

Lithuania's Foreign Policy Under the Eastern Partnership Programme in 2009–2014: From Small State Policy to Smart State Strategy

Maksimas Milta*

Abstract

The article addresses Lithuania's foreign policy vis-à-vis the Eastern Partnership programme in 2009–2014 from the perspective of small states' abilities to influence decision-making processes within the European Union. The author aims at revealing the puzzle of Lithuania's marginal capacities of absolute power being disproportional to the output of its foreign policy towards implementation of the Eastern Partnership programme and hence utilising "smart state strategy" conceptualised by Anders Wivel. The novelty of the study rests on expansion of applying the smart state strategy towards the post-negotiation stage of the policy implementation. The article contributes to the debate over the applicability of the "smart state strategy" approach towards the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, by arguing that Lithuania's foreign policy vis-à-vis the Eastern Partnership programme in 2009–2014 does indeed serve as an example of such behaviour, however recognising Lithuania's initial shift from utilising "small state policy" to "smart state strategy".

Keywords: small state studies, smart state strategy, influence, Lithuania, Eastern Partnership, European Union.

Introduction

Adoption of the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union (EU) in 2007, fostered the process of reconsidering the role of the European Union's external policy and frameworks, applied to its neighbourhood in Europe, mainly in the south and east, through institutionalisation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the form of the Union for Mediterranean and Eastern Partnership (EaP) programme, respectively. The narrative of a "more for more" principle has become the dominant political rhetoric; the intention to form a circle of friends across the EU's external borders supplemented by the introduction of bilateral and multilateral

* **Maksimas Milta** holds a Master's degree in Eastern European and Russian Studies from the Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences at Vilnius University. Email: maksimas@milta.lt

tracks of cooperation has been widely promoted by stakeholders and opinion-makers. Emergence of the EaP programme, inaugurated in May 2009 during the Prague Summit, for the first time conceptualised EU external policy vis-à-vis its neighbourhood in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus through establishment of four different pillars of multilateral cooperation and bilateral cooperation with a final goal of establishing political and economic association between the EU and its neighbouring states in the east.

Lithuania, one of the smaller EU Member States, historically focused its foreign policy on its direct (Belarus, Russia) and indirect (Ukraine, Georgia) neighbours in the east, and soon after the EU accession in 2004 it switched to promoting itself as a regional leader and role model for the future successful transition of the aforementioned countries to the rule of law and democracy, thus ensuring its own geopolitical intentions of having a safe and predictable political environment across Lithuania's borders. Conventionally considered as a small state within the context of EU decision-making, Lithuania has achieved a tangible level of recognition while contributing to promotion of the EaP programme within its relations with 6 EaP countries, becoming particularly accelerated during its rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU (Presidency). This proactive behaviour of a state, representing 0.59% of the population and possessing an equal amount of votes within the Council highlights an inherent puzzle, whereas its marginal capacities in the decision-making process across the EU has been disproportional to the output of Lithuania's foreign policy towards implementation of the EaP programme, thus signalling the effect of a smart state strategy¹. Placing utmost political prioritisation of Lithuania's Presidency on achieving deliverables of Association Agreements (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) with the EaP programme's frontrunners, thus encompassing the common European interest, stood as core for exploiting its coalition-building skills with EU Member States.

Given the fact of the EaP countries standing on the edge of Lithuania's security policy and geopolitical interests, the ability to obtain a broad coalition of Member States and the support of the European institution in political prioritisation of the EaP programme demonstrates Lithuania's fulfilled externalisation of foreign policy interests by means of Europeanisation, galvanised due to the rapid development of Russia's imposed geopolitical and security setting in Eastern Europe.

¹ Hereinafter used, as conceptualised in: Wivel A. and Grøn C.H., "Maximizing Influence in the European Union after the Lisbon Treaty: From Small State Policy to Smart State Strategy", *Journal of European Integration* 33 (5), 2011.

The article searches for answers to the following research question: How does engagement into implementation of the EaP programme reflect Lithuania's foreign policy shift to a smart state strategy? In addition, its aim is to assess Lithuania's foreign policy vis-à-vis 6 EaP countries through the smart state strategy prism under the framework of implementation of the EaP programme.

This article discusses the following argument: the shift of Lithuania's foreign policy under the Eastern Partnership programme in 2009–2014, from utilising “small state policy” to “smart state strategy” rests on exercising self-interested mediator and lobbyist roles in the post-Lisbon Treaty institutional environment.

The innovativeness of the article is based on the expansion of Anders Wivel's introduced categories of “small state policy” and “smart state strategy”, whereas the application of both takes place in the post-adoption stage of the European Union policy initiative, in this case, the EaP programme. Merging the conceptual framework of the Europeanisation of foreign policy with the analytical instruments of small states' behaviour, reviewed in the context of geopolitical determination of policy-making, contributes additional input into the European integration research.

The article has three parts. First, the existing strategies of a small state's behaviour within EU external policy decision-making and overall distinguishing between “limiting damage” and “expanding influence” approaches are addressed providing a theoretical basis for the article. Second, in the analytical part the 2009–2011 period of implementing the EaP programme is reviewed, whilst Lithuania's delivered foreign policy is attributed to represent a “Good European” or “small state policy” example, primarily determined by the combination of the election cycle and economic turmoil milieu. Third, the period from post-Warsaw summit until the end of 2014 of the EaP programme's implementation is analysed, whereas explanation of the transformation within Lithuania's foreign policy of adopting a “smart state strategy” approach by means of the self-interested mediator and lobbyist roles are utilised.

1. The influence of small states in the European Union: room for manoeuvre

The predecessor of the EU – the European Coal and Steel Community was initially founded by 3 larger (West Germany, France, Italy) and 3 smaller states (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands), whilst the current 28 EU Member States demonstrate a significant change in composition of the membership, given

that the population of 20 of the 28 Member States is less than 12 million per country. Thus significant transformation within the membership structure of the EU and deepening of the integration between Member States, especially after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty makes analysis of small EU Member States' behaviour within the decision-making process a valuable branch of European integration studies.

There is no consensus among scholars regarding precise criteria for defining the smallness of states. Starting from the 1960s, several generations of scholars aimed at conceptualising the issue, including Raimo Väyrynen, Andres Wivel, Baldur Thorhallsson, Tom Crowards and Diana Panke. For the research addressing the EU decision-making process, the allocation of votes within the Council of the EU in the post-Lisbon Treaty environment and more often the appearance of informal consultations of larger states, should be mentioned² as a general means of defining the smallness of states. Recent research in the field of small state studies suggests³ a shift in reviewing not the power a state *possesses* but rather the power it *exercises*, thus addressing the relational nature of a definition tied to a specific spatial-temporal context. This suggestion is a useful tool for illustrating the vagueness of absolute criteria in defining the influence of a small member state in EU decision-making⁴. Defining small state capacities within the EU power asymmetry proposes a puzzle regarding the size of a Member State affecting its actions within EU decision-making, thus the action capacity of a small state, as argued by Thorhallsson⁵, stands as a valuable instrument for further analysis. In the present article a working definition of a small EU Member State will be addressed to those Member States, having less than the average amount of votes in the Council (i.e., less than 3.57 in the Qualified Majority Voting system)⁶. Utilisation of the following variable is based on the widespread application of this approach and its usefulness in studies⁷

² Wivel et Grøn, (note 1) p. 525.

³ Wivel A. and Thorhallsson B., "Small States in the European Union: What Do We Know and What Would We Like to Know?", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19 (4), 2006, p. 654.

⁴ E.g., Belgium's impact on reforms of local governance, Luxembourg's role in creating the European Monetary Union, and Denmark's contribution towards EU environmental and climate policy are illustrations of the exercised influence of small states in the past.

⁵ Thorhallsson B., "The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives", *Journal of European Integration* 28 (1), 2006, p. 8.

⁶ In ascending order: Malta, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Croatia, Ireland, Finland, Slovakia, Denmark, Bulgaria, Austria, Sweden, Hungary, Portugal, Czech Republic, Greece, Belgium and the Netherlands

⁷ Panke D., "Good Instructions in No Time? Domestic Coordination of EU Policies in 19 Small States", *West European Politics* 33 (4), 2010, p. 771.

related to the determination of small states' behaviour in the post-Lisbon Treaty institutional environment.

Traditionally, policy, exploited by a small state in the EU decision-making process, is defined by adjusting to the binding powers of the larger Member States (i.e., minimising the negative impact of the limit of absolute power) through utilisation of the following strategies⁸:

1. Hiding – institutionalised through neutrality or non-alignment status;
2. Seeking shelter – conducted through membership in alliances (e.g., NATO);
3. Binding – ensured through establishment of internationally applied and recognised rules, institutions and norms.

However, the complexity of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (precisely, further reviewed EaP programme) provides a political configuration where particular Member States are empowered to exercise specific interest in a proactive way, primarily caused by their own legacy and national priorities. Lithuania stands here as an object of interest and is conventionally considered as a small state endogenously and exogenously, also when applying the article's working definition.

From the security perspective, small states traditionally seek to be sheltered by the larger states, thus relying on the latter's actions. Adjusting this feature to the temporal dimension of the launch of the EaP programme, it is important to stress that the purpose of the programme was not only a way to externalise and institutionalise the Polish-Swedish draft on the basis of the Union for Mediterranean precedent, but also to develop a visible instrument for accommodating the security setting in Eastern Europe and ensuing ties between the EU and the 6 EaP countries, especially in the aftermath of 2008 Russo-Georgian war. Some scholars argue⁹ that small states possess structural disadvantages on the level of exerting influence and decision-making when compared to their bigger counterparts, primarily due to a lack of resources and funding of diplomatic staff, organisational capacities and the limits of possible expertise provision.

On the other hand, small states are able to deliver influence via dimensions of: bargaining power (threat), argumentative power (expertise), and power of reputation (image). Panke claims¹⁰ these approaches can also be enhanced in the following manner:

⁸ Thorhallsson B. and Bailes A.J.K., "Instrumentalizing the European Union in Small State Strategies", *Journal of European Integration* 35 (2), 2013, p. 99.

⁹ Panke, (note 7) p. 801.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 802.

1. Bargaining power can be supplemented by institutional coordination at the regional level and strategic coalition building with bigger states.
2. Argumentative power can be assisted by a small state contacting the European Commission and relevant policy prioritisation.
3. Power of reputation can be adjusted by the impartiality of a small state and professional execution of the Presidency by a small Member State.

When it comes to the latter, scholars stress: “holding of the Presidency by smaller countries can therefore be considered an institutional opportunity to strengthen their position”¹¹.

Small states are not limited in uploading their national interests to the level of EU decision-making, in particular if strategies corresponded with the steps undertaken by a small member state, such as learning, coordination and legitimacy, according to Panke¹². Prior research demonstrates¹³ that small Member States demonstrate a visible level of support for the implementation of legal norms, in this way ensuring the suitable legal framework for further steps to be undertaken in a specific area, which traditionally involves the consensus culture of EU decision-making. Additionally, researchers bring evidence of the smallness of small states not resulting in dis-functionality within their own foreign policy, but rather the foreign policy of small states being focused on a small functional and geographical range of interest, therefore requesting fewer resources to be allocated than what the larger states do¹⁴.

Despite being asymmetrically dependent on larger EU members, the smaller states are able to utilise factors of their own smallness for uploading national priorities. Among these factors, consistency, persuasive ideas and credibility are traditionally suggested when reviewing the impact of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg on the formation of the European Monetary Union¹⁵. Thus the way small states utilise their own influence is determined by the vulnerabilities small states possess in terms of absolute power. This is why small states’ behaviour within the EU decision-making process can also be grounded on utilising weaknesses

¹¹ Theunis B., “Reflections on Small States and Their Influence in the European Union”, in Milfet K. and Keygnaert W., eds, *The Baltic States in an Enlarging European Union: Towards a Partnership between Small States*, KU Leuven, 1999, p. 170-171.

¹² Panke, (note 7) p. 813.

¹³ Archer C. and Nugent N., “Introduction: Small States and the European Union”, *Current Politics and Economics of Europe* 11 (1), 2002, p. 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁵ Maes I. and Verdun A., “Small States and the Creation of EMU: Belgium and the Netherlands, Pace-Setters and Gate-keepers”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43 (2), 2005, p. 327-348.

for delivering influence, through the state acting as a) lobbyist, b) self-interested mediator, or c) norm entrepreneur, as conceptualised by Wivel¹⁶. Although small states are often seen as the weak part in the asymmetric relationship, exploiting influence over decision-making processes within the EU also prerequisites solid efforts aimed at viable coalition-building.

Wivel argues¹⁷ that the behaviour of small EU Member States is located in a continuum of two extremes: small state policy and smart state strategy, whereas small states are encouraged to maximise own influence if the following characteristics of a smart state strategy are preserved:

1. A small member state's goals and means towards the promotion of specific policy should be highly focused, instead of aiming at an explicitly broad agenda, while a small member state should also be ready to negotiate the suggestion.
2. Seeking common European interests should be ensured, preferably avoiding conflict with existing policies, but rather supplementing existing policies with an additional framework or focus area, whereas coalition-building skills are required.
3. Mediation skills between the interests of larger Member States should be delivered.

Summarising the existing approaches in small Member States' delivering influence in EU decision-making, it should be noted that small states are generally considered as able to deliver this influence, though they do bear the vulnerability of a lack of absolute power. Despite traditionally directing their own foreign policies in accommodating the interests of larger Member States, smaller states are advised to consider exploitation of proactive behaviour, involving (1) a combination of coalition-building skills, (2) a precise and realistic agenda towards a common European interest, (3) the ability of prioritisation of argumentation-led discussion and (4) possession of a relevant reputation based on professional arrangement of the Presidency and impartiality of their own interests, if they intend to deploy their own influence at the European level. Categorisation of various modes of behaviour provides a specification of how the smart state strategy can be exploited either through prioritising exerting influence either through the institutional frameworks of the European Commission and European Parliament (lobbyist approach) or through the Council dimension (self-interested mediator), or by reaching a

¹⁶ Wivel and Grøn, (note 1) p. 530.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

benchmarking level of policy-implementation domestically prior to its exploitation at the European level (norm entrepreneur).

In the next two analytical chapters of the article, Lithuania's foreign policy under the EaP programme in 2009–2014 will be assessed on the basis of fulfilling the logics of a small state policy or smart state strategy approach in order to track the evidence of the shift that took place during the given period, and its causes.

2. Good European: from European Neighbourhood Policy to Warsaw Summit

Soon after the fulfilment of Lithuania's initial mission of "returning to Europe"¹⁸ by joining the EU and NATO in 2004, coherent adaptation of the "Good European" role of smooth adaptation of *acquis* during pre-accession negotiations and asymmetric dependence on EU budget support¹⁹ within the EU decision-making process has become a dominant trend of behaviour, as determined by the insufficiency of professionals in public service and aspects of identity transition after the re-establishment of independence. However, scholars distinguish certain policy areas where Lithuania's involvement has been different, among such are the EU Neighbourhood policy and its Eastern Dimension²⁰.

The unprecedented scale of EU enlargement in 2004 has given a pretext for determination of the enlarged Union's relationships with its neighbourhood in Southern Mediterranean and Eastern Europe and developing a circle of friends of the Union across its boundaries in order to ensure security and stability. Originally announced in the communication "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood", the suggested vision of the ENP Eastern Dimension excluded the Southern Caucasian countries of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, thus limiting the scope of the neighbourhood as suggested by the Eastern Dimension to Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. At the same time, Lithuania's accession to the EU coincided with the election of Valdas Adamkus for a second Presidential term, whilst the role of "regional leader" has

¹⁸ Vašcenkaitė G., "The Discrepancy of Lithuanian Foreign Policy: 'Normative' Deeds for the 'Realpolitik' Needs?", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 24, 2011, p. 34.

¹⁹ Vilpišauskas R., "National Preferences and Bargaining of the New Member States Since the Enlargement of the EU: The Baltic States – Still Policy Takers?", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 25, 2011, p. 11.

²⁰ Pastore G., "Small New Member States in the EU Foreign Policy: toward 'Small State Smart Strategy'?", *Baltic Journal of Political Science* 2, 2013, p. 80.

become the dominant ideological narrative²¹ of his foreign policy²². Lithuanian diplomats argue that the first indication of Lithuania's perceived role resulted in strong advocacy for inclusion of the Southern Caucasus countries into the ENP Eastern Dimension, eventually achieved by an official launch in 2004. Symbolically, Lithuania is the only small EU Member State maintaining a network of embassies across all the EaP recipient countries²³, which illustrates ex ante prioritisation of bilateral relations with the 6 EaP countries.

Studies of the regional leader role's rationale argue²⁴ that its finality is grounded on the geopolitical logics of securing Lithuania's neighbourhood by means of counterbalancing Russia's impact in Eastern Europe and actively standing for Euro-Atlantic integration of the neighbourhood. Strong personal ties between Adamkus, President of the United States George W. Bush, Presidents of Poland Kwaśniewski and Kaczyński, formulate key elements in promotion of the regional leader's role by Adamkus. Alas according to senior diplomats²⁵, despite Adamkus' involvement in mediating Ukraine's Orange Revolution political crisis and advocating for Georgia's territorial integrity during the Russo-Georgian war, the regional leadership role did not convert into Lithuania's influence across European institutions, primarily due to its incomparability and lack of experience of operating under Brussels' game. Shortage of experience for delivering influence under the institutional setting of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), supplemented by its hard-liner standing towards the vision of bilateral relations of EU and Russia, culminated by Lithuania's veto during post-Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) mandate negotiations, resulted in Lithuania's isolation in Brussels. The forthcoming presidential victory of Barack Obama and the further shift of United States foreign policy priorities towards the Asia-Pacific region all in all resulted in marginalisation of the regional leader's role.

²¹ Laurinavičius Č., Lopata R., and Sirutavičius V., "Kritinis požiūris į Lietuvos užsienio politiką: kas pasikeitė nuo Augustino Voldemaro laikų?" ["A Critical Approach to Lithuanian Foreign Policy: What has Changed since Augustinas Voldemaras' Times?"], *Politologija* 54, 2009, p. 111.

²² The first documented public appearance of a "regional leader" role for Lithuania's post-2004 foreign policy is attributed to the Interim President Paulauskas. Details: Paulauskas A., "Lithuania's New Foreign Policy", Speech at Vilnius University, May 24, 2004, <http://paulauskas.president.lt/one.phtml?id=4996>, 02 05 2015.

²³ Among the larger Member States of the European Union, only Poland, Italy, the United Kingdom, France and Germany have embassies in every one of the 6 recipient countries of the Eastern Partnership programme.

²⁴ Jonavičius L., "Geopolitical Projections of New Lithuanian Foreign Policy", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 17, 2006, p. 29.

²⁵ Senior official (1) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

The severe economic crisis in Lithuania, supplemented by the presidential victory of Dalia Grybauskaitė coincided with the inauguration of the EaP programme on the basis of the earlier submitted Polish-Swedish proposal. Grybauskaitė's foreign policy agenda in the early years of her first term is considered²⁶ pragmatic, avoiding unilateral hard-liner decision-making and shifting focus onto the importance of Nordic-Baltic cooperation. Both the destination of Grybauskaitė's first official visit abroad (i.e., Sweden²⁷) and regular participation in Nordic-Baltic informal meetings of delegations during every European Council meeting illustrates a shift from the previous role of regional leader²⁸. The mutual visits of President of Belarus Lukashenka and Grybauskaitė in 2009–2010 demonstrate both Lithuania's foreign policy alignment with the goals of the EaP programme and a dramatic shift from Adamkus' policy of avoiding contact with the authoritarian leader of Belarus. On the whole, Grybauskaitė's foreign agenda in the discussed period was focused on deepening networking with Western European EU Member States in order to obtain political recognition of Lithuania for accumulation of political capital in future and being able to proceed with the "Brussels game" in the long-run. Hence, her lack of pro-active foreign policy correlates with overall adoption of the "Good European", or policy-taker's role vis-à-vis the general EU legislation negotiations as argued by Vilpišauskas²⁹.

The Lithuanian Parliamentary elections of 2008 resulted in formation of the centre-right Andrius Kubilius Government, that devoted explicit prioritisation of the EaP programme in a separate sub-chapter of the Government programme³⁰, including references for "creating efficient Eastern Partnership policy", "aiming at development of integration between European Union and Eastern partners" and "promoting active policy of the European Union in order to solve the problem of Russia's military personnel deployment in Georgia and Moldova". Meanwhile Lithuania's Constitution determines the President's leading powers in outlining

²⁶ Vaščenkaitė, (note 18) p. 37.

²⁷ Symbolically, the first country visited by President Adamkus after his re-election in 2004 was Poland. Details: Press Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Prezidentas su darbu vizitu lankysis Lenkijoje (President will visit Poland), 05 08 2004, <<http://archyvas.lrp.lt/lt/news.full/5178>>, 02 05 2015.

²⁸ Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentė. Vizitai (President of the Republic of Lithuania. Visits), 08 04 2015, <<https://www.lrp.lt/lt/prezidentes-veikla/vizitai/108>>, 02 05 2015.

²⁹ Vilpišauskas, (note 19) p. 18.

³⁰ Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo nutarimas Nr. XI-52 Dėl Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės programos (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Resolution XI-52 On Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania), December 9, 2008, <<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.F1EEF18DCA0B>>, 02 05 2015.

the country's foreign policy³¹, hence Grybauskaitė's imposed approach to limiting unilateral proactive behaviour of Lithuania's foreign policy vis-à-vis the EaP countries reduced implementation of the Government's programme to levels of Development Cooperation and means of technical assistance to recipient countries.

Externally, the combination of the election cycle of the European Parliament and implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, thus establishing the European Union External Action Service (EEAS), transformed the institutional disposition of Member States in determining EU foreign policy. The Polish Presidency of 2011 did not manage to deliver initialing Ukraine as AA as a result of political developments in Ukraine, accompanied by the imprisonment of Tymoshenko, resulting in the ensuing frozen year in EU–Ukrainian relations³² and the widely assumed failure of the Warsaw Summit³³.

As a result, the first stage of implementation of the EaP programme, starting with discussions over internal demand of strengthening the ENP towards the east, initiated by the German Presidency³⁴ and ending with the Warsaw Summit, did not become a prime time for Lithuania to deliver influence over EU decision-making processes vis-à-vis the EaP programme. Instead, Lithuania demonstrated supporting behaviour characteristic of a “Good European”, determined by its possession of endogenous and exogenous limits and a crisis of transition from its previously exercised role of a regional leader and with its diplomatic capacities additionally restrained due to chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2011. Therefore, analysed within Wivel's suggested categories, Lithuania's reluctance to engage in bargaining behaviour vis-à-vis the EaP programme in 2009–2011, utilisation of a policy-taker's approach and the general focus on Grybauskaitė's announced pragmatic policy approach provides evidence of the essential logics of small state policy – taking smallness of the state as a departure point for formulating policy actions on “damage control”.

³¹ Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992, <<http://www3.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Constitution.htm>>, 02 05 2015.

³² Senior official (1) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

³³ Audronius Ažubalis, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 17, 2014

³⁴ Senior official (1) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

3. Acting smart: before and after the Vilnius Summit

The EaP programme is a unique example of EU policy-making, primarily due to being a “project in the making”, thus the flexible design of the programme facilitates exploiting further enhancement of cooperation, based on the achievements of the recipient country; the EaP tackles both CFSP and counterbalances the geopolitical setting in Eastern Europe, through undermining the previously dominating position of Russia. Public discourse has no doubts as to the significance of the Polish-Swedish contribution for drafting the initial EaP proposal, when the post-Warsaw timeline of the EaP programme implementation is projected, i.e., the stage of actual implementation of the programme (different from the stage of *negotiating* the programme), involving respective competition for discursive attention and political prioritisation, provision of funding, expertise and technical assistance among other existing EU programmes.

The failure of the Warsaw Summit and the ensuing frozen year in EU–Ukraine relations³⁵ produced the risk of the EaP programme’s failure in tackling recipient countries. Assuming these initial conditions and learning from the experience of the Polish Presidency, an explicit round of preparations for Lithuania’s Presidency was launched by the Seimas adopting Presidency priorities, among them – the EaP programme, thus demonstrating the unprecedented case of a smaller EU Member State determining the foreign policy initiative as its Presidency priority in the post-Lisbon Treaty institutional environment. As according to diplomats³⁶ and scholars³⁷, in order to proceed with this step, comprehensive preparation work with European institutions, primarily the EEAS, has been undertaken.

Domestically, recognition of the growing importance of the EaP programme took place through inclusion of the EaP programme in a revised version of the National Security Strategy of 2012 with explicit reference to the importance of the

³⁵ Senior official (1) at Lithuania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

³⁶ Audronius Ažubalis, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 17, 2014; Expert at the Parliament (Seimas) of Lithuania, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 17, 2014; Senior official (1) at Lithuania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014; Expert (1) at Lithuania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014; Senior official (2) at Lithuania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014; Expert (2) at Lithuania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

³⁷ Kaznowski A., “Defying the Treaty: The Influence of the Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies on the Development of the Eastern Partnership”, *EU Diplomacy Paper*, 6, 2014, p. 11.

EaP programme for Lithuania's security environment³⁸, institutional transformation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whereas the existing Department of Eastern Neighbourhood Policy was supplemented by the introduction of an additional Eastern Partnership division. According to then-Foreign Minister Ažubalis, the EaP started to dominate within the discourse of bilateral relations with recipient countries³⁹; diplomats confirm that discussions about Lithuania's bilateral relations with recipient countries started to encompass issues of the Eastern Partnership on regular basis⁴⁰. Lastly, Prime Minister Kubilius' office also commissioned a Presidency-related research project⁴¹ in order to provide evidence for further political decision-making and preparation for taking over Presidency duties. Lithuania's orientation towards the comprehensive fulfilment of its Presidency duties was demonstrated by the timing of arranging Presidency preparations⁴² that was instrumental in maintaining 'institutional memory', in terms of the handover to the new Algirdas Butkevičius Government after the Parliamentary elections of 2012.

Despite Lithuania's election cycle, the frozen year in EU–Ukraine relations, accompanied by modest progress over Moldova's, Georgia's and Armenia's AA, was marked by adoption of the FAC list of conclusions on Ukraine, highlighting 10 issues to be tackled by Ukraine in order to proceed with initialling AA and DCFTA with the EU⁴³; according to diplomats, adoption of Council recommendations indicated a chance of reaching deliverables with Ukraine during the Vilnius Summit, although consequent utmost political prioritisation of producing deliverables resulted in placing outstanding risks on the entire Presidency and the requested unprecedented concentration and coordinated effort across the

³⁸ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Resolution Amending the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution on the Approval of the National Security Strategy. XI-2131, 26 June 2012, <http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=433830>, 02 05 2015.

³⁹ Audronius Ažubalis, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 17, 2014.

⁴⁰ Senior official (2) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

⁴¹ European Union-funded project "Increase of the Lithuanian European Affairs system effectiveness" (No VP1-4.2-VRM-05-V-02-001).

⁴² Soon after the Warsaw Summit, the Lithuanian Parliament adopted the "Resolution on the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of European Union", Presidency of the Council of the European Union Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established and an explicit Presidency inter-institutional plan of work was adopted by October, 2012.

⁴³ Council of the European Union, Press Release - 3209th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs, 17438/1/12 REV 1, 10 December 2012, <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-12-516_en.htm> 02 05 2015.

Presidency, Member States and European institutions⁴⁴. In the situation of the inherited trajectory of requested progress with Ukraine to be achieved in order to achieve Lithuania's internal geopolitical goal of pursuing Ukraine's integration with the European Union, experts emphasise successful orientation of Lithuania's Presidency on a facilitating role and provide very favourable assessment of implementation of its Presidency duties⁴⁵, in particular by avoiding undermining of EEAS and European Commission roles⁴⁶, hence standing as an honest broker, assisting European institutions in fostering its policies, earning trust and support across institutions, accumulating potential for its further utilisation during sensitive discussions on reaching deliverables with EaP recipients at the Vilnius Summit.

Prior research in the field of EU decision-making vis-à-vis external relations is sceptical over the Presidency's influence on agenda-setting potential⁴⁷, given that only COREPER II remains to be chaired, whilst FAC, PSC and the Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST) are chaired by EEAS officials. However, scholars do also argue that informal relations and mechanisms remain equally important for the rotating Presidency⁴⁸, thus maintaining good relations with EEAS officials forms a prerequisite for utilising agenda-shaping and brokering influence, as demonstrated by Lithuania through maintaining very good relations⁴⁹ with Petteri Vuorimäki, Chair of COEST. Analysts highlight⁵⁰ Lithuania's efforts in organising excursions for COEST and PSC members to Chisinau and Kyiv as a means of informal lobbying for members interest in supporting fostering of the EaP agenda.

When it comes to utilisation of coalition-building skills, working closely with EaP enthusiasts like Sweden and Poland and prior networking in the region ensured support of Baltic and Nordic counterparts, promoting our own smallness appeared to stand as an attractive factor in bringing in support of the Visegrád group, whilst Germany's support was ensured thanks to the like-mindedness of Foreign Minister

⁴⁴ Senior official (1) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

⁴⁵ Kaznowski, (note 36) p. 27.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 27; Senior official (2) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

⁴⁷ Kaczyński P. M., "What is Left for the Rotating Council Presidency under the Lisbon Rules?", in Fabry E., ed., *The contribution of 16 European think tanks to the Polish, Danish and Cypriot EU Trio Presidency*, Paris: Notre Europe, 2011, p. 340.

⁴⁸ Westlake M., *The Council of the European Union*, London: John Harper, 1999, p. 50.

⁴⁹ Kaznowski, (note 36) p. 23.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

Westerwelle regarding the EaP programme's topicality and Lithuania's imposed political prioritisation of the programme. According to diplomats, Germany's support was highly instrumental during negotiations on the COREPER II level⁵¹, supplemented by the United Kingdom's steadily growing support⁵² for Lithuania's efforts in agenda-shaping and brokering the EaP agenda, with the milestone of Prime Minister Cameron's participation in the Vilnius Summit ensured smooth proceedings with legislative procedures and reaching deliverables with recipient countries to-be-signed at the Vilnius Summit.

The rapid development of domestic politics in Ukraine and Armenia, as a result of Russia's imposed pressure on both⁵³, led to the inability to sign AA during the Vilnius Summit. While Armenia's rationale has been argued by its intention join the Eurasian Customs' Union, President Yanukovich expressed concerns over the negative impact of the AA and DCFTA on jeopardising Ukraine's economy, which caused a wave of public protest in Kyiv, referred to as the Euromaidan, which resulted in the ousting of President Yanukovich. In this respect, Lithuania's contributed efforts of utmost political prioritisation of reaching deliverables during the Vilnius Summit has advanced the turning point of European Union–Ukraine–Russia relations, as according to scholars⁵⁴, the scale factor of internal political changes in Ukraine due to Euromaidan ensured the EU's (including the larger Member States⁵⁵) eventual recognition of the crucial importance of the EaP programme. In total, during its Presidency Lithuania ensured the conclusion of 141 legislative and 283 non-legislative dossiers⁵⁶, including outcomes reached under implementing the priority of the Eastern Partnership.

Kaznowski's comparative study of the utilisation of the Lithuanian and Polish Presidencies provides a useful avenue in determining Lithuania's fulfilment of Wivel's conceptualisation of the smart state strategy. The scholar argues that the

⁵¹ Senior official (1) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

⁵² Senior official (2) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

⁵³ Kaznowski, (note 36) p. 17.

⁵⁴ Laurinavičius M. and Kasčiūnas L., "Lietuvos pirmininkavimui ES Tarybai pasibaigus: kaip neiššvaistyti pasiekto sėkmės, o pasinaudojant ja sustiprinti šalies užsienio politiką" ["Aftermath of Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: How not to Waste Success reached, but to Utilise it for Strengthening of National Foreign Policy"], *Rytų pulsas* 56 (1), 2014, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Audronius Ažubalis, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 17, 2014.

⁵⁶ Grybauskaitė D., Speech to the European Parliament, January 14, 2014, <<https://www.lrp.lt/en/activities/speeches/speech-by-president-dalia-grybauskaite-to-the-european-parliament/6590/18502>> 02 07 2015.

Lithuanian Presidency “was admired among Member State officials for the way in which they actively consulted and engaged with them in achieving common objectives”⁵⁷, thus providing an added value as “in the long-term many predict that Lithuania will enjoy favourable relations with the EEAS and future Council Presidencies”⁵⁸. This favourable evaluation of Lithuania’s Presidency goes in line with the assessment provided by the European Council on Foreign Affairs Scorecard 2014⁵⁹ of Lithuania as a “leader” in categories of 1) Support for the European Commission in resisting Russian pressure on Eastern Partnership countries, 2) Support for a strong line on the release of Tymoshenko, and 3) Support for efforts to achieve a visa-free regime with Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova.

Inability of the EU to pursue President Yanukovich to sign AA and DCFTA during the Vilnius Summit is considered by analysts as a turning point in the progress of the EaP programme⁶⁰. Despite rapid development of the domestic political setting in Ukraine, involving unprecedented public protests in Kyiv and throughout the country, the ousting of President Yanukovich, extraordinary Presidential and Parliamentary elections and election of a consolidated pro-European majority across all branches of power, the first reactions in the aftermath of the Vilnius Summit argued⁶¹ a need for revision of the programme, through recognition of Russia’s role in the region, increasing funding mechanisms for adjustment of transition costs of recipient countries and introduction of clearer finality of the programme through the offer of membership in the European Union.

Right before the galvanisation of resistance between public protesters and President Yanukovich, a non-paper, enlisting 20 points on the EaP programme after the Vilnius Summit was circulated within COEST in the beginning of February, 2014. Produced as a common effort of 13 Member States⁶², the non-paper suggests

⁵⁷ Kaznowski, (note 36) p. 27.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵⁹ European Council on Foreign Affairs, Scorecard 2014 – Lithuania, <http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2014/countries/lithuania>, 02 05 2015.

⁶⁰ Kasčiūnas L. and Keršanskas V., “Lessons from Vilnius”, *New Eastern Europe* 10 (1), 2014, p. 10-11.

⁶¹ Meister S., “After Vilnius: Why the EU needs to rethink its Eastern Partnership”, European Council on Foreign Relations, 20 December 2013, <http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_after_vilnius_why_the_eu_needs_to_rethink_234>, 02 05 2015; Moshes A., “The EU’s defeat in Vilnius: can the Eastern partnership be salvaged?”, *Comment* 20/2013, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2013, <http://www.fiaa.fi/assets/publications/FIIA_Comment_20_2013.pdf>, 02 05 2015; Osica O., “The Eastern Partnership: Life Begins after Vilnius”, Centre for European Policy Analysis, 13 December 2013, <<http://cepa.org/content/eastern-partnership-life-begins-after-vilnius>>, 02 05 2015.

⁶² Namely, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

aiming at maintaining political prioritisation of EaP via strengthening visibility, enhancement of the programme through designing a differentiated concept of PCA for Armenia and a pledge to express more explicit support of development in recipient countries.

Notwithstanding the eventual breakthrough of the EaP by signing AA and DCFTA with all three frontrunners of the EaP programme in mid-2014, the progress and agenda of the EaP programme in 2014 was heavily dominated by Russia's actions vis-à-vis Ukraine, primarily its occupation of Crimea and military intervention into the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Rapid development of the security setting in Europe has resulted in three rounds of sanctions on behalf of the European Union towards Russia, with Lithuania taking an exceptional hard-liner position, thus gaining additional recognition from the United Kingdom⁶³. In addition to Lithuania's bilateral aid to Ukraine provided through means of development cooperation, humanitarian and military aid accounts for 0.6 million Euros, supplemented by the delegation of 18 Lithuanian experts⁶⁴ to Ukraine provides additional recognition among European counterparts.

From the Parliamentary perspective, a consistent advocacy for ensuring Ukraine's territorial integrity and demand for applying sanctions towards Russia has been raised by the Seimas in three consequent resolutions⁶⁵ in January–April of 2014, supplemented by the Committees on European Affairs and Foreign Affairs adopting a strategy on Lithuania's support to Ukraine, informally referred to as the Marshall Plan to Ukraine in the Lithuanian media⁶⁶, initially drafted by the opposition faction of the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats⁶⁷,

⁶³ Senior official (1) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

⁶⁴ That is Office of the Government, OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, OSCE Project Co-ordination in Ukraine, EU delegation to Ukraine, EUBAM, EUAM, European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department and the International Organisation for Migration Mission to Ukraine.

⁶⁵ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, . Pareiškimas dėl padėties Ukrainoje [“Resolution on situation Ukraine”], January 23, 2014, <<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/656f3e20843111e3a31cd3b1d0ac5038>>; Rezoliucija dėl Rusijos Federacijos keliamų grėsmių Ukrainos ir visos Europos saugumui [“Resolution on Russian Federation's imposed threats to Ukraine's and Europe's security”], March 13, 2014, <<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/72738100aabd11e38e1082d04585b3dd>>; Rezo-liucija dėl padėties Ukrainoje [“Resolution on situation Ukraine”], April 24, 2014, <<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ac7879f0cc5511e3a8ded1a0f5aff0a9>>, 02 05 2015.

⁶⁶ Kubilius A. and Ažubalis A., “Opinion: Lithuania's strategy for long-term support to Ukraine”, *The Lithuanian Tribune*, October 6, 2014, <<http://en.delfi.lt/opinion/opinion-lithuanias-strategy-for-long-term-support-to-ukraine.d?id=66038290>>, 02 05 2015.

⁶⁷ Audronius Ažubalis, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 17, 2014.

aimed to be promoted by Lithuanian Parliamentarians within the COSAC dimension⁶⁸.

On the level of political discourse, Grybauskaitė has been consistently demonstrating a hard-liner position towards developments in Ukraine by stating that “Russia is terrorizing its neighbors and using terrorist methods”⁶⁹, which has been widely circulated in domestic and international media. Her encompassed hard-liner standing towards Russia was also supplemented by strong voicing of the presence of an existential threat to Lithuania, both in the international media⁷⁰ and during her annual State of the Nation address⁷¹. Another firm standing has been demonstrated in naming Russia as a “terrorist state”⁷², which on the whole should be interpreted as perceiving Lithuania’s *realpolitik* foreign policy determination⁷³, inherited from the times of Adamkus’ promoted role of regional leader. Lastly, Lithuania’s election as non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UN SC) for the 2014–2015 mandate has provided a forum for utilisation of a hard-line standing regarding military confrontation in Eastern Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea⁷⁴, thus initiating 8 out of 26 total meetings⁷⁵ dedicated to Ukraine’s issue within the UN SC. According to Kojala⁷⁶, Grybauskaitė’s shift in foreign policy towards the Eastern Neighbourhood in 2013–2014 has demonstrated a switch to Adamkus’ role of Regional-subsystem collaborator from her Internal

⁶⁸ Expert at the Parliament (Seimas) of Lithuania, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 17, 2014.

⁶⁹ “Lithuania’s president: ‘Russia is terrorizing its neighbors and using terrorist methods’”, *The Washington Post*, 24 September, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/lithuanias-president-russia-is-terrorizing-its-neighbors-and-using-terrorist-methods/2014/09/24/eb32b9fc-4410-11e4-b47c-f5889e061e5f_story.html> 02 05 2015.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ State of the Nation Address by H.E. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014 <<https://www.lrp.lt/en/speeches/state-of-the-nation-address/-2014/20827>>, 02 05 2015

⁷² Dalia Grybauskaitė: Rusija yra teroristinė valstybė [‘Dalia Grybauskaitė: Russia is a terrorist state’], *15min.lt*, November 20, 2014, <<http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/dalia-grybauskaitė-rusija-yra-teroristine-valstybe-56-467874>>, 02 05 2015.

⁷³ Vaščenkaitė, (note 18) p. 55.

⁷⁴ Expert (3) at Lithuania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 5, 2014.

⁷⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, *Lithuanian Diplomatic Yearbook 2014,22* December 2014, <<http://www.urm.lt/uploads/newsletters/2014/12/22/45ccf6d948e41ff1b7e9814c0492ff7f41814756.html>>, 02 05 2015.

⁷⁶ Kojala L. and Ivanauskas V., “Lithuanian Eastern Policy 2004–2014: The Role Theory Approach”, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 32, 2014, p. 72.

development role, according to Holsti's role conceptions⁷⁷. In this respect, utilisation of her hard-liner standing, based on the geopolitical determination of Russia's imposed threat to Lithuania through its actions towards Ukraine and the progress of the EaP programme, requires strengthening cooperation ties with Poland and overcoming the crisis in top-level political relations between the two states, which also coincides with recommendations submitted by interviewees⁷⁸.

Summarizing the rationale of Lithuania's behaviour during the EaP programme in 2012–2014, it is important to highlight the following summands:

- Combination of 1) comprehensive organisational preparation, based on learning from the Polish Presidency and agenda-planning, 2) establishment of cooperative and trustworthy relations across European institutions, 3) utmost political prioritisation of the EaP programme, 4) absence of undermining larger Member States' roles and fulfilment of vital coalition-building, 5) consensus among domestic stakeholders regarding importance of the EaP programme as an empowering instrument of domestic foreign policy ensured Lithuania's agenda-shaping and brokering powers during its rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU within bilateral and multilateral tracks of cooperation, thus delivering smooth implementation of its own determined goals vis-à-vis recipient countries, with an overarching objective of fostering European integration of recipient countries (or at least frontrunners), thus exercising the roles of "self-interested mediator" and "lobbyist" under its smart state strategy determined behaviour;
- Success in coalition-building has been driven by its ability of justifying the Eastern Partnership as a common European interest to various groupings of Member States, therefore exploiting the role of honest broker within the Council;
- The ability to reach set goals under the EaP framework and expand internal outreach of the EaP among other CFSP areas was possible due to exercising the facilitating role of Presidency and consistently avoiding undermining External Actions Service and Commission roles, thus ensuring trustworthy relations, allowing Lithuania to exploit the

⁷⁷ Holsti K. J., "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy", *International Studies Quarterly* 14 (3), 1970, p. 245-246 (cited in Kojala and Ivanauskas, (note 76) p. 53.

⁷⁸ Expert (3) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 5, 2014; Expert (1) at Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview with the author, Vilnius, December 29, 2014.

- resources of European institutions in reaching smooth consensus during negotiations over unilateral expansion of trade preferences towards Ukraine and overall negotiations on the AA and DCFTA;
- Geopolitical escalation in Eastern Europe, illustrated by Russia's imposed pressure on Armenia and Ukraine, supplemented by Crimea's occupation and Russia's military presence in Eastern Ukraine strengthened the rationale towards toughening the geopolitical orientation of Lithuania's foreign policy. Given on-going escalation, internal demand for the introduction of a more tangible security component within the revised EaP programme started to prevail in the political discourse.

Conclusions

Emergence of the EaP programme, as an extension of the ENP, provided an unprecedented political initiative of the EU vis-à-vis its neighbourhood in Eastern Europe, bearing significant geopolitical importance to one of the smaller EU Member States – Lithuania. Recipient countries of the EaP programme stood as core of Lithuania's previously possessed regional leadership policy under Adamkus. Despite Grybauskaitė's exercised change of means, rhetoric and strategic partnerships of foreign policy, its geopolitical character has remained.

The incompatibility of Lithuania's regional leadership role with the institutional environment of the European Union galvanised during post-PCA mandate negotiations was later supplemented by Grybauskaitė's announced orientation on a pragmatic approach to foreign policy, which resulted in bearing a "Good European" or "small state policy" approach over all areas of EU policy-making with an orientation towards enhancement of socialisation and networking across Member States during the first stage of the EaP programme's implementation. Simultaneously, enforcement of the Lisbon Treaty has led to the appearance of a new range of actors within the EU external policy, decreasing the already limited powers of influence of small Member States, thus determining new ways of informal cooperation among Member States to be utilised in order to influence decision-making processes, involving coalition-building, brokering and others.

Development of the security setting in Eastern Europe, reflected in the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, consolidation of power by President Putin of Russia and the ensuing occupation of Crimea and military aggression in Eastern Ukraine resulted in Lithuania's domestic demand for fostering implementation of the EaP programme to ensure the EU's counterbalancing presence towards Russia's

traditional influence in Lithuania's sensitive neighbourhood in Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus. As a result, a shift in policy orientation from "small state policy" to "smart state strategy" was achieved by means of comprehensive agenda-planning and trustworthy relations with European institutions, exercising coalition-building among Member States and providing utmost political prioritisation during Lithuania's Presidency. In this respect Lithuania's impact towards promotion of the EaP programme within the EU agenda should not be limited by a revision of the formal roles and responsibilities assigned by the Lisbon Treaty, but rather by exploitation of informal means of agenda-shaping and argument-led brokering, encompassing the smart state strategy's fulfilment which should also be interpreted as an exploitation of uploading the character of Europeanisation.

Lithuania's exhibited proactive behaviour towards the EaP programme during the preparation for, implementation and aftermath of the Presidency has been grounded on fulfilling Wivel's outlined recommendations for ensuring smart state strategy implementation, i.e., coalition-building skills, precise agenda towards a common European interest, and the ability of prioritisation of argumentation-led discussion. While exploiting the political prioritisation of the EaP programme during the rotating Presidency, diversification of a bilateral and multilateral track of activities encompassing recipient countries' possessed vulnerabilities allowed ensuring smooth fulfilment of the intended deliverables with Georgia and Moldova, whilst exceptional fulfilment of Lithuania's lobbying efforts towards the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan's implementation with Moldova has contributed to the continuation of a pro-European coalition in Moldova. Lastly, Lithuania's ability to socialise and network with Member States supplemented by its trustworthy relations with EEAS has allowed it to multiply its domestic resources by the ability to externalise efforts through the respective involvement of European institutions, all in all leading to the fulfilment of its own goals in the Eastern Partnership programme.

It should be noted however that Russia's imposed escalation of the security setting in the EU neighbourhood has toughened Lithuania's stance, inherent for its regional leadership role under Adamkus, though possession of an outstanding reputation based on professional arrangement of the Presidency and previously assured networking and socialisation with Member States has prevented Lithuania's isolation, compared to its prior experience with post-PCA mandate negotiations, and led to the recognition of Lithuania, demonstrating a by-product of smart state strategy exploitation in the EaP programme.