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groups, committees (a total of over 250 such groups operate in the EU Council), Member State ministry and other institution employees, responsible for a particular field (finance, transport, agriculture, environmental protection, etc.) meet and discuss the European Commission's proposals, present their country's position on the matter, argue it. The work of the supporting structures of the Council is organized and meetings are chaired by representatives of particular institutions from the Presidency State. A specific legislative proposal is first agreed on at the level of experts from the Member States, and then it is discussed at the ministerial level. In order to effectively coordinate the activities of the members of the successive Presidencies and to facilitate the continuity of work, in 2007 a common trio (three consecutive 18-month Presidencies of Member States) program was established. At the end of 2012, the Irish-Lithuanian-Greek presidency trio programme was approved. Such trio programs are dominated by the most important issues on the EU agenda.

The EU Council is made up of the General Affairs Council and nine sectoral councils, in which representatives of respective institutions from the Member States work. When the Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2009, the meetings of European Union leaders and foreign ministers began to be chaired by permanent presidents and they took over responsibility for the organization of work from the rotating Presidency. Because of this, the visibility and political importance of the rotating EU presidency was reduced; however, for the rotating Presidency this responsibility still remains important.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EU AND REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

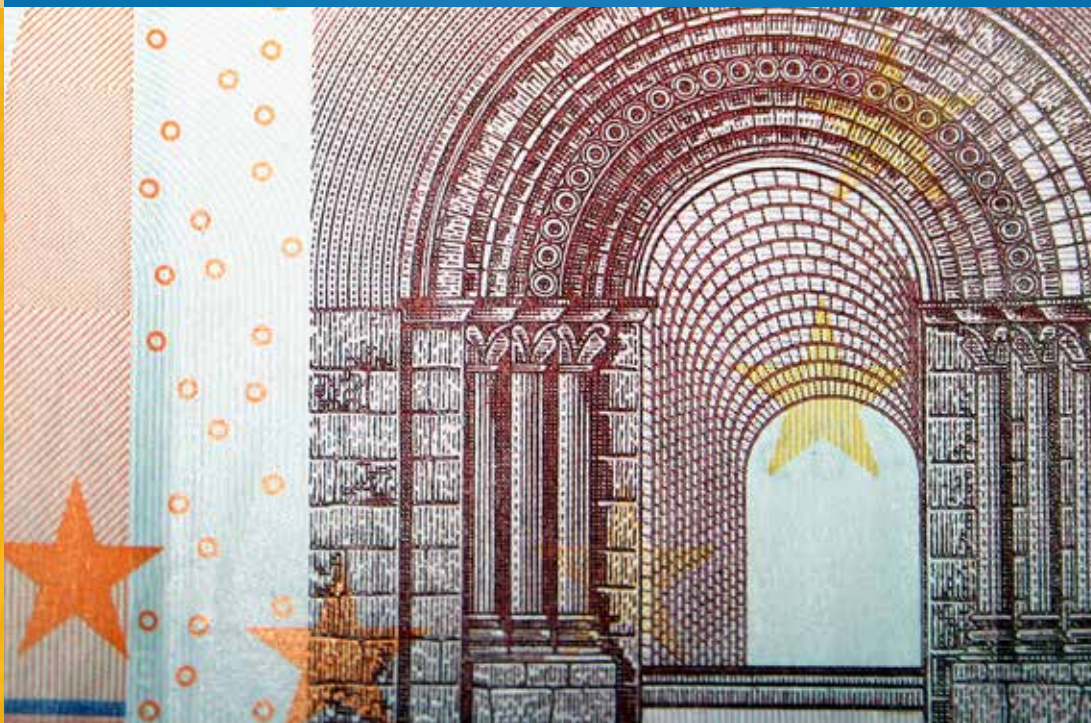
The main functions of the Presidency are: 1) organization of work, including logistics, meeting material preparation (in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU), the organization of meetings, etc.; 2) chairing meetings and conducting discussions, pursuing consensus on issues under consideration; 3) leadership-shaping agenda and providing suggestions on solutions acceptable to all the Member States; 4) the Lisbon Treaty limited the representative function of the EU Council, which still continues to be important in maintaining inter-institutional relations, in particular with the European Parliament and its committees. A big responsibility is placed on the Presidency's ministries and other institutions (central bank, etc.) of the Member State holding Presidency, which participate in coordinating the Member States' European policy, and on public administration, especially the senior officials of ministries. A heavy workload is also placed on the Member State's Permanent Representation in the EU, especially if a large part of the meetings is organized in Brussels. The Presidency usually cooperates intensely with the European Commission, which not only provides drafts of new legislation, but can also contribute with their available expertise.

Presidential agenda depends not only on the rotating Presidency. Since the EU's decision-making process, from preparation and submission of a European Commission proposal and until the final decision is made, with the approval of the Council and the



EU PRESIDENCY—PROCEDURE, RESPONSIBILITY, OPPORTUNITY

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) is one of the oldest EU procedures, established with the creation of the European Communities. The main purpose of this procedure — to give an opportunity for all the EU Member States to be responsible for organization of the Council's activities, forging consensus among all the EU Member States and the search for solutions. This allows the politicians and public servants of the Member States in the Presidency position to better understand what kinds of arguments guide the other EU Member States, on what national and EU-wide interests are grounded, how to find the acceptable solution by reconciling the different interests, how cooperation with other EU institutions works. Presidency of the Council rotates every half year. It is symbolic that it is assumed by every EU Member State, regardless of its size, economic status, geographical location, or other characteristics. Usually people refer to the Presidency of the EU (the Council), but it includes not only organization of the activities of the Council, when decisions are made during meetings of Ministers from Member States, but also the activities of the working



European Parliament, usually lasts a couple of years, most of the issues on the agenda are inherited from the previous presidencies. One of the main challenges for each incoming new rotating Presidency is the readiness of being able to properly respond to unforeseen events. It must be ready to respond to possible economic, political or other events within the EU or outside it (except for issues of the EU's foreign policy, which is now entrusted to the European External Action Service). The ability to respond swiftly and the functioning of the Presidency in general is determined by the European affairs coordination system, inter-institutional cooperation, communication with institutions from the other Member States and EU bodies, the domestic political consensus in the Presidency Member State on issues under consideration and the ability to take political leadership.

However, probably the most difficult task is to reconcile the different roles of an impartial mediator, seeking to find a solution acceptable to everybody, and an advocate of national interests. Of course, national interest is not always different from the interests of the EU as a whole. However, often when discussing specific economic regulatory or financial issues it will inevitably become necessary to assess the potential impact of such decisions on different groups in society and the Member States. In such cases, each



LITHUANIAN PRESIDENCY—ESTABLISHMENT IN THE EU

In planning the Member States Presidency schedule until 2020, it has been agreed for some time already that Lithuania would chair the Council of the EU in the second half of 2013. Out of the three Baltic States, Lithuania is the first to assume this responsibility. After the Parliamentary elections in 2008, a Government programme adopted at that time referred to the need to prepare for Lithuania's Presidency of the EU Council. With more than a couple of years remaining till the start of the Presidency, civil servant training was organized, a staff turnover and strengthening of the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU was anticipated, planning of meetings began, political decisions on the Lithuanian Presidency's priorities were made. During Lithuania's Presidency of the EU, the list of priorities will consist of the EU agenda's priority issues: economic growth, reducing unemployment, financial stability and energy security. Of the more than 500 issues presented in the Lithuanian Presidency's agenda, about 115 are identified as priorities. Separately, as Lithuania's Presidency priorities, the following have been identified: 1) energy security; 2) Eastern neighbourhood; 3) implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region; 4) cooperation on border security. It is expected that the most important event of Lithuania's Presidency will be the meeting of the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries in Vilnius; during this meeting, it is expected to make decisions important to the Eastern partner countries—Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

As has been mentioned, the Presidency's possibilities to focus more attention on its own priority issues are limited. This will depend not only on the intensity of the EU Council's agenda as well as external events, but also on Lithuania's domestic political consensus and smooth coordination of the Presidency work. These factors will determine to what extent in general Lithuania will exploit the opportunity to draw the attention of the other EU Member States to its concerns. Most of the work of the Presidency will be carried out not at the highest political level, but at the expert meetings, which usually deal with technical issues. In total, about 150 events are planned in Lithuania, and about 3,000 meetings in Brussels and Luxembourg. The budget of Lithuania's Presidency of the Council of the EU is LTL 214 million.

It is expected that Lithuania's Presidency of the Council of the EU will contribute to the establishment of Lithuania in the EU, strengthening its reputation. However, the biggest benefit for Lithuania will be the strengthening of its civil service due to the training of civil servants in preparation for the Presidency, and their actual work during the Presidency, especially in chairing, coordinating decision-making in Lithuania and with colleagues from other Member States. It is very important that these improved capabilities of Lithuania's public sector are sustained also after the end of the Presidency to continue representing the interests of Lithuania in the EU.

Prof Dr Ramūnas Vilpišauskas

Member State seeks to minimize potential adjustment costs, while the Presidency's objective is to find a commonly acceptable solution that would help to achieve, with the most appropriate instruments, the objectives set out in the EU Treaty.

A dilemma arises for the Member State when seeking to implement the priorities of its Presidency. Possibilities to prioritize some issues over the others are limited. Too active promotion of the issues important to the Presidency State can weaken the credibility of this Member State and confidence in it by the other Member States, ultimately complicating final decision-making and the overall success of the Presidency. By the way, reaching consensus on the discussed issues is one of the most important indicators of the Presidency's success. The more decisions are taken, especially those that are politically important, which the EU Council adopts during six months of Presidency, the more successful the Presidency is considered to be. To be sure, this measure of success depends on much more than the Presidency's efforts—very important is the stage of the decision-making process of a particular issue (if it is at an early stage of deliberations, the likelihood of achieving consensus within half a year is very low), its political significance and the degree of divergence of the positions of the Member States, the EU's and Member States' political calendar and unforeseen events.



Lithuanian Collectors Coins



COINS DEDICATED TO LITHUANIA'S PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

<i>Denomination 50 litas</i>	<i>Denomination 1 litas</i>
<i>Silver Ag 925</i>	<i>Cu/Ni Alloy</i>
<i>Quality proof</i>	<i>Diameter 22.30 mm</i>
<i>Diameter 38.61 mm</i>	<i>Weight 10.00 g</i>
<i>Weight 28.28 g</i>	<i>Edge of the coin: rimmed at intervals</i>
<i>Edge of the coin: 2013 07 01–2013 12 31</i>	<i>Mintage 100,000</i>
<i>Mintage 4,000</i>	

Issued in 2013
Designed by Rytas Jonas Belevičius

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www.lithuanian-mint.lt

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