



PULASKI REPORT

"The role of the new Member States in the developing of the EU's Eastern agenda in the years 2004-2007 – perceptions of EU officials"

Katarzyna Pisarska

ABSTRACT: *The report tries to assess the influence of EU's new Member States from Central Europe on the European Union's Eastern policy in the years 2004-2007. It is based on the results of a mixed method study conducted in 2007 and 2008 among 60 EU officials (both desk officers and national diplomats) dealing with Eastern policy issues either in the European Commission and the Council of the European Union. The report answers questions concerning the types of developments happening on the EU agenda in the years 2004-2007, the major factors provoking these changes, and the role of new Member States, including Poland, in the forming of the EU's Eastern policy.*

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CONTENT

I. Introduction	3
II Results of qualitative research.	6
1. Impact of the 2004 enlargement on EU's Eastern policy.....	6
1.1. Assessment of changes of EU's Eastern policy after 2004.....	6
1.2. Assessment of principal factors affecting the change of the EU's Eastern policy.....	10
2. Assessment of the effectiveness of new Member States in shaping EU's Eastern policy	12
2.1. General characteristics of new Member States	12
2.2. Level of activity of the new Member States on the EU forum and the learning process of European procedures.....	14
2.3. Influence of the new Member States on the EU Eastern policy – successful and unsuccessful initiatives	19
3. Assessment of Poland's activities in shaping the European Union Eastern policy	25
4. Summary qualitative research results	28
III Results of quantitative research	29
1. Perceptions of changes in EU relations with its Eastern neighbours since the 2004 enlargement	29
2. Perceptions of the performance of eight new Member States in shaping the EU's Eastern agenda	34
3. Perceptions of the performance of Poland in shaping the EU's Eastern Agenda.....	37
4. Summary of quantitative research results	40
IV. Verification of research hypotheses.....	41
V. Recommendations for Poland	45
About the author	47
About the Casimir Pulaski Foundation.....	47

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I. Introduction

With each new wave of enlargement the European Union acquires not only new members but also new dimensions in its external relations. The newcomers bring into the EU their particular national interest, but also experience and knowledge of their direct surroundings. The accession of Spain to the EU in 1986 generated a greater interest in relations with Latin America, whereas the accession of Finland and Sweden in 1995 shifted the attention of the bloc towards the so-called "Northern Dimension".¹ In this regard the 2004 EU enlargement to eight Central European countries, although the most ambitious in the EU's history, was no different in the overall logic. It has forced the European Union to reexamine its relations with the new Eastern neighbors: Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine; as well as provoked a certain reevaluation of the policies towards the entire region.

The 2004-2007 EU Eastern policy developments, characterized generally by a greater involvement in the region, are a result of at least two factors. Firstly, the physical extension of the European Union's border to the East has made the EU face a new sets of problems (visa issues, transit, border control) demanding a closer and a more intense cooperation with Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Secondly, the accession of new Member States from Central Europe, has brought new sensitivities and a strong lobbying group demanding a more direct EU involvement in its Eastern neighborhood. Countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and the Baltic States, being well acquainted with the regional conditions and having significant experience in dealing with Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, have tried to lay out new directions in the EU's foreign policy.

¹ The Northern Dimension in the external and cross-border policies of the European Union reflects the EU's relations with Russia (and particularly North-west Russia) in the Baltic Sea region and Arctic Sea region. The concept of creating such a dimension was introduced by Finland after its own and Sweden's accession to the EU in 1995.

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The purpose of the presented report is to assess to what extent the 2004 European Union enlargement and the activity of new Member States², in particular Poland, have had an impact on the development of EU's relations with its three Eastern neighbors: Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. This will be done through an analysis of perceptions of Brussels-based officials, responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the EU's Eastern policy, on the overall performance of the newcomers. The reason for choosing this research population is that EU bureaucrats and diplomats through their day-to-day work in a multi-national environment are the best equipped observers of changes happening within the European Union foreign policy. They have first-hand access to all national foreign policy proposals. Throughout their work in or with the EU institutions they gain a more supranational perspective on European issues, which makes them more objective judges of the efficiency of one Member State proposal over another.

The undertaken analysis has tested three main hypotheses of the study:

Hypothesis 1: The 2004 EU enlargement has had a direct impact on EU relations with Eastern neighbours, reshaping the Union's policy towards the region.

Hypothesis 2: The activity of new Member States has been a significant but not an exclusive factor influencing the developments in the EU's Eastern foreign policy.

Hypothesis 3: Poland, as the biggest new Member State, has had the greatest aspirations in forming comprehensive EU Eastern policy and its impact on the EU agenda was greater than that of other new Member States.

Among the most important research questions tested were:

- How have the EU relations with Belarus, Russia and Ukraine changed following the EU enlargement?

² The study concerned eight new Member States from Central Europe, namely the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia. It has not studied the influence of Bulgaria and Romania, which have joined the EU in January 2007.

- What were the primary and secondary factors influencing the EU policy shift of policy?
- How has the performance of different new Member States varied in trying to influence the EU Eastern agenda? Where the views of newcomers significantly different from old Member States?
- To what extent the policies undertaken by Poland are perceived in Brussels as successful or unsuccessful in influencing the EU agenda?
- What have been the main weaknesses and the strengths of the Polish efforts to influence the EU Eastern policy?

The author has used a **mixed-method approach** in the study, which means converging both qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (survey) data, collected from a population of European Union diplomats responsible for the implementation of the EU's Eastern policy issues in Brussels. In the study, the survey (**quantitative method**), conducted among 60 EU officials, is used to measure the relationship between the EU 2004 enlargement (independent variable) and two dependent variables:

- a) the changes in EU bilateral relations with Belarus, Russia and Ukraine
- b) the impact of the new Member States, in particular Poland, on the EU Eastern Agenda

At the same time the influence of newcomers on the EU Agenda is explored using in-depth interviews (**qualitative method**) with 20 EU desk officers or national representatives to the Council, working on day-to-day basis in Brussels.

The actual data collected was from 20 participants in interviews conducted over a 5-month period (June-October 2007) and 40 respondents from surveys done over a 7-month period (July 2007 – January 2008). Overall, the empirical research included interviews with diplomats and desk officers coming from 15 member states: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden and United Kingdom, whereas the survey was conducted on a population representing 25 EU member states (all EU states excluding Portugal and Greece)

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II. Results of qualitative research

1. Impact of the 2004 enlargement on the EU's Eastern policy

1.1. Assessment of changes of the EU's Eastern policy after 2004

When asked about the changes occurring on the EU Eastern agenda between 2004 and 2007, the majority of EU officials indicated a general **increase of interest in Eastern issues within the European Union itself**. During this period the EU Eastern policy became one of the priorities of EU's external relations and foreign policy. Cooperation with Belarus, Russia and Ukraine was more frequently the subject of discussions on the EU level. This change concerned different EU institutions to a different extent. The most visible raise in significance of the Eastern policy, in comparison to the situation before 2004, occurred in the European Parliament (EP) and in the Council of the EU. A considerable increase in the subject matter could be observed both during the sessions and discussions, and in the final conclusions tabled by these institutions. Relatively small changes in terms of interest were observed within the European Commission, which having maintained its contacts with Eastern European countries since the 90-ties, have already before kept Eastern issues high on the agenda.

The second important result of the 2004 enlargement, as indicated by EU officials, has been a **mental change in the perception of the region**, mostly by **the 15 old Member States**. As one of the EU officials said: *"Eastern Europe was a complete "terra incognita" for many Member States before the enlargement, more distant mentally than Africa or even Latin America."* The European Union began to discern the autonomous character of different states in Eastern Europe. The problems of Ukraine, Belarus, Central Asia and Black Sea states became more significant in European discussions, in comparison to the earlier predominant Russian subject matter. The EU policy with respect to these countries became more sublime. In the years 2004-2007 many old Member States redefined their geographic concept of EU's Eastern policy. The policy had earlier been either related to the enlargement of the European Union (and concerned only countries of Central Europe) or understood as EU's relations with the Russian Federation. The situation changed after 2004, many respondents said that the old Member States "discovered" new geographic areas, like the Caucasian region or Central Asia.

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The third important shift change affecting the EU Eastern policy was **the development of existing contacts and the opening of new cooperation areas**. Qualitative changes occurred in the development of mutual relations. More attention was given to direct contacts with East European societies (*people-to-people contacts*) and on facilitating of personal traffic for the citizens of third countries (visa facilitation agreements, transport agreements, etc.). Actions aimed at the support of civic society in Ukraine became important, as well as developing "creative solutions" supporting democratic movements and the non-governmental sector in Belarus. Many diplomats from Brussels indicated that the increased interest in the cooperation with Eastern neighbours was also expressed in faster response of the European Union to current events in the East. Such examples were: a relatively effective participation of the European Union in the round table negotiations during the „Orange Revolution" in Ukraine and an almost immediate response, in the form of declarations and sanctions, to the forged presidential election in Belarus in 2005.

A number of interviewed respondents indicated the evolution of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in this context. The general framework of the ENP, introduced in the years 2003-2004 was not changed; certain new trends can however be discerned. One of them is a tendency to regionalize problems, as proven by the success of the idea of Black Sea Synergy,³ as well as the discussion on the Polish proposal to form an Eastern Dimension of the European Union. As a European Commission official said: *"The ENP brings more of an equilibrium to the Eastern neighbours who have had much less wide ranging agreements and institutional setups than our Southern ENP countries"*.⁴ Thus, the consequence of the enlargement and deepened cooperation with the East was obtaining a better **equilibrium between the Eastern Dimension and the Southern Dimension** of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Southern Dimension, covering the countries of the Mediterranean Sea, had

³ The Commission initiated "Black Sea Synergy" in April 2007, the cooperation with the Black Sea region countries within the European Neighbourhood Policy. As the consequence of the enlargement of the Union with Bulgaria and Romania, the Synergy would contribute to the development of the cooperation and complement existing bilateral activities aimed at the stability and the reforms in the Black Sea region, including Turkey and Russia. See more: *European Commission, Black Sea Synergy - a New Regional Cooperation Initiative, Communication, COM(2007) 160 final, Brussels, 11/04/2007*

⁴ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 18th October 2007.

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generated before more attention and more funds. The Southern Dimension had had better institutional structures and contractual basis, prepared in the framework of the Barcelona Process. This disproportion decreased after 2004, though some interviewed respondents said that obtaining a full equilibrium between the two Dimensions of the European Neighbourhood Policy is still one of its most challenging issues.

New fields of cooperation with the East gained significance between 2004 and 2007, as experienced in the energy sector. Some of the respondents even claimed that the largest qualitative changes in the Eastern policy result from energy issues. As one of national representatives of COEST working group said:

*"There is a growing interest in the East, mainly because of the search of alternative sources of energy. All other issues are interlinked. For example, democracy building is also important, because you cannot have secure supply if you do not have a safe political and economical environment in both supplier and transit countries. I would even say that If there was no direct economic interest in the region, there would be little interest in investing in the promotion of human rights and democracy."*⁵

The fourth indicated change on the EU Eastern agenda after 2004 was the **revaluation of the relations between the European Union and Russia**. The principal goals of the Union with respect to the Russian Federation, implemented within such documents as the "Road Map" or earlier Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), were not altered. Russia remained the most important partner in the East, causing much controversies and disputes among the governments of the 27 Member States. In the period 2004-2007 more and more Member States became aware, however, that maintaining the *status quo* in relations with Russia contradicts the interests of all Member States. As one of European Commission officials said:

*"Enlargement has had a beneficial impact in regards to EU policy towards the Federation. It is now much more undesirable for an individual Member State to have policy positions at the end of the spectrum. There is a certain understanding that if we want to conduct any relations with Russia, Member States have to come to clear and coherent position. Therefore, there is much more of a tendency to identify what are European common interest".*⁶

⁵ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 11th July 2007.

⁶ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 10th July 2007.

The above is confirmed by national representatives in COEST:

*"The European Union in 2007 has been successful in trying to be more united on the issue of the Russian Federation. But this is not because of some kind of an internal EU reorientation, but because of the way that Russia behaves. The Russian behavior has in a way united Europe. We all agree with the assessment of the situation, but there are great differences in the proposals on how to deal with it"*⁷

As the Russian political rhetoric aggravates and the existing EU policy proves unsuccessful, unanimity of the European Union is becoming the only effective measure towards the Russian Federation. Search for a consensus on the issue of Russia counteracts the Russian *"divide et impera"* tactics based on breaking up the European solidarity. The respondents mentioned the EU-Russia Samara Summit in 2007, as an example of an unsuccessful Russian attempt to base its relations with the EU on relations only with selected European partners. The sole fact that this issue has reappeared in several interviews proves that there is a deeper understanding of the fact in Brussels of the need for a reorientation in EU-Russia relations.

A shift in thinking about Russia does not contradict however the continuation of strong bilateral relations between Russia and some individual Member States. As one of European Commission officials said:

*"The bilateral policies between Russia and EU Member States go on, and the European Commission does not prevent them. But we do observe that among Member States there is more interest in discussing and searching for common EU interest. Moscow is now also realizing that it has to deal more with Brussels than before, despite the fact that there would prefer to deal with individual capitals."*⁸

⁷ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 12th July 2007.

⁸ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 9th July 2007.

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1.2. Assessment of principal factors affecting the change of the EU's Eastern policy

The second principal aspect discussed in the interviews was the possible factors, responsible for the changes occurring on the EU's Eastern agenda. Most of the respondents agreed that these changes resulted from three factors:

1. **The physical extension of EU's Eastern border to the East.** As its result the European Union had to face new problems (visas, border control), which led naturally to closer and more intense cooperation with Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine.
2. **The accession of new Member States from Central Europe,** which has brought new sensitivities and a strong lobbying group demanding a more direct EU involvement in its Eastern neighborhood.
3. **The external environment changes,** not related to enlargement, occurring in the direct neighbourhood of the European Union.

Many respondents have emphasized the significance of the third factor, suggesting that much of the changes on the EU's Eastern agenda between 2004 and 2007 were not directly connected to EU's enlargement. Some respondents expressed opinions that the enlargement process was only a catalyst of the shift in EU's Eastern policy, but not its reason. A more intense cooperation with the Eastern neighbours was a result more of internal developments happening in the third countries, to which the EU was simply reacting. As one of the respondents said: *"At the moment the European Union is more reacting to what is happening in Russia, than designing a new policy on how to deal with Russia".*⁹

Many respondents confirmed the above opinion and exemplified it with EU's Eastern activities being a reaction to certain external factors:

- Strengthened and deepened cooperation with Ukraine as a result of the "Orange Revolution".
- Attempts to create common European energy policy, as a result of the Russian gas blackmail against Ukraine and Belarus.

⁹ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 18th October 2007.

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- No considerable changes of the policy in respect of Belarus, as a result of a limited progress of this country.
- Increased involvement in such regions as Caucasian countries and Central Asia, as a result of price rise of energy raw materials, war in Afghanistan and expansive Russian policy.

Apart from the above mentioned three principal factors affecting the EU Eastern policy, another important factor was raised by some respondents. As one of European Commission officials said:

"In the last few years the European Union has realized that there is a significant potential for the democratization of at least some of the Eastern European countries. Moreover, there is a broader understanding that one can apply the model used to transform Central European states, also as an universal model for other countries of the region. The events in Ukraine have shown that a deeper integration with the EU is possible, and this makes the EU want to act."¹⁰

Qualitative difference was indicated in this context, between the Southern Dimension and the Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. A model of democratization by economic and political integration, so successfully used in Central Europe, had not proven to work for the Mediterranean Sea area. At the same time, the Eastern European states, with historical experience and structural problems similar to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, appear as an area where the chance of repeating such transformation and consolidation of democracy is relatively high; which encourages the European Union to be more involved in the region.

¹⁰ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 10th July 2007.

2. Assessment of the effectiveness of new Member States in shaping EU's Eastern policy

2.1. General characteristics of new Member States

The second part of the interviews contained questions about different aspects of the activity of the new Member States in shaping EU's Eastern policy.¹¹ Many European officials stressed that Central European states were by no means a unified group. In spite of common historical experience resulting from their participation in the socialist block, the new Member States did not form a unified front within the Union, as regards the Eastern agenda. The first difference results from their geographic location. A split along the Carpathian line is even described by some authors.¹² On the one hand, Poland and the Baltic states are more involved in Belarusian and Ukrainian issues and promote a less complaisant policy towards Russia. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia, on the other hand, are more interested in the Balkans, and their attitude to Russia is more pragmatic, or even friendly.¹³ The geographic location also determines the frequency of use of historical arguments in the state's foreign policy discourse. Some respondents said that the closer a Member State is to the Russian Federation, the more probable is the use of historical arguments in European discussions, as a pro or a con to a given proposal.

The second division criterion is the size of a country and the political potential involved. Poland, the biggest new Member State, aspires to shape the comprehensive Eastern policy, as shown in the concept of the Eastern Dimension of the European Union, proposed in 2003. The other new Member States, mostly small and middle-sized countries, realize their limitations in influencing the policy of the EU and choose their specialization. Lithuania specializes in Belarusian issues, the Czech Republic in Moldavian issues, Estonia is involved in Georgia, Slovakia acts in Ukraine.¹⁴

¹¹ The respondents were informed at the beginning that the interviews would not concern only those member states that were not integrated in May 2004. The research did not include Bulgaria and Romania that became the members of EU in January 2007.

¹² See more: G. Gromadzki, K. Raik, "Between activeness and influence. The contribution of new member states to EU policy towards the Eastern neighbours", Open Estonia Foundation, Tallinn 2006, p. 25-26.

¹³ See more about different attitudes of the Member States to Russia in: M. Leonard, N. Popescu, "The Account of Force in the Relations between European Union and Russia", Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Warsaw 2008.

¹⁴ G. Gromadzki, K. Raik, "Between activeness..." op.cit., p. 26.

The policies of the new Member States, in many respects differ from each other; yet their general attitude to Eastern neighbours is more consistent, if compared to old Member States. The new Member States demonstrate their common approach in at least three areas. Firstly, **European aspirations of the Eastern neighbours are supported**, as well as their striving for the membership of the European Union, as soon as the membership criteria are met. As a diplomat from a West European country said: *"The new Member States do not see their Eastern border as the final border of the European Union".*¹⁵ This attitude results from the experience of the new Member States, based on the EU's "open door" policy of the 90-ties. Poland is the strongest promoter of Ukrainian membership in the EU, while Romania keeps the issue of Moldova on the agenda. Other new Member States, although supportive of the idea, are more pragmatic and avoid public declarations concerning further EU enlargement to the East.

Secondly, all new Member States promote and **support the policy of greater involvement of the European Union in the East**, especially in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the South Caucasian region. In this context, the European Neighbourhood Policy, though at the beginning seen as a disappointment (because of a lack of EU membership prospects for the neighbours), is currently one of priorities for all new Member States, as the first step for further integration of the Eastern neighbours. The new Member States speak for more involvement of the Union in the democratization of the Eastern Europe and in the resolution of its frozen conflicts. All EU initiatives aiming at strengthening civil society and independent opposition movements in the East are strongly supported and promoted. As almost all new Member States have common borders with Eastern neighbours, they act together for visa facilitations and closer border cooperation.

Thirdly, the new Member States show a very careful approach and **relative distrust in their relations with Russia**. As a representative to COEST said: *"There is not a general common position among new Member States on the issue of Russia. It is undeniable however that their understanding of the situation is different from many old Member States."*¹⁶ The new Member States perceive the Russian Federation as potential

¹⁵ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 11th October 2007.

¹⁶ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 17th October 2007.

danger for such countries as Ukraine or Georgia in their integration with Europe. They are also very critical about the progress of democratization in Russia and their assessment of the situation remains negative. Being partly dependent on Russia gas supply, the new Member States call for a common energy policy of the Union. The new Member States also propagate the involvement of the European Union in the resolution of frozen conflicts, within the cooperation with Russia in particular.

2.2. Level of activity of the new Member States on the EU forum and the learning process of European procedures

The new Member States are not a unified group; hence the assessment of their involvement in shaping of the EU Eastern agenda is not clear-cut. Some respondents, both those from the European Commission and diplomats of the Member States, defined the new Member States as the driving force of the EU Eastern policy. It was stressed that the newcomers constantly monitored the situation in the East and kept it high on the EU's Eastern agenda. A frequently given example was Belarus. According to the respondents, despite the fact that no real improvement in EU-Belarus relations occurred, the importance of this country in the EU internal discussions in the years 2004 – 2007 was growing due to the involvement of the new Member States.

Poland and Lithuania were mentioned as being the most active of the newcomers. The other new Member States preferred to abstain, even if they shared some opinions, unless the problem concerned their interest or specialization area. The level of activity depended not so much on national interests, as on financial and logistics means enabling the participation in the implementation of a policy.

Some respondents said, however, that the level of involvement of the new Member States in the EU Eastern policy, as seen from a Brussels perspective, has not significantly differed from the involvement of old Member States. As a national representative in the COEST group said: *"All Member States have direct interests in the Eastern neighborhood of the European Union. We are talking after all about a quarter of the world being directly next to Europe."*¹⁷ It was also stressed that the history of relations between the European Union and Eastern Europe was very long; and the EU

¹⁷ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 4th July 2007.

Eastern policy, implemented within the European Neighbourhood Policy, had its institutions shaped still before the enlargement. Some respondents said that one should not assume that the new Member States had some knowledge earlier unavailable inside the EU or that they could serve as a "bridge" between the old Member States and the Eastern neighbours. As a highly ranked European Commission official said:

"It was a misjudgment of new Member States to think that they knew more about the Eastern countries. I even feel that new Member States come from a history where they had less access to information. Their advantage of being neighbors is leveled out by the disadvantage of coming from a situation where they did not have full access to information over many years."¹⁸

Such statements must be considered with criticism and care however. As an example, one decade of official contacts between the European Union and the Russian Federation can hardly contribute to better understanding of Russian policy, than four decades of common experience of the new Member States in the socialist block. Moreover, the states of Central Europe had shared centuries of common difficult historical experience with Russia, incomparable with other states of the continent.

In regards to practical activity on the EU forum, the new Member States, although vocal and visible in opened discussions, have not produce more proposals for the EU Eastern policy than old Member States. Most respondents agreed that the contributions of the newcomers were quite predictable and presented little added-value. Moreover, most of the new countries preferred to voice their opinion only on issues related to their specialization. This can be explained by a realistic assessment of their real influence on the EU Eastern agenda. Another reason is the transitory period of the first years of EU membership, during which new states learn to operate in an unknown and complicated decision-making system. This required not only the understanding and acceptance of formal rules of the EU decision-making process; but also the learning of informal EU procedures. Such informal "rules of the game" consist among other of: sharing information with other Member States; consulting national proposals before their official presentation on the EU forum; taking the interest of other EU states into consideration

¹⁸ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 9th July 2007.

in the preparation of proposals; coherent activity on all decision-making levels.¹⁹ The study showed that learning these informal practices was particularly difficult for the new Member States and was one of the reasons of failure of many interesting concepts and ideas concerning the Eastern policy of the European Union. The repeated "sins" of the new Member States in the years 2004 – 2007, mentioned in the interviews, were:

- a) **Breaking the principle of coherence.** The operating mode of the European Union assumes that issues agreed on a lower level are not reconsidered on a higher level. The new Member States acted often in a reverse way. As one of the European Commission officials said:

*"At the beginning the new Member States thought that if they cannot get the influence on the lower level, they will be able to do it afterwards on a higher level, in COREPER or the Council. This provoked furious reactions from old Member States, because the EU functions on a kind of trust and clear procedures, i.e. that what you agree at a lower level, should not be reopened at a higher level; if one is not able to agree at one stage, this should be immediately signalled to the others, and not "hidden away"."*²⁰

- b) **Inability to build a consensus for a proposal.** Many respondents indicated that the new Member States had a tendency to present their postulates and proposals without prior consultation with other EU partners, including the European Commission. A diplomat from an old EU Member State said:

*"In the first years following the enlargement some new Member States were more eager to table non-papers than proposals. For the old member state to table a non-paper is actually a long process of consultations and informal lobbying of the Commission, and making sure one has support of the other member states. The newcomers sometimes circulate papers, out of the blue, which nobody has seen before and asked for support."*²¹

Moreover, the new Member States have made the mistake of presenting their proposals in declaratory form or as a list of desired activities, without considering the legal and practical obstacles for their implementation.

¹⁹ See more: Ana Juncos, Karolina Pomorska, "The deadlock that never happened: The impact of enlargement on the Common Foreign and Security Policy Council working groups", [w:] *European Political Economy Review*, nr. 6 (Marzec 2007), p. 4-30.

²⁰ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 9th July 2007.

²¹ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 16th October 2007.

- c) **Extreme attitudes and veto threats.** A frequent objection expressed in regards to the behaviour of new Member States concerned their often aggressive discourse and extreme attitudes presented during EU internal discussions. The general expectation was that the new Member States, as most of old Member States, would not force their postulates "at any price" and would promote their national interest in a more constructive and pragmatic way, ending in more effective solutions. As one of the European Commission officials said: *"The most difficult and the most important thing to learn for a new Member State is to understand when is the moment to play hard and when the time to be ready for compromise and find a solution"*.²² Many respondents mentioned that some new Member States had the tendency to use veto threats simply for tactical purposes. It was stressed that such tactics could not have succeeded in a long run, as such state was considered as unreliable by its partners and its postulates were not accounted for. As another European Commission official said: *"In the EU's decision-making process communication is crucial. It is much easier to convince other Member States of your ideas, if you make yourself seen as constructive. It is normal that countries have particular interests, but you should present them in a manner in which others do not feel locked-out"*.²³
- d) **Unloyal behaviour towards EU partners.** This charge was raised particularly in the context of Eastern policy. The new Member States, having close relations with their Eastern neighbours, could not sometimes resist the temptation to pass confidential information and openly criticize joint EU decisions in front of third parties. That evoked distrust and suspicion of the European partners: *"Some new Member States openly side with the ENP neighbor, despite the treaty obligation that is called coherence. We cannot decide something together and then go outside and criticize what the EU is doing. This undermines the effectiveness of the EU as a collective actor and comes from states who publicly preach the importance of EU solidarity and unity."*²⁴

A large part of errors and procedural shortcomings was levelled out during the "learning" of the European decision-making process. The learning occurred at different

²² Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 9th July 2007.

²³ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 9th July 2007.

²⁴ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 18th October 2007.

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speeds. Small new Member States adopted the rules relatively fast, whereas the bigger states, namely Poland, proceeded at a slower pace. Good communication and coordination between diplomats delegated to Brussels and their national ministries was crucial for the "learning process" to succeed. The national diplomats were the first to encounter the informal rules of the European institutions and became the "agents of change", passing these principles to their national authorities. A lot depended on individual predispositions of national representatives because, as all the respondents mentioned, in the working groups of the Council of the European Union *"personality does matter"*. Unfortunately, personal predispositions did not always correlate with the speed of adopting the EU rules by a particular new Member States. Most ministries of the new Member States still experience difficulties in adjusting from bilateral diplomacy to more complicated multilateral diplomacy and find it hard to understand that effective proposals must comply with the interests and needs of all EU Member States.

To sum up, the "learning process", experienced by newcomers in their first years of membership in the EU, had an impact on the efficiency of their efforts to shape the EU Eastern policy. Firstly, some time had elapsed before these states became active on the EU forum and learned what issues could and should be the subject of discussion. Secondly, procedural errors contributed to failures of many interesting concepts. The contribution of the new Member States, in terms of concrete initiatives, was thus not outstanding. At the same time however the accession of new Member States from Central Europe, brought new sensitivities and a strong lobbying group, which by exerting pressure on partner states, contributed to greater involvement of the EU in the East.

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2.3. Influence of the new Member States on the EU Eastern policy – successful and unsuccessful initiatives

The study has shown that adopting EU rules by new Member States took a considerable amount of time. This does not mean however that in the years 2004-2007 the newcomers were not able to influence the EU Eastern agenda. On the contrary, the respondents have given many examples of successful initiatives in this matter, of which the most frequently quoted have been tabled below. The analysis of the tables in this section must account for the fact that the respondents usually mentioned the most recent initiatives. Apart from the involvement in the “Orange Revolution”, all described activities, both success and failures, were initiated or continued in 2007.

Table 2. Examples of successful initiatives of new Member States in influencing the EU’s Eastern agenda in the years 2004-2007.

Successful initiatives of New Member States in shaping the EU’s Eastern agenda	Country responsible for the initiative	No. of times mentioned in interviews
1. Visa facilitation agreement with Moldova	Czech Rep., Hungary, Slovakia	8
2. Blockage of negotiation mandate for new EU-Russia Agreement	Poland	6
3. Proposal of establishing regional cooperation within the Eastern Dimension of the ENP	Poland	5
4. Visa facilitation for Georgia	Lithuania, Estonia	5
5. Bringing Belarus on the EU Agenda	Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland	4
6. Involvement during the “Orange Revolution”	Poland	3

As shown in Table 2, the most frequently mentioned success of the new Member States in influencing the Eastern agenda was the visa facilitation agreement, concluded in 2007 between the European Union and Moldova. The high estimate of this initiative resulted from the rare fact that more than two Member States cooperated in the

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initiative.²⁵ Moreover, the proposal complied with the interests and the needs of many Member States. The EU states, which in general objected to visa facilitation for third countries, accepted the agreement with Moldova due to the fact that a readmission agreement was part of the negotiated “package deal”. The new Member States have formed a “critical mass”, which contributed, with the support of the European Commission, to convincing other Member States that an agreement with Moldova should be concluded. As some respondents said, new Member States played a facilitative role during the negotiations enabling all partners to develop a consensus.

A similar situation took place during the negotiations over a visa facilitation agreement between the European Union and Georgia – a second example of efficient Eastern agenda-influencing. Under the leadership of Lithuania, the new Member States have proven the discriminative character of European regulations in respect to Georgian citizens, in comparison to Russian citizens resident in the Republic of Abkhazia. Strong arguments used in the discussion convinced other EU members to sign the agreement with Georgia.

A third successful common activity of new Member States, most frequently mentioned by the respondents, was lobbying for more open cooperation with Belarus. European Commission officials stressed that still before enlargement the European Union had been aware that a policy shift in this matter is necessary. But it was the participation of the new Member States that proved to be a key factor in convincing other European partners to abandon complete isolation of Belarus and to turn to more open policy. European Commission officials indicated an important role of Poland, Slovakia and Lithuania in making other states aware of the significance of the support for Belarus.

Among successful attempts to influence the EU’s Eastern agenda by new Member States, as much as three Polish initiatives were indicated. The most frequently mentioned of them was the blocking of the European mandate for the negotiations of a new agreement with Russia. This success was however considered by respondents as the most ambiguous one. On the one hand, the blocking of the negotiations caused

²⁵ The proposal concerning the visa facilitation agreement with Moldova was initiated by the Czech Republic and was supported by Slovakia and Hungary. The idea had been brought by Moldovian lobbying. Moldova contacted these Member States at the start, knowing about their support.

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considerable involvement of the European Union in lifting the Russian embargo on Polish meat. This issue dominated the EU – Russia Samara Summit in May 2007. On the other hand however, Poland was harshly criticized for its excessively uncompromising attitude and methods of negotiations. As a diplomat from an old EU Member State said:

*"There had been much irritation in the Council with the way the Poles dealt with the issue of the Russian meat ban. Many countries supported Poland on the principle that Russia cannot treat any EU Member State in a discriminative manner. At the same time however, the Polish very strict and inflexible instructions from the capital, and not having any leeway by the Polish Ambassador in the negotiation process, made it extremely difficult to find a consensus"*²⁶

Similar opinions were expressed by other EU diplomats:

*"Poland was successful in making the issue of the Russian ban on Polish meat an EU policy, but there is a general resentment among the other Member States in the way this was done. There was a general feeling that with the meat issues Poland was not playing along the rules of the game, although the formal rules were never broken"*²⁷

The second, Polish initiative, which was considered as a success was the proposal to create an "Eastern Dimension" of the European Union. Many respondents stressed that it was too early to assess if the Polish postulate would be implemented; but it was understood better in the course of time. Some respondents admitted that in the first years of their membership the Eastern Dimension concept was not supported even by other new Member States. As one of national representatives said:

*"Many Member States were opposed to the first Polish initiative of the Eastern Dimension, as it was presented in a way in which even new Member States could not have supported it. All Baltic States stressed that it might lead to a competition between the East vs. the South. In such a case the amount of focus on a particular region would depend only on the country having the Presidency of the EU and it is important to have the whole EU backing a certain policy."*²⁸

²⁶ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 6th July 2007.

²⁷ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 16th October 2007.

²⁸ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 17th October 2007.

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A breaking moment for this initiative however was the year 2007 and the adoption of the Black Sea Synergy strategy, showing the need for a more regional approach to the European Neighbourhood Policy. As a diplomat from a new Member State said:

"Since the introduction of the Black Sea Synergy Process there has been a genuine shift in thinking towards a more regional approach for the European Neighbourhood Policy. It was just in the process of completing the Synergy Process when some countries understood that the Polish proposal of the Eastern Dimension would have been useful." ²⁹

The concept is still developing and Poland must keep promoting it during the next presidencies to ensure its final success.

Only three respondents mentioned the involvement of Poland in the mediation of the European Union during the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine – an initiative which is considered by many Poles as the greatest success of Polish diplomacy. Low recollection of the event is probably the result of the flow of time since 2004. As mentioned before, the respondents concentrated on the most recent initiatives. These respondent, which have mentioned the Polish involvement in Ukraine stressed that it was the most constructive Polish attempt to influence the EU's Eastern agenda, contributing to the growth of interest in Ukrainian issues in Western Europe.

Apart from several successful attempts to influence the EUs Eastern, the new Member States have also experienced failure in some of its proposals. Such failures, most frequently mentioned by the respondents are tabled below.

²⁹ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 17th October 2007.

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Table 3. Examples of unsuccessful initiatives of new Member States in influencing the EU's Eastern agenda in the years 2004-2007.

Unsuccessful initiatives of New Member States shaping the EU's Eastern agenda	Country responsible for the initiative	No. of times mentioned in interviews
1. Attempt to block the Council of the European Union decision to temporarily withdraw the generalized tariff preferences with Belarus.	Lithuania	5
2. Blockage of negotiation mandate for new EU-Russia Agreement	Poland	4
3. Making bilateral problems with Russia an "EU problem"	Lithuania, Poland, Estonia	3
4. Lobbying for membership perspective for Ukraine	Poland	3
5. Collaboration with US over missile placement	Poland, Czech Republic	1

The Lithuanian attempt of 2007 to block the decision of the Council of the European Union to withdraw the generalized tariff preferences with Belarus was widely criticized. The withdrawal of the preferences was a penalty for permanent infringement of labour rights (including freedom of assembly) by Belarusian authorities. Lithuania argued that its veto against this decision was a result of the undertaken policy of detente towards Belarus. Supported by Poland, Lithuania managed to postpone the European decision for one year, but the majority of the European states were critical about its position. The European Commission, as well as some Member States, believed that the attempt to block the decision of the Council was in fact motivated by solely individual economic and commercial interest of Lithuania.

Another widely criticized behavior of new Member States was attempting to involve the European Union in all bilateral disputes with the Russian Federation. Examples given by respondents concerned the recognition of the Latvian border by Russia, historical disputes such as the Katyn massacre case or the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact; or even the Russian embargo on Polish meat. Not all such attempts to involve the European Union were considered as negative however. The Estonian case was given, as an example of successful lobbying for EU engagement and solidarity. In April 2007

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Estonia has asked for the support of the European Union in a dispute concerning the removal of the Soviet War Memorial from the centre of Tallinn. As described by a diplomat representing one of the old Member States:

"In the beginning many Member States understood the Russian protest against moving the Soviet War Memorial from the center of Tallinn. However the way in which Estonians have explained to us the position they were in, has resulted in a very strong feeling of solidarity and consensus with the country. Especially that Estonia have underlined how much they did not want the failure of the Samara Summit, but saw it only as an occasion for raising the problem. This was a very convincing way of doing things."³⁰

Different opinions on attempts of newcomers to involve the EU in bilateral conflicts with Russia may mean that the principle of asking for EU solidarity is not questioned. What is questioned however are the methods used by some new Member States in the presentation of their arguments on the European forum. The arguments of force (i.e. threats of veto), in many cases should be replaced with the force of arguments, which allows achieving more desirable end results.

Another unsuccessful postulate of the new Member States was the promotion of further enlargements of the European Union, in particular to Ukraine. The respondents stressed that the idea was commendable and well understood but the situation of the European Union, after unsuccessful constitution referenda in France and the Netherlands, made further enlargement unrealistic in the near future. In the years 2004-2007 the idea proved to have little or no supporters among Western European governments; a fact which has also influenced the discourse presented by new Member States. By 2007, even the strongest supporters of an EU "open door" policy, such as Poland, have ceased using publicly the word "enlargement" and replaced it with a more neutral "maintaining of a European perspective" for EU neighbours.

To sum up, we can conclude that the most successful initiatives of the new Member States were those, which took into consideration the interests of the European Union as a whole and were broadly consulted or even tabled with other EU partners. A key to success was the choice of timing for the presentation of a proposal and the choice of arguments acceptable for others. Gaining prior support for an idea from the European Commission was also relevant. Those initiatives, which presented mostly

³⁰ Interview with a national representative to COEST, Brussels, 4th July 2007.

individual interests of a Member State or excluded the interests of other European partners, as a general rule, have not achieved success.

3. Assessment of Poland's activities in shaping the Eastern policy of the European Union.

The assessment of Poland's role in influencing the EU's Eastern agenda in the years 2004-2007 proved to be a difficult task for the respondents. On the one hand interviewees stressed the activeness and knowledge of Polish diplomats in regards to Eastern policy issues. They have pointed out that Polish representatives had a deep understanding of the problems of their neighbours and were sensitive to the concerns of the region. Moreover, Poland, contrary to other new Member States of Central Europe, had not concentrated only on a particular "specialization" and aspired to shape the Eastern EU policy on a larger scale, as exemplified with the proposal of the "Eastern Dimension" of the European Union. On the other hand however, Poland was harshly criticized for its European policy discourse and methods of attaining its objectives on the European forum. This was partly due to the fact that the study was carried out at the time, when Poland was ruled by the uncompromising Jarosław Kaczyński's government and was blocking the negotiation mandate for the new agreement between the European Union and Russia. These facts have with no doubt influenced the overall results of the study. Many comments however were general and referred also to the activity of previous Polish governments.

During the interviews many respondents pointed out to the fact that Poland needed a lot of time to define its place inside the European Union. Due to its size and population, from the start Poland had tried to play the role of a big EU state; which soon proved to be a difficult task. On the one hand, big states can carry out harder politics, which was often done by Poland. On the other hand, however they are required to win the support of smaller partners and to meet the expectations of all EU Member States. Poland has often failed to meet these two requirements.

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The most frequent accusations expressed against Poland in its attempt to influence the EU's Eastern agenda were:

1. **Confrontational discourse of Polish foreign policy, resulting in the isolation of Poland on the European forum.** At least half of the respondents expressed the opinion that Poland had a tendency to put itself in a isolated position. Poland used threats of veto more often than other new Member States and the rhetoric of Polish foreign policy was rather confrontational than conciliating. As one of the European Commission officials said:

"Poland strongly pursues foreign policy objectives but does it in a blatant fashion. For most of the Member States the worst-case scenario is to end up in an isolated position. It seems however that this does not worry Poland much, and is even perceived as a sign of a strong foreign policy. Not many big Member States do that – at least not openly."³¹

The respondents commented that such an attitude is not respected inside the European Union and reduces the reliability of a Member State. Such a partner is perceived as unfit for common political initiatives. In addition, blocking of proposals and agreements at any price by one state makes other states solve problems on a bilateral level.

2. **Procedural problems related to national coordination of foreign policy.**

Some respondents believed that Poland had more difficulties in the adoption of the Brussels' "rules of the game" than other new Member States. It tended to present too many postulates and initiatives at a time. Moreover, many of Polish proposals were tabled unilaterally and no coalitions of supporting countries were formed. Procedural shortcomings were caused not so much by the Polish diplomats residing in Brussels, who quickly learned how to proceed inside the EU; but were the result of specific instructions sent from Warsaw. Respondents pointed out that a problem of coordination within the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was visible, partly due to its vertical and hierarchical structure.

3. **No medium-term strategy for EU's Eastern policy.** The respondents pointed out that although Poland has treated its EU membership as a way of promoting its Eastern policy goals and concepts, it had no medium-term plan for

³¹ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 15th October 2007.

the EU's policy towards its Eastern neighbours. Poland's short-term strategy was shaped by current events in Eastern Europe, whereas the long-term strategy was based on further EU enlargement to the region. At the same time, there was not precise action plan for the „in between” period. The respondents also stressed that Polish foreign policy discourse was strongly influenced by history and historical experience, which sometimes made it difficult to undertake a more pragmatic way of thinking about the East in public discourse. Moreover, some interviewees pointed out that Poland had an incomplete perception and understanding of the European Neighbourhood Policy, often ignoring issues related to its Southern dimension (development policy for Africa, negotiations with Iran or cooperation with Israel). Only a more global approach to EU's neighbourhood and showing interest in other regions however, could assure that other Member States would support Polish ideas for the Eastern policy.

Overall, taking into account Polish aspirations and potential, Poland's role in shaping the EU's Eastern policy in the years 2004 – 2007 was limited. With no doubt, its activity in regards to Eastern policy was very visible. But so was the activity of Lithuania, being a much smaller EU state than Poland. Moreover, „activeness” did not necessarily translate into „efficiency of action”. The critical opinions expressed by EU officials and diplomats suggest that the successful Polish initiatives were either forgotten and discontinued (i.e. the „Orange Revolution”) or have been pursued with a high price of a loss of reputation of a reliable EU partner (i.e. veto over the negotiation mandate for the agreement between EU and Russia).

In spite of the criticism, some respondents praised Polish Eastern policy and the country's activity within the EU. Positive word came particularly from representatives of EU states (both old and new Member States) with similar perception of Eastern policy. In their opinion, a more realistic attitude in EU's relations with Russia and the growing prioritization of relations with Ukraine were a result of Poland's lobbying.³² Among other appreciated activities were the attempts of Polish MEPs to promote Eastern issues

³² D. Kral, „Enlarging EU Foreign Policy. The role of new EU member states and candidate countries”, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, June 2005, s.24.

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within the European Parliament³³ and widespread Polish support for the democratic opposition in Belarus. Respondents noted that the process of Poland adapting to the European realities continued and considerable improvement was noticed every year.

4. Summary of qualitative research results

The empirical part of the study has shown that in the years 2004-2007 considerable changes have taken place on the EU's Eastern agenda. The shift in EU's Eastern policy was not revolutionary however, but resulted from an evolutionary EU adaptation process to a new geopolitical situation after 2004. The character of the changes was more quantitative (more interest, more involvement in the region) than qualitative (as regards the substance of the policy).

The study has also proven that new Member States were actively involved in trying to shape the evolving EU's Eastern agenda. Although not a homogenous group, the newcomers have shared many common views, particularly in regards to the need of a deeper EU's involvement in the East; and have shown much activeness on the EU level in this matter. Two countries – Lithuania and Poland – were distinct in the whole group of the new Member States, as the most active. Both these states were however criticized for their often aggressive and uncompromising discourse of European policy. Other new Member States acted in a more modest manner and took active part only in questions related to their third country specializations.

The interviews however have not given an unambiguous response to the question whether the activity (visibility) of newcomers was transformed into real results (impact on EU policy). Some respondents said that the influence of the new Member States was negligible in terms of concrete initiatives. Furthermore, even those interviewees, who recognized the contribution of new Member States in shaping EU's Eastern policy, have pointed out that this was only one factor influencing the shift in EU policy in the years 2004-2007. The study showed that in the opinion of the majority of EU officials, the most important factor was the development of the situation in neighbouring EU countries.

³³ See more: K. Pomorska, M. Szczepanik, "Elites adapting to Europe: Polish politicians and diplomats in the European Parliament and the Council", paper prepared for the Central and East European International Studies Association 4th Convention, Tartu, 25-27 June 2006.

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Most respondents agreed that the ongoing "learning process" of the European Union influenced largely the efficiency of new Member States in shaping the EU Eastern policy in the years 2004-2007 and contributed to the failure of many interesting concepts and ideas for that policy. The learning is carried out at a fast pace however and many initial errors are not being repeated. Thus, the efficiency of the new Member States in influencing the EU Eastern policy is growing, as evidenced with examples of successful initiatives brought on the Eastern agenda.

III. Results of quantitative research

The second part of the study consisted of a survey, conducted among 60 EU officials between July 2007 and January 2008. The response rate was 67%, meaning that 40 respondents have filled-in and returned the questionnaire. The survey data were collected by means of a questionnaire containing 32 items and divided into three sections. The results of each section are discussed below.

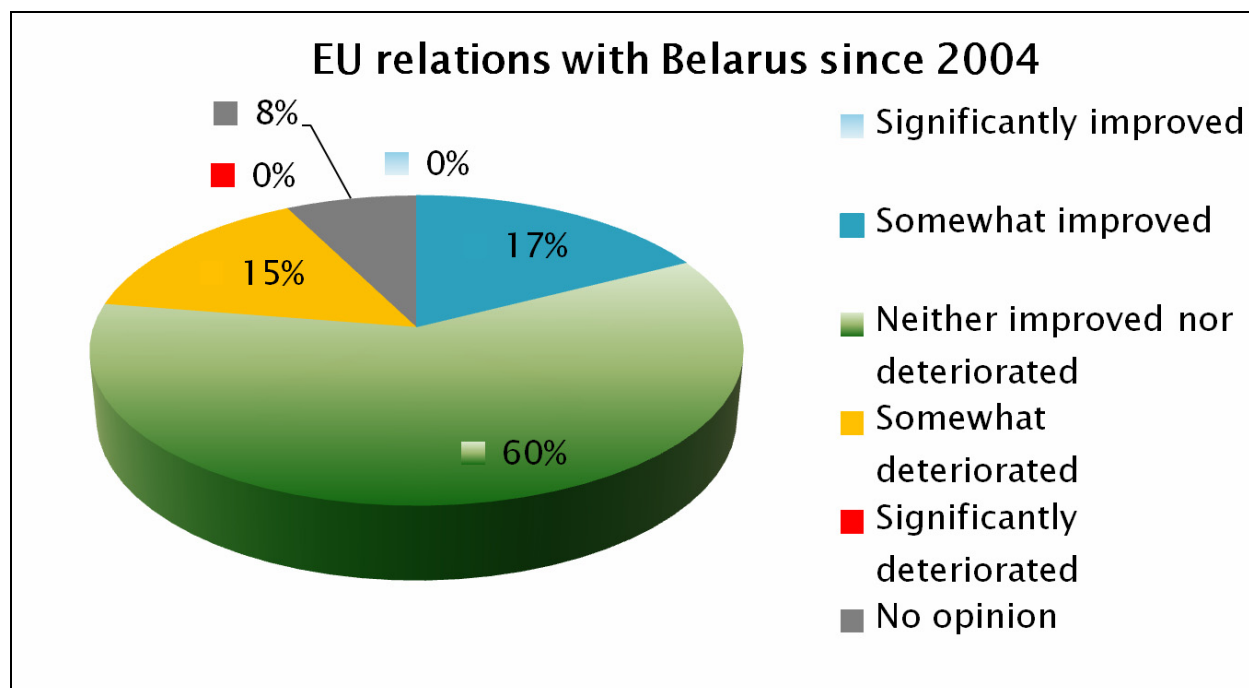
1. Perceptions of changes in EU relations with its Eastern neighbours since the 2004 enlargement.

In the first section of the survey the respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, EU relations with Belarus, Ukraine and the Russian Federation have improved or deteriorated following the 2004 enlargement. They were also to assess the impact of the enlargement (positive or negative) on bilateral relations of the EU with these three neighbouring countries.

When asked about **relations between the European Union and Belarus**, most respondents (60%), answered that no significant changes occurred in the mutual relations (see: Picture 1) since 2004. The rest of the respondents have split in their opinion into two groups: 17% answered that the relations with Belarus have somewhat improved; 15% on the other hand have found that these relations had somewhat deteriorated. No extreme answers were registered: there were no respondents expressing the opinion that EU relations with Belarus have significantly improved or significantly deteriorated in the examined period.

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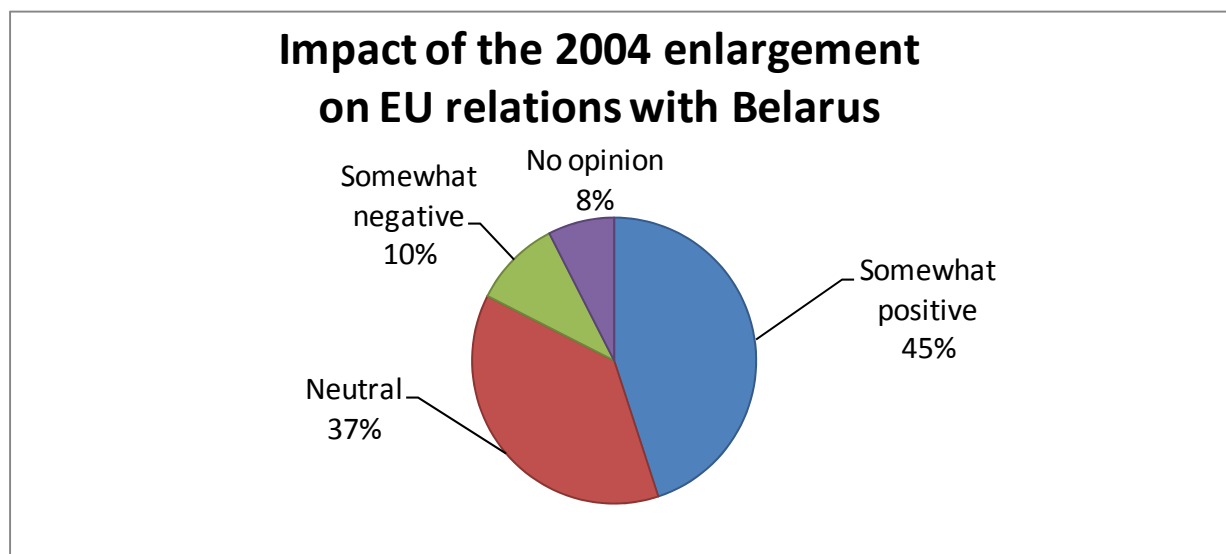
Picture 1. Evolution of EU relations with Belarus since 2004



Different results were obtained in assessing the impact of the enlargement process on the relations between EU and Belarus (see: Picture 2). In spite of the respondents' opinion that the mutual relations did not change, 45% answers to the second question stated that moving the EU border eastwards affected the relations in a positive way. 37% respondents found the enlargement unaffected these relations, 10% assessed the process as negative for bilateral relations with Belarus. Again, no extreme answer were given, nobody considered the enlargement as a factor influencing the relations between the European Union and Belarus in a very positive or very negative way in the last years.

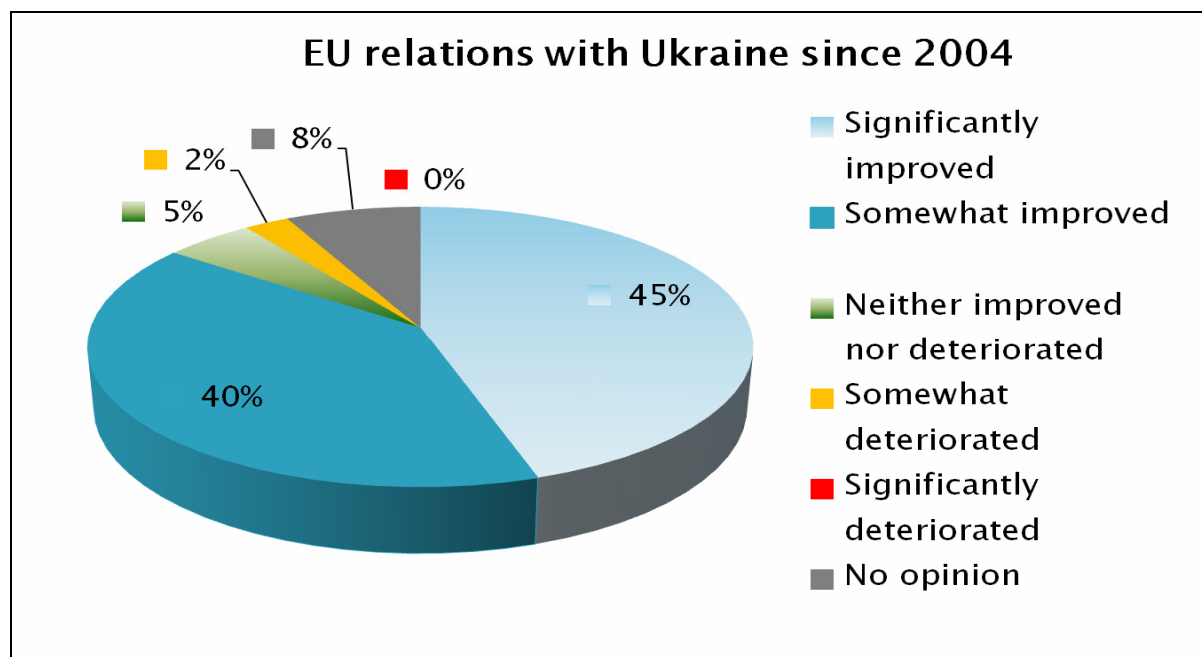
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Picture 2. Impact of the 2004 enlargement on EU relations with Belarus



In response to the question about the state of **relations between the European Union and Ukraine**, as much as 85% respondents answered that improvement could have been noticed after 2004; 24% of those answered that the relations have significantly improved (see: Picture 3). It was the best assessment of mutual relations, among three neighbouring states. Only 5% respondents believed that no change took place in bilateral relations; and 2% answered that these relations have somewhat deteriorated.

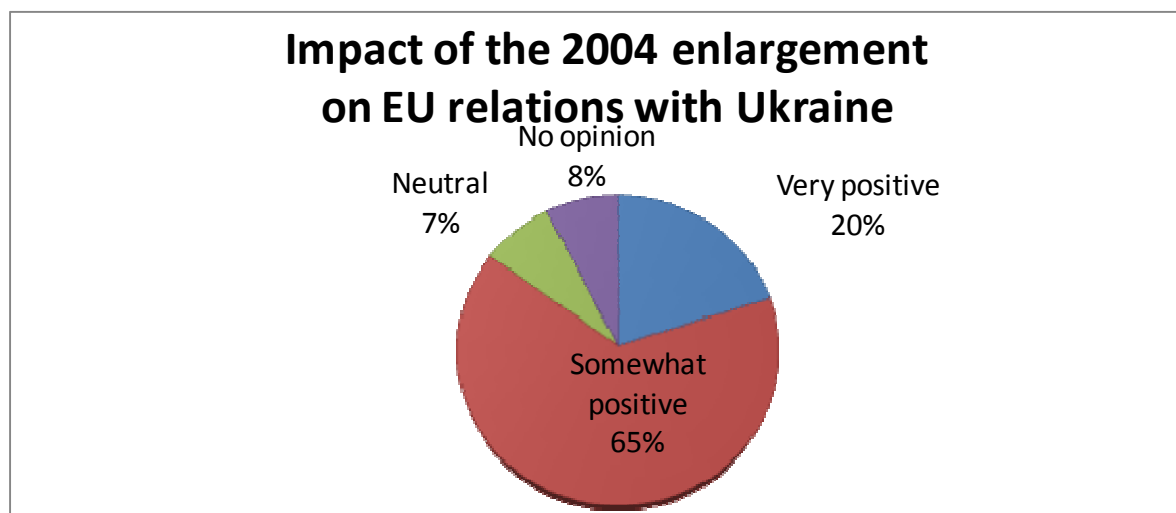
Picture 3. Evolution of EU relations with Ukraine since 2004



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Similarly, the impact of the 2004 enlargement on bilateral relations with Ukraine was assessed very positively (see: Picture 4). Favorable opinions amounted to 85%: 20% respondents found the impact “very positive” and 65% “somewhat positive”. None of the respondents expressed the opinion that moving the EU border eastwards has had a negative impact factor on bilateral relations with Ukraine.

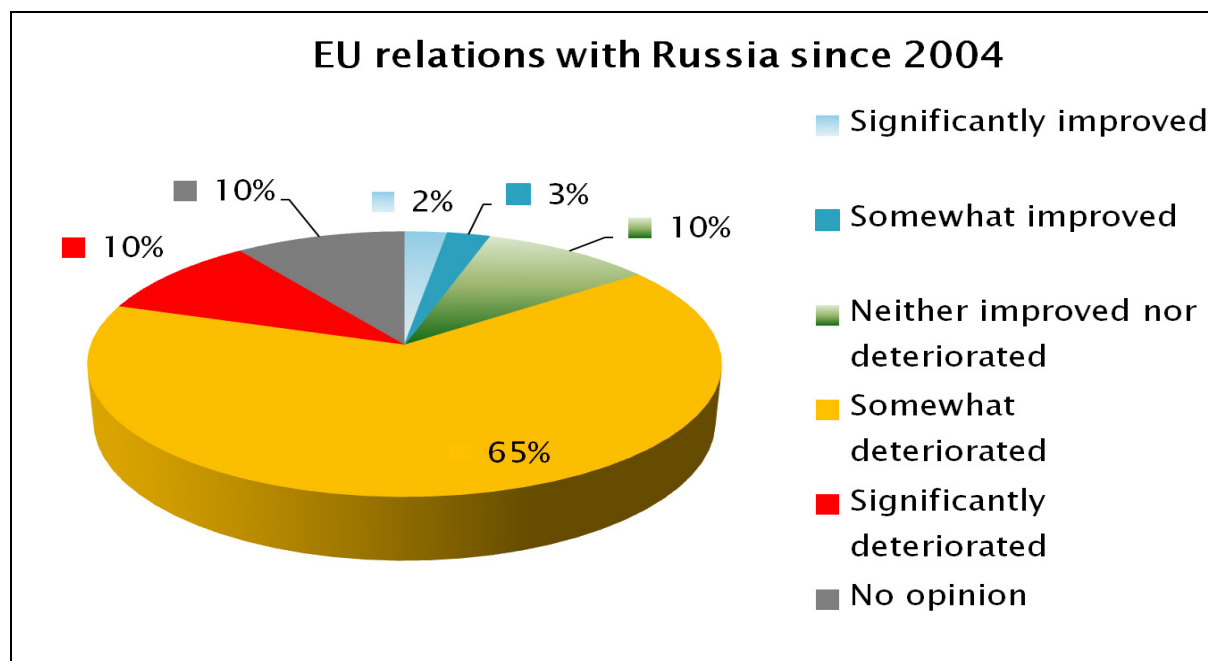
Picture 4. Impact of the 2004 enlargement on EU relations with Ukraine



The worst ratings were given to the evolution of relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation (see: Picture 5). As much as 75% respondents found the mutual relations deteriorating since 2004. 10% stated that this deterioration was significant. 10% respondents found the situation unchanged, only 5% noted some improvement in bilateral relations in the last years.

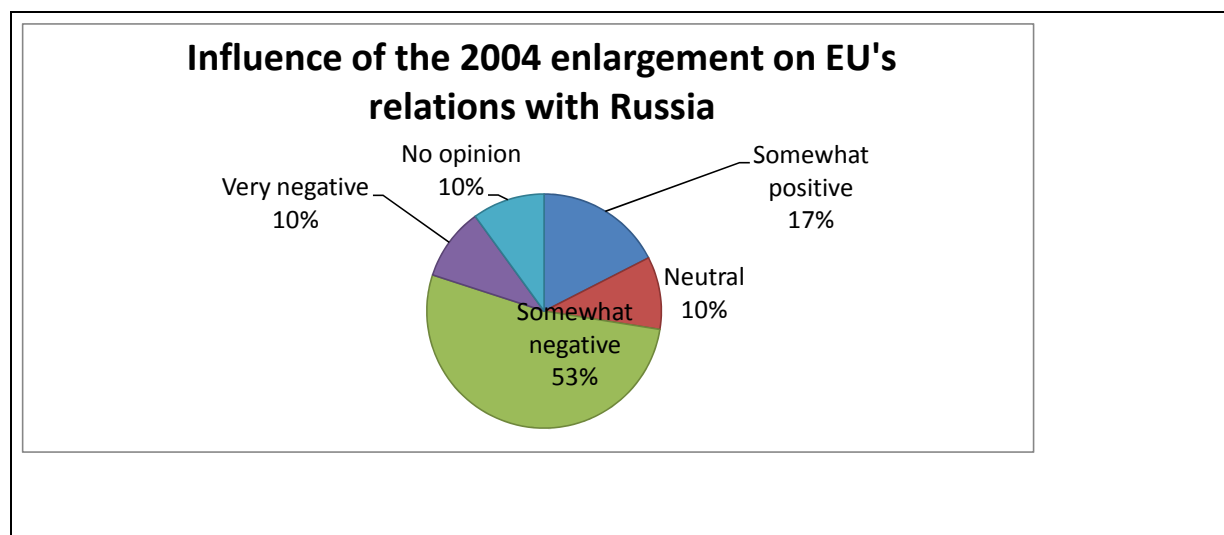
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Picture 5. Evolution of EU relations with Russia since 2004



Similar results were obtained in assessing the impact of the 2004 enlargement on the relations between the Russian Federation and the Union (see Picture 6). 63% respondents found the process "very negative" (53%) or "somewhat negative" (10%) for the mutual relations. 17% respondents assessed the impact as positive for bilateral relations, and 10% found it "neutral".

Picture 6. Impact of the 2004 enlargement on EU relations with the Russian Federation



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2. Perceptions of the performance of eight new Member States in shaping the EU's Eastern agenda.

The second section of the questionnaire included questions concerning the activity of eight new Member States, treated as a bloc of countries. Firstly, respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with a number of opinions regarding the new Member States' contribution to the EU's Eastern policy substance. Secondly, respondents were asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 5 the overall performance of these new states in contributing to the EU's Eastern policy.

In the first part of the section respondents were asked to assess the accuracy of the following theses concerning the period between 2004 and 2007:

- I. New Member States were important driving forces in pushing the ENP agenda eastwards
- II. New Member States added many new proposals to the EU Eastern agenda
- III. New Member States placed greater stress on the role of human rights and democracy in the region than old members
- IV. New Member States rarely worked together to pursue Eastern policy goals
- V. New Member States introduced proposals driven mainly by national interest and domestic considerations
- VI. New Member States have not been able to propose a convincing plan to its EU partners for dealing with new Eastern neighbours
- VII. The impact of new Member States on Eastern policy issues could be much higher than it is the case

As many as 82% respondents agreed with the first statement that the new Member States played an important role in pushing the European Neighbourhood Policy eastwards. 35% of them supported the statement strongly, 47% considered it as "somewhat accurate". Only 10% found it inaccurate.

The next highly positive result (79%), was obtained for the second statement that the new Member States added to EU Eastern agenda many new proposals. 32% of the respondents found the statement "very accurate", 47% considered it as "somewhat accurate". Only 11% disagreed with the statement. At the same time, a similar result (72%) was obtained for the fifth statement that the new Member States introduced

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proposals driven mainly by national interest and domestic considerations. Only 5% respondents expressed a different opinion, 20% had no opinion.

The cooperation of the new Member States on Eastern agenda was a more controversial issue. Most respondents (44%) answered that the new Member States seldom cooperated with each other in issue related to Eastern policy. One-third of the respondents (33%) disagreed with this opinion.

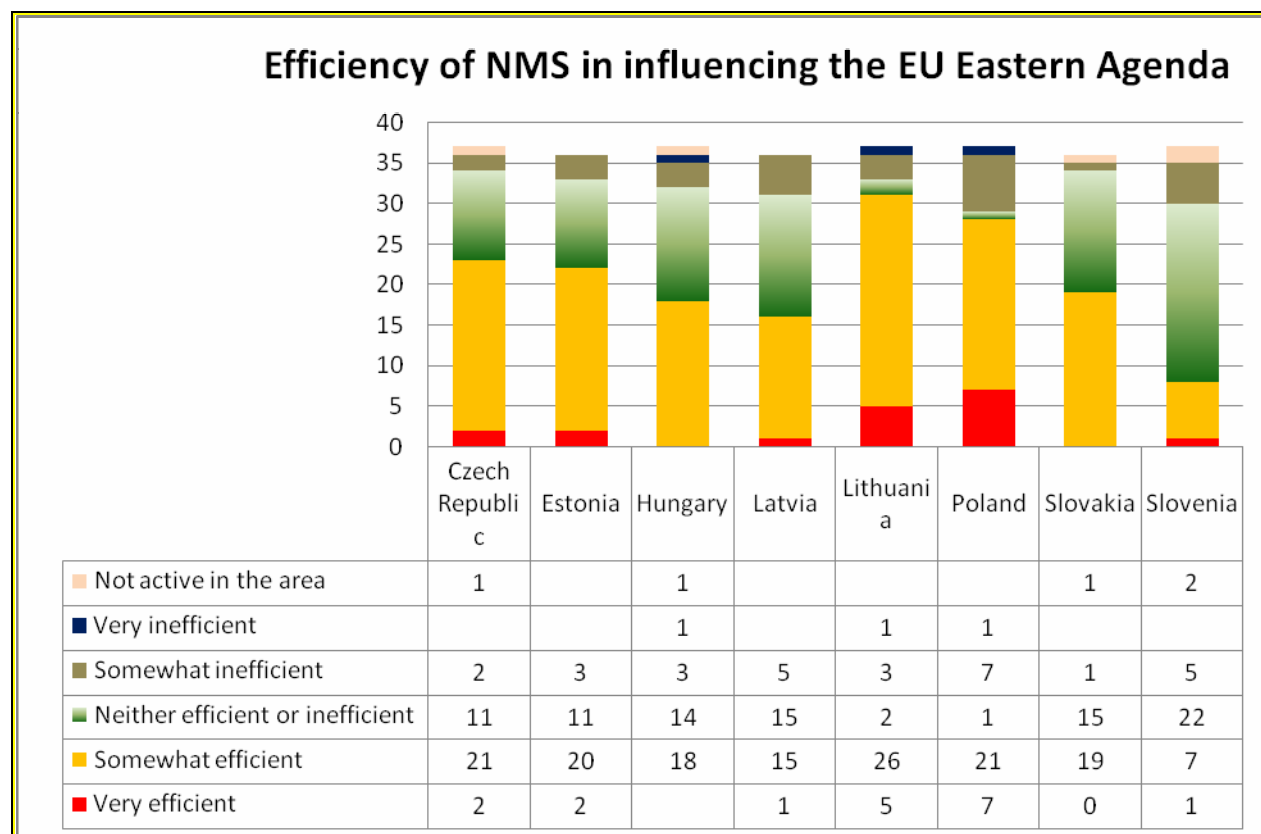
The most controversial however was the third statement. Only 34% respondents agreed that the new Member States placed greater stress on the role of human rights and democracy in the region than the old Member States. 38% disagreed, and other respondents expressed no opinion.

Finally, only half of the respondents agreed with the sixth and the seventh statement (52% and 50%, respectively) that new Member States were not able to propose a convincing plan to its EU partners for dealing with new Eastern neighbours and that the impact of new Member States on Eastern policy issues could be much higher than it was the case. 18% and 17% respondents, respectively, disagreed with these two statements. The rest of the respondents had no opinion.

In the second part of section two respondents were asked to assess the efficiency of the new Member States in influencing the EU Eastern agenda. The results are shown in Picture 7.

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Picture 7. Efficiency of new Member States in influencing the EU Eastern Agenda in the years 2004-2007.



One should note, that the results of quantitative research in this matter clash with those obtained in the qualitative part of the study. Here, Lithuania and Poland obtained the highest ranking (77.5% and 72.2%), as being “very efficient” and “somewhat efficient” in influencing the EU Eastern agenda (the sum being slightly higher for Lithuania). As we recall, in the earlier presented results of in-depth interview, these two countries were harshly criticized for their uncompromising attitudes and irrelevant proposals. Picture 7 proves however that the criticism did not influence the opinions concerning the efficiency of these two states. At the same time Poland had the highest, of all new members, negative assessment of its activity (17%). This only proves that Poland is an active, but controversial player on the European forum.

Regarding other new Member States, in the opinion of respondents quite efficient in influencing the EU Eastern agenda were also the Czech Republic and Estonia (more than 50% positive opinions). Results for Slovakia, Hungary and Latvia were slightly lower (47.5%, 45% and 40%, respectively). The worst result was obtained by Slovenia

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– only 20% respondents found its activity in shaping the EU's Eastern policy as efficient; and as much as 55% expressed no opinion on the matter. This is not surprising however, considering Slovenia's geographic location and no direct interests in the EU eastern neighbouring countries.

The answers given in this part of the questionnaire indicated an interesting general trend, repeated also in further parts of the survey. The respondents showed more willingness to criticize new Member States, if these were treated as a group of states. If asked however to assess the activeness or efficiency of a particular state, respondents avoided expressing negative opinions. The tendency resulted probably from the specific qualification of diplomats and EU officials (naturally moderate and restraining from direct criticism of other states), not so much from the efficiency of the new Member States.

3. Perceptions of the performance of Poland in shaping the EU's Eastern Agenda.

The last, third section examined perceptions about the overall performance of Poland, the largest of all eight new Member States, in shaping the EU Eastern policy. The choice of Poland, as a case study, has been determined not only by the size of the country, but most importantly because it has been perceived as the most active of newcomers in advocating its Eastern policy concepts. The respondents were given examples of European policies undertaken by Poland in the last three years and were asked to give their opinion on whether they think these policies have proven to be successful or unsuccessful. The results are presented in Table 1.

* * *

Table 1. Assessment of the Polish attempts to influence the EU's Eastern agenda in the years 2004-2007 (%).

Assessment of the Polish attempts to influence the EU's Eastern agenda	Successful proposal	Unsuccessful proposal	Difficult to assess/No opinion
1. Mediating during the „Orange Revolution”	65%	0%	35%
2. Advocating for facilitation of visa regime for Eastern neighbors	54%	15%	31%
3. Bringing the Belarusian issue on the EU agenda	44%	13%	43%
4. Advocating for the creation of a new "Eastern Dimension" within the EU	40%	23%	37%
5. Advocating for an association agreement with Ukraine replacing the current PCA	39%	23%	38%
6. Advocating for more funds under the ENP instrument to the Eastern neighbors	37%	18%	45%
7. Advocating for a more rigid stance on human rights abuse in Russia	15 %	22%	63%

Mediating and engaging the European Union in the 2004 round table negotiations in Kiev during the “Orange Revolution” was unambiguously perceived as the most successful Polish initiative in shaping the EU's Eastern agenda. The percentage of positive opinions amounted to 65%; with no respondent considering this action as an unsuccessful one. At the same time almost one-third of respondents (35%) were not able to give an opinion on the initiative; which probably resulted from the flow of time and difficulty of recollecting this event by younger officials.

A similar high percentage of “good” and “very good” opinions (54% total) was obtained for Polish activity as regards visa facilitation for the citizens of Eastern European countries. Only 15% respondents found the Polish advocacy in this matter as “somewhat unsuccessful” or “unsuccessful”. 31% had no opinion.

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A little less than 50% of positive opinions were obtained for Poland's attempts to promote the Belarusian issues on the EU agenda (44%) and the proposal to create an "Eastern Dimension", as a regional framework of cooperation within the European Neighbourhood Policy (40%). The latter result is surprisingly high, considering that the initiative of the Eastern Dimension is in its preliminary phase and has not obtained sufficient support from other EU partners. The high ranking of the proposal may mean however that there is a growing expectation within the EU that the "Eastern Dimension" or an "Eastern Partnership" will finally come to be.

Only 39% and 37% of respondents have assessed the lobbying for an enhanced EU-Ukraine association agreement and for increased funds for the East within the ENP, as successful Polish actions. Similar numbers of respondents had no opinion or could not assess whether these initiatives were successful or unsuccessful. Commentators said that these two initiatives were promoted by a number of Member States and by the European Commission, thus should be not considered as such pursued solely by the Polish government.

Finally, the worst ratings were given to the Polish attempts to advocate for a more rigid stance on human rights abuse in Russia. Only 15% respondents thought that the Polish efforts in this matter were a success; whereas 22% qualified it as a clear failure. As one of the respondents commented: *"Poland has been unsuccessful in advocating for a more rigid stance on human rights abuse in Russia, partly because Poland has been at the heart of some of the problems the EU has in its relations with Russia."*³⁴

It is worth noting that answers "No opinion" and "Neither successful or unsuccessful" were quite frequently chosen by respondents for all seven of Polish initiatives. One of the reasons might be the aforementioned tendency to avoid expressing negative opinions towards a concrete Member State. Another reason might be insufficient knowledge of EU officials about Polish efforts to influence the EU's Eastern policy in the years 2004-2007.

³⁴ Interview at the Council Secretariat, Brussels, 17th October 2007

4. Summary of quantitative research results

Primarily, the survey results have demonstrated that the 2004 Eastern enlargement has not influenced to the same degree or in the same way EU's relations with its three new neighbours (Belarus, the Russian Federation, Ukraine). The impact of enlargement on bilateral relations depended mostly on the developing situation in individual third states. The "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine, the more aggressive Russian foreign policy discourse and a lack of progress in Belarus have determined respectively the improvement of relations with Ukraine, the deterioration of relations with Russia and no change in EU's relations with Belarus.

Secondly, the research confirmed the assumption that the Eastern policy efforts of new Member States in the years 2004 – 2007 were visible and had a direct impact on the shape of the EU's Eastern agenda. This was particularly true for two states, judged as the most active and efficient in their Eastern proposals, namely Lithuania and Poland. These conclusions contrast with the results obtained by the author during in-depth interviews, where the policies of these two countries were assessed as unconstructive and confrontational. The survey results confirmed however many of the opinions about the newcomers expressed already in the qualitative part of the study. Among them were: the lack of close cooperation among new Member States on Eastern policy issues; the tendency to table proposals driven solely by national interest of an individual Member State; the inability of newcomers to propose to other EU partners a convincing complex plan for EU's Eastern policy; and finally the inclination of most new members (excluding Poland) to specialize within the Eastern agenda in relations with one or two particular third states.

Thirdly, in regards to the Polish initiatives aiming at influencing the EU's Eastern policy, the study has shown that the highest ratings were obtained by these proposals, which appeared beneficial from the point of view of the EU as a whole. The round table mediations during the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine or promoting visa facilitations for citizens of Eastern European countries were judged as the most constructive, thus most successful Polish initiatives. The quite positive assessment of the Polish "Eastern Dimension" concept may suggest that there is a growing acceptance for the

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regionalization of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Polish leading postulate for the EU's Eastern policy will have a chance for realization in the upcoming years.

The questionnaire did not contain questions about additional (other than new Member States lobbying) factors influencing the EU Eastern agenda. For this reason, the newcomers' Eastern activities may seem more significant than that presented in the qualitative part of the research. The results of in-depth interviews confirmed however that the new Member States efforts to impact the EU's Eastern policy, was only one (not necessary decisive) of three factors influencing the overall Eastern agenda in the years 2004-2007.

IV. Verification of research hypotheses

The final comparison of qualitative and quantitative results, obtained and described in previous parts of the report, allowed the author to verify three tested research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The 2004 EU enlargement has had a direct impact on EU relations with Eastern neighbours, reshaping the Union's policy towards the region.

The study revealed that a genuine evolution occurred after 2004 in the relations between the European Union and its Eastern neighbours - with qualitative and quantitative changes taking place on the EU's Eastern agenda. As in-depth interviews indicated, the most important of these changes were: a general increase of interest in Eastern issues within the Union itself; a change in perception of the region by old Member States, the development of existing cooperation areas and opening of new areas; assuring more of a equilibrium between the Southern and the Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy; a certain revaluation of EU's relations with Russia.

The research verified the hypothesis that the abovementioned changes in EU's Eastern policy were a result of the 2004 EU enlargement, seen as the combination of two simultaneous processes: moving the EU border eastwards and the activity of new Member States from Central Europe. The quantitative part of the study demonstrated however that the impact of enlargement on bilateral relations with new neighbours

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depended mostly on the developing situation in individual third states. The “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, the more aggressive Russian foreign policy discourse and a lack of progress in Belarus have determined respectively the improvement of relations with Ukraine, the deterioration of relations with Russia and no change in EU’s relations with Belarus.

Hypothesis 2: The activity of new Member States has been a significant but not an exclusive factor influencing the developments in the EU’s Eastern foreign policy.

The research results proved that the activity of the new Member States in the years 2004 – 2007 has been one of the key factors influencing the EU Eastern agenda. The accession of eight Central European states resulted in forming of a critical lobbying mass for a stronger engagement of the EU in the East. Their activity however, as assumed in the hypothesis, was only one of three important factors influencing the EU Eastern policy. The other two were: the physical extension of EU’s Eastern border to the East and the external environment changes, not related to enlargement, occurring in the direct neighbourhood of the European Union.

The assessment of the overall efficiency of new Member States in shaping the EU’s eastern policy is not clear. Based on the study results, it is not possible to judge whether the impact of the new Member States was truly “significant”. The new Member States were with no doubt active on the European forum, including the Council working groups; however the research failed to prove that they tabled more proposals or made more contributions on the EU Eastern agenda than the old Member States. Some commentators said that in terms of concrete initiatives the contribution of the new Member States was not significant, though their presence in the discussions was visible and recognizable by other EU partners.

Hypothesis 3: Poland, as the biggest new Member State, has had the greatest aspirations in forming comprehensive EU Eastern policy and its impact on the EU agenda was significantly greater than that of other new Member States.

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Both qualitative and the quantitative research results indicated that Poland was one of the most active Member States in the years 2004 – 2007. Poland was the only new Member State presenting broader regional aspirations, not limiting itself to “specialization” in relations with selected Eastern neighbours. This broader perspective was portrayed by the Polish “EU Eastern Dimension” concept, which has recently evolved into an “Eastern Partnership” initiative. As the final success of this proposal is still uncertain, the Polish engagement in the “Orange Revolution” negotiations remains the only undisputed Polish success in the years 2004-2007. Similarly high marks given to much smaller Lithuania proves that in regards to its potential Poland could have played a much more efficient role in shaping the EU Eastern policy. Thus, the research results provided no basis to conclude that Polish influence was significantly greater than the impact of the other new Member States.

It should be noted, that some difference between qualitative and quantitative research occurred, in the assessment of the efficiency of Polish policy. Most survey respondents assessed Polish attempts to influence the EU Eastern policy as “efficient” or “very efficient”. In the in-depth interviews Poland was however harshly criticized for its uncompromising attitude and self-isolation tendencies, which decreased its effectiveness in influencing the EU’s agenda. The discrepancy can follow from the fact that qualitative methods give more space for loose remarks and criticism as such, that more “to-the-point” quantitative methods.

Overall, the success of new Member States in influencing the EU Eastern agenda could have been more evident in the years 2004-2007, if not for several structural limitations characteristic for most of the newcomers. The first limitation is the existence of a weak political culture in these states, characterized by the lack of tradition of decision-making based on obtaining broad national compromise. The EU internal negotiations are all about compromise, which strongly contrasts with the inflexibility and inability to search for a common ground, so distinctive for some of the new Member States.

The second important limitation was the lack of experience in using the available lobbying instruments to influence EU’s policy. A key to success is conducting a multilevel

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and multilateral policy within the Union, permanently building coalitions with other EU members and finally assuring the support of the European Commission for one's proposals. As one of the European Commission officials said:

*"New Member States still look at the European Commission as it was the accession process: that it is an institution that tells them what to do. But now the situation has changed and the Commission is their ally. The small old member states understand that they need the Commission in order to be successful. This is not yet or not always the case with the newcomers."*³⁵

Finally, other limitations of new Member States include insufficient financial resources necessary to support the proposed initiatives and highly hierarchical and inflexible administrative structures (particularly of the ministries of foreign affairs), which made it extremely difficult to convert from bilateral to multilateral diplomacy.

All of the above mentioned problems disenable the new Member States at the moment to exert significant influence on the EU's Eastern policy. The existing limitations must be therefore overcome in order for the newcomers to use their full potential in influencing EU foreign policy. This is with no doubt one of the most important task for these states for the upcoming years.

³⁵ Interview with European Commission official, DG RELEX, Brussels, 9th July 2007.

V. Recommendations for Poland

The research results enable the definition of key recommendations for Poland, to improve its efficiency in promoting Eastern policy concepts within the European Union. Among the most important are:

- I. **Multilateral diplomacy.** Poland should focus on forming coalitions with like-minded countries - both old and new members - around its Eastern proposals. Unilaterally prepared and not consulted proposals serve only as political demonstrations, however with little chance of being actually accepted and implemented by the European Union.
- II. **Medium-term strategy.** One medium-term strategy, replacing short-term strategies, must be formed for the EU Eastern policy. The strategy must reflect a comprehensive and global vision of the EU foreign policy and comply with the general European interest. The strategy should be limited to a few most important items and propose concrete solutions to the most urgent problems of the region. Poland should avoid issuing purely declarative statements or presenting its idea in a "demand list" form.
- III. **Constructive cooperation.** Efficient promotion of Eastern concepts within the European Union requires more consideration for the interest of other EU members. For this reason Poland should show greater flexibility and willingness to compromise in order to reestablish the image of a constructive and reliable partner; capable also of taking advantage of available EU instruments. Veto can be used only as an ultimate solution, after careful reconsideration of all its negative consequences. Historical and emotional arguments must be replaced by content-related arguments and pragmatic attitudes.
- IV. **„Grassroots” activities.** To ensure efficient promotion of Polish Eastern policy concepts, more focus on pragmatic, day-to-day activity within the European Union itself is necessary. This can be done by placing more experts in the Council working groups, seconding national administration personnel to work in EU institutions, assuring that the quota for Poles in

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the EU institutions is filled, and using the COREU information system more often. Networking between Polish administration and Poles already employed in EU institutions is also very important.

- V. **Structural changes at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.** The decision-making process at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the coordination between the Ministry and the Polish Permanent Representation in Brussels must be improved. Intellectual support for the Ministry must be provided, by cooperation with Polish think-tanks and use of their expertise. Academic teachers and representatives of the non-governmental sector should be invited to participate in a broader discussion on the goals and practical implementation of Polish Eastern policy concepts.

Concluding, it should be noted that the "Eastern Partnership" initiative, presented by Donald Tusk's government in the spring of 2008, proves that some of the above mentioned postulates are being already effectively implemented by Poland. The progressing europeization of Polish foreign policy gives thus hope that the existing deficiencies will be eliminated and Poland will become in the future a true creator of the EU Eastern policy.

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About the author

Katarzyna Pisarska is the Director of the Polish Academy of Young Diplomats and a PhD candidate at Warsaw School of Economics' Department for Public Administration. She is a graduate of the University of Łódź (MA in American Studies), Warsaw School of Economics (MA in European Studies) and the College of Europe in Bruges (European Politics and Administration). In the academic year 2006/2007 she was a Fulbright visiting fellow at Harvard University. She specializes in European Neighbourhood Policy, Polish Eastern policy, the adjustment of the Polish legal system to the Schengen Convention and in EU visa policy. Since 2005 she also works as a Council of Europe expert for civil society development in Eastern Europe (specializing in Ukraine and the Russian Federation). Contact: kpisarska@diplomacy.pl

About the Casimir Pulaski Foundation



The **Casimir Pulaski Foundation** is an independent, non-partisan institution with a mission to promote freedom, equality and democracy as well as to support actions of strengthening civil society. The foundation carries out activities both in Poland and abroad, among others in Central and Eastern Europe and in North America.

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation was founded due to political changes that took place in Poland after 1989. The principal values of Casimir Pulaski (freedom, justice and democracy) are an inspiration for every initiative undertaken by the Foundation. A few of the Foundations activities include: conducting scientific research, preparing publications and analyses, organizing seminars and conferences, providing education and support for leaders.

Among others the most renowned initiative of the Foundation is the Academy of Young Diplomats an annual educational program, which prepares candidates to work for Polish civil and foreign service as well as for European institutions (www.akademia.diplomacy.pl).

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Foundation is the main organizer of the Warsaw Regional NGOs Congress conducted under auspices of the Council of Europe. The Congress gathers more than 200 decision-makers from the biggest NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe (www.warsawcongress.pl).

Foundation is also publisher of the Communication Platform for Non-governmental Organizations www.non-gov.org This portal is held under auspices of the Council of Europe.

One of the youngest Foundation's projects is the Institute of Leadership, which educates future leaders for Polish political elites. The Foundation also provides scholarships for outstanding academics as well as for civic and political leaders www.instytutprzywodztwa.pl).

Foundation also awards the Casimir Pulaski Prize "the Knight of Freedom" to outstanding people who have made a significant contribution in promoting democracy. So far the prizewinners were: professor Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, former minister of foreign affairs of Poland, historian professor Norman Davies and doctor Alaksandar Milinkiewicz, leader of Belarusian opposition.

Casimir Pulaski Foundation has a partnership status with the Council of Europe and is a member of the Group Abroad, an association of Polish non-governmental organizations working abroad.

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Fundacja im. Kazimierza Pułaskiego

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation

Konduktorska 18/15, 00-775 Warsaw, Poland

Tel/Fax: +48 22 406 07 82, e-mail: office@pulaski.pl

www.pulaski.pl

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