



# Turning “Them” into “We”

## The Impact of the Rotating European Union Council Presidency on the Member States

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### **Abstract**

The rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), held by each Member State (MS) for six months in turn, is seen both as an opportunity and a burden for the MS. While the functions and the achievements of the Council presidencies have been widely studied on the EU level, this thesis takes a reverse, and under-researched perspective of looking at what holding the presidency means for the MS and whether it fulfills its alleged function of bringing Europe closer to the MS. Combining new institutionalist theoretical approaches under the concept of Europeanisation and employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, this thesis addresses the question of whether the Council presidency leads to Europeanisation of national polities and politics. It examines the impact of the presidency on three levels: national administrations, national ministers and the citizens of the MS.

Firstly, based on nearly a 100 expert interviews with civil servants from six MS I find that holding the presidency leads to at least temporary Europeanisation of national administrations and an improvement of national-EU policy coordination practices, mostly through sociological institutionalist perspective: change of attitudes, skill development and networking. Secondly, an analysis of a novel quantitative dataset of ministerial attendance to the meetings of the Council of the EU shows that the Council presidency encourages the ministers of the respective MS to attend more frequently, but the effect is temporary, explained by a rationalist logic of consequentiality rather than appropriateness. Thirdly, conducting a Eurobarometer survey data analysis, I find that the Council presidency relates to a minor improvement of knowledge of the EU among the citizens of small EU Member States and those countries that held the Council presidency for the first time. Overall, my findings suggest that the Council presidency presents and opportunity rather than burden for the MS.



**Jury:** Dimiter Toshkov (Leiden University), Alexander Trechsel (University of Lucerne/EUI, co-supervisor), Ieva Grumbinaitė (Candidate), Ulrich Krotz (EUI, supervisor) and Daniel Naurin (University of Oslo).

## **Bio**

Before her Ph.D. in Political and Social Sciences at the EUI, Ieva completed an MSc in Public Administration at Leiden university and a BA in European Studies at Otto-von-Guericke University in Magdeburg. Her research interests include qualitative and quantitative methods (interviews, survey, categorical data analysis), European Integration, EU institutions and policies. She focused on the rotating EU Council presidency in her PhD thesis. Currently, Ieva is working as a senior researcher at the Public Policy and Management Institute in Vilnius, Lithuania.