

# A Performance Assessment of the 2022 Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU: External Security

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ABSTRACT

This contribution to the forum on the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU (CZ PRES) in 2022 focuses on external security policy issues. It provides a tentative assessment of the legislative agenda, non-legislative deliverables, and relevant political initiatives of the CZ PRES. Building on recently developed methodologies for assessments of EU presidencies, it is based on a set of measurable indicators directly related to the work and efforts of the presidency during its six-month term. The findings indicate a solid execution of the key functions of EU presidencies – political leadership, brokerage, and external representation – in response to the challenges stemming from the war in Ukraine in terms of both legislative and non-legislative deliverables. Regarding the assessment of the political initiatives, the performance of the CZ PRES was above average overall, albeit several initiatives have not realized their maximum potential when it comes to result delivery.

KEYWORDS

Czechia, European Union, Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU, security, CSDP/CFSP, Strategic Compass, sanctions, Ukraine

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## INTRODUCTION

This contribution to the forum on the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU (CZ PRES) in 2022 focuses on external security policy issues, excluding energy security, which is covered in other contributions. Pending the forum editors' guidelines, the following three questions are addressed, building on the methodologies recently developed by Toneva-Metodieva (2002) and Veleva-Eftimova and Haralampiev (2022) for assessments of EU presidencies:

What have been the most significant achievements of the CZ PRES?

What have been the most important failures of the CZ PRES?

What are the legacy and leftovers of the CZ PRES?

The structure of the article is as follows. The first section offers a review of the antecedent academic literature on the presidency of the Council, which sheds light on the key roles and functions of the presidency, the impact of the institutional changes introduced by the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty on these roles, the internal and external factors that (ought to) play a role when it comes to the performances of EU Member States holding the rotating presidency, and the assessments of the 2009 CZ PRES. The second section outlines the conceptual and methodological challenges related to evaluations of the rotating presidency in terms of measuring specific results and outcomes and specifies the criteria used in this article in order to offer a tentative assessment of the legislative agenda, non-legislative deliverables, and relevant political initiatives of the CZ PRES in the area of external security. This assessment is presented in section four, which is preceded by a succinct overview of the official CZ PRES priorities in the third section. In addition to a summary of the key findings related to the most significant achievements (both legislative and non-legislative deliverables in response to the challenges stemming from the war in Ukraine) and failures (the limited result delivery of several political initiatives), the concluding section also discusses the leftovers (especially the development of the EU's rapid response capabilities) and legacy of the 2022 CZ PRES in the area of security.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

While the review of the antecedent literature reveals a growing interest in the study of the presidency of the Council, essential gaps persist when it comes to evidence-based and methodologically sound assessments of the performances of individual Member States as Council chairs. First, much of the existing literature focuses on the key roles and functions of the presidency when it comes to EU-level decision-making, i.e., agenda setting (including its own initiatives); political leadership (including priority setting); brokerage in policy disputes; and national and external representation (BATORY – PUETTER 2013; ELGSTRÖM 2006; VAN GRUISEN – VANGERVEN – CROMBEZ 2019; HÄGE 2017; METCALFE 1998; PRINCEN 2003; SCHOUT – VANHOONACKER 2006; TALLBERG 2004; THOMSON 2008; WARNTJEN 2008). Overall, there is a tentative consensus regarding the multi-dimensionality of the role of the rotating presidency. In practice, the boundaries between the roles are not always well defined; they can be mutually supportive as well as conflicting, some roles may dominate for specific presidencies, and not all roles are relevant in every policy area, as which roles are relevant depends on the conditions of the environment in which the presidency operates (SCHOUT – VANHOONACKER 2006: 1056). In terms of theoretical explanations, rational choice institutionalists have stressed *“utility maximization and the ambition of member states to use the exclusive leadership functions and resources of the presidency.”* In contrast, historical and sociological institutionalists have emphasized *“the relevance of the internalization of the impartiality norm and the obligation to fulfill core leadership functions to the benefit of the Union”* (BATORY – PUETTER 2013: 99–100).

Second, scholars have examined the impact of the institutional changes introduced by the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty on the role and the leadership potential of the Presidencies (BATORY – PUETTER 2013; DINAN 2013; HÄGE 2017; TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020). While the introduction of a ‘permanent’ President (appointed for two and half years to lead the European Council) and assigning the presidency of the Foreign Affairs Council to the High Representative took away important responsibilities from the rotating presidency (BATORY – PUETTER 2013: 98), much of the antecedent literature shows that the presidency still *“plays an influential role in shaping the agenda of the Council in line with its priorities and that this power has not significantly waned as a result of the institutional changes introduced by the Lisbon treaty”* (HÄGE 2017: 701; VELEVA-EFTIMOVA – HARALAMPIEV 2022: 156).

Third, the available literature suggests a relatively long list of internal and external factors that (ought to) play a role in the performances of the EU Member States holding the rotating presidency. In addition to the aforementioned impact of treaty changes, the former include the importance of the topic to the country holding the presidency; preferences, commitments and actual negotiation strategies of key players; the level of preparations; and sensitivities between coalition partners (SCHOUT – VANHOONACKER 2006: 1058). Several studies also emphasized the importance of the relatively tight six-month timeframe concerning Council outcomes, i.e., the legislative agenda, schedules, deadlines, etc. (METCALFE 1998; RITTBERGER 2000; TSEBELIS – MONEY 1997), and the timing of the presidency itself, i.e., at what time the presidency is placed within the European institutions' cycle; at what time the presidency is placed in terms of the multiannual financial framework cycle; and at what time the presidency is placed within the Trio setting (BATORY – PUETTER 2013; JENSEN – NEDERGAARD 2014; TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020). When it comes to the importance of domestic specifics of the Member State holding the presidency, e.g., its size, year of accession, GDP per capita, past presidency performance, public opinion about the EU, and authority, the findings from existing studies are “ambiguous” (SCHOUT – VANHOONACKER 2006; VELEVA-EFTIMOVA – HARALAMPIEV 2022: 154).

When it comes to external factors, the following have been discussed: the degree to which a topic has been explored (new versus old); the level of trust in the Chair of the presidency; the presence of other brokers in the system; the shadow of the future; the political sensitivity of a topic (SCHOUT – VANHOONACKER 2006: 1057–1058) and the (succession of) various crises that the EU has to overcome at the time of the presidency, e.g., the financial one in 2008–2010, the refugee-related one in 2015–2016, or the Russian-Ukrainian one since 2022 (TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020).

Fourth, when it comes to the assessments of the performances of Member States as Council chairs, individual case studies have been relatively numerous (SEE TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020: 652), even beyond the yearly overviews published by the Journal of Common Market Studies from 1998 till 2013 (COPSEY – HAUGHTON 2013), substantially outnumbering comparative cases (E.G. BENGTSOON – ELGSTRÖM – TALLBERG 2004). Importantly for this article, several studies prioritized policy area case studies over comprehensive presidency assessments, focusing, for example, on the role of the presidency in

brokering a specific agreement <sup>(E.G. GALLOWAY 1999)</sup> (on Agenda 2000) or its impact on the development of a particular policy area <sup>(E.G. BJURULF – ELGSTRÖM 2004)</sup> (on transparency policy). I am not aware, however, of any study examining specifically the performance of an EU Council presidency in the area of security, either internal or external.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the findings of the antecedent literature assessing the 2009 CZ PRES. Among the Czech expert community, this presidency is arguably most remembered for the change of government in the middle of its six-month term. While the expectations were relatively low already before this event due to domestic factors, including the relative lack of experience of the Czech Republic as a recent entrant to the EU, and the avid Euroscepticism of the then Czech President Václav Klaus and the government that initially executed the presidency (led by the center-right Civic Democratic Party), several important external factors also had a major impact <sup>(BENEŠ – KARLAS 2010; KRÁL – BARTOVIČ – ŘIHÁČKOVÁ 2009)</sup>. These included at least three the gas dispute between Ukraine and Russia; the renewed hostilities in the Gaza Strip; and the global financial and, later, economic crisis), the lack of cohesiveness of the trio consisting of France, the Czech Republic and Sweden, and the French President's foreign major crises (policy ambitions and management of the economic crisis, which were problematic to the extent that the *“activities of the CZ PRES and President Sarkozy came across as uncoordinated and even adversarial”* <sup>(BATORY – PUETTER 2013: 101)</sup>). Nevertheless, most evaluators of the 2009 CZ PRES concur that its effectiveness could be characterized as mixed. In the security area most pertinent to this analysis, the 2009 CZ PRES performed well in external energy security and EU relations with Eastern Europe. However, its management of the Gaza crisis, *“as well as of transatlantic relations, was not free from serious lapses”* <sup>(BENEŠ – KARLAS 2010: 78)</sup>.

## DEFINING AND MEASURING SUCCESS

As aptly noted by Schout and Vanhoonacker <sup>(2006: 1051)</sup>, *“[j]udging presidencies is easy, evaluating them is not.”* Many academic assessments of presidencies *“are short and do little more than list the major developments”* <sup>(SCHOUT – VANHOONACKER 2006: 1051)</sup>, and among policy-makers, *“political correctness often requires that Presidencies are evaluated as a success”* <sup>(TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020)</sup>. Consequently, despite the growing academic interest,

genuine evidence-based evaluations of EU presidencies are still in short supply, and “*the study of the presidencies, including of their political initiatives, remain[s] at the level of the narrative statement*” (VELEVA-EFTIMOVA – HARALAMPIEV 2022: 154). This is due to a number of factors.

First, definitions of success are often only loosely specified. In line with the aforementioned key functions of the presidency, they range from the ability to increase the pace of integration; managing political divergence; realization of “considerable progress” (SCHOUT – VANHOONACKER 2006: 1051–1052); and the influence of the presidency on the EU political system to delivered results in terms of negotiation outcomes (TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020: 652–653). An evidence-based evaluation has to go beyond such general statements in order to avoid contradictory conclusions.

Second, few analyses specify a methodology for evaluating the presidency in terms of measuring specific results. Most analyses of the Council presidency “*focus on particular aspects of the preparation or the performance of the Presidency and remain descriptive in nature, rather than offering a methodologically sound framework of indicators for the findings and judgements offered*” (IBID.). According to Toneva-Metodieva (IBID.: 651–653), the methodological difficulty of performance assessments of the presidency is a consequence of the level of complexity in the Council and the EU decision-making, which is further compounded by limited access to information about the negotiations in the Council and its preparatory bodies, as well as the other two key institutions in the policy process at EU level – the Commission and the Parliament. Moreover, the volume of EU-level decision-making has increased substantially, making “*it very difficult to track each process, involved actors, concerned stakeholders, influences, bargaining strategies, outcomes and impact*” because “*there is no standardized practice of reporting of the Presidencies, as the Presidency is not an institution bound by requirements for accountability, but rather a function occupied only for a limited period*” (IBID.: 653). Finally, the results of a presidency “*are intertwined with (a) circumstances at EU level and in the Member States, (b) the strategies of a plethora of institutions, actors, and stakeholders, [and] (c) developments on the international arena*” (IBID.: 651). These contextual issues are beyond the presidency’s control but can significantly impact its agenda, progress, and outcomes.

As such, albeit this analysis is limited to assessing the external security agenda of the 2022 CZ PRES, the conducting of a full-fledged evidence-based assessment would necessitate a research effort that would be far beyond the limited time scope (50 days since the end of the presidency) and resources of a single author with two research assistants. Therefore, to the extent possible, the following analysis follows the methodologies recently developed by Toneva-Metodieva (2020) and Veleva-Eftimova and Haralampiev (2022) for presidency assessments. These are based on a set of measurable indicators directly related to the work and efforts of the presidency during its six-month term, thus excluding the aforementioned contextual factors.

Since the primary function of the Council is the adoption of legislative acts, a key indicator for assessing the performance of the presidency is the number of legislative dossiers discussed and the stage of advancement achieved. However, a comprehensive legislative agenda assessment would only be plausible regarding “internal” security, i.e., Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), where the EU has legislative powers. When it comes to “external” security, i.e., the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it is still the Member States which remain sovereign policy actors in their own right. As a consequence, no legislative acts can be adopted in these areas at the EU level and the Ministers of Defense meet only informally. The few possible exceptions of ordinary EU legislation with security implications are related to the strong competences of the EU for regulating the single market, such as the EU Money Laundering Directives, which are relevant in the fight against terrorism, or the adoption of various sanctions (restrictive measures), where relevant Council Decisions are implemented with accompanying EU Regulations.

This situation is different when it comes to non-legislative deliverables adopted by the Council, including Recommendations and Conclusions, and policy documents such as strategies, road maps, action plans, reports, EU positions for international organization summits, conventions, or concluded international agreements (TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020: 654, 660–651). The evaluation of these deliverables by the presidency can be performed both for JHA and the CSFP/CSDP because the Lisbon Treaty gives the Union an explicit external mandate. Specifically, according to Art 24, EU

competence “shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union’s security,” and Arts 23–46 spell out specific provisions for the CFSP and the CSDP.

Political initiatives are “*initiatives of political and strategic nature, initiated or carried forward (ex. diplomatic processes, strategic debates, expert and public discussions)*”, which “*each presidency has the opportunity to put forward or continue[...] based on its individual preferences and the conditions on the EU political arena. This area of activity is what shapes the image of a Presidency and what it is often remembered for*” (TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020: 655). For their evaluation, the following criteria were used with numerical scores assigned to their values (see Table 1): the type of initiative; the degree of intensity of the action performed; and the quality of the result (for which conditional grades were given). By adding up the numerical scores of each of these indicators, the overall assessment was calculated for each specific initiative, and this score was then normalized; i.e., the specific numerical value derived was related to the possible maximum which can be achieved for the respective work, set at 100, and also to the possible minimum, set at 0. In this way, an index with indices of individual political initiatives conducted by the presidency was obtained (see Figure 1 and the online Appendix).

TABLE 1: KEY QUALITY PARAMETERS FOR EVALUATING POLITICAL INITIATIVES

1. Initiative type/score:	Conference-forum/5, Diplomatic negotiations/4, Political meeting-dialogue/4, Expert meeting-dialogue/3, Training/1, Other/1
2. Action intensity/score:	One-off (for example, one event)/4, Repeated (a series of initiatives with a follow-up)/3
3. Quality of the result/score:	No documents have been adopted/0.5, Documents of a purely declarative nature/2, Documents containing specific proposals for action – with a deadline and without funding/3, Documents containing specific proposals for action – without a deadline and with funding/3.5, Documents containing specific proposals for action – with a deadline and with funding/4

Source: Author’s compilation based on Veleva-Eftimova – Haralampiev (2022).

To account for the differences in the relative importance of specific political initiatives, the sum of numerical values assigned to three additional indicators was used to determine their conditional weight: the stage of the implementation process of the initiative; the scope of the institutional participants; and to what extent the initiative was a priority for the EU (see Table 2). Thus, a single general index for all the political initiatives conducted by the presidency was obtained as a calculation of a weighted average of

the indices of the individual initiatives (see the online Appendix). Since this overall index is a number in the range from 0 to 100, it can be interpreted on the basis of its similarity to a percentage, and as such, it can be used as an indicator of the degree of success of the performance of the main activities of the presidency (in our case it is limited only to the external security agenda).

TABLE 2: CONDITIONAL WEIGHTS FOR EVALUATING POLITICAL INITIATIVES

<b>1. The stage of the implementation process of the initiative/score:</b>	A new initiative launched by the presidency/4, A continuation of work already undertaken/an already existing process/2
<b>2. The scope of the institutional participants/score:</b>	The Council of the EU alone/3, The Council of the EU jointly with other institutions from the EU triangle/4, The Council jointly with other institutions outside the EU triangle/5, The Council jointly with other non-governmental participants (local or international)/4
<b>3. Is the topic a priority for the EU?/score:</b>	Yes, it is on the Leaders' Agenda, in the Conclusions and of priority for the presidency/6, Yes, it is on the Leaders' Agenda and in the Conclusions of the European Council/4, Yes, it is in the Conclusions of the European Council and of priority for the presidency/4, Yes, it is on the Leaders' Agenda and of priority for the presidency/4, Yes, but it is only on the Leaders' Agenda/2, Yes, but it is only in the Conclusions/2, Yes, but it is only of priority for the presidency/2, No/1
<b>4. The priority for the EU according to the standing of participants/score:</b>	Not a priority, experts are involved/1, Not a priority, but ministers are involved/2, Not a priority, but leaders of the states are involved/6, Single priority, experts are involved/2, Single priority, ministers are involved/4, Single priority, leaders of the states are involved/8, Double priority, experts are involved/4, Double priority, ministers are involved/6, Double priority, leaders of the states are involved/10, Triple priority, experts are involved/6, Triple priority, ministers are involved/8, Triple priority, leaders of the states are involved/12

Source: Author's compilation based on Veleva-Eftimova – Haralampiev (2022).

A fundamental limitation of this assessment of the 2022 CZ PRES activities is the shortage of data necessary to properly evaluate all of the relevant indicators listed in Tables 1 and 2. Due to time constraints, the author was only able to collect the data for directly measurable indicators of the nature of the CZ PRES performance in terms of political initiatives, which can be found in a number of primary sources, i.e., documents published by EU institutions and the Czech government/ministries/agencies. In contrast, much of the information on the negotiation processes of legislative and non-legislative initiatives cannot be derived from open sources. The operationalization of the relevant indicators would therefore necessitate a substantial number of interviews with representatives of the presidency team and interviewees from the General Secretariat of the Council and/or the European Parliament as co-legislators (TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020: 663). This task was beyond the limited human and time resources available for

writing this article. Consequently, only a rudimentary assessment of the negotiation progress (i.e., no progress, some progress, or major progress) made on security-related legislative and non-legislative initiatives undertaken by/during the 2022 CZ PRES is presented below. Their complete list is provided in the online Appendix.

## THE CZECH PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES IN (EXTERNAL) SECURITY

The CZ PRES from 1 July to 31 December 2022 was in the middle of the trio, as it was preceded by the French and followed by the Swedish presidency. The original joint programme of the presidencies approved on 14 December 2021 by the General Affairs Council had four priority thematic areas: 1) protecting citizens and freedoms; 2) building economic foundations: a European model for the future; 3) building a climate-neutral, green, equitable and social Europe; 4) promoting European interests and values in the world. Albeit the first priority area was (internal) security oriented, overall, the priorities “*were mainly aimed at addressing and mitigating the negative economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic*” (CZECH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2022A). When it came to (external) security, the trio plan merely noted that “*the three Presidencies will also work towards a stronger and result-oriented Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) through the endorsement and implementation of the Strategic Compass*” (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2021: 3).

The emphasis on (external) security, however, became the number one priority following the Russian aggression in Ukraine in February 2022. In fact, it can be argued that the (search for the) EU response to the war in Ukraine dominated the entire CZ PRES agenda. This was clearly reflected in all five of the priority areas specified in the CZ PRES programme: managing the refugee crisis and post-war reconstruction of Ukraine; energy security; strengthening European defense capabilities and cybersecurity; the strategic resilience of the European economy; and resilience of democratic institutions (CZECH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2022B). The programme included 61 explicit references to the “Russian aggression” against Ukraine and stated that the CZ PRES would support the EU’s efforts to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine via further use of EU instruments for arms supplies and other assistance

measures for Ukraine, in particular under the European Peace Facility (EPF); the application and enforcement of the sanction regimes and their further extension; and ensuring accountability for crimes against international law committed during the war in Ukraine (CZECH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2022B: 17).

Beyond the war in Ukraine, the CZ PRES programme included the following key (external) security topics: the implementation of the Strategic Compass; strengthening the EU-NATO cooperation, the development of capabilities in this respect and the strengthening of European defense capacities; the development of rapid response capabilities and streamlining CSDP missions and operations; resilience against disinformation and strategic communication at the EU level; and the external aspects of the fight against terrorism (CZECH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2022B).

## THE FULFILLMENT OF THE CZECH PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES IN (EXTERNAL) SECURITY

When it comes to the legislative and non-legislative deliverables related to the war in Ukraine, substantial and tangible progress was made in fulfilling the following CZ PRES priorities in the area of external security:

- The quick adoption of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> package of EU sanctions against Russia, which was to be supplemented with a price cap on Russian oil in cooperation with the G7 countries; and the agreement on fully suspending the EU-Russia visa facilitation agreement (see the online Appendix for specific Council Decisions and Regulations).
- The launch of the Union's Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) in mid-November 2022. The mission aims to train around 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers in EU countries in two years. Its full operability is expected to start at the beginning of 2023.
- The implementation of several assistance measures under the EPF, with successfully negotiated compromises in increasing the financial and material support for Ukraine by setting the mechanism for reimbursement of supplies, which enabled the EU Member States to continue to provide the support (the total reimbursements from the EPF amounted to EUR 3.1 billion),

and an agreement to increase the EPF's total budget by EUR 2 billion in 2023 and by up to EUR 5.5 billion in the period up to 2027 (OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC 2023: 6, 11–13).

- Albeit not explicitly earmarked as a security matter, the December 2022 approval of an EU loan of EUR 18 billion to prevent a financial breakdown in Ukraine in 2023 is also worth noting here, given the need to overcome the long-standing veto by Hungary (EUROPEAN COUNCIL 2022).

No tangible progress was made when it came to ensuring accountability for crimes against international law committed during the war in Ukraine. In this area the CZ PRES only issued political calls for support of the work of the International Crime Tribunal and the establishment of a special international tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression committed by Russia at the UN Security Council meeting in September 2022 (PERMANENT MISSION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO THE UN 2022).

When it came to the other external security priorities, some progress was reached in the following areas in the implementation of the Strategic Compass, where the CZ PRES:

- Actively cooperated in the preparation of the new Pact for a Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy.
- Contributed to the completion and approval of the text of the Council Conclusions on foreign manipulation of information and interference.
- Helped to find consensus on the implementation guidelines for the Framework for a coordinated EU response to hybrid campaigns, thanks to which the hybrid toolbox became operational.
- Oversaw the United Kingdom joining the PESCO project on military mobility;

Contributed to the development of the European defense industry with the agreement at the Council level on the EDIRPA Regulation (support for collaborative public procurement), which represents the first step towards expanding the possibility of a joint acquisition of military material by EU Member States (OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC 2023: 11–13).

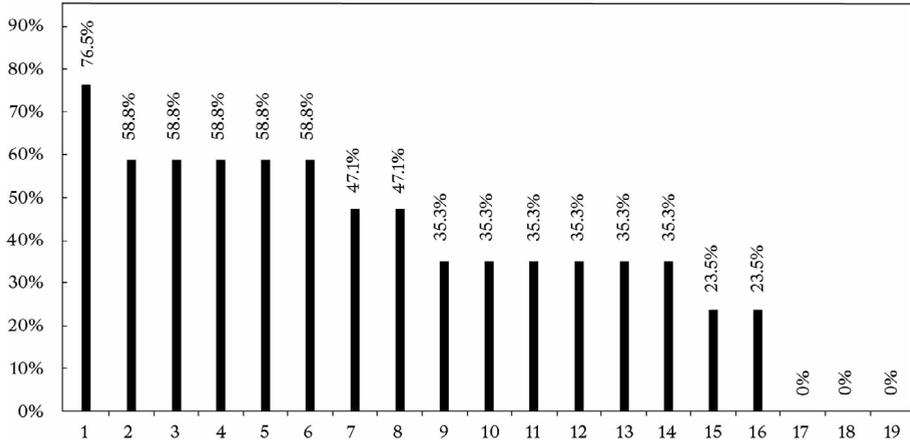
Regarding the other priorities, the CZ PRES contributed to implementing the Council's conclusions on the external dimension of counter-terrorism. When it came to strengthening the EU-NATO cooperation, the CZ PRES made progress on the third joint EU-NATO declaration, which was completed and signed in early January 2023, and which specifies key areas of future cooperation, including resilience and the protection of critical infrastructure, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, the security implications of climate change and foreign information manipulation and interference (EUROPEAN COUNCIL 2023). Little, if any, progress was achieved when it came to the development of rapid response capabilities and streamlining CSDP missions and operations.

Beyond the initially stated priorities, the CZ PRES also oversaw the EU responses to two other external developments: 1) the launch of the EU civilian monitoring capacity at the Armenian part of the border with Azerbaijan and the start of the preparations for setting up a standard CSDP civil monitoring mission in Armenia; 2) the imposition of additional sanctions against Iran for its repression of civil protests and also for its supplying Russia with drones that were used in the aggression in Ukraine (OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC 2023: 11–13). Overall, when it came to non-legislative outcomes, 43 were adopted during the four meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council during the CZ PRES (see the online Appendix).

Regarding the assessment of the political initiatives, Figure 1 presents the normalized assessment in the form of indices of individual political initiatives conducted by the CZ PRES (see the online Appendix for the complete list) using the quality parameter criteria specified in Table 1. The political initiative with the highest index (76.5) was the August 2022 Informal Meeting of EU Ministers of Defence, where the political agreement on the Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) was reached. The political initiatives with the lowest index (0) were the Away Days for the working groups Military Committee Working Group and Headline Goal Task Force (EUMCWG and HTF), and the Working Party on Maritime Issues Away Day, which are all held regularly every six months and involve the given group's visit to the presidency country, during which the group members have the opportunity to learn about the culture and history of the host country. What is important here is the structure of the distribution – only six out of 19 political initiatives have reached over half of the

maximum possible potential for achieving a result and five initiatives have reached less than one fourth of the potential.

FIGURE 1: INDICES OF POLITICAL INITIATIVES (IN DESCENDING ORDER)



Source: Author's calculations. For the list of all the initiatives and their scoring, see the online Appendix.

Following the application of conditional weights (see Table 2) to account for the differences in the relative importance of specific political initiatives, the general index assessment of the political initiatives of the CZ PRES is 43 (see the online Appendix for details). Since the index is a number in the range from 0 to 100, it can be interpreted based on its similarity to a percentage. Considering that virtually no Council presidency is likely to achieve an overall index higher than 70–75 (TONEVA-METODIEVA 2020: 664), the CZ PRES's achievement when it comes to the political initiatives' results in the area of external security can be qualified as a good, but only slightly above average performance.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis of legislative and non-legislative deliverables of the 2022 Czech Presidency in the area of external security (CFSP/CSDP) points to an overall excellent performance when it comes to addressing the challenges of the war in Ukraine and a medium performance when it comes to other policy priorities, in particular the implementation of the Strategic Compass and EU-NATO relations. In two of the initially mentioned priority areas – ensuring accountability for crimes against international

law committed during the war in Ukraine and the development of rapid response capabilities, and streamlining CSDP missions and operations – little progress was achieved. Regarding the assessment of the political initiatives, the performance of the CZ PRES was good overall, albeit several initiatives have not realized the maximum potential when it comes to result delivery.

Several caveats are in order. First, due to the lack of data from interviews, the assessments presented in this article are tentative only. In particular, it is impossible to assess the quality and quantity of the contributions of different actors involved in the preparation and delivery of specific deliverables and initiatives (the CZ PRES versus the High Representative and the European External Action Service), since much of the underlying work happens behind closed doors in more than 30 working groups (KEUKELEIRE – DELREUX 2014: 70). Secondly, from a methodological point of view, the selection of political initiatives and the criteria used for their normalized quality assessments and conditional weighting may require further adjustments, both in general and to compensate for the fact that the criteria were not originally designed to measure specific policy areas only. Third, the standard of comparison matters which would require a comparative perspective to other priority policy areas (two are covered in other contributions to this special forum) and to other presidencies.

Nevertheless, some general observations can be made. First, the importance of the impact of external crises on the agenda of the CZ PRES is crystal clear. While the original trio programme paid limited attention to external security issues, the CZ PRES agenda was dominated by security challenges resulting from the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Second, it is a major achievement that the CZ PRES has lived up to the vast majority of these challenges while simultaneously delivering a decent, if at times average, performance on other security priorities at the EU level. In this respect, it can be argued that the 2022 CZ PRES managed the entire external security agenda much better than the 2009 CZ PRES. Third, the few external security priorities with little to no progress arguably concerned relatively long-term challenges, such as the development of the EU's rapid response capabilities and the streamlining of CSDP missions and operations, which were bound to persist long beyond the six months of the CZ

PRES. As such, these left-overs of the CZ PRES in the external security policy area are possibly better characterized by the ‘long-runners’ label.

Overall, one can therefore argue that the CZ PRES’s solid execution of the key functions of EU presidencies – political leadership, brokerage, and external representation – in response to the war in Ukraine, the largest conflict on the EU’s doorsteps in decades, represents the single most important legacy of the 2022 Czech Presidency.

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