and constitutional status of the Presidency, but rather on the practice, which is dependent on specific factors indicated in this paper. The methodology used in the study combines various theoretical paradigms (the concept of roles, rational choice institutionalism, constructivism) and research methods (systems, comparative, behavioural, simulative) in order to capture the phenomena that are invisible from the point of view of a particular theory or method and, in consequence, to efficiently examine the issue in question.

***Keywords:** Presidency of the EU Council, EU Institutions, EU Enlargement Policy, Stabilisation and Association Process, Methodology*